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**CHILDREN'S MINISTRY OF PENTECOSTAL AND CHARISMATIC
CONGREGATIONS IN MANGAUNG TOWNSHIP: A PRACTICAL
THEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION**

By

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**Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God Almighty, Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour and God the Holy Spirit for wisdom, guidance and strength and for making it possible for me to achieve this feat; all glory, power and honour be unto God now and forever more. Amen!

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- My son Tshepang, even though he is working far away from home he kept encouraging me whenever we got to talk.
- To you all, may the good Lord bless and protect you.

DECLARATION

I, Lefu Tefo Maphalla, hereby declare that the dissertation submitted by me for the awarding of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy Practical Theology at the University of the Free State is my independent work and has not been previously submitted, in part or whole, to any university or institution for awarding of any degree, diploma, or other qualification.



Signed:

Lefu Tefo Maphalla

Date: July 2024

ABSTRACT

Children's Ministry of Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung Township faces many challenges that include a lack and/or inadequate infrastructure and shortage of trained personnel, especially regarding how to work with children. Children's ministry is a collaborative effort between parents, teachers, children and congregations. In this collaborative effort, parents are the primary role players and must be recognized as such. However, all these stakeholders have to work in tandem for the ministry to achieve its desired outcomes.

The thrust of the study was to determine the challenges of volunteer workers/teachers regarding children's ministry, the understanding of the pastors regarding the ministry, the current practices of children's ministry, the role of different stakeholders in the ministry and what would be the requirements for an effective children's ministry.

The study was both a theoretical and empirical study. Relevant literature was studied to understand the roles of different stakeholders or role players in children's ministry and normative practices of congregations. It used qualitative research study. It also used empirical methods that included participatory action research methodologies to collect data. Observations and reflections on the practices of children's ministry were done, as well as in-depth interviews with ministry teachers and pastors of the congregations. Focus group interviews with parents augmented this. The ATLAS.Ti 2023 software package was used to analyze the data.

The study made the following main findings: the ministry challenges are a lack of resources, mainly in the form of buildings/facilities, a shortage of teachers and a lack of support by the parents. The practices of the ministry are singing, teaching the Word of God, memory of verses, drama, sketches and plays. It thus made the following recommendations to improve it: first, there must be a vision and mission for the ministry and provide a budget to support the vision and mission. Second, recruit, train and retain teachers. Third, invite parents to the ministry, theologically ground them to understand their responsibility, and train, equip and support them with materials. Fourth, build relationships with them. Fifth, the children should be given an opportunity to make inputs regarding the running of the ministry and also to serve both in the ministry and congregation. Congregations should be intergenerational. Moreover, the ministry

ought to be taken seriously by the leadership of the congregations and the parents. This could be achieved by appointing a person with a certain level of authority in the congregation to oversee the activities of the ministry.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
DECLARATION	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
CHAPTER 1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background on Children’s Ministry	1
1.1.1 Researcher’s motivation for doing the study	4
1.2 Why a Practical Theology Study?	6
1.2.1 Faith formation	8
1.2.2 Christian education.....	10
1.3 Significance of the Study	11
1.4 Objectives of the Study	12
1.5 Research Problem	12
1.6 Research Question	13
1.6.1 Sub-question 1: Objective 1.....	14
1.6.2 Sub-question 2: Objective 2.....	15
1.6.3 Sub-question 3: Objective 3.....	15
1.6.4 Sub-question 4: Objective 4.....	17
1.6.5 Sub-question 5: Objective 5.....	18
1.7 Context of Children in Mangaung Township	19
1.8 Clarification of Main Concepts used in the Study.....	21
1.9 Ethical Considerations.....	24
1.10 Conclusion	24
CHAPTER 2 CHILDREN’S MINISTRY LITERATURE REVIEW	25
2.1 Introduction	25
2.2 History of Children’s Ministry	26
2.3 The Current Situation in SA Regarding Christian Education	30
2.3.1 National Christian Education Policy Framework	30
2.3.2 The void in Christian education	32
2.3.3 Vacuum created by parents.....	32

2.3.4	Challenges that Christian children and children in general face	33
2.4	Theological Perspectives Regarding the Importance of Children's Ministry	35
2.4.1	Children are part of God's plan for humanity and the church	35
2.4.2	Childhood is a critical stage of life	37
2.4.3	Children's ministry is taken for granted by congregations	38
2.4.4	Children are the most critical group in a congregation	39
2.5	Roles of Different Players In Children's Ministry	41
2.5.1	The role of parents/family	42
2.5.2	The role of a pastor	46
2.5.3	The role of a local congregation	47
2.5.4	The role of volunteer workers/teachers.....	50
2.5.5	The role of children.....	53
2.5.6	Some Christian traditions regarding catechism in children's ministry	55
2.5.6.1	Baptist and Reformed traditions.....	55
2.5.6.2	Catechesis in the Roman Catholic tradition.....	59
2.6	Conclusion	61
CHAPTER 3 THE NORMATIVE TASKS OF THE CHURCH, PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGIES AND PENTECOSTAL CHILDREN'S MINISTRY PRACTICES		65
3.1	Introduction	65
3.2	The Core Functions of the Church.....	65
3.3	Pentecostal Theologies: A Perspective on Core Ministries	70
3.3.1	Kerugma /preaching/ proclamation/ evangelism	71
3.3.2	Marturia or witness	73
3.3.3	Leitourgia / liturgy	74
3.3.4	Worship.....	76
3.3.5	Didache / teaching.....	78
3.3.6	Koinonia / fellowship.....	80
3.3.7	Diakonia / service	81
3.4	Theological Grounding of Pentecostal Children's Ministry Practices.....	83
3.4.1	Dedication of infants and/or children to the Lord.....	84
3.4.2	Bible-reading and memory verses	85
3.4.3	Prayer, praise and worship.....	86
3.4.4	Partaking in Holy Communion	87
3.4.5	Christmas and Easter celebrations.....	88

3.4.6	Evangelism/preaching	88
3.4.7	Water and Holy Spirit baptism	89
3.5	Summary.....	89
3.6	Proposed Normative Practices of Pentecostal Children's Ministry	90
3.6.1	Kerugma (Evangelism/proclamation).....	91
3.6.2	Worship service.....	91
3.6.3	Didache / teaching.....	92
3.6.4	Koinonia / fellowship.....	93
3.6.5	Diakonia / service	94
3.6.6	Marturia / witness	94
3.6.7	Kubernesis / administration	94
3.7	Conclusion	95
CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES, METHODS AND TOOLS.....		96
4.1	Introduction	96
4.2	Research Procedure	98
4.3	Selection of Congregations for the Study	101
4.4	Overview of the Congregations	102
4.4.1	“Cornerstone” congregation.....	102
4.4.2	“Our Hope” congregation.....	103
4.4.3	“New Life” congregation	103
4.4.4	“Gift of Life” congregation	104
4.5	Summary.....	105
4.6	Data Collection Methods and Tools Used.....	105
4.6.1	Interviews with pastors and teachers/volunteer workers	105
4.6.2	Focus group discussions with parents.....	106
4.6.3	Participatory action research: Participant observation	107
4.7	Data Analysis Methods.....	109
4.7.1	Observations	109
4.7.2	Data analysis using ATLAS.TI 2023 Software	110
4.8	Conclusion	110
CHAPTER 5 ECCLESIOLOGY AND MINISTRY PRACTICES OF THE CONGREGATIONS		112
5.1	Introduction	112
5.2	Practical Theology Ecclesiological Descriptions of the Congregations in the Study	113
5.2.1	Identity of “Cornerstone” congregation	114

5.2.2	The mission of “Cornerstone” congregation.....	115
5.2.3	Ministry of “Cornerstone” congregation.....	115
5.2.4	“Cornerstone” congregation observations and reflections.....	115
5.3	“Our Hope” Congregation Observations and Reflections.....	117
5.3.1	Identity of “Our Hope” congregation.....	117
5.3.2	The mission of “Our Hope” congregation.....	117
5.3.3	Ministry of “Our Hope” congregation.....	117
5.3.4	Observations and reflections made in “Our Hope” congregation.....	118
5.4	“New Life” Congregation Observations.....	119
5.4.1	Identity of “New Life” congregation	119
5.4.2	The mission of the “New Life” congregation.....	119
5.4.3	Ministry of “New Life” congregation	119
5.5	"Gift Of Life" Congregation Observations	121
5.5.1	Identity of “Gift of Life” congregation.....	121
5.5.2	The mission of the “Gift of Life” congregation	121
5.5.3	Ministry of “Gift of Life” congregation	122
5.6	Summary.....	123
5.7	Conclusion	124
CHAPTER 6 CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE FINDINGS REGARDING MINISTRY PRACTICES		
.....		126
6.1	Introduction	126
6.2	Biographical Description of the Focus Group Participants	127
6.2.1	Summary.....	130
6.3	Analysis of the Data Collected Through Interviews with Teachers.....	131
6.3.1	Definition of the group codes used	131
6.3.1.1	Group code 1: Challenges	131
6.3.1.2	Group code 2: Main focus.....	132
6.3.1.3	Group code 3: Practices	132
6.3.1.4	Group code 4: Role.....	132
6.3.1.5	Group code 5: Improvement	133
6.3.1.6	Group code 6: Good story.....	133
6.3.1.7	Group code 7: Comments.....	134
6.3.2	Analysis results of the code groups	134
6.3.3	Referencing method used in this section	134

6.4	Challenges Experienced by Children’s Ministry Teachers	135
6.4.1	The main focus of children’s ministry, as per the teachers.....	137
6.4.2	Practices of the children’s ministry according to the teachers	138
6.4.3	Role of children’s ministry teachers	140
6.4.4	Improvement needed in children’s ministry, according to the teachers	141
6.4.5	Good story to tell about children’s ministry, according to the teachers.....	143
6.4.6	Teachers’ general comments regarding children’s ministry	144
6.4.7	Summary.....	145
6.5	Parents’ Focus Groups Data Analysis Report.....	147
6.5.1	Children’s ministry challenges, according to parents	147
6.5.2	The main focus of children’s ministry.....	149
6.5.3	Role of parents in children’s ministry	150
6.5.4	Assistance needed by parents to play their role in children’s ministry.....	151
6.5.5	Improvement needed in children’s ministry, according to parents.....	152
6.5.6	Good story to tell regarding children’s ministry according to parents	153
6.5.7	Parents’ general comments concerning children’s ministry.....	154
6.5.8	Summary.....	154
6.6	Reflections by the Pastors.....	157
6.7	Understanding of the Pastors Regarding Children’s Ministry	157
6.8	Practices of Children’s Ministry According to the Pastors	158
6.8.1	Summary.....	159
6.9	Discussions on the Findings of Critical Reflections on Best Practices in Children’s Ministry...	160
6.9.1	The findings of the teachers’ interviews.....	161
6.9.2	Challenges of children’s ministry according to the teachers.....	161
6.9.3	The main focus of children’s ministry.....	164
6.9.4	Role of children’s ministry teachers	166
6.9.5	Practices of children’s ministry according to the teachers.....	167
6.9.6	Improvements needed in children’s ministry, according to the teachers	169
6.9.7	A good story to tell about children’s ministry, according to teachers	170
6.9.8	The teachers' general comments regarding children's ministry.....	171
6.10	Discussion of the Findings of the Parents’ Focus Group Interviews.....	172
6.10.1	Challenges of children’s ministry according to the parents.....	172
6.10.2	The main focus of children’s ministry, according to the parents	173

6.10.3	The role of parents in children's ministry.....	174
6.10.4	Assistance needed by the parents to fulfil their role	175
6.10.5	Improvement needed in children's ministry, according to the parents	176
6.10.6	The good story to tell, according to the parents	177
6.10.7	General comments by parents concerning children's ministry.....	178
6.11	Understanding of the Pastors Regarding Children's Ministry	179
6.12	Practices of Children's Ministry According to the Pastors	180
6.13	Conclusion	181
CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY OF PENTECOSTAL CONGREGATIONS.....		183
7.1	Introduction	183
7.2	Conclusion	183
7.2.1	Sub-question 1	184
7.2.2	Sub-question 2	184
7.2.3	Sub-question 3	185
7.2.4	Sub-question 4	185
7.2.5	Sub-question 5	185
7.3	Limitations of the study.....	186
7.4	Recommendations	187
7.4.1	Recommendations to children's ministry teachers	187
7.4.2	Recommendations to the parents	188
7.4.3	Recommendations to the pastors	188
7.4.4	Recommendations to the local congregations	189
7.4.5	Proposed strategy for Pentecostal children's ministry in Mangaung Township	190
7.4.5.1	Development of a vision and mission for Pentecostal and Township children's ministry	190
7.4.5.2	Recruitment and training of volunteer workers/teachers of children's ministry.....	191
7.4.5.3	Liturgy involving children.....	192
BIBLIOGRAPHY		196
ANNEXURE A: NCLS Questionnaire.....		219
ANNEXURE B: Township congregational survey (2021)		236
ANNEXURE C: Ethical clearance for NCLS–SA 2021 Project and consent form		245
ANNEXURE D: Ethical clearance for this project		250
ANNEXURE E: Interview questions for volunteer workers /teachers.....		254

ANNEXURE F: Transcribed teachers' interviews	255
ANNEXURE G: Teachers' code book	276
ANNEXURE H: Teachers' quotation report.....	277
ANNEXURE I: Biographical information of focus groups participants.....	289
ANNEXURE J: Questions for focus groups participant	291
ANNEXURE K: Transcribed focus groups interviews	292
ANNEXURE L: Focus groups interviews code book	322
ANNEXURE M: Project: Parents focus groups	323
ANNEXURE N: Transcribed pastors' interviews	337
ANNEXURE O: Pastors' code book.....	341
ANNEXURE P: Pastors' quotation report.....	342

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Osmer's core tasks of Practical Theological Interpretation (Osmer 2008:4)	7
Figure 6.1: Children's ministry challenges according to the teachers	136
Figure 6.2: Main focus of children's ministry according to the teachers.....	137
Figure 6.3: Practices of children's ministry according to the teachers	139
Figure 6.4: The role of the children's ministry teachers	140
Figure 6.5: Improvement needed in children's ministry according to the teachers.....	142
Figure 6.6: Good story to tell about children's ministry according to the teachers	143
Figure 6.7: General comments by the teachers regarding children's ministry	144
Figure 6.8: Relationships network of aspects raised by the teachers	145
Figure 6.9: Challenges of children's ministry according to the parents	148
Figure 6.10: Main focus of children's ministry according to the parents	149
Figure 6.11: Role played by the parents in children's ministry.....	150
Figure 6.12: Assistance needed by the parents to play a role in children's ministry	151
Figure 6.13: Improvement needed in children's ministry according to the parents	152
Figure 6.14: General comments by the parents concerning children's ministry	154
Figure 6.15: Relationships network of aspects raised by the parents.....	155
Figure 6.16: Understanding of the pastors concerning children's ministry.....	157
Figure 6.17: Practices of children's ministry according to the pastors	158
Figure 6.18: Relationships network of aspects raised by the pastors	159

LIST OF TABLES

Table 6.1: Gender of participants per congregation (N = number of participants)	128
Table 6.2: Age groups of participants per congregation (N = number of participants)	128
Table 6.3: Employment status of the participants per congregation (N = number of participants)	129
Table 6.4: Marital status of the participants per congregation (N = number of participants)	129
Table 6.5: Education level of the participants per congregation	130

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background on Children's Ministry

Children's ministry should be an important aspect of every congregation. A congregation that does not have this ministry is short-sighted and lacks vision for the future. It only lives in the here and now. Children form an important part of any home, society and congregation. Even though, most of the time are not taken seriously, they are, however, models of faith (Mark 10:15). Moreover, they play a crucial role, such as bringing joy and laughter into the lives of those around them. They also bring hope for the future as they are regarded as future parents, leaders and members of the community. However, they need to be nurtured to reach their potential. The ultimate goal of children's ministry is to form the faith of children and nurture them in order to become future leaders and all that God intended them to be. Again, it is to form children's faith, just like all believers, to become Christ's disciples who strive to be like Christ (Fredericks 2019:44). The ministry has a responsibility to make the tree good so that its fruit will be good (Mat. 12:33). However, if it fails to do that the opposite may equally be the case.

There is a significant number of Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung Township. Some of these congregations are relatively old, while some are relatively new. Compared to mainline congregations, some Pentecostal congregations have pastors with either limited or no theological training. They also lack infrastructure (Nel 2016(a):3 and Verster 2020:78). The two critical variables in running an effective and influential children's ministry are capacitated personnel and an appropriate and adequate infrastructure. Schoeman (2017:95) made a thought-provoking observation between mainline and other congregations, such as Pentecostals, regarding faith formation in children's ministry. He says the former seems to hold children's ministry, catechism, and confirmation of faith in high esteem, while the latter is not the case. It is, therefore, imperative to establish why this seems to be the case.

Pentecostal congregations refer to those congregations that subscribe to the phenomena of speaking in tongues (glossolalia) and prophesying and use of Spiritual gifts, among others. Gooren (2004:n.p.) define them broadly by saying, "The term Pentecostal is appropriate for

describing globally all churches and movements that emphasize the workings of the (Holy) Spirit, both on phenomenological and theological grounds." This definition is problematic because it groups many congregations that subscribe to different things. That is why, by his admission, he says he wonders "whether classical Pentecostal churches, like the Assemblies of God, would feel comfortable being in the same category as African Initiated Churches (AICs) (and vice versa!)." Mofokeng and Madise (2019:2), citing Anderson (2004:108), define Pentecostalism as a "movement that insists on bringing back into modern church life the first-century apostolic pneumatological experiences such as divine healing, prophesy, and speaking in tongues." The latter definition sounds more precise than the former, even though many congregations may still claim to be attempting to do the same, but their practices differ. However, it takes work to define it precisely, given its diverse nature (Cartledge 2012:587).

The Scripture in Deuteronomy (6:6–7) admonishes the people of God to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul and strength and to diligently teach their children God's commandments when they are in their houses, when they walk on the way, and when they sleep and wake up. Again, the Scripture admonishes parents to train their children in a way they should live so that when they are grown up, they will not deviate from it (Pro. 22:6). In the Old Testament God commanded His people to teach their children His commandments and the same was expected of the Gentiles who converted to Judaism. They were equally required to abide by God's commandments in this regard.

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ tasked His disciples to preach the gospel to all nations, baptizing those who believed and teaching them to keep His commandments (Mt.28:19–20). Since some of the believers were Gentiles, the responsibility of teaching them, including the Jews who converted to Christianity, fell on the apostles since they were the ones who knew Christ's teachings. This group was the new people of God, the church.

Bosch (2011:eBook) emphasize the missional nature of congregations. Congregations should therefore understand themselves as being sent by God instead of having their own mission. He says, "Mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God." He posit that mission should be understood as God's mission. That implies that congregations exist for the sole purpose of carrying out the mission of God, that is, *Missio Dei*. Guder (1998:110) regard the church as an Apostle of God to the world. He says, it "Exists as a community,

servant, and messenger of the reign of God in the midst of other kingdoms, communities, and powers that attempt to shape our understanding of reality.” If it fail to recognize this fact, its existence would be self-serving. In emphasizing this notion, Nel (2018:23) says, "We are because God is. This is a critical departure point in understanding that the church does not just have a mission but is a mission and is in mission...." 'We are a work of God for God-intended purpose' ". Again, congregations cannot claim to be fully and effectively carrying out their mission if, in doing that, they are leaving children behind. As alluded to above, a ministry to children should become integral to every family and congregation.

The challenges mentioned above that Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung’s experience affect how these congregations practice children's ministry. Nel (2016:3) attributes this situation to three things: first, the Pentecostal movement's historical origins. He posits that in South Africa (SA), the movement started among the poor and dispossessed. Second is the movement's sense of urgency in preaching the gospel. Citing Anderson (2007:47–72), he says the Pentecostals see the need to preach the gospel so urgently that preparation and training would waste their time. And third is the perception by the Pentecostals that intellectualism suppresses the work of the Holy Spirit.

The same notions seem to be the underlying principles when appointing children's ministry teachers among Pentecostal congregations. There seems to be a belief that the requirement for one to be a children's ministry teacher is a passion for teaching children the Word of God and that the Holy Spirit should have baptized the person. This challenge of untrained personnel and the need for better infrastructure exacerbates the situation. Qualified personnel and suitable infrastructure create a conducive learning environment for formal learning. According to Brock (2001:375), one factor contributing to nurturing "faith maturity" is a comfortable environment where all can learn together. An adequate and suitable infrastructure contributes to such an environment.

Compounding the challenges of some Pentecostal congregations is a need for more training materials and good teaching programs to assist volunteer workers/teachers. According to Hamm and Beemer (2009), as cited by Fredericks (2019:43), the issue of children's ministry programs does not only affect Pentecostal congregations. It seems to affect other congregations as well. They say congregations use teaching programs that do not equip

children with skills to defend the faith. To remedy the problem, they propose the inclusion of apologetics in children's educational programs. The findings of Maphalla (2020:77) in his mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree Master of Practical Theology, titled Exploration of the Role of Mangaung Township Congregations in Early Childhood Development supports this view. His study of the role of Mangaung Township congregations in Early Childhood Development (ECD) found that the main challenges that ECDs run by Mangaung Township congregations grapple with are poor access to ECD and a lack of relevant programs. These challenges have a negative impact in terms of teaching children the gospel. Given this negative impact, the question that Dean (2010(a):7) asks is relevant in this context when she says, do the practices of our youth/children reflect Christ? One might add another question: how can an unfavourable situation produce a perfect outcome? These are challenging questions to answer since many factors contribute to one's practices to reflect Christ. What and how one teaches and the way she/he models it contribute to the equation. The children's ministry program issue seems to be a recurring aspect and, therefore, warrants some attention.

In conclusion, Pentecostal congregations are famous for, among other things, loud music, enthusiastic or energetic preaching, belief in miraculous healing, and speaking in tongues (glossolalia). However, more still needs to be known regarding how they practice their children's ministry. This study, therefore, undertook to evaluate the children's ministry of Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung Township.

1.1.1 Researcher's motivation for doing the study

The researcher is a member of a Pentecostal congregation in Mangaung Township in the Free State Province of South Africa. The congregation has been in existence for over 20 years. The congregation was founded in 2001. When it started, it held its services in a school hall shared with other congregations. It, however, used the hall at different scheduled times on Sundays only. Its membership then comprised of few families. The situation only allowed it to have one service at a time, let alone a separate children's ministry.

The congregation bought a site where it pitched a tent two years later while the church building commenced. The building was finished in the same year. The congregation did not start with

children's ministry due to several challenges. These included, among others, inadequate infrastructure, no trained personnel to run the ministry, and a lack of training materials.

The children's ministry only started after seven years of its existence. It started after the congregation constructed a shack next to the church building to house the children's ministry. It did not commence earlier due to inadequate infrastructure because the church building could not accommodate two concurrent services. Before constructing the shack, it was a challenge for parents to bring children earlier or remain behind after the leading church service so the children could have their separate service. Even after the construction of the shack, the infrastructure challenges persisted. The shack could not accommodate all the children. It also needed to be more suitable for the effective and efficient ministry running.

In 2018, the congregation managed to build another bigger building dedicated to the main service on Sundays, leaving the other building to be used by the children's ministry. However, this building was a non-partitioned hall; as a result, different groups of children were taught simultaneously but using different parts of the building. The situation could be improved for teaching children.

The other challenge related to training children's ministry personnel is that they still need to receive proper training for leading children's ministry. The volunteer workers/teachers only attended two short courses offered by one congregation. The leadership needed to determine whether the people who offered those short courses were suitably qualified.

Given the children's ministry situation at the researcher's congregation, he is concerned whether the same or similar situation needs to play itself out in other Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung Township as well, primarily because some of them were established after the researcher's congregation. Again, some even have a less and worse infrastructure than the researcher's congregation.

Furthermore, given its importance, children's ministry should be the heart of every congregation. It holds hope for the continued existence of any congregation. A congregation will surely perish if it does not have a children's ministry. A children's ministry ensures that children carry the fundamentals of the Christian faith, its values and traditions into the future. It also teaches children about how God created the universe and human beings. The main concern is that if congregations do not teach children the fundamentals of the Christian faith,

who will, considering that the government of the day has abolished religious education in public schools and many children attend those schools?

On the other hand, the children of parents who attend churches that do not have a children's ministry get exposed to other contrary teachings in places like schools, sports facilities and on television, among others. Therefore, will these children continue with the faith or know their parents' faith doctrine when they grow up? Considering this, Hazel's (2019:28) question is even more relevant when she asks, "If the generation that saw God's amazing miracles in Egypt, that experienced His merciful protection in the wilderness was in danger of rebelling against God and forgetting His glory, then how much greater would that danger be for a generation of children that never hear about Him?". The danger could even be worse than we could imagine.

The researcher (2020:79) did an exploratory study on the role of Mangaung Township congregations in early childhood development. In that study, he found that although congregations were doing a great job forming children's faith, they needed to pay more attention to specific areas, such as the use of social sciences in developing their programs and appropriate content for different age groups. Regarding content, the researcher found that the ECDs use whatever materials they can find. One of the reasons for this is that the cost of the materials could have been cheaper, especially for resource-constrained ECDs. That study motivated him to want to do more work concerning children's ministry.

1.2 Why a Practical Theology Study?

According to Magezi (2019:120), practical theology has four distinct enterprises with different audiences, namely; "(1) an activity of believers seeking to sustain a life of reflective faith in everyday life, (2) a method or a way of analyzing theology in practice used by religious leaders and by teachers and students across the theological curriculum, (3) a curricular area in theological education focused on ministerial practice and sub-specialties, and (4) an academic discipline pursued by a smaller subset of scholars to support and sustain these first three enterprises." Of particular relevance to this study is the first three enterprises among those four. Concerning the first enterprise, the researcher, as a member of a Pentecostal congregation, sought to reflect on the practices of a children's ministry performed in the everyday life of the Pentecostal congregations. About the second enterprise, he attempted to

understand the practices of the congregations concerning a children's ministry and the challenges they are facing. Furthermore, he determined the knowledge the volunteer workers/teachers need to do their work. For example, how to practice discipleship and ministry to improve children's ministry (Miller-McLemore 2012:14). Concerning the third enterprise, the researcher sought to evaluate how the congregations, through the leadership of the pastors, practice faith formation by doing Christian education through children's ministry.

Again, Magezi (2019:119), citing Cahalan & Mikoski (2014), says that a thorough practical theological approach has three elements. It starts with practice, then moves to reflection, and then back to practice. By first reflecting on the practices of the Pentecostal congregations' children's ministry, trying to understand their challenges attending to them, and further proposing a framework for improving their practices, the study would fulfil the three elements of the practical theological approach.

The study is also practical theological empirical research. It espouses Osmer's four tasks of practical theological interpretation (Osmer 2008:4), namely, (1) what is going on? (2) Why is this going on? (3) What ought to be going on? (4) How might we respond? These are depicted in a diagram below:

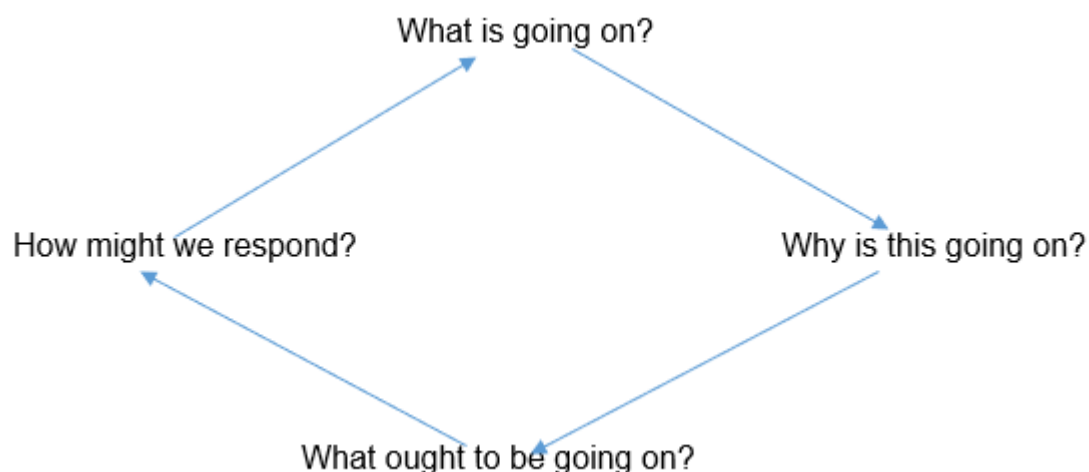


Figure 1.1: Osmer's core tasks of Practical Theological Interpretation (Osmer 2008:4)

According to this approach to practical theological interpretation, the first step when doing an empirical enquiry is to gather information about the situation to understand it better. The second

step is to interpret it based on the applicable theories. The third step is the normative task, which is using theological concepts and good practices to guide our response to the situation. The final step, then is to determine strategies to use to influence mechanisms toward the desirable situation (Osmer 2008:4). The same approach is adopted in doing this study.

The approach allows the use of empirical research and, according to Pieterse (2017:3), citing Schoeman *et al.* (2012:133), has the advantage of bridging sub-disciplines and the interpretation of interconnectedness of ministry. In this regard, the study attempted to bridge and connect two sub-disciplines of practical theology: faith formation and Christian education, and the two are discussed below.

1.2.1 Faith formation

Maddix, Kim and Estep Jr. (2020:35) define "faith as God's grace-induced and Spirit-empowered assent given in knowledge of, belief in, and trust in Jesus Christ." Therefore, faith formation refers to how faith, as defined above, is mediated and further developed. According to Osmer (2005:27), faith formation "has to do with the relationships, practices, narratives, and norms of the community's shared life." It must, however, be borne in mind that God initiates this faith as per Romans (10:17): "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." However, God uses human agents to preach His word.

Moreover, God assigns every person a measure of faith (Rom.12:3). Furthermore, God freely gives people a saving grace (Eph. 2:8). The Holy Spirit plays a catalytic function in the process (John 3:5; 16:8–9). In the children's ministry, volunteer workers/teachers work as agents that mediate this process by teaching children the Word of God.

Van Niekerk and Breed (2018:1), citing the work of Avenant (2015:65), articulate faith development as "an intentional process by which the faithful are guided to grow in their relationship with God and the accompanying change in lifestyle. It involves the development of the believer's identity and calling in Christ. It is also "Participating in God's work of grace in the believer's life, and this is a lifelong process." The volunteer workers/teachers intentionally preach and teach children the Word of God and model a Christian lifestyle to make them

disciples of Christ. They do this in keeping with what Apostle Paul instructed Timothy to do (2 Tim. 4:2; 5).

The above-stated position slightly differs from that of Estep and Kim (2009:3), who state that three assumptions underpin Christian faith formation; first, it is in part human, even though it is predominantly the work of the Holy Spirit. Second, both theology and social sciences influence it. However, theology takes precedence over social sciences, and third, the church's ministry can influence it. Concerning the first element, the researcher believes that it starts with God, who gives the word and commissions people to preach and teach it, and He also grants people the grace to assent. They rightly indicate that it has a human dimension since people mediate it. Again, people who listen to the message must assent to it as the Holy Spirit empowers them.

Concerning the second element, the researcher believes the Scripture should wholly inform it but may employ social sciences methods. He subscribes to the notion of Sola Scripture. The Sola Scripture concept implies that the Scripture is the ultimate authority and all other sources are subordinate to it (Long 2018:47). With the third element, the researcher believes that the ministry of the church does not influence faith formation; on the contrary, the church is the context of faith formation. The notion stance is supported by the Religious Education Curriculum Faith Formation Goals (N.d:134) of the Roman Catholic Church when it states that through faith formation, "It is hoped that children will develop a commitment to participate in the mission and ministry of Jesus, our saviour, living their Christian faith in the church community, for the kingdom of God (ethical living as Jesus' disciples)." Faith formation happens in the context of a faith community and is a lifelong enterprise.

Since the object of this study was to evaluate children's ministry in Pentecostal congregations, which includes their faith formation practices, it will inevitably look at how the children's ministry of the congregation influences or contributes to the faith formation of the children. Christian or religious education is inevitably part of faith formation and a sub-discipline of practical theology. The two are intertwined; one cannot have one without the other.

1.2.2 Christian education

Graendorf (1981:16) define Christian education in three aspects: descriptive, functional and intelligent. A descriptive aspect talks to it as being Bible-based, Holy Spirit-empowered, or Christ-centered and a teaching-learning process. The same seeks "to guide individuals at all levels of growth through contemporary teaching means toward knowing and experiencing God's purpose and plan through Christ in every aspect of living, and to equip them for effective ministry, and this led to the philosophic aspect which is the 'overall focus on Christ the Master Educator's Example and to Command to make Mature Disciples'." Christian education, like faith formation, is a process initiated by God using human agents through which He reveals Himself and whose goal is to draw people to Him. For example, in Deuteronomy (6:1 – 9), God reveals His commandments and statutes to the children of Israel and commands them to teach them to their children. Osmer (2005:27) says Christian education concerns itself with those practices that focus directly on teaching and learning.

According to Fasipe (2021:29), God is the first teacher who revealed Himself and taught the Patriarchs the law, and through this, He demonstrated His sufficiency and man's insufficiency without Him. He, in turn, commanded them to teach their children, who would also pass on the teachings to their children after them. God planned it to be a generational occurrence (Deut.6:2). The church took over this function in the New Testament as per Christ's commissioning His disciples (Mt. 28:20).

Osmer (2005:27) identifies three core tasks of the church's teaching ministry as:

1. Catechesis, which refers to handling Israel's Scripture and early Christian tradition;
2. Exhortation, moral formation, and education; and
3. Discernment, teaching the congregation how to understand the circumstances of their everyday life and world in terms of God's promised future for creation.

Considering those mentioned above, one may ask, what should the children's ministry teach? Osmer (2005:16) gives three things that should be the purpose of the teaching ministry of congregations, namely;

1. The teaching ministry seeks to help Christians better understand and participate in God's redemption of the world in Christ Jesus.

2. The teaching ministry seeks to help Christians grow in their relationship with the risen Lord and
3. The teaching ministry orients the Christian community members toward God's promised future for creation.

Fasipe (2021:38 – 39) concurs with both Graendorf and Osmer above when he says that children's ministry volunteer workers/teachers must teach the Scripture and use it as a foundational document to form the children's worldview. Furthermore, they should help the children to understand that the Bible is not just a story but God's plan for man's salvation. Therefore, their concern should be the children's salvation. Again, Fasipe (2021:40) supports Osmer's second purpose of the teaching ministry of congregations by saying that teachers of children's ministry and parents should work together to help the children grow spiritually using the Bible as the manual. Christian education's goal should be to nurture and disciple children to become adult members of the church of Christ. Fredericks (2019:40) says Christian education in the form of Sunday school (children's ministry) can provide opportunities for discipleship.

In conclusion, practical theology through faith formation and Christian education sub-disciplines should help children have a relationship with Christ and teach and nurture them until they become adult members of the congregations.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The study will first highlight the pastors' understanding or vision of children's ministry and their role in the congregation as part of the leadership. Pastors are the vision carriers of their congregations. They point and lead the way that a congregation has to take. They should have a broader vision for the entire congregation and specific ones for different ministries aligned to the broader vision or mission. It is, therefore, vital to establish their understanding and role regarding children's ministry.

Again, the study will bring the practices of children's ministries in Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung to the fore. It will further highlight the parents' understanding of their role in children's ministry. The researcher executed a literature study on the role of family/parents to understand

the role of family/parents in children's ministry. Through empirical work, parents would be allowed to have a say regarding their current role in children's ministry and how they would like to be involved in children's ministry going forward.

The study will also highlight the challenges confronting the children's ministry volunteer workers/teachers regarding their work, if any. It will allow the volunteer workers/teachers to voice out how they would like the congregations' leadership and parents to help them do their work more effectively and efficiently.

In conclusion, based on the findings from the empirical work, the study aims to ultimately make recommendations in terms of what could be done or improved concerning the practices of the children's ministry of the congregations. It would also propose a strategy for improving the children's ministry in Pentecostal congregations.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study's main objective was to determine how Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung understand and practice children's ministry. The main objective was divided into the following five sub-objectives:

- To determine the challenges faced by volunteer workers/teachers regarding children's ministry.
- To establish the practices or activities of children's ministry in Pentecostal congregations.
- To determine the understanding of the pastors regarding children's ministry.
- To determine the roles of parents and volunteer workers/teachers in children's ministry.
- To determine how children's ministry could be improved.

1.5 Research Problem

The challenges that Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung Township have include, among others, untrained personnel and inadequate and/or poor infrastructure. Coupled with these are the programs taught that are unsuitable for equipping the postmodern culture with the

necessary skills to defend their faith (Fredericks 2019:43). These all have a bearing on how the congregations practice children's ministry. Georgina (2020:30), concurring with this assertion, says, "The mere setting up of a children's ministry without requisite resources is not enough to ensure holistic child development." Furthermore, Moschella (2012:224) says there are gaps between theory and practice. Again, he says, "Even when people of faith attempt to do good, or to "practice what they preach," their practices, attitudes and actions, when studied closely, tend to reveal gaps between the group's stated theologies and its way of life." The study, therefore, seeks to determine what is going on in children's ministry in the Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung, more so given their apparent constraints.

Nel (2016:3) attributes the situation in Pentecostal congregations to three things: the historical origins of the Pentecostal movement. In terms of this, he posits that in South Africa (SA), the movement started among the poor and dispossessed. Second, the movement's sense of urgency in preaching the gospel. Citing Anderson (2007:47-72), he says the Pentecostals see the need to preach the gospel as urgent that preparation and training would waste their time. Third, the perception of the Pentecostals is that intellectualism suppresses the work of the Holy Spirit.

The same notions seem to be the underlying principles for appointing the children's ministry volunteer workers/teachers. There seems to be a belief among the Pentecostals that the two most essential things required to be a children's ministry teacher are a passion for teaching children the Word of God and that the Holy Spirit should have baptized the person. This challenge of untrained personnel and the lack of and/or poor infrastructure worsen the situation (Mans 2015:12; Felix 2015:40). For learning to occur, qualified personnel and suitable infrastructure play a critical role in creating a conducive learning environment. One factor contributing to nurturing faith and/or trust is a safe and comfortable environment where all can learn together (Brock 2001:373-375; Van Niekerk and Breed 2018:6). Adequate and suitable infrastructure contributes to such an environment.

1.6 Research Question

The research question for the study was: how do the Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung Township understand and practice their children's ministry?

This question was divided into the following five sub-questions:

1.6.1 Sub-question 1: Objective 1

What are the challenges of volunteer workers/teachers regarding children's ministry?

Sub-question 1 addresses objective 1.4.1. It is linked to Osmer's (2008:4) descriptive-empirical task. Its purpose is to establish what is going on. There are many challenges facing children's ministry. Some of the challenges besetting the ministry are discussed below.

As alluded to under 1.5 (p.12), children's ministry, often, lacks resources in the form of humans, materials and infrastructure. They also lack the support of the congregation's leadership. The volunteer workers/teachers are either not or poorly trained (Felix 2015:40; Mans 2015:12). Wade (2019:3) states an obvious fact that volunteer workers/teachers are often volunteers, and in most cases, many of them lack formal training in education and/or child development. This situation may inadvertently lead to children's traumatic experiences through physical or psychological abuse. It is critically important that people who work with children are well-trained in that regard.

Mans (2015:9) says his visit to various congregations and interactions with children's ministry leaders gave him the impression that congregations offer weak religious education programs to children. His experience, coupled with the challenges mentioned above, reinforces the perception held by many people that children's ministry is marginalized. Wade (2019:11 – 12) made a similar assertion by noting that local congregations value children's ministry less and do not prioritize it since congregations do not include children in their programs, services and workshops because they regard them as disruptive.

Sub-question 1 is responded to in chapters 2, 3, and 6 through a review of relevant literature, the normative and reflections by parents and volunteer workers/teachers, respectively.

1.6.2 Sub-question 2: Objective 2

What are the current practices or activities of the congregations regarding children's ministry?

The question is a sequel to the previous one. It also links to Osmer's (2008:4) task 1, the descriptive-empirical task, which responds to the question: what is going on? Its purpose is to determine the practices or activities that the Pentecostal children's ministry currently has. There is a consensus among scholars about the practices or activities of children's ministry. The most common ones are teaching and learning the Word of God through sermons (understanding of parables and metaphors), Bible study, Scripture memorization, and Evangelism. Children's ministry also celebrates church festivals such as Christmas, Easter, Holy Communion and dedication and baptisms, among others (Muller 2015:6; Felix 2015:33; Fredericks 2019:39; Wade 2019:27).

Sub-question 2 is further responded to in chapters 2, 4, 5 and 6 through a review of relevant literature, the normative, ecclesiology and ministry practices of the congregations and critical reflections on the findings regarding ministry practices, respectively.

1.6.3 Sub-question 3: Objective 3

What is the understanding of the pastors regarding children's ministry?

Sub-question 3 sought to establish an understanding of the pastors regarding children's ministry of their congregations. Sub-question 3 corresponds to objective 1.4.3. Again, it links with Osmer's (2008:4) second task, namely, the interpretive task and seeks to establish *why this is going on?* Moschella (2012:224) rightly says there are always gaps between theory and practice. Its purpose is two-pronged; first, it is to understand better what informs the practices of children's ministry among Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung. Second, it attempts to discover gaps between the understanding of the pastors and the current practices of the children's ministry. According to Osmer (2008:4), this task draws on theories of the arts and sciences to understand why things happen the way they happen. It will shed light on what is happening regarding children's ministry in congregations.

According to Osei (2019:21-22), the understanding of some of the pastors regarding children's ministry is based on Luke (2:52) that is, it "Exists to lead children to Christ and to bring them

up to grow mentally, physically, socially and spiritually to take up the mantle of leadership in the near future." They also believe that ministry should complement the parents' God-given responsibilities. They also believe that children like Timothy (2Tim. 3:15) should know the Scriptures from childhood.

Again, some pastors' understanding concerning volunteer workers/teachers seems to be that anybody can become a children's ministry's teacher. Irungu (2018:59), in her research on church leadership's support towards the performance of children's ministry in deliverance churches done in Nairobi, found that 47.4% of the children's ministry teachers had no minimum requirements for those joining the ministry. The reason for this was that recruitment into the ministry was based on God's calling, and as such, no educational requirements were necessary. The response succinctly captures the view of some pastors when it comes to children's ministry. However, they do acknowledge the need for teachers' development programs (Irungu 2018:59). The important thing is that congregations do not use the educational requirements to prevent people from serving in the ministry.

Interestingly, Fasipe (2021:53) found that children's ministry teachers understand their work as a calling. They give their time, skill and best effort to invest in the children's future, believing that teaching the children the biblical truth will impact their lives. According to Wade (2019:13), the understanding differs in different congregations; in some churches, the people (volunteer workers/teachers) choose to support the children's ministry using their experience, while in others, they are educationally and/or professionally trained to do the work. This understanding implies that others believe that as long as they have the experience of working with children, they can help by becoming children's ministry teachers. In contrast, others believe that even though they might have a calling, they need training before becoming involved in children's ministry.

One common understanding of both pastors and children's ministry volunteer workers/teachers is that teaching in children's ministry is a calling; hence, on the one hand, some pastors allow people to teach even before they can receive training in the ministry; on the other hand, some people volunteer their services using the experience obtained in other related fields.

Sub-question 3 is responded to in chapters 2, 6 and 7 through relevant literature review and respondents' reflections.

1.6.4 Sub-question 4: Objective 4

What should be the role of parents and volunteer workers/teachers in children's ministry?

Sub-question 4 aimed to address objective 1.4.4. It links with Osmer's (2008:4) normative task, which responds to the question: *what ought to be going on?* This task employs "theological concepts to interpret particular episodes, situations, or contexts." Below are some of the roles of parents and volunteer workers/teachers in children's ministry.

Parents should play a key role in preparing children for the children's ministry. According to Deuteronomy (6:6 – 9), parents should learn the Word of God and teach it to their children. One of the parents (7:033) in Schoeman's (2017:172) study says the role of a parent is "Reading the Bible, praying together (with the children) and making them aware of the faith—you know—just showing them stuff, showing them how the Lord is involved in our everyday lives, that is important." Children should have been taught the Christian faith by the time children attend children's ministry.

Again, parents should also train the children in how they should live (Pro. 22:6). Training involves teaching and demonstrating how to do something. In other words, parents should also model God's word on their children. In the same study by Schoeman (2017:172), in support of modelling Christian life to children, another parent (9:041) said, "Kids learn by example." On the other hand, Wade (2019:29) emphasizes the importance of the whole family context in faith formation and the development of children by saying, "Family is a cornerstone of development for children and often forms the basis for how they understand, how they should operate through their religious context within and beyond the household." Parents play a primary role in children's ministry as they are the first people to teach and train children in godliness before they can even learn about the children's ministry.

The volunteer workers/teachers derive their mandate from the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19 – 20). God also gave them spiritual gifts that they must use for the ministry of the gospel (Eph. 4:11 – 13) and the command to train a child in a way he/she should go (Pro. 22:6) and one that Paul gave to Timothy (1Tim. 4:12 – 13) concerning his ministry to the church.

The Great Commission mandates that volunteer workers/teachers evangelize to children. Wade (2019:12) says the implications of the evangelism messages should be for salvation

decisions, that is, a person hearing the message and deciding to dedicate her/his life to the teachings of Christ. Moreover, Wade (2019:12) says training a child in a way he/she should go involves but is not limited to the following steps: "Believing in Jesus' birth from a virgin, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, and then deciding to follow those beliefs (e.g., a decision for salvation or assurance of salvation)." On the other hand, Fasipe (2021:12) says that before children's ministry teachers can teach the children, they must first ingrain the Word of God in their hearts. They could do these by embedding their relationship with God by showing their love for Him and making His Word a priority in their lives even before teaching the children. Regarding spiritual gifts, teachers must minister by teaching the children God's Word. The goal of their ministry should be to make children the disciples of Christ.

Sub-question 4 is addressed through the relevant literature review in Chapter 2, the normative in Chapter 4, observations made during visits to the congregations regarding children's ministry practices in Chapter 5, and reflections by parents and volunteer workers/teachers in chapter 6 and recommendations and proposed strategy for Pentecostal's children's ministry in chapter 7.

1.6.5 Sub-question 5: Objective 5

What would be the requirements for an effective children's ministry?

This question links with Osmer's (2008:4) fourth task, which is the pragmatic task that seeks to determine how we might respond. It also seeks to address objective 1.4.5. Moreover, according to Osmer (2008:4), this task helps us respond in a way that positively influences the situation. Some of the requirements for effective children's ministry are discussed below.

One of the first requirements for an effective children's ministry should be a change in children's behaviour. For example, Maphalla (2020:64) found that in the Early Childhood Development Centre where a congregation uses it to reach the community with the gospel using children who attend its ECD centre when the pastor visits those families and asks them what difference they noticed in terms of the behaviour of their children since attending their ECD, the parents responded that the children have learned to pray and now ask them to pray before they eat or sleep.

Again, according to Atta (2017:1), one of the requirements of an effective children's ministry is contributing to the church's external and internal growth. Regarding external growth, children's ministry should take part by planning activities that help spread the gospel. Internal growth refers to the church's biological growth whereby children are taught about Christ and are challenged to respond to His gospel as their personal saviour and Lord and, after that, become His disciples.

Another requirement relates to the internal growth of the church. Iringu (2018:12) posits that children's ministry should involve the children in other ministries of the church, such as praise and worship, intercession and reading of the Word. She says this develops a sense of responsibility among the children. Osei (2019:41; 43) attests to the children's ministry's contribution to church growth. In his study, 65% and 80% of the respondents believe that the children's ministry contributed about 60% and 75% to the numerical growth of the church membership and the Youth, Evangelism, and Music ministries, respectively.

All those mentioned above are important markers of the requirements for an effective children's ministry. Sub-question 5 is further responded to in chapters 2, 4, 6, and 7 through a review of relevant literature study, the normative and reflections by parents and volunteer workers/teachers, and recommendations and proposed strategy for Pentecostal's children's ministry, respectively.

1.7 Context of Children in Mangaung Township

Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, where Mangaung Township is situated, is a Category A municipality. A category A Municipality has exclusive executive and legislative authority in its area (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996: Establishment of municipalities¹⁵⁵). The Metro is situated in the Free State Province, which is in the centre of South Africa. The Free State shares a border with five provinces: Gauteng, the Eastern Cape, the Northern Cape, KwaZulu Natal and North-West, and the neighbouring country of Lesotho (Stats SA, 2011).

According to the Mangaung Metropolitan Free State Profile and Analysis District Development Model (N.d:10 – 13), citing Stats SA (2016) census in 2019, Mangaung Metro had a total population of 861 651. According to the same source, the median age was 25, which is like

that of the country. Again, the largest category of the population was between the ages of 25 – 44 (31.8%). The next category is young children (0 – 14 years), with a total share of 25.6%. The same source claims that during the same period, the average household size was 3.1, which was lower than the national average. Furthermore, it claimed that 41.4% of households were headed by women, with men heading 59%. Young people under 15 years old were heading 1 418 homes. Moreover, regarding health, HIV/AIDS was the leading cause of death in the Metro. However, for children below five years of age, the leading causes of death were preterm birth complications (13.8%), lower respiratory infections (13.3%), and diarrheal diseases (11%). Furthermore, in terms of poverty dimensions, poverty was high in Mangaung Metro.

Regarding the poverty dimension, Mangaung Metropolitan, the Free State Profile and Analysis District Development Model (N.d:10 – 13) indicated that a total of 315 427 (36.6%) people were living in the lower poverty line in 2016. Lower poverty line households refer to "Those households whose total expenditure is close to the food poverty line live on "survival foods" and therefore, sacrifice some basic food needs in order to meet their non-food requirements" (Stats SA 2021:11). The situation is worrisome and warrants serious attention from all concerned and have a direct bearing on crime and other social disorders that the Municipality is currently experiencing.

In conclusion, children in Mangaung Township are the second largest population group (25.6%), making them the most critical category. Their percentage is significant to warrant the church to pay special attention to them and invest in children's ministry to reach them. These statistics also highlight three crucial factors, namely, a high number of households headed by females (41.4%) of the total Mangaung population, a high number of child-headed households (1 418), and households (36.6%) that are living below the poverty line. These factors can, to some extent, contribute to a high level of HIV/AIDS and its resultant deaths, the cause of child mortality below the age of five and high crime levels. The impact of these and other challenges affects children the most (Verster and Ngesi 2019:153). Moreover, according to the Mangaung Metropolitan Free State Profile and Analysis District Development Model (N.d:19), the Municipality is among the top three in the national top 30 police stations infested by crimes such as burglary, arson, and vehicle and stock theft, among others. One may ask, are the practices of the children's ministry among the Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung

Township aimed at addressing the challenges that children in the Mangaung Township context face?

1.8 Clarification of Main Concepts used in the Study

This section briefly explains the main concepts used in this study. They are explained based on how they are used in this context. Clarification is made to avoid misunderstanding since they could be used to mean other things in different contexts. The focus is mainly on the recurring concepts. The following concepts are defined and clarified: children's ministry, faith formation, Christian education, children, teachers/volunteer workers and Pentecostals.

Children's ministry: This refers to the ministry undertaken by congregations for the children. This ministry involves several groups of people that include the children, parents, volunteers, and other members of the congregation who work together as a team (Fredericks 2019:45). It was formerly known as Sunday school or children's church. In some quarters, it is still referred to by those names. Sometimes, these names are used interchangeably. In terms of this ministry, it is assumed that by having children participating in the congregation's shared life, their faith would be formed in the process (Brock 2001:371). The goal of this ministry is to form children's faith, just like all believers, to become Christ's disciples who strive to be like Christ (Fredericks 2019:44).

Faith formation: According to Muller (2015:6), faith formation is a process whereby children come to know God by being formed and transformed to know, love and serve God. It is about nurturing children's relationship with God (Roberto and Pfiffner 2007:4). It is a hoped-for outcome as the children are taught about God since it is fundamentally the work of the Holy Spirit. The process of teaching and nurturing children influences them both consciously and subconsciously; however, the work of convicting them to the extent that they come to the saving grace of Christ is done by the Holy Spirit.

Christian education: It is an agency of the church that concerns itself with practices that focus directly on teaching and learning. It is both Bible-based and Christ-centred.

Children: According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child UNICEF (1989:2), a child refers to every person under the age of 18 years. The South African

Constitution also defines a child in the same way. The definition is broad and encompasses different categories of children, for example, infants, toddlers, young children and adolescents, as well as teenagers (Fowler and Dell 2004:37 – 42; Batra 2013:255 – 258). In this context, children refer to the people who are between toddlerhood and adolescence. In terms of ages, they are from two to 12 years old. The age range is selected because it is critical in children's cognitive development and many congregations cater to them in the context of children's ministry.

Volunteer worker/teacher: In respect of children's ministry, a volunteer worker/teacher is a person who "assists in a child's cognitive, social, and of course, spiritual development" (Warren 2018:2). According to the same author this person's role is not limited to presenting lessons each Sunday, but it is instead the development of children. Moreover, she/he is doing this free of charge as she/he is not part of the congregation's paid staff. In many congregations, they are referred to as Sunday school or children's church teachers.

Pentecostals: In the main, there are two types of Pentecostals, namely, classical and independent Pentecostals. There are also other Pentecostals that include, among others, mega-churches. Classical Pentecostals (Verster and Ngesi 2019:157), such as Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), Assemblies of God, and Full Gospel, have their origins at the beginning of the 20th century, and they operate as denominations. In contrast, independent ones are the ones that came out of those. Independent Pentecostals operate independently of denominations. They run autonomously, with their pastors being their heads and not reporting to any higher body.

There is no single definition for Pentecostalism. There are, therefore, other types of Pentecostals depending on how one defines Pentecostalism. For example, Anderson (2020:121 – 122) categorizes Pentecostalism into four generally accepted groups by scholars, namely;

1. "Classical" Pentecostals with origins near the beginning of the 20th century and
2. Independent Pentecostal churches from the same era, especially those in Africa and Asia.

3. "Charismatics" in older churches from the 1960s onwards, of which Roman Catholic Charismatics are as numerous as classical Pentecostals.
4. Independent Charismatic mega-churches and "Neocharismatics" that commenced in the mid-1970s often promote the "prosperity gospel," which is the most controversial globally. Some of these are prominent in financial and sexual scandals. Nevertheless, many of these churches also have a significant role to play in their members' and communities' social development (2020:121 – 122).

Bangura (2016:2), citing Asamoah-Gyadu (2013:166), attempts to define Charismatics as "Bible-believing and Holy Ghost-anointed churches who do not compromise on the divinity and sacredness of the Bible." This definition is equally applicable to Pentecostals. Moreover, as can be deduced from the myriad definitions above, it is not easy to draw a clear distinction between Pentecostals and Charismatics. However, Clark, Lederle, *et al.* (1989:17) give us standard features of Pentecostal doctrines held by all Pentecostals everywhere in the world. These are as follows:

- That Jesus Christ can/should be personally encountered as the saviour of the sincerely repentant sinner, resulting in regeneration to a transformed life.
- To every believer, there is an experience of God's Spirit available according to the pattern of Spirit baptism found in the history of the first-century church in Acts.
- The power of God is revealed today in the lives of individuals and communities as it was in the early Christian communities.
- A sincere attitude of praise and worship should mark the individual believer's life and the whole group's liturgy.
- The regenerate is obliged to reveal a distinctively Christian lifestyle based on the discipleship of Jesus.
- The goal of the individual believer, the local church, and the larger Pentecostal community is to further the mission of Jesus.
- Jesus is coming again to judge the world and to renew creation apocalyptically.

Given the difficult challenge of distinguishing between different types of Pentecostals, in this study, the term Pentecostal(s) only refers to classical and independent Pentecostals.

1.9 Ethical Considerations

The researcher has followed all the ethical guidelines of the University of the Free State. The South African Church Life research project herein this study referred to as the National Church Life Survey (NCLS), obtained ethical clearance. Its approval number is UFS-HSD2018/1075, while the children's ministry of Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung Township obtained ethical clearance under the other version of *The South African Church Life research project* whose ethical clearance number is UFS-HSD2022/1629/22.

1.10 Conclusion

Chapter 1 served as an introduction to the study. It gave background to the study and the factors that motivated it. The importance of children's ministry in the faith formation of children cannot be overemphasized. Children represent the future of any congregation, society or community and nation even though, in most cases, they are taken for granted or shunned. Jesus used them as models of faith. Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung Township are faced with many challenges, including a lack of infrastructure and trained personnel, among others. These play a pivotal role in effective children's ministry. In view of the challenges that these congregations face, the study sought to establish how the Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung Township understand and practice their children's ministry. Generally, the chapter laid out the structure that the study would take. It follows Osmer's (2008:4) four tasks of practical theological interpretation, namely, (1) what is going on? (2) Why is this going on? (3) What ought to be going on? And (4) how might we respond? Now, attention turns to the second chapter of the study, namely, a review of relevant literature regarding children's ministry.

CHAPTER 2

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

While Chapter 1 focuses on the background of the study and the shape that it took going forward, chapter 2 reviews relevant literature on practices of children's ministry that congregations employ and the faith formation of the children in general. The chapter surveys children's ministry environment. It is aligned to Osmer's (2008:4) task 2, that is, the interpretive task to respond to the question, *why is this going on?* Task 2 is about the formulation of a theoretical framework. Different role players in children's ministry comprise parents/family, the church, teachers/volunteer workers, pastors and the children (Rains 2019:19). Each of them understands children's ministry differently and has different expectations about other role players. For example, some pastors believe that anybody can become a children's ministry teacher.

In contrast, others believe that it is a calling. Therefore, they do not see a need to have minimum requirements for those who would like to do the work (Irungu 2018:59). Even if there is a common understanding between or among different role players regarding what needs to be done in children's ministry however, Moschella (2012:224) says there are always gaps between theory and practice. The chapter gives a better understanding of where the gaps are and what causes them.

Again, children's ministry is part of Christian education that focuses on teaching children the Word of God, and according to Osmer (2005:62), there are four frames of the teaching ministry of congregations. These are the practices frame, the curriculum frame, the leadership frame and the pilgrimage frame. This study is moulded in the practice frame. The practices frame refers to the religious practices of congregations. Furthermore, Osmer (2005:62) says this frame "brings into focus the ways a congregation is a community sharing a way of life embodied in its practices, which mediate both the traditions of the past and the contextual challenges of the present...." He further defines religious practices as follows: "Religious practices are socially shared, tradition-bearing activities that embody an interpretation of the ultimate context

of existence and have sufficient depth to forge a shared sense of identity among a community's members and shape the character of individual participants" (Osmer 2005:91 – 92).

Moreover, Osmer (2005:92) highlights four critical characteristics of religious practices that are central to this frame, namely, (1) tradition bearing—they are of patterned routine with specific roles assigned to those who participate in them, (2) socially shared activities that build up a common sense of identity—the focus is more on religious community activities as opposed to actions of individuals, (3) character shaping—the goal of the activities is to form the faith of those who participate in them, and (4) embody an interpretation of the ultimate context of existence—this refers to how the congregations understand themselves in terms of who they are, where they come from and where they are going, that is, the reason for their existence. These characteristics are going to be looked into through the lenses of the relevant literature.

Chapter two, first, starts with the history of children's ministry. Second, it surveys the current situation of Christian education in South Africa. Third, the focus is on the void in Christian education left by schools, the vacuum created by the lack of involvement by parents in the faith formation of their children, and the challenges children face outside their homes. Fourth, the focus then turns to theological perspectives regarding the importance of children's ministry. In this regard, the discussion is on the following perspectives: children as part of God's plan for humanity, childhood as a critical stage of laying the foundation of life, children's ministry as being taken for granted by congregations, and children being the most critical group in a congregation. The discussion then zooms on the role of different stakeholders in children's ministry; these include parents/family, pastors, the local congregation, volunteer workers/teachers and children. Lastly, the discussions are on the perspectives of some Christian traditions regarding children's ministry practices, and the chapter closes with a conclusion.

2.2 History of Children's Ministry

Whatever form of religious education there is, is as old as Christianity itself (Vieth 1960:19). According to Fredericks (2019:40), children's ministry began in the late 1700s. He says, "Jewish children from infancy were taught to obey their parents, to respect the elderly, to obey the precepts and ordinances of the Law, and to reverence sacred things and places." Later,

Jesus Christ commanded His disciples to preach the gospel and teach those who believed (Mt. 28:20). In Acts (2:42), the early church disciples continually met for instruction in Scriptures, fellowship and prayers. Blaising (1994:22) says that in the late second century, "the church developed new forms (or new expressions of old forms) of ministry, worship, and instruction. The goal was a massive reeducation in religion resulting in pure faith and godly life in Jesus Christ." The implication for congregations is that they must teach their members to live in a manner commensurate with their beliefs.

Sunday school, which was a precursor to children's ministry, was started in 1780 by a Christian layman known as Robert Raikes in Gloucester, England (Vieth 1960:21; Oliver 2006:119 – 120; Espinosa 2011:3). This assertion supports the claim by Fredericks above. Raikes' primary purpose was to address poverty and teach underprivileged children primary education that included religion. The church later adopted the Sunday school approach as an evangelistic tool. It maintained this form throughout its early history (Vieth 1960:25). The church later institutionalized it. That resulted in relegating it to the province of women, thus devaluing it due to the prevalent culture at the time (Gillespie 1987:45). At the time, both the church and society did not hold women in high esteem in society.

Even though there is consensus among scholars that Christian education started in the 1700s, Mans (2015:12) however, posits that Christian education, a precursor to Sunday School, dates back to the first century. The assertion by Mans regarding the beginning of Christian education supports the claim made by Vieth (1960:19) above that Christian education is as old as Christianity itself. Their argument makes sense in that whatever Christian practice one does has educational value. The difference could be whether the lesson from that particular practice is formal or informal.

Notwithstanding the above debate about when Christian education started, Oliver (2006:120), citing Greyling (1965:18), says that in South Africa, it arrived in Pietermaritzburg in 1841. Oliver (2006:121 and Vieth (1960:25), both citing De Villiers (1957:261), claim that the purpose of Christian education was to prepare children for the catechism class. The two complemented each other. The target group for Sunday school was young children aged six to 14, who would later move to catechism class. Sunday school classes and church services were held at different times, and as a result, children attended both (Greyling 1965:20, 21), as cited by Oliver

(2006:121). Parents and schools also played a pivotal role in building the children's faith, with parents laying the foundation at home and school as building blocks (Oliver 2006:121). Each stakeholder had to play their part for the system to function correctly.

Yust *et al.* (N.d:17), citing Lynn and Wright (1971:14 – 15) says, although the Sunday school movement started as a response to poverty, however, as it spread, it changed its focus to solely religious instruction. This shift in focus happened even when it was taught in schools. The same sentiment is echoed by Oliver (2006:121) when she says, "Thus, for the past two hundred years, children's religious education.....has been attentive to moralistic religious instruction than social justice." It is, therefore, essential to note that as it shifted its focus in the process, it lost a key characteristic feature, namely, the social justice element. Even today that critical element is still missing, and there is a need to incorporate it back.

Recently, with the advent of democracy in SA, Christian education seemed to have suffered a blow when the Democratic Government took over and shifted the responsibility to the church and congregations, as well as parents. It is, however, still taught in private Christian schools even though the social justice element part of it still seems to need to be added. The shifting of religious education in schools to the church and congregations and the parents created a vacuum concerning teaching children the Word of God, who mainly relied on the schools for Christian instruction. This vacuum will remain in place given that some parents cannot do what the schools did: teach children the Word of God. Oliver (2006:124) says, "For the first time, many Christians recognized the enormous task that schools had, that of providing spiritual education and training on behalf of parents, the church and the Christian state." Parents and, to some extent, congregations had been relying on schools to assist them in this regard.

Today, the same problems that prompted the formation of Sunday school are still present, if not intensified. Currently, on the one hand, the following challenges are facing children: famine, child labour, prostitution and many other social ills and diseases such as HIV/AIDS, the disintegration of family structures, joblessness (parents), abuse, rape, crime and poverty (Mans 2015:6; Yust *et al.* N.d:17). Again, Yust *et al.* (N.d:17) citing Couture (2007:3) say 30 000 children die daily from preventable diseases such as malnutrition and diarrhoea. They emphasize the need for the spiritual formation of children to pay attention to these social justice issues. Furthermore, they say, "If our gospel is not good news to the poor, it is not the good

news of Jesus. So those in need must be of special importance in our communities and our (faith) formation of young people." The gospel should be good news in all areas of life, not only on the spiritual front.

On the other hand, children are in danger of growing up not having the 'real Christian faith'. The danger is due to parents abdicating their responsibility due to the dictates of the modern culture by letting the so-called experts teach their children (Hazel 2019:26). Several advanced factors in this regard include parents' busy schedules or lack of know-how, to name but a few. While these may, to some extent, be true, they do not absolve parents from performing their responsibility.

In conclusion, though Sunday school started as a response to poverty, teaching underprivileged children primary education that included religion, the movement lost focus when the church took over. It then used it as an evangelistic tool and further relegated it to the province of women. The act could be seen as a downgrade because women were not given prominent positions in the church and society by then. Again, it would seem that once the gospel is divorced from its broader mandate and becomes a preserve of the few, it loses direction and impact.

Again, later on, it was no longer used as an evangelistic tool. Its focus was now on the children of the members of the church. One of its aims was to develop children's knowledge of the Word of God (Schoeman 2017:97). It thus lost the drive or zeal for the total emancipation of underprivileged children and reaching out to the lost with the gospel. There is now a pressing need for children's ministry to trace back its roots.

The researcher believes that the challenges that prompted its founder to start it have now more than doubled. Even though other organizations are involved in children's ministries of one form or another, congregations through children's ministry are well placed to do this since they are different from those organizations. Maphalla (2020:70), in his study of the role of Mangaung congregations in Early Childhood Development (ECD), found that in addition to the services that the ECDs rendered, they also integrated Christian values in whatever they were doing as well as reaching the community with the gospel. There is a desperate need for this now more than before.

2.3 The Current Situation in SA Regarding Christian Education

This section discusses the developments in Christian education before the advent of democracy and the new National Policy on Religion and Education. It also discusses the void left by the abolishment of Christian education at schools and a vacuum created by parents as a result of not fulfilling their role in the faith formation of their children and the challenges that Christian children and children face outside the home.

2.3.1 National Christian Education Policy Framework

Prior to 1994, the government of the day adopted a policy of Christian National Education (Dreyer 2006:41). On the one hand, the schools used "a biblical-confessional approach to the teaching of all school subjects, but specifically to biblical faith or confessional education (education into faith, not just about faith, as in comparative religious instruction), and again on the other hand, Christian religious observance during the normal school day.." (Van der Walt and Nagy 2019:2). The government did this because it did not distinguish between itself and the church. Moreover, Dreyer (2006:41), citing Chidester (2003), says, "This was even more so because the state embraced and promoted Calvinism confessionalism and triumphalism that required pupils to prescribe to religious convictions that explicitly denigrated adherents to other religions." Teachers and learners had no option but to comply, irrespective of their religious convictions or beliefs.

The new democratic dispensation brought about a new approach to religious education with the introduction of the National Policy on Religion and Education (2003), which is in line with the Constitution of the country (Dreyer 2006:43). It banned religious education in public schools leaving private schools to decide for themselves. The new policy distinguished between teaching about religion and religious instruction and religious nurture. On the one hand, teaching about religion has been deemed the responsibility of public education. In other words, the responsibility of teaching religion resides with public schools. On the other hand, religious instruction and nurture are to be provided by the home, family and church. Ironically, this is what the Bible commanded or required them to do in the first place.

The policy has the following specific aims and guiding principles:

To enhance the constitutional values of citizenship, human rights, equality, freedom from discrimination, freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion to develop holistically (that is, intellectually, physically, socially, and spiritually). To enhance knowledge, skills and values necessary for enriching learners, interpersonal relationships and an open and democratic society. The different responsibilities concerning the teaching about and of religion, the contribution of religious education to integration and unity in diversity, and the importance of a professional approach to teaching religion (professional teachers, appropriate and credible teaching and learning materials, and objective assessment criteria) (Dreyer 2006:43; Louw 2014:178 – 179).

In a nutshell, it aims to effect the Bill of Rights in a school environment and treat the children and their religions equally (Dreyer 2006:49 – 50). The new policy implies that the state is impartial towards religion, which raises some practical theological challenges to the church, which, to some extent, has been relying on schools to help it. These include the challenge of learning to respect and participate in a pluralistic society. Furthermore, most importantly, it prepares children to live in a pluralistic society. Van der Walt and Nagy (2019:7), citing Prins (2019:20), posit that there is a perception that the abolishment of confessional religion-based values might have been the cause of moral degradation that South Africa is experiencing at the moment. However, they quickly admit that more needs to be done to establish facts in this regard.

In conclusion, parents and the church should see the new policy positively because it reminds them of their God-given mandate. They should now stand up and do what they are required to do since the state would no longer do it for them. Instead, it is exposing their children to other religions. Consequently, this can leave the children ill-equipped and exposed to many challenges without ammunition to deal with them. The current South African religious education, as a result of the new policy, has created some vacuum in certain areas in an attempt to correct the mistakes made by the past regime.

2.3.2 The void in Christian education

As highlighted above, schools did the second stage of the process of children's ministry, in which principals ensured that it happened. Moreover, preachers would visit schools occasionally to teach the children (Oliver 2006:119). Furthermore, citing Venter Weilbach and Du Plessis (1929:8; 1882:24), Oliver says parents would prepare children for instructions at school while the school, in turn, would prepare children for instruction by the preachers. Children had to confess their faith openly. However, the situation has changed as schools, particularly public schools, no longer offer religious education to children. If parents are not teaching their children the Word of God, this responsibility falls squarely on the church's shoulders. The church has a responsibility to teach the parents and equip them to fulfil this responsibility. Without the church's help most parents will not be able to do it alone. This situation increases the churches' burden even more.

What makes this void even more evident is the myriad of challenges that schools are grappling with, including lack of discipline among children, lack of respect for authority, and Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (see 2.3.4 below), among others. These things support the perception of moral degeneration that Van der Walt and Nagy (2019:7) referred to earlier.

2.3.3 Vacuum created by parents

According to Oliver (2006:118), the goal of the religious education system employed in South Africa in the past was to teach the children the Bible, thereby preparing them to become members of the church and state and accumulate knowledge that would help form their religious personalities. The process had three stages. The first stage was supposed to be done by the parents at home. The parents were supposed to practice daily worship by teaching their children the Bible and helping them learn its stories. They were also supposed to take their children to church on Sundays and explain the preaching later in the evening.

The situation later changed partly because of the dictates of the modern culture and, to some extent, the busy lives that parents lead and the lack of know-how. Parents have shifted their responsibility to the so-called experts. Hazel (2019:26) says, "Before the invention of teacher certifications and doctorate degrees, parents were responsible for passing on the knowledge

of God and leading their children to become adults that live holy lives as commanded by God." Parents are now relying more and more on external help even though God had commanded them to teach their children (Deut. 6:6 – 7). This act burdened the teachers with limited time concerning the work they needed to cover.

Rueckert (2012:1) supports the view mentioned above when he says some parents bring their children to children's ministry "out of the desire to learn about the faith or out of expectations from their parents or because they had to do it when they were their children's age." He quips that notwithstanding these reasons, it would seem that they do not put any effort into teaching their children faith on their own. Instead, they expect the church to do it for them. Ironically, according to Schoeman (2017:86), citing Barna (2003), 85% of parents believe it is their principal duty to form their children's faith. However, two out of three do not do it; instead, they delegate that responsibility to the church. There might be parents who do not only acknowledge that responsibility but are also doing it. However, the question is: are they doing it consistently?

Brown (2014:47) claims that parents start well with ideal intentions but struggle to maintain measurable engagement as the children grow older than when they were young. There is a need for this engagement to continue because God commanded parents to raise children according to His ways. Even though the local congregation is crucial in this regard, the parents are central to the process (Barna 2003:16). The author further says, "Gaining a proper perspective on the partnership between parents and church in the mutual effort to raise God-loving and God-fearing children is paramount." Parents cannot afford to relegate their responsibility to the local congregation; instead, they must partner with it. Both parties need help to do it successfully.

2.3.4 Challenges that Christian children and children in general face

The absence or lack of Christian education in schools has opened numerous challenges regarding the Christian faith, especially regarding children's ministry. Children are taught that all religions are equal and that everyone is free to choose what he/she believes. At school, some children start to hear about other religions for the first time, some of which might even sound appealing to them. There is also a challenge of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. According to Smith (N.d:47), Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is about "inculcating a moralistic approach to

life. It believes that central to living a good and happy life is being a good moral person. That means being nice, kind, pleasant, respectful, and responsible; working on self-improvement; taking care of one's health; and doing one's best to be successful." It is self-driven and self-gratifying.

Again, according to Cunningham (2023:30), Moralistic Therapeutic Deism "serves as a self-focused compilation of secular philosophy, politics, culture, and spirituality flavoured with fragments from popular religions." Gieseke (2012:6) identifies it as a *de facto* creed where "believers get to enjoy whatever particulars of their faith heritages that appeal to them while also reaping the benefits of this shared, harmonizing, interfaith religion." Its main focus is on the self more than anything else.

The main problem with Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is that, by its nature, it relegates faith to the back seat by advocating moral values at the expense of the power of grace. This phenomenon also manifests itself in the following forms: children no longer know what genuine faith or religion is, regarding it as a nice thing to have; choosing what they like about their religion and at the same time discarding what they do not like about it (Dean 2010(b):33; Zscheile 2012:3; Maphalla 2020:81). It is an end in itself, instead of leading people to God.

Another challenge that children from Christian families face concerns defending their faith. The study by Gieseke (2012:1) found, among others, that teenagers need to be equipped to speak about their faith confidently and that they cannot explain what they believe and how that fits into their daily lives. The researcher believes that things did not start there with these teenagers. There is a high probability that they needed more proper grounding in their childhood years regarding their religious faith. Mans (2015:6) and Yust *et al.* (N.d:17) have eloquently enumerated some of the children's general challenges. They include child labour, prostitution, abuse, rape, crime, poverty, etc.

In conclusion, before the advent of democracy, the government played a significant role in teaching children the Word of God through the National Christian Education Policy. The situation changed when the democratic government introduced a new National Policy on education and religion. According to this Policy, public schools are no longer supposed to teach religious instruction; instead, parents and congregations are responsible. This policy change created a void for those who relied on schools to teach children the Word of God.

Notwithstanding this, Christian children and children, in general, are faced with more challenges than those that prompted the formation of Sunday school. The family and the church should now take the responsibility for their children's faith formation more seriously than before.

2.4 Theological Perspectives Regarding the Importance of Children's Ministry

This section presents a case regarding the importance of children's ministry. Why does children's ministry matter that much to warrant its ministry since children are an integral part of every society, congregation and family? Furthermore, if they are an integral part of society in every respect, why pay particular attention to them? The section thus focuses on theological perspectives regarding the importance of children's ministry. These include;

1. Children are part of God's plan for humanity and the church,
2. Habits are formed and the foundation of life laid during this critical stage of childhood,
3. Children's ministry is usually taken for granted by congregations and
4. Children are an essential group in a congregation. These are discussed below.

2.4.1 Children are part of God's plan for humanity and the church

First, children have always been part of God's plan for humanity. After God created Adam and Eve, He blessed them and commanded them to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:26), implying that they must have children, among others. When He was about to destroy the first earth with water, He saved Noah and his children (Gen. 7:1). Later, God called Abram and made a covenant with him in which He included his children (Gen. 17:7 – 9). Again, when He instituted the Passover, children were part of the Passover meal (Ex. 12:3).

In the context of this study, the main reason for having a children's ministry is because God commanded His people, Israel, to teach their children His commandments (Deut. 6:4). The primary reason was that children should know and revere God. Children of Israel made memorials that served as reminders and lessons to the generations to come of the mighty hand of God upon them in their journey from Egypt to the land of Canaan. For example, the 12 stones that Joshua commanded the children of Israel to take from the midst of Jordan, where

the water cut off before the ark of the Lord (Jos. 4:6 – 7). There is an obligation on the part of congregations to ensure that children, just like everybody else, are taught the Word of God.

Second, children are a heritage from God (Ps. 127:3). Like any precious gift received from God, they have to be cherished and nurtured. These gifts place an obligation on every parent or guardian whom God has made steward unto the children placed under her/his care that as a responsible and faithful steward, she/he must raise them as is expected of them. The birth of Samson is a typical example. Before he was born, an angel appeared to her mother, telling her how to conduct herself since she would have a child and how to raise that child after he was born (Judg.13:3 – 5). The case clearly shows how God is concerned about children even before birth.

Third, Jesus the Master Himself warns against despising little children, saying their angels behold the face of God in heaven. Again, He taught about imitating children and even warned the people that if they do not repent and become like children in their conduct, they will never enter the kingdom of God. Moreover, He said anyone who receives a child in His name is akin to receiving Him (Mt. 18:2 – 6; 10). These are powerful words that cannot be taken for granted if we are serious about obeying the Word of God. To further demonstrate His love and appreciation for children, Jesus rebuked those who chased the children away from Him. He took them in His arms, laid His hands on them and blessed them (Mark 10:16). Nel (2018:62) says what Jesus said and did "helps us to understand how the triune God feels and thinks about children...." It is a clear demonstration of God's love for children.

Furthermore, in the New Testament, we see children continuing to be part of the family and church worship services. The disciples met together in their homes to break bread (Acts 2:46). When the Philippian jailer believed. He was baptized together with his family (Acts 16:33). The disciples had fellowship and prayers together with all family members and children (Acts 21:5).

All these mentioned above indicate that children have been and will always be part of God's plan for humanity and are integral to families, communities and faith communities. Therefore they should not only be seen but taken note of as bonafide members of the congregation and community. Accepting this implies that both parents and congregations should take care of and ensure that they prepare for children in advance.

2.4.2 Childhood is a critical stage of life

On the one hand, Fowler (1981:n.p) and Fowler and Dell (2004:36 – 38) mention and delve into specific faith development stages in children. However, those specific faith development stages are not the focus of this study. On the other hand, Barna (2003:521) stresses the importance of the childhood stage in general. He says it is a critical stage in life where a godly foundation must be laid in children's lives because the enemy also targets it. Again, he says, "Childhood is, indeed, a period of life with a special aptitude for learning: but it is caught in webs of sin that are not of its design, webs that today trap children in patterns of violence, consumerism, premature achievement-to-please, sexual commodification, genetic manipulation, and abandonment in the quest for adult fulfilment." He further quips that first, there must be an acknowledgement by the congregations that children are at risk, and second, congregations must focus on dealing with it through schooling patterns. These above-stated facts point to the fact that children are in a crumbling culture and moral and spiritual reconstruction is urgently needed if hope is to be restored (Harding 2008:1). Children's ministry is the right vehicle for restoring that hope by addressing and mitigating these threats or risks.

As evidenced by developmental theories, children, like any human being, constantly grow emotionally, mentally, socially, morally and spiritually. This growth implies that children exhibit potential to be influenced in many ways. Osmer (2000:511), citing Erasmus (ibid), reckons that children have the potential to be swayed in any direction when he says, "Handle the wax whilst it is soft, mould the clay whilst it is moist, dye the fleece before it gets stains." Again, citing the same source, he says, "Nature may be strong, yet education is more powerful." The latter statement demonstrates the essential role that education, specifically Christian instruction done by children's ministry, can play in children's lives.

Espinoza (2014:10) says Christian educators should realize that spiritual growth cannot be separated from other dimensions of growth. Accordingly, Christian educators must keep abreast of developments in terms of the spiritual needs of children as they grow. As children grow and learn, it is imperative to note that this exposes them to inherent risks. One of the risks is related to their readiness to learn. Osmer (2000:517) claims that children are caught in the web of sin. They, therefore, need more than family nurture to help them navigate this; they also

need religious education that appeals to them based on their unfolding experience. They should not be left to their own devices.

According to Fredericks (2019:40), there are several reasons why children's minds need to be influenced; these include but are not limited to the following:

Young children are both teachable and impressionable before reaching the preteen years. Children and preteens should be prepared for adolescence and young adulthood, and children and preteens have a greater likelihood of becoming Christians during this stage.

Therefore if children are not influenced by the Word of God at the right time, that would leave them exposed to be influenced by other things which might lead them astray. Moreover, it would later be difficult to try to influence them with the Word of God since they would have passed the teachable and impressionable stage.

2.4.3 Children's ministry is taken for granted by congregations

Children's ministry plays a pivotal role in a congregation that is often overlooked or taken for granted, even though some parents are brought to church by children. As mentioned earlier, some parents bring their children to church to learn about their faith, among other things. The researcher is of the view that some of these parents would not even attend church services if it were not because of their children. Some parents fear that if their children do not attend church, they will not be "good people" because there would be nobody to teach them right from wrong.

Again, the teachings taught in church are not taught anywhere else. Some of these parents could have been forced to attend church when they were young, and once they became independent, they stopped attending church. However, they now recognize the church's essential role in their lives; hence, they want their children to do the same. This view is supported by Barna (2003:12), who states that children play a critical role in bringing adults to churches.

Another reason why children's ministry matters is because the devil, the enemy of humanity, is always roaming about, looking for whom he may devour (1Pet. 5:8). Children are not immune

to his attacks. In Todd's (2009:113) words, "The forces of darkness are not hesitating to act in childhood. The enemy recognizes childhood as a critical and vulnerable stage during which he might destroy what God loves. Thus, that enemy who seeks to "steal, kill and destroy" mounts a full assault on children as early as possible and as deceptively as possible. With greed and ambition leading the way, the host of human sin has constructed societies and systems which neglect, marginalize and exploit our youngest, most vulnerable citizens." He makes an impassionate plea to the Christian leaders by saying, "We beg Christian leaders to recognize the importance of children. It could be a tragedy if the church could be complicit in this regard by neglecting and marginalizing children in its midst." Whether oblivious or not of this fact, the church is, to some extent, complicit in the neglect and marginalization of the children's ministry by not prioritizing it.

Mans (2015:9;12) and Wade (2019:3; 11 – 12) elaborated further on the marginalization of children's ministry despite its importance. This marginalization is exhibited by poor training of volunteer workers/teachers, poor and/or lack of infrastructure for the ministry, weak programs, and children not being allowed to attend certain church services, programs and workshops, among others.

2.4.4 Children are the most critical group in a congregation

Georgina (2020:35) says, "Children are the most important single population group for the church to focus upon because what you believe by the time you are 13 is what you will die believing." Children are the future of any family, society or nation. Children signify the future and the hope that a family, society, organization, and even a nation will continue to exist for generations. Harding (2008:1) puts it more succinctly, citing Choun and Lawson (2004:11) when he says, "No basic resource is more critical to the future of the human race than children." Again, Georgina (2020:35) posits that humans are the same everywhere. If the church wants positive results and continuity regarding its faith, it must prioritize children's ministry by investing in it. He exemplifies the Jews in terms of how they make this happen. He says they established synagogues for their children from a tender age to ensure their children are trained about their faith. Moreover, they are also purposefully focused on educating their children because they are supposed to lead the following generation. So, children's ministry matters

because it gives hope that the church will continue to exist and teach the same doctrine it is teaching now even when the older generation has passed.

Todd (2009:93) cites essential findings of the studies by Bryant Myers (N.d) and George Barna (2003), who found that "85% of the people who decide on Christ as their saviour do so between the ages of four and 14" and "the probability of someone embracing Jesus as his or her Saviour was 32 per cent for those between the ages of five and 12; four per cent for those in the 13 - 18 range; and six per cent for people 19 and older." These statistics indicate that as people grow older, their chances of embracing Jesus as their saviour become increasingly remote compared to when they are young. The congregation must take advantage of the opportunity presented by this growth stage in children. Through children's ministry, preach the gospel to them and make sure that they do it right so as not to miss the opportunity, as chances of success are higher than in any other growth stage.

Given the above, Hazel (2019:28) asks a question, "If the generation that saw God's amazing miracles in Egypt, that experienced His merciful protection in the wilderness, was in danger of rebelling against God and forgetting His glory, then how much greater would that danger be for a generation of children that never hear about Him?" Parents cannot fail to teach their children God's word as per God's commandment (Deut. 6:6 – 7) and hope that the children would know their faith and not be influenced by forces such as Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, among others. In the same breadth, if congregations do not help parents by equipping them to play their role in the faith formation of their children, they should not be surprised if their children's ministry does not seem to be effective because they cannot have one without the other.

Considering the above, there is a pressing need for congregations to have a children's ministry that would form the children's faith to respond to the challenges mentioned above. According to Morgenthaler, Kaiser and Larson (2014:243), Christians are made, not born. Citing Westerhoff (1992), they say, "While ultimately the act of coming to faith is the work of the Holy Spirit, this schooling-instructional model assumes that, at some point within this formal instruction, children will grasp the essence of the faith into which they are dedicated or baptized and become active followers of Jesus Christ." The question that may be asked is if the children are not instructed in the way of the Lord, how will they come to the saving faith? This question

needs to be responded to by both parents and congregations. In addition, Schoeman (2020:92) says congregations need to ask themselves the following two questions, which relate to their identity and relevance in their contexts: *who are we, and what are we doing?* Pentecostal congregations need to be able to interpret these questions in the context of their children's ministry.

In conclusion, God has a particular interest in children. He demonstrates this by placing them in homes in the care of parents/guardians and commanding them to teach them His commandments. Jesus Christ also blessed them and rebuked those preventing children from coming to Him (Felix 2015:37; Nel 2018:57; Deut. 6:6 – 9 and Mt. 19:13 – 14 ESV). If children matter that much to God, indeed, they should matter to both parents and the congregations. Van Rensburg (2013:157) urges parents to understand God's heart by fathering and mothering children through imitating Christ's example. Children are also at a critical stage of their lives wherein a godly foundation has to be laid before they are exposed to external forces. Again, it is at this stage that many children decide to follow Christ. Both parents and church must give children the necessary attention and help they need in their spiritual formation journey. Equally, the devil also targets children at this stage so that he denies them a bright future. It is critically vital that congregations, parents, volunteers and the rest of the faith community join hands to ensure that children are raised according to godly principles because they matter to God. Furthermore, congregations should value children to the extent that they invest in children's ministry with complete assurance that their labour will not be in vain.

2.5 Roles of Different Players in Children's Ministry

Children's ministry is a team effort and, therefore, requires the involvement of different stakeholders. Rains (2019:10) says children's ministry requires a team effort comprising parents, the church, teachers/volunteers, children themselves, all leaders and the entire faith community to succeed. All these stakeholders/roleplayers have a critical role to play and be in sync with each other. In terms of this collaborative effort, each member's role or part must be spelt out clearly and/or their needs determined. Gieseke (2012:15 – 16) sees this collaborative effort in terms of Paul's imagery of Christians as members of one body where each member has a particular function but also contributes to the whole body's functioning and well-being.

However, parents and congregations are the main stakeholders and role players in children's ministry. This section focuses on the role of the family/parents, the pastor and/or the congregation, the volunteer worker/teacher, and the children.

2.5.1 The role of parents/family

Children are born into families, and the first people that a child sees and gets acquainted with are their parents or guardian(s). By default, they are the primary caregivers (Woog (2007:26) and by virtue of that play an important and decisive role in children's lives (Nel 2018:255). Stressing the importance of parents in youth (children's) ministry Nel further says most scholars in this field are in agreement regarding the importance of families in this ministry (2018:82). Citing Freudenburg (1998), again he says, "Parents are the primary Christian educators in the church, and the family is the God-ordained institution for faith-building in children and youth and for the passing of faith from one generation to the next." As the first people that a child interacts with and as such they are most trusted people in a child's life. In as much as children are a gift to parents from God; equally, parents are also a gift from God to children. Again, Nel (2018:257) says, children are incorporated into God's way and His people by the parents. They are the primary mediators of faith in their families.

Parents and/or families therefore, have the primary responsibility of teaching children the Word of God (Deut. 6:7). Schoeman (2017:79), citing Wuthnow 1999:xxxi) succinctly captures the essence of this Scripture when he says, "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 being part of a community." All these can best be practised at home than anywhere else. He further says, "It is obvious that regular reading of the Bible in the home links the child to the stories, the symbols, and practices of their faith. It forms their Christian identity and shapes their actions through the values and patterns of thought formed." Parents/guardians, either through their words and/or actions, inadvertently influence children's faith.

Parents' time with their children enables them to influence them more than anybody else. Vieth (1960:168) regards the family as the most potent tool in personality development. Espinoza

(2011:5 – 6) says the extent of parents' influence on their children is such that even when children are no longer actively involved in congregations, sixty-seven per cent of them still hold religious beliefs that are very similar or primarily similar to those of their parents. Parents must take advantage of their time with their children to influence them as much as possible before they can be exposed to external forces.

Roberto (2016:1) says, the whole notion of faith formation "is developed around the belief that parents and the family are the most powerful influence for virtually every child and youth outcome—personal, academic, social, and spiritual-religious; and that parents are the most important influence on the social and religious lives of the children, youth, and emerging adults." Again, the family environment plays an integral role in fostering children's faith formation. Morgenthaler *et al.* (2014:254) say it is in the family environment where our unique identity is shaped "through apprenticeship to older siblings, parents, and extended family by being incorporated into family activities through experiences and celebrations that make our story part of the story of the family". It is, therefore, apparent that no amount of effort by a congregation regarding the faith formation of children will succeed without the involvement of the parents and/or family.

Furthermore, children like everybody else "are the relationships that make us (them); we (they) have our (their) being in and through relationships that place us (them) into reality, and therefore we (they) are open ontologically to the possibility of encounter" (Root 2014:244). Moreover, Root (2014:245) says, "we are given personal knowledge of the multistrata of reality—even *experiencing* the independent objective reality of God's own being as it becomes to us." This knowledge is mediated in the main by parents or caregivers. The primary relationships that a child has during his/her formative years are those of biological parents/caregivers and siblings. These are the relationships that have the most influence in their lives.

Woog (2007:26) supports the earlier mentioned statement by Roberto when she says parents, as primary caregivers, need to help children navigate what goes on in their lives since they live in more than one culture. On the one hand, they live in a religious culture made up of the home with its family's spiritual practices, local congregation and the wider Christian community with its events. On the other hand, they live in a culture of a local community, the neighbourhood,

schools and network of friends, among others. The two cultures, with their different value systems, might confuse the children; hence, the parents need to help them navigate the two. She further says the parents should get involved or be on the same page with what the children are learning, even in the local congregation. What the children learn at children's ministry from the local congregation should not only be between the children and the children's ministry teacher. There is a need for open communication between the parents and ministry leaders. On the one hand, the leaders can inform the parents about what children are learning and ask parents to help by asking the children at home or emphasizing those things they learnt at the ministry (Maphalla 2020:82). On the other hand. Parents could take the initiative, approach the ministry leaders, inquire about what children are learning and offer to help where necessary.

Another vital role of the parents/family is modelling faith in a child (Gieseke 2012:5). They model both life and faith to children (Nel 2018:259). Parents should not only talk, but they should also walk the talk. This is critically important because most children tend to follow their parents' example whether good or bad, Nel (2018:263) citing Strommen (1973:28). Again, Gieseke (2012:5) referencing Pearce and Denton (2011) says, "A parent's religiosity provides an important role model for youth (children) and determines to a large extent the type of religious exposure experienced during childhood and adolescent years." The reason for this is that children learn what they live (Martinson 1997:397). The families that children are born into become their immediate context, which is formative in terms of their relationships and beliefs. Again, he says:

Regardless of their form or state of health, these families of origin are intergenerational systems that create an ethos (a way of life) and a mythos (a life perspective). Whatever else families are doing, whether intentionally or not, whether constructively or not, families are passing on the values and faith of one kind or another to their children.

Furthermore, Martinson (1997:397) asks two critical questions concerning parents/families modelling faith to their children. First, "If families are the basic units of life that shape faith and values, then the primary question becomes: What faith are they passing on? Moreover, "A secondary question emerges as well: Can families become more rather than less intentional and constructive in this moral and spiritual work? It would appear that most families could be more intentional in what they do daily." They seem to be intentional only when it comes to

certain things and even then at certain times, hence Martinson's appeal for families to become more intentional and constructive. Being intentional is critical because children are always watching, and they learn more by observing what the elders do than say.

According to Schoeman (2017:81), another role that parents need to do is role model behaviour to their children. Role modelling in religious practice and belief is such behaviour as regular church attendance and participating in church activities, home prayers and Scripture reading. To a great extent, the practices will demonstrate to children that Scripture reading and prayers are not only done at church but are an integral part of who we are as a family.

Drawing from her own experience as a parent Espinoza (2011:12) says that notwithstanding parents' role regarding the faith formation of their children, it should be borne in mind that parents also have a sense of weakness. In her own words, she says, "When we care for children, we inevitably find our weakness, our inability to provide for all of the child's needs. We feel responsible for the children in our care and find ourselves filled with sadness, anger and guilt when they do not act as we want them to." The researcher thinks these emotions are agitated by the desire not to fail the children. He believes they want to represent God well in the sight of the children concerning the responsibility He has entrusted them to raise their children in His fear.

Schoeman (2017:90) supports Espinoza's above statement when he says many parents admit inadequacy in nurturing their children's faith. Hence, they abdicate their responsibility to the church. Citing a survey by Barna (2003:e-source), he says, "While more than four out of five parents believe they have the primary responsibility for the moral and spiritual development of their children, more than two out of three of them abdicate their responsibility to the church." To further show parents' inadequacy, Schoeman (2017:89) says most parents need targets regarding their children's lived faith or spiritual growth. Some parents, however, do not teach faith or spiritual formation to their children and transfer that task to the church for other reasons. According to Rueckert (2012:1), some do not care about the matter and only do it out of their parent's expectations, while others only focus on faith matters at church.

In the final analysis, parents need the church to help them in the faith formation of their children. Supporting the earlier statement made by Espinoza (2011:12), Warren (2018:10 – 11), when he considered the mammoth task of nurturing the faith of children, concluded that "One can

surmise that even the best of parents does not have all the answers for the spiritual development of their children. The church, if allowed by the parent, can come alongside the parent and provide great support in this important effort." No matter how hard they try, parents cannot do it alone.

In conclusion, given the fact that children are born into families, and parents are primary caregivers, it is, therefore, their principal role to teach them the Word of God, role model Christian behaviour, and be intentional in integrating Christian practices in their daily activities in an attempt to influence their children's faith. Parents' time with their children gives them ample opportunity to influence them more than anybody else. However, since no parent feels adequate for this colossal task, parents need to work with the church.

2.5.2 The role of a pastor

The role of a pastor is subsumed under the purpose of the gifts Christ gave to the church (Ephesians 4:11 – 13). He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. His purpose was to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Again, to edify the church until all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of Christ.

Again, Christ likens his followers to sheep and Himself to a shepherd (John 10:14). Apostle Peter (1Pet. 5:4) uses the imagery of Christ as a chief shepherd and flock (followers) and those commissioned by Him as shepherds too. Manala (2010:2) says, "In many church traditions, the pastor is accepted as a leader" of the church. Moreover, as the leader, he/she is therefore expected to perform leadership functions in the church supported by other leaders and the whole faith community. He further says the pastor has to share his/her God-given vision for the church, control and responsibility. In children's ministry, the pastor must be the vision bearer, which he/she must share with volunteer workers/teachers. Again, he/she must share the responsibility and control of the ministry with them.

Furthermore, the role of a pastor is to tend, lead and feed the flock of Christ (John 21:17). Jesus asked Peter to tend and feed His sheep. Flowing from that, the work of a pastor, therefore, is to shepherd the flock of God by leading, feeding and protecting it (Osei 2019:35). According to Beely (2009:18), this implies preaching, teaching, counselling, and celebrating

the mysteries and/or sacraments with the faith community. He/she should take care of all the spiritual needs of the faith community under his/her care and, to some extent as far as possible, some emotional and other needs.

Wollschleger (2018:579;581) reports that two of the pastors he interviewed regard their role as the authority of leading people and keeping them faithful to the gospel, leading the congregation forward and giving it options by providing theological framework and grounding, respectively. Madanchian, Hussein, Noordin and Taherdoost (2017:1044) regard a leader's effectiveness as his/her ability to impact group members to perform their roles with positive organizational outcomes. In the context of children's ministry, a pastor has to guide, lead and influence every team member within the theological framework in a positive manner so that they can achieve the ministry's organizational outcomes together.

In conclusion, a pastor is like a church manager (Manala 2010:3) who "is expected to facilitate fulfilment of the four management functions, namely planning, organizing, leading and directing, efficiently and effectively for the realization of church health and well-being." He/she holds a pre-eminent position in a local congregation and plays a critical role in the establishment, growth and influence of all its ministries and activities.

2.5.3 The role of a local congregation

Christ commissioned the church to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing those who believed and teaching them to obey all the things He commanded (Mt. 2:19 – 20). According to Warren (2018:12 – 13), "The ultimate purpose of the local congregation is to point everyone, especially children, toward Christ for salvation while also carrying out the beginning steps of discipleship as they learn what it means to be a follower of Christ." Given that, Hazel (2019:37) says the church has no basis for separating children from the rest of God's people. She contends that if children are to learn to be part of the body of Christ and grow in His knowledge, the church must change its approach towards its ministry for them, starting from home. Notwithstanding that, congregations seem to be paying more attention to youth and adults at the expense of children.

Schoeman (2017:86) says the local church, as the world's hope, carries the message of good news that engenders hope. This good news is intended for both individuals and families. However, when families come to the church with their children, children are not given the same attention and treatment as the parents. The church's attitude towards children led the disciples of Christ to rebuke those bringing children to Him to lay hands on them (Mk. 10:13 – 16). However, we see Jesus instead rebuking the disciples for their actions. Even today, the disciples of Christ in the form of the church seem to be doing a similar thing, albeit indirectly, by treating children differently from adults. In light of the above-cited Scripture, Van Rensburg (2013:143) says that the church needs to restore children to their rightful place. Furthermore, she encourages the church to continually review her attitude towards children and see if it conforms to God's requirements. Therefore, the church must treat children like all its other members.

There are three leading roles or responsibilities of the church toward parents in terms of helping them perform their responsibility toward their children, namely, train, encourage and support them. Brown (2014:7), citing Jones (Family Ministry Field Guide 99), says that most parents have never received guidance from their churches regarding how to disciple their children. In the main, there are two categories of parents in this regard. On the one hand, those who do not know their responsibility concerning teaching their children the Word of God.

On the other hand, those who know their responsibility but do not know how to do it. Therefore, it is the church's responsibility to either remind or teach and support parents regarding teaching their children the Word of God. Van Tol (2019:11) cautions that the church's support to families must be structured in a manner that considers the differing needs of individual families. It should not be a one-size-fits-all approach.

Again, Brown (2014:50) says the church should not only enable parents to discipline their children, but they should also equip them. While doing this, they should be mindful of setting boundaries that delineate their role from those of parents and further train parents to meet theirs. He further says the church must plan to train parents and make a concerted effort to have a fruitful partnership with families if any success is to be realized. The church should also support parents by supplying them with educational guidelines for use at home since there are few out there (Vieth 1960:171). Moreover, Yust *et al.* (N.d:13) reckon that since parents are

the appropriate people to demonstrate a lifestyle of faith, the church needs to teach parents to embody the values and practices they would like to pass on to their children.

The church also has the duty to both parents and children to transmit its faith traditions from one generation to the next (Weber & de Beer 2017:5). In pursuit of this endeavour the church must provide both parents and children with a place and space to view faith in action. It must also embrace "the parents of the catechumens engaging with their spiritual family, acts as a blueprint for forming lasting relationships in the context of faith" (Schoeman 2017:96). It must also model the life of faith both in speech and action.

Another critical area that congregations have to play a role in is through investment in infrastructure for children's ministry thereby creating a conducive environment for children's faith to grow. Dean (2010(a):15) says, the most impactful investment is in the form of "clarifying the mission and vision of the ministry of young people (children), shoring up volunteers, budgets, and staff relationships, developing sinews between pastors, parents, and volunteers, and so on." These should be complemented by guidance, materials, support and clarification of the parents' role in forming their children's faith (Schoeman 2017:93). Furthermore, the congregations must create an environment conducive to intergenerational gatherings. In this type of environment, there is an interaction between young and older people at different levels of faith maturity, fellowshiping together, sharing their stories and encouraging one another (Brock 1982:374). If the congregations are not deliberately investing in children's ministry, no matter how much they claim to hold children in high regard while their actions do not back their words, they are just paying lip service.

In conclusion, the congregation's role in children's ministry is to evangelize and disciple them. Again, they should train, encourage and support parents in their God-given responsibility of forming their children's faith while at the same time investing in its personnel in the form of volunteers/teachers, clarifying the vision and mission as well as providing the required resources. Lastly, the congregations should create a conducive environment by being intergenerational.

2.5.4 The role of volunteer workers/teachers

Volunteer workers are at the coal face of children's ministry. Usually, their job is misunderstood and undermined and, in most cases than not, they are unequipped for the vital work that they are doing. Warren (2018:1) claims that the downward spiral concerning societal morality can be traced back to neglect in children's ministry. They usually need more support to do their work. They often work with inadequate and old materials (Felix 2015:40). As a result, they just carry on with their work and end up being demoralized and frustrated and not enjoying what is supposed to be the most important and fulfilling work that they are doing.

The role of a volunteer worker/educator is significant because, according to Van Tol (2019:10), it sets the tone in terms of "How families view inclusion within the church, how the church or school body views inclusion, how the volunteers and ministry function, how persons with disabilities feel, and so much more." Therefore, they must create a conducive environment for every member of the stakeholders to feel part of the ministry. Given that families are primary stakeholders in the faith formation of their children, volunteer workers/teachers should work with families from the ministry's inception. They should formally invite parents to children's ministry (Bunnell 2016:26). Extending a formal invitation to parents sends a clear message that they are needed and must be part of the ministry. Family or parent(s)' participation in children's ministry is critical in ensuring that children attend and participate in all ministry activities by bringing them to classes and assisting the volunteers in whatever way they may need to be assisted.

The need to involve parents in children's ministry must be emphasized. Maphalla (2020:82), in his study of the role of Mangaung Township congregations in ECD, recommended that congregations involve parents in their children's education. They should also build relationships with them to the extent that teachers even visit parents at home or invite them to the centres to discuss issues that children are taught and how parents can play a role. He furthermore, recommended that teachers give children homework requiring parents' involvement.

Volunteer workers/teachers must create a conducive environment for learning. Adams (2009) in Grajczonek (2011:25) says, "An important factor in the intentional nurturing of young children's spirituality is the classroom environment itself, which must be open and sensitive to the spiritual." Elaborating on this point, Grajczonek (2011:25), citing Hay (1998), says spiritual

education is the reverse of indoctrination. He claims that volunteer workers/teachers have the following four primary responsibilities:

- (i) Helping children keep an open mind;
- (ii) Exploring the ways of seeing;
- (iii) Encouraging personal awareness and
- (iv) Becoming personally aware of social and political dimensions of spirituality.

A conducive environment for children to learn in their ministry can be created by allowing them to talk about their lives at the beginning of the service (Woog 2007:19). Woog cites four keys by Anderson and Hill (2003) that could be used with children of all ages whenever there is a ministry with them. The four keys are (1) Caring conversation. This caring conversation could be achieved by asking children questions each week about what is going on in their lives. (2) Devotion time. This time is devoted to God by reading the Bible together and discussing what has been read or prayed. They emphasize that prayer should always form part of devotion time. (3) Service. Service implies that the reason God has blessed us is so that we could become a blessing to others, and (4) Rituals and traditions. The two refer to regular practices done with the children, such as Bible reading, prayer and talking about what goes on in their lives. These and others help create an environment conducive to children's ministry to grow and thrive.

Again, Grajczonek (2011:25), citing de Souza (2004) and Hyde (2006), and de Souza and Hyde (2007:100) says, "Educators' roles are key at the planning stage of a curriculum that seeks to nurture children's spirituality, and educators are urged to attend to not only the cognitive domain in their planning but also the affective (felt sense) and spiritual domains by providing time and silence for inner reflection, for creative, imaginative and intuitive responses and transformed action, respectively." Harris (2014:18) concurs with the above statement, saying, "By nurturing, supporting, and acknowledging all aspects of childhood consciousness during developmentally appropriate play, educators and health professionals can liberate a child's spirituality." He further says educators must maintain a vision of the 'holistic' whole child. Volunteers/teachers should avoid the pitfall of nurturing children in only one dimension, leaving out the rest.

The findings of Maphalla (2020:79 – 80) supported the view that congregations seem to refrain from factoring in theories from social sciences when teaching children. He recommended that congregations make use of developmental sciences in this regard. However, the use of Scripture should take precedence over such. Long (2018:50) shares the same view when he says all sources must be submitted to the authority of the Scripture. When children's ministry leaders look for materials for use in the ministry, they should look for those that prioritize the Revelation (Scripture), then the response, that is, those that respond to the needs of the children.

The most familiar role of a volunteer worker/teacher is to teach children the Word of God or biblical principles and truths (Van Rensburg 2013:196; Fredericks 2019:41). Some of these truths are about the creation of the universe, how God created man in His image and how man is different from the rest of the creation since he/she bears the image of God. Moreover, how the devil deceived man, fell and plunged the whole creation into chaos, and God's redemption plan for man and creation. The children need to know about these things before they hear about the evolution theory and the like. Volunteer workers/teachers should continue teaching children biblical truths or principles. They should do these with a goal of making children disciples of Christ, who will go out as well and make others disciples of Christ. In support of this view, Woog (2007:22) says, "An outcome of children's ministry should not only be to have a relationship with God but also the ability to understand and communicate their faith." Performance of this will further the mission of God.

Another way of teaching children the Word of God is by leaving out the word. Volunteer workers/teachers should not only talk about what children should do but also walk the talk. Apostle Paul instructed Timothy by being a pastor that as he taught, he must also set an example in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity (1Tim. 4:12 ESV). Leaders should not only tell people what to do but also show them how to do it. Woog (2007:22), citing Anderson and Hill (2003:171), says leaders of children's ministry must be authentic, available and affirming. By this, she affirms what the above Scripture says: that they must live what they believe, be accessible to children and affirm all the people. Furthermore, she says, a way for children's volunteer workers/teachers to affirm children is by knowing the developmental stage(s) of children and listening to them when they talk so that they will be able to help them explore the

world and their faith. Volunteer workers/teachers, therefore, have to build a rapport with children so that they can open up to the extent that they are free to talk to them about anything.

In conclusion, the role of volunteer workers/teachers is to include parents in the ministry by formally inviting them to take part right at the beginning of the ministry. They must also create a conducive environment for children's ministry to grow and thrive. This conducive environment should nurture children spiritually, emotionally and otherwise by helping children keep an open mind and explore other ways of seeing, as well as becoming personally aware of social and political dimensions of spirituality. This environment will allow children to talk about anything to the teachers without fear of being scolded. They should do these while grounding them in the Word of God to make them disciples of Christ, who would, in turn, also make others disciples of Christ. The teachers should also lead by example in what they expect the children to do.

2.5.5 The role of children

Children are an essential component of the children's ministry, without whom there would be no children's ministry. Wade (2019:3) says children are left out of decisions about church matters. What he says is true even on matters that directly affect them. Schaefer (2020:42) concurs with this assertion when he/she says, "There is a common pitfall within the body of Christ concerning children. They are approached as things to be changed rather than as human beings who, despite their small stature, somehow mysteriously bear *imago Dei*." Even though they are taken for granted, Hart (2005:14–15) remarks that the depth of children's concerns and questions can surprise us. He further says this indicates that children do not take for granted the things that adults do for granted. The role children can and should play in the church and children's ministry is discussed below.

Ephesians (6:1 – 3) instructs children to obey their parents in the Lord. They should honour their parents as well. A promise is attached to these commandments that it will go well with them and have long lives. If they do these things, the Lord promises to bless them. Osei (2019:37) says, first, the children's obedience should not be partial but instead complete, and second, their obedience is pleasing to the Lord. They are not only doing it to gain their parent's approval, but most importantly, they are doing it for the Lord.

Again, children have to learn the Word of God as they are taught either by parents or teachers. It is incumbent upon them to learn when the parents teach and train them (Deut. 6:7 – 9; Prov. 22:6). Jesus was found in the temple, sitting among the teachers of the Law, both listening to them and asking them questions (Luke 2:46; 49) and when His parents found Him and asked Him why He remained behind, he in response, asked them whether they did not know that He was supposed to be in His Father's house. Similarly, children must be in God's house because it is their Father's house.

Children should not only be in God's house, but they should also be there to learn and ask questions. It is critically important that children are allowed to ask questions during teaching lessons in children's ministry. To this end, Atta (2017:12), citing Gangel (1975), says, "Children should be able to have their own Bible and use their own Bible. We must teach the Bible as God's whole revelation and not a doctrine or teaching from one passage of Scripture to the exclusion of others. Children should realize that the Bible is the final authority." Having their Bibles and reading them will assist the children to develop a love for reading and studying the Bible to gain insight and build their personal beliefs about it.

Moreover, children have a role in worshipping and serving in the church. During Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, and when He entered the temple, the children worshipped Him, crying out, "Hosanna to the Son of David." (Mt. 21:15 – 16 ESV). Furthermore, the chief priests and scribes were indignant and asked Jesus to stop them. Instead, He referred them to the Scripture, asking them whether they had read the Scripture that says, "Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise?" By replying, He was affirming what the children were doing. Samuel (1Sam. 2:18) ministered in the temple as a child under the tutelage of Eli, the priest wearing a linen ephod after he was weaned and dedicated to the Lord as a young child (1Sam. 1:24). Children have a role to serve in whatever form in the house of the Lord. All that they need is to be offered an opportunity and guidance to do that.

Lastly, children have a role in evangelism ministry like all other members of the body of Christ. A case in point is a young slave girl from the land of Israel who waited on Naaman's wife (2 Kings 5:2–3). She told her mistress about a prophet in Israel who could heal her master's leprosy. Her mistress and master heeded her word, and he was cured of his leprosy. Osei (2019:37) quips that what is needed is for parent(s), church leaders and volunteer

workers/teachers to understand that God can use children to fulfil His mission. They should train and include them in missionary work that fits their age.

In conclusion, children are part of the household of God like everybody else and should be included in the functions of the church like all the other church members. These functions include evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, and ministry and worship (Fredericks 2019:39). However, for them to be able to fulfil their role, they need to be recognized and given a chance to voice their needs and gifts, challenges and expectations (Strandenaes 2004:494). If given a chance, they can surprise us with the depth of their concerns and questions (Hart 2005:14 – 15).

2.5.6 Some Christian traditions regarding catechism in children's ministry

Different Christian denominations or traditions approach faith formation as it relates to children's ministry differently. In some traditions, this activity is generally referred to as catechesis. Osmer (2005:237) defines catechesis as "An interpretive activity undertaken by the congregations and their members who see themselves as participants in the Theo-drama of the triune God and are seeking to better understand their roles in this drama by deepening their understanding of Scripture and Christian tradition." Cantrell (n.d.) and Piper (n.d.) on the other hand, give a concise definition of the root word for catechesis, that is, catechize which means "to instruct, teach" (Luke 1:4; Acts 18:25; Gal. 6:6). In this section the discussion would be confined to Baptist and Reformed, and Roman Catholic Church traditions. The first two represent the majority of Protestant traditions, for example, Evangelical, Liberal and strictly Reformed and Lutheran (Van Leersum-Bekerbrede 2021:1). At the same time, the latter is to some degree different to them.

2.5.6.1 Baptist and Reformed traditions

Baptist and Reformed traditions are used together here for no particular reason other than they both represent Protestant traditions. As mentioned, they represent the majority of Protestant traditions (Van Leersum-Bekerbrede 2021:1). They could have been dealt with individually. Still, the researcher put them together just to show what is happening in other Christian

traditions regarding catechism. On the other hand, Roman Catholic traditions represent a different tradition to Protestantism; hence it is dealt with separately even though there might still be some similarities among them.

This section uses the Baptist catechism and a Biblical catechism from Antioch Bible Church as sources. The Baptist catechism is a revised version of "The Baptist Catechism", drafted in 1689 and adopted by the Philadelphia Baptist Association in 1742 in Great Britain (Piper N.d), while the Biblical catechism is patterned on the Reformed Westminster catechism that was written in London in 1647 by Puritan ministers (Cantrell N.d). The latter is used mainly to get the Reformed perspective. The purpose of the catechism is to give parents and other people responsible for teaching or instructing children in the way of the Lord an authoritative instruction and a way of teaching it.

Osmer (2000:510) contends that the Reformer's understanding of childhood came about due to their attention to the context of practical programs on education and family. Again, given their understanding of childhood as a unique stage, they followed the humanist model of helping children internalize the best models of religion and culture by catechizing them. Catechesis refers to a formal instruction aimed at helping the children "learn the basic doctrines and practices of the faith through an intensive program of catechetical instruction. Study, memorization, and understanding of catechisms in the context of family devotions and preparation for admission to the Lord's Table were seen as affording children a basic theological foundation, even as it introduces them to practices like prayer, worship, and hymn singing" (Osmer 2000:512). The Reformed catechesis to children summarizes` their children's ministry practices that culminate in their participation in the Lord's Supper.

Discussions here first focus on the advanced reasons for the importance of catechism. Second, a summary of the topics taught is given. Third, the points of difference between the two traditions are highlighted, and lastly, the children's ministry activities or practices are mentioned.

On the one hand, Piper (N.d:3) explains why Baptist catechism is essential. These are as follows:

1. To continue in the faith, stable and steadfast (Col. 1:23).
2. To attain the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God (Eph. 4:13 – 14).

3. Due to many deceivers (1John 2:26).
4. To assist in terms of complex doctrines (2Pet. 3:16).
5. To raise leaders who can instruct in sound doctrine (Titus 1:9).

On the other hand, Cantrel (N.d:3 – 8) gives the following reasons for catechizing:

1. Because the Scripture encourages it,
2. To evangelize,
3. To follow the example of church history,
4. To benefit more from Bible reading and sermons and to spark more Scripture memorization,
5. To increase discernment and vigilance against error,
6. To keep core doctrines central,
7. To see the unity of the whole Bible,
8. To prepare for temptation and suffering,
9. To teach logical thinking and
10. To unify homes and churches.

A statement may summarize all the reasons mentioned above by Cantrel (N.d:3) that the purpose of the catechism is to dispel ignorance concerning the Word of God. He further says, "Shallow, wondering Christians who are not grounded in their faith are a danger to themselves and others." Moreover, to avoid this and ensure that the reasons mentioned above for catechizing happen, the church must make a concerted effort to train and empower people in terms of resources to help carry out their God-given mandate effectively.

The catechisms are structured in a question-and-answer format. The topics addressed in the Baptist catechesis range from who God is and how we know there is a God, the purpose of man, the Word of God and how we know the Bible is the Word of God. Creation of everything, including man, his fall, God's redemption plan, the person and the work of Christ, are also discussed. The process continues until children are confirmed as full members of their respective congregations, allowing them to serve in some church structures.

Baptists and the Reformed believe that the church has two sacraments: baptism and the Lord's Supper. The differences between them are regarding catechism, infant baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Baptists regard baptism as "a holy ordinance, in which immersion in the water in

the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, signifies our being joined to Christ and our sharing the benefits of the covenant of grace and our engagement to the Lord's." If rightly administered, a person's whole body must be immersed or dipped in water (Piper N.d:33 – 34). They also believe baptism is for those who believe and profess repentance (Acts 8:12; Grudem 1994:970; Cantrel N.d:108). It is regarded as a symbol of beginning a Christian life. They, therefore, do not believe that infants should not be baptized.

Concerning the Lord's Supper, the Baptists regard it as a holy ordinance of the church. Those who partake of it proclaim the Lord's death. By faith, they are spiritually nourished with benefits that Christ purchased, and they grow in grace (1Cor. 11:23 – 26; 10:16; Piper N.d:35). The requirement for worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper is that one must examine oneself, discern the Lord's body; their faith and their repentance (1Cor. 5:8; 11:2 – 31; 2Cor. 13:5; Piper N.d: 35). By implication infants and children who do not understand what is meant by these Scriptures should not partake of the Lord's Supper.

On the contrary, with respect to baptism, the Reformed's (including Lutheran, Episcopalian, Methodist and Presbyterian, among others) position is that baptism is administered to all infant children of believing parents. It is premised on the argument of the "covenant community" of God's people (Grudem 1994:975). According to this argument, in the Old Testament, circumcision was administered to all Israelite male children and children of foreigners bought and dwelling in their houses (Gen. 17:10 – 13).

Again, in the New Testament in Colossians (2:11 – 12), baptism is used to draw the exact parallel. Other examples used are the families of Lydia, the Philippian jailer and the household of Stephanas, who were baptized (Acts 16:15; 16:33; 1Cor. 1:16; Grudem 1994:976). However, the Scripture does not say whether there were children or not among those who were baptized. It may be assumed that they must have been there.

The popular Reformed view concerning the Lord's Supper is that it is a symbolic and spiritual presence of Christ; that is, the bread and the wine symbolize the body and the blood of Christ, respectively. However, the Lutherans hold a different view. They contend that the Lord's Supper has to be taken in a literal sense. The body and the blood of Christ are present during the Lord's Supper and, therefore, distributed to those who partake in the Lord's Supper (Grudem 1994:994 – 995).

Concerning children's ministry practices in the Reformed tradition, Van Leersum-Bekerbrede (2021:1) says that children participate in worship in the Netherlands' reformed context. They are baptized, sit in pews on Sunday morning service like all other members, take part in children's moments, sing in choirs, welcome people at the door, and witness or participate in the Lord's Supper, among others. Moreover, children perform most of the roles during special services such as Easter. For example, they welcome people, pray, enact stories and speak blessings to the congregation (Van Leersum-Bekerbrede 2021:17 – 18). According to the First Shiloh Baptist Church (N.d.), the activities of their children's ministry are worship service, Sunday school and Bible study, children's choirs, and social, cultural and spiritual activities such as Vacation Bible School, children retreat and field trips. What they are doing is in line with their mission to help children grow spiritually while being trained to revere God, obey their parents and get involved in religious activities. The information on how they get involved in ministerial activities needs to be clarified.

In conclusion, the purpose of catechizing children in both traditions is to instruct and teach them the way of the Lord. Baptists and Reformed believe in two sacraments, namely, baptism and the Lord's Supper. They, however, differ in terms of who should be baptized. The Baptist baptizes those who repent of their sins and profess Jesus as their saviour, while the Reformed believe in infant baptism. Both have similar children's ministry practices, with the Reformed ones seeming to be more involved in main church activities.

2.5.6.2 *Catechesis in the Roman Catholic tradition*

The Roman Catholic Church believes that the means of salvation are vested in the church. It is through Christ's Catholic Church alone that the fullness of the same can be obtained. The bishops have a divine right to take the place of the apostles as church pastors, and whoever listens to them listens to Christ, and whoever would not listen to them despises Christ (Carl 2021:21). Focus here would be paid to the children's ministry practices from infancy, those that adults do together with children and those that are aimed at children alone and/or with children. These include infants' baptism, Eucharist, children's Mass and confirmation.

The church believes that baptism should be conferred upon infants shortly after birth. Baptism must be performed first because it is necessary for salvation. Second, justification is conferred

in baptism. Third, baptism is the chief sacrament of forgiveness of sins. Infants who may die before their baptism are prayed for and are entrusted to the mercy of God (Carl 2021:27 – 28). During infant baptism, parents are responsible for raising them as Christians (Directory for Masses with Children N.d:1).

According to the Directory for Masses with Children (N.d:3), after baptism, both the church and the parents should work together towards children developing human values that are present in the Eucharist celebration. These include "The community activity, exchange of greetings, capacity to listen and to seek and grant pardon, expression of gratitude, the experience of symbolic actions, a meal of friendship, and festive celebration." In terms of these, it is expected that Christian families should play a significant role in teaching these values.

It is also expected that the Christian community and/or godparents and other zealous persons who are noted for their dedicated service should contribute to a great extent, especially assisting those families that are incapable of fulfilling their obligation in bringing up children in a godly manner (Directory for Masses with children N.d:4). It is also required of the Christian community to play a role by living out as a witness to the gospel by living communal charity, and by actively participating in celebrating the mysteries of Christ.

During liturgical practices such as Masses and feast days that adults do together with children, it is encouraged that children should not be neglected. An account should be made to include them even "by speaking to them directly in the brief comments (at the beginning and the end of Mass) and at some point, in the homily." Efforts should also be made to include "infants who are unable or unwilling to participate in the Mass may be brought in at the end of Mass to be blessed together with the rest of the community". It is believed that the Christian spirit is engendered when children participate with their family members and this builds common values and togetherness among family members (Directory for Masses with children N.d:5).

Concerning Masses dominated by children where adults are few, they are recommended to take place during weekdays as opposed to Sundays, and these are to be conducted slightly different from the main ones. It is advised that as many children as possible should participate, among others, in preparing the venue and the altar where the Mass is taking place, act as cantor, sing in the choir, play musical instruments and proclaim the readings of the word. The priest officiating in such a Mass is required to make the celebration festive, familial and

meditative. A limited number of adults are also required to play a role because the Eucharist is an activity for the entire ecclesial community (Directory for Masses with Children N.d:6 – 7). Emphasis is mentioned in the directory to make every effort necessary to accommodate children during the Mass but not at the expense of diluting the essence of the Mass, which is to help children encounter Christ in the Eucharist celebration.

The last practice that completes the baptismal grace is confirmation. Carl (2021:33) says, "The sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace" "Confirmation unites us more firmly to Christ and increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit", and 'without Confirmation and Eucharist, Baptism is certainly valid and efficacious, but Christian initiation remains incomplete." Regarding these catechism articles, children who have not yet been confirmed are not recognized as full church members until they are confirmed.

In conclusion, with respect to the Roman Catholic Church, children's ministry practices include infant baptism, which is conferred to children shortly after birth. This is necessary for salvation, justification and forgiveness of sins. It is the role of the parents, godparents and community of faith to work together to teach and instil Christian values in children. Children are groomed to participate during the Eucharist, whether during Mass dominated by adults during Sunday service or their Mass celebrations. During the latter, they are expected to participate more than adults. The baptismal grace is considered complete when children are confirmed, and therefore, they must be confirmed since this completes the initiation process into Christianity. In a nutshell, their approach to the church generally is intergenerational. They try by all means to include all church members in all their activities.

2.6 Conclusion

Chapter two discussed Christian education, which later evolved into Sunday school that started around 1700 to address poverty and teach underprivileged children primary education. As a Sunday school, it was used as an evangelistic tool and lost its social justice aspect. Currently, it has evolved into a children's ministry with many role players involved. These include parents, pastors, volunteer workers/teachers and the faith community. All these need to work together for the ministry to succeed. Children's ministry seems to be taken for granted by parents and many congregations, even though it plays a crucial role in ensuring the future of the Christian

faith. The neglect evidences a need for more resources such as trained personnel, materials, infrastructure, etc. Unfortunately, this is happening at a time when children are facing a lot of challenges in their lives, such as poverty, diseases, crime, child abuse, child labour, and human trafficking, to name but a few. It is also happening at a time when the government has removed Christian instruction from public school syllabi, leaving it to both parents and the church, which is where it belongs.

Again, the chapter highlighted the implications of the National Policy on Education and Religion (2003) (Dreyer 2006:41). The Policy advocates for equality and diversity of religions. It no longer promotes Christianity as it used to be the case in the past. This, therefore, implies that there is a vacuum regarding the role that used to be played by the schools concerning teaching children the Word of God. The church and the parents now have to step-up and do their God-given mandate of teaching their children the Word of God. In doing this, both the church and the parents need to listen to the voice of the children given the context that children live in at school, even in the communities, thereby recognizing and affirming their importance. Below is a list of important issues that the chapter raised for the parents and congregations regarding children's ministry:

1. Teach children true or saving faith, given the multiple religions they are exposed to at school,
2. Make children disciples of Jesus Christ, who in turn would be able to make others disciples of Christ also,
3. Teach them tolerance while at the same time being able to defend their faith,
4. Listen to children as well, avoiding a common pitfall of approaching them as things that are to be changed (Schafer 2020:22) and
5. Congregations should find ways of including children in all their functions, thereby recognizing them as full members of the body of Christ.

Furthermore, the chapter highlighted the roles of different players in children's ministry, namely, the parents/family, the pastors, local congregations, ministry teachers and the children themselves. The parents/family as primary caregivers must teach children the Word of God (Deut. 6:7; Woog 2007:26). However, they need the support of the church to do that.

The role of the pastor as a leader of a congregation is to lead and feed the flock of Christ (John 21:17). Furthermore, he/she must be the vision bearer of the congregation and all its ministries, which he/she must share with the ministry teachers/volunteer workers, and also share the responsibility and control of the ministry with them. The local congregation should value children's ministry to the extent that it supports it in every way possible and embrace the children as fellow members of the congregation by giving them opportunities to serve.

Children's ministry teachers/volunteer workers' role in children's ministry cannot be overemphasized. They are at the coal face of children's ministry. Their primary role is to create a conducive environment for learning (Grajczonek 2011:25) and include the parents in the ministry (Bunnell 2016:26; Van Tol 2019:10). Concerning children, their role over and above teaching them the Word of God and modelling it to them; they have the responsibility to:

Help children keep an open mind, explore the ways of seeing, encourage their awareness and become personally aware of social and political dimensions of spirituality (Grajczonek 2011:25).

Lastly, focus was turned to the role of children. The role of the children in their ministry is to obey and honour the parents, attend ministry services, as well as learn the Word of God as taught by the parents and the teachers (Eph. 6:1 – 3; Osei 2019:37; Deut. 6:7 – 9; Luke 2:46; 49). In conclusion, children have a role in the church like all the other members of the church. These include evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, and ministry and worship (Fredericks 2019:39).

All these role players need to understand their roles and, where necessary, ask for support. Children's ministry requires teamwork comprising all the role players mentioned above for it to be effective. No role players can make it on their own without participation by other players.

Moreover, the chapter dealt with Christian traditions in terms of catechism as it relates to children's ministry practices, where the Baptists and Reformed (Protestants) differ slightly. Baptists do not believe in infant baptism, baptizing them only when they claim to believe the gospel and, therefore, repent of their sins. At the same time, the Roman Catholic Church performs the Reformed practice of infant baptism. With the Reformed and Roman Catholic traditions, the process of becoming a full congregation member is completed when children are confirmed. Again, in both traditions, parents play a role in catechizing children. Children

can also participate in church activities, making their services intergenerational. This theoretical framework is important in view of Pentecostal children's ministry in several ways. First, Pentecostal children's ministry does not happen in a vacuum; it should benchmark itself against the Scripture and best practices done in other Christian traditions. Second, the framework stipulates who are or should be the role players in children's ministry and their respective responsibilities. Again, it gives Pentecostals a perspective on how to implement children's ministry while at the same time maintaining their unique identity.

Now, the discussion will turn to chapter 3. The chapter focuses on the normative regarding the church's primary ministry. The chapter seeks to answer Osmer's (2008:4) task three, namely, what ought to be going on concerning the church's ministry.

CHAPTER 3

THE NORMATIVE TASKS OF THE CHURCH, PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGIES AND PENTECOSTAL CHILDREN'S MINISTRY PRACTICES

3.1 Introduction

While the previous chapter focused on reviewing the literature concerning children's ministry and related topics; attention will now turn to the normative regarding the church's primary ministry from which flows children's ministry. This chapter attempts to respond to sub-question 4 of the study, namely, "What should be the role of parents and volunteer workers/teachers in children's ministry?" As mentioned in Chapter 1 under sub-question 4, parents and children's ministry teachers play a pivotal role in children's ministry; hence their role is here looked into in relation to what is happening or should happen in children's ministry.

The normative task in this chapter refers to the core functions of the church as they relate to the children's ministry. The core functions are, *leitourgia* (liturgy), *koinonia* (hospitality and fellowship), *kerygma* (proclamation), *didache* (teaching and discipleship), *diakonia* (service), and *marturia* (witness). These are looked at in terms of the roles of both the parents and the teachers. These will be discussed first, followed by children's ministry of Pentecostal congregations. Since there is more than one Pentecostal theology, an attempt is made to summarize Pentecostal theologies by focusing on the four strands of the "full gospel" and Pentecostal children's ministry practices. The "full gospel" is commonly agreed to by all Pentecostals; hence, the discussion is limited to it. It comprised regeneration, sanctification, baptism in the Holy Spirit and eschatology. Lastly, normative practices of Pentecostal children's ministry are then proposed. The chapter closes with a conclusion.

3.2 The Core Functions of the Church

The church has a mission or is in a mission in the world, which is the mission of God, that is, *Missio Dei*. This mission informs the church's ministry, which includes children's ministry. It attempts to implement its ministry by doing certain core practices. It is important to unpack these core practices and determine if they assist it in achieving its mission. The performance

of these core functions, or lack thereof, has a bearing on how the church views and implements its mission. The focus of this section is on the developments regarding what different scholars consider as the core practices of the church.

According to Van der Ven (1996:63), the primary or core functions of the church are divided into two groups, namely primary and secondary, and there are four distinctions between the two. The first distinction refers to the frequency and duration of the work. In terms of this, the primary is done or often happens, while the secondary ones occur after a long period. The second relates to the direction of their work, which could be either positive or negative. Moreover, the distinction between the two is said to be normative. The third distinction is the range of their influence. In terms of this, some may have a narrow range while others' range may be broad. The last distinction concerns the function's intentionality or lack thereof (Van der Ven 1996:64 – 65).

Van der Ven (1996:77 – 79) says the four core functions of the church are latency, integration, goal attainment, and adaptation. These are named based on their content. Since he adopted these terms from social sciences, he decided to translate them into 'ecclesiological sense', giving them the following terms respectively, identity, integration, policy and management. According to him, on the one hand, activities in all sectors are wholly determined by the core functions. On the other hand, these core functions find their expression in the sectors (Van der Ven 1996:83). In terms of this, there is mutuality between the two.

Latency refers to the church's convictions, vision and mission (Van der Ven 1996:77). In the past, it was assumed that everybody knew what the church stood for. This is no longer the case, hence the need for the name changes from latency to identity. It is responsible for forming and transforming the Christian identity of the congregation and its members. Integration refers to incorporating and assimilating members. The policy is concerned with forming congregational goals consistent with the congregation's purpose. At the same time, the management function develops structures that assist the organization in pursuing and achieving its goals (Osmer 2005:63).

While what Van der Ven is saying makes much sense, the challenge with his approach is to first approach a theological perspective from a sociological perspective. His approach caused some confusion about what were supposed to be the normative functions of the church. If he

had started with what he termed the sectors, that is, pastoral care, catechetical, liturgy, proclamation, and diacony and then applied social lenses, this would make them more straightforward.

Fields (1998:45; 47; 49), citing Warren (1995), says the five eternal God-ordained ministries of the church are evangelism, worship, fellowship, discipleship and ministry. According to him, these are premised on the following Scriptures. First, Matthew (22:37 – 40), which states that one ought to love the Lord His God with all her/his heart, soul and mind and that one ought to love one's neighbour as oneself. Second, Matthew (28:19 – 20) talks about the Great Commission. Moreover, Apostle Paul in Romans (12:1) talks about worshipping God by presenting our bodies to Him as a living sacrifice. He claims this type of worship refers to celebrating God's presence by honouring Him through our lifestyle, implying our lifestyle should be pleasing in God's sight.

Furthermore, Fields (1998:48 – 51) goes on to explain the purposes of each ministry. He says the purpose of evangelism is to share the gospel with people who do not have a personal relationship with Christ, referencing Acts (1:8). Worship, on the other hand, is limited to singing praise and worship songs, especially in youth services. On the contrary, worship is what humanity is created for, that is, to honour God in everything we do. The purpose of the fellowship is to care for, nurture, hold accountable and encourage one another. Discipleship's purpose is to build up and/or strengthen new believers. It is a lifelong process aiming to bring maturity to the Christian life. Furthermore, the purpose of ministry is to help new believers discover their gifts and use them in service for the Lord and other people.

There seems to be little to choose between some of the ministries Fields mentions. A case in point is the distinction between discipleship and fellowship. He says the purpose of the fellowship is to care for, nurture, hold accountable and encourage one another, while discipleship is to build up or strengthen new believers, which is a lifelong process. New believers cannot remain new forever. If discipleship is a lifelong process, there must be more to it than building up new believers. The same could be said with the fellowship; it is a lifelong process. Again, regarding ministry, Fields could have used a different term for what he refers to as ministry because he refers to other church functions as ministries. Yet, he uses different terms for them to differentiate them from others. The term ministry needs to be clarified better.

However, he clarifies it by his definition, "meeting needs with love". Moreover, he says this could also be achieved by participating in mission work (Fields 1998:50 – 51).

Dean (2004:153), referencing Acts 2:41 – 47), says the contemporary church has only refined instead of improving upon the basic parameters set by the first Christians. According to her, the normative practices of the church are *leitourgia* (liturgy), *koinonia* (hospitality and fellowship), *kerygma* (proclamation), *didache* (teaching and discipleship), *diakonia* (compassion), *diaxologia* (praise and worship), and *marturia* (witness). Dean (2004:154) understands *marturia* (witness) as the centre of them all. In emphasizing the centrality of witness, she says, "In "real life," of course, every act of witness is braided thickly into the others — and more harm comes from over-categorizing than under-categorizing them. The Christian life is a totality, and the acts of witness that compose it resist unravelling thread by thread. The distinctive feature of Christian practice is grace, and divine grace always defies classification". In essence, this implies that we should see the core function of the church in totality. According to her, the church's primary function is to witness the self-giving love of God in Jesus Christ, which should be reflected in every church practice.

Osmer (2005:222 – 223), on the other hand, sees the core practices of congregations in terms of Christ's fivefold office, which are embodied by congregations. He refers to these as congregational Christopraxis, i.e. "a way in which a missional congregation participates in what God did in Christ" (Nel 2018:220). They are as follows: *marturia*, *diakonia*, *doxology*, *didache* and *koinonia*. He says three core practices embody *marturia*, namely; "(1) kerygmatic preaching—the proclamation of the gospel in the context of worship; (2) testimony—the communication of the gospel in personal forms of sharing; and (3) evangelism—witnessing to the gospel outside the community of faith." *Marturia* corresponds to Christ's prophetic office that talks to Christ's proclamation of good tidings on earth.

The core practices that embody *diakonia* correspond to Christ's priestly office. These are: "(1) Eucharist; (2) burden bearing—the congregation's care for its members in times of pain and need; and (3) social outreach—ministries of service and advocacy that provide concrete help to those in need and advocate their cause in the face of social injustice" (Osmer 2005:223). *Doxology* as a congregational Christopraxis corresponds to the transfigured which is the third item of Christ's fivefold office. It talks about the glory and beauty of Christ's eschatological

resurrection. According to Osmer (2005:223), the three core practices in this regard are: "(1) Sabbath keeping—setting aside a day of “rest” for worship and enjoyment of God; (2) the praise of God through music, prayer, psalmody, song, dance, poetry, and other forms of creative self-expression in the context of the gathered community; and (3) recreation—activities affording the enjoyment of God’s creation and the development of the individual’s creative gifts through play, the arts, and so forth.” All these practices are aimed at worshipping and glorifying God.

Again, Osmer (2005:224) says the three core practices relating to *didache* are: “(1) catechesis—handing on Christian Scripture and tradition; (2) exhortation—moral formation and education that enables the congregation to serve as a “contrast society”; and (3) discernment—learning to “test” the spirits to determine the guiding light of the Holy Spirit.” It is interesting to note Osmer mentioning discernment as one of the core practices of congregations, thereby highlighting its critical role in the life of a congregation. If congregations practice discernment as they ought to, they can avoid being deceived by false prophets.

The last congregational Christopraxis that Osmer (2005:224) addresses is *koinonia*, which refers to the congregation's fellowship as a faith community. Allen and Ross (2012:115) regard it as "participation with one another in the life of God and to the communal life it creates." According to Osmer (2005:224), the core practices of *koinonia* are: "(1) baptism—initiation into the fellowship of a community; (2) the affirmation of spiritual gifts—identification and nurture of the charismata of all members of the community; and (3) hospitality—extending to strangers kindness usually reserved for friends and family and demonstrating goodwill in the public sphere through open dialogue with the church's non-Christian partners in history." In essence, *koinonia* ensures that every congregation member becomes a fully-fledged member who feels at home in a congregation and participates in all its life.

The main difference between Dean’s and Osmer’s (2005:225) core practices is that Dean includes *leitourgia* (liturgy) as one of the core functions of a congregation, while the latter leaves it out. In the normative practices that Osmer (2005:225) mentioned, he says they afford a congregational leader a framework for assessing the relative strengths and weaknesses of the Christopraxis of her/his congregation. His focus is on assessing the relative strengths and weaknesses of the congregation's Christopraxis.

Nel (2018: 226), citing Firet (1977; 1986), on the other hand, supports the view that the core practices of the church are interwoven and interdependent but have different modes of ministry. Again, he regards the congregation's core practices as God's way of coming to His people. He says, "God approaches and meets people primarily through the Spirit, the Word, and the ministry of people. The sovereign God can, however, approach and meet people in any way he pleases. All our attempts to understand ministry (pastoral mediation and pastoral role fulfilment) are attempts to explain God's coming by means of his Spirit, his Word, and people's service. As such, our insight and wording are limited and incomplete." (Nel 2018:217).

Again, Nel (2018:220) shares the same perspective as Firet (1986:40) and Dean (2004:153 – 154) that the primary function of the church is *marturia* (witness) of Jesus Christ, and all other functions are built into this one. According to Nel (2018:232 – 239), the comprehensive core practices of the church are *kerugma* or preaching, *leitourgia* or worship service, *didache* or teaching, *paraklesis* or pastoral care, *koinonia* or mutuality, *diakonia* or service, *marturia* or witness and *kubernesis* or administration. As rightly said, Nel's list is comprehensive, considering every function the church does. Again, to avoid confusion, Nel has rightly singled out witness as the church's primary function, which is braided into all others.

In conclusion, the core practices of the church are summed up by *marturia* or witness, as mentioned by several authors. This talks about a mission Jesus gave His disciples when He was about to leave them. He said they shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon them and be His witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8). Again, He said to them, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mt. 28:19 – 20). The two Scriptures summarize the core practices of the church, with *marturia* being the primary one while others are thickly infused with it. *Marturia* may be done in word or deed.

3.3 Pentecostal Theologies: A Perspective on Core Ministries

This section deals with the identity of Pentecostal theologies. Pentecostal theologies explicate the tenets which are regarded as normative among Pentecostals. These are common traits of

Pentecostalism, that is, their confessional identity (Nel 2015:44 – 46). These traits set Pentecostals apart from other movements or Christian traditions regarding their beliefs and practices. Mans (2015:66), using The Church of Pentecost in Ghana as a case study, posits that the core beliefs of Pentecostals are "dogmatic/systematic aspects concerning God, the depravity of man, Jesus as saviour, repentance, justification and sanctification, the sacraments (baptism(s) and the Lord's Supper), the gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit, eternal life, tithes and offerings and divine healing." To Pentecostals, this is normative because it is what makes Pentecostals stand out from other Christian movements. Even though there is no single definition of Pentecostalism, Pentecostals, in their diversity, agree on these and to them, these make them normative. These fall under the below-mentioned core functions of the church, especially *didache*.

The discussion in this section will, however, focus on Pentecostal theologies in respect of the core functions of the church, namely, *kerugma* or preaching, *marturia* or witness, *leitourgia* or worship service, *didache* or teaching, *koinonia* or mutuality and *diakonia* or service. Some beliefs mentioned by Mans find their expression within the core functions of the church discussed below. Attention will then turn to Pentecostal theologies and practices/activities concerning children's ministry. The practices include but are not limited to dedication of children to the Lord, Bible reading or memory verses, praying, praise and worship, partaking in Holy Communion, Christmas and Easter celebrations, evangelism, water baptism and baptism in the Holy Spirit.

3.3.1 *Kerugma* /preaching/ proclamation/ evangelism

Kerugma is understood to mean proclaiming the good news of Jesus in the spoken word (Leland 2014:18). Citing Dempster (1991:25), Leland defines evangelism as follows:

Evangelism is the traditional name we give to the objective of the church's kerygmatic ministry because, in this activity, the church invites people to respond to the 'evangel' being preached. The call to conversion identifies the evangelistic objective resident in the kingdom of God (Dempster 1991:25).

Samuel (2015:6) says that early Pentecostals expressed their theology through testimonies, sermons and journals. To them, the proclamation of the gospel or the good news was through sermons and other means. He claims their intention of proclaiming the gospel was to testify about God's actions in and through them instead of presenting well-articulated theological tenets. They had an earnest quest to experience divine intervention and guidance in ministry. Their main focus was missions; to save souls and plant churches (Samuel 2015:19). This is still the Pentecostals' understanding today.

Again, Samuel (2015:6) says, "The early Pentecostals considered signs and wonders also as a means of divine guidance. They believed that irruptive events such as signs and wonders that accompanied their preaching had a crucial role in influencing the mental disposition of the recipients, which led them to faith in Christ." The statement is supported by Clark *et al.* (1989:77 – 78) when he says, "As in so many other areas of Pentecostal practice, the criteria for validity in preaching is not established in terms of theological sophistication or professional accomplishment, but in terms of effectiveness. Where folks have been saved, delivered from sin, sickness and bondage to evil forces; where real comfort and encouragement have been received; where people have experienced the power of God in Jesus—there the preaching has been successful." It is customary in Pentecostal preaching to expect those mentioned above to occur instead of an intellectual exposition of the Scripture. The same is expected from contemporary Pentecostal preachers or preaching. Being continuationists, Nel (2019:2) says Pentecostals always expect and allow historical biblical events to be re-enacted.

Pentecostals believe that conversion leads to regeneration or being born-again, after which a person is baptized by immersion in water. When they hear the gospel, it is for people who believe it and turn to God for the forgiveness of their sins (John 3:5; Acts 2:38). This is contrary to infant baptism. It marks the beginning of the Christian life (Grudem 1994:699; Cartledge 2008:118; Tomberlin 2015:425; 430). It also comes in response to the preached message that calls people to repentance. People respond by acknowledging their sins, turning to Christ for forgiveness, and trusting Him for their salvation. This experience makes them children of God and members of God's family (John 1:12).

Pentecostal preaching is for both non-believers and believers. Preaching refers to Christ-centred, experienced-certified theology encompassing conversion, sanctification, baptism in

the Holy Spirit, divine healing and other spiritual gifts, and the second coming of Christ (Clark *et al.* 1989:44; Nel 2014:291; Nel 2019:2). Pentecostal preaching is transformational. It always aims at changing or influencing people's behaviour in one way or another. It is believed it is in preaching that the Scripture presents itself as the living Word of God. Again, it is through preaching the Word of God that faith is shaped when people receive the Word of God (Pleizier 2019:438). The Word of God is not only living but powerful as well (Heb. 4:12). Its ability to work is not dependent on the ability and wisdom of the preacher (1Cor. 2:1 – 5). Instead, it is characterized by its dependence on the anointing of the Holy Spirit (White 2015:119). Hence, any member may be given a chance to preach if he/she is believed to be called and anointed to preach. Clark *et al.* (1989:77 – 78) contend that “the criteria for validity in preaching is not established in terms of theological sophistication or professional accomplishment, but in terms of effectiveness. Where folk have been saved, delivered from sin, sickness and bondage to evil forces; where real comfort and encouragement have been received; in effect, where people have experienced the power of God in Jesus.” What matters most in Pentecostal preaching is the impact or effectiveness of the preached message as opposed to the knowledge and ability of the preacher.

Generally, Pentecostals believe in preaching an entire gospel message (*kerugma*) or 'fully experienced gospel'. Pentecostal preaching primarily aims at non-believers whose end goal is their conversion to Christianity. Clark *et al.* (1989:79), citing Yim (1985:81), say, "Preaching is intended to transform the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour of Christians and non-believers through the proclamation of God's word in the power of the Holy Spirit." In Pentecostalism, for preaching to be effective, it is expected to bring visible results in people's lives.

3.3.2 *Marturia* or witness

Marturia or witness is closely linked to preaching. However, in the main, Pentecostals understand it to mean telling others what God has done to them and how He could do the same to others. Witnessing is another form of evangelism. Samuel (2015:9) cautions that even though Pentecostals highly esteem their experience about the workings of God in their lives, they must be Scriptural. Samuel (2015:10), citing Boddy (1911), says, "All experiences should correspond with the Word of God. In this great work, the Scriptures must be our guide. Those

who have any different guide soon wander from the truth." This measure safeguards against any form of error which might creep in. In Acts (1:8), Jesus said to His disciples that they should be His witnesses after they have received power from on high. Based on this text, read together with others, such as 1Pet. (2:9) that Christians are a holy nation chosen to proclaim the praises of Him who called them; Pentecostals regard these texts as a call to every believer to witness Christ.

Bartos (2015:20; 27) posits that Pentecostals derive their name from the Pentecost event that took place in the book of Acts, and therefore, they attempt to work according to the book of Acts. He says, "In the ecclesial practice, the Lucan texts in Acts 2 must be corroborated with the Pauline text of 1Corinthians 12–14 in order to understand the importance that the spiritual gifts have in public worship." Archer (2007:303; 306), support this view by claiming that Pentecostalism is a theological tradition which is narrative. Its "method and manner are organically connected to the body thus affirming a narrative approach that starts from below, among the people who have encountered the Spirit of the living God in community." Every congregation member's witness plays a vital role in spreading the gospel. It is believed that every member who has had an encounter with Christ and is imbued with the Holy Spirit can witness Christ.

3.3.3 *Leitourgia* / liturgy

Alvarado (2012:135 – 136) says people's "liturgical practices demonstrate their understanding of God and their appraisal of the ecclesiastical event." It is in this context that Pentecostal liturgy should be understood. There is a perception among Pentecostals that they are not liturgical because liturgy is regarded as cold formalism and structured inflexibility (Clark *et al.* 1989:69). However, according to Griggs (2017:21), citing Macchia (2006), "their worship is far more ritualized than they recognize." The seemingly liturgical crisis has already been acknowledged and addressed by contrasting it to the structural environment of the established traditions, according to Vondey (2010), as cited by Griggs (2017:23).

Liturgy is defined as "The expression of worship in a gathered community that contains the rituals, primary rites, and practices they engage in while seeking to worship Jesus through the Spirit; the church's collective and embodied actions and behaviours that appropriately express

the movement's attitudes, sensibilities, values, and beliefs regarding the worship of the triune God" (Davis 2021:69) citing Alexander (2016). Pentecostals, in whatever they are doing during the worship service, put a great deal of emphasis on the movement of the Spirit hence opposition to formal, structured and inflexible liturgy.

Pentecostal liturgy emphasizes spontaneity, liberty, and emotional intensity rather than a set of liturgy and uniformity (Clark *et al.* 1989:1; Nel 2016(b):2). Again, Griggs (2017:23) citing *Ibid.*, (128) says, "Over against, a 'conceptually fixed, written, priest-centered, and performance-oriented framework of sacramental celebration, Pentecostal liturgy emerged as a deconstructing, flexible, oral, participation-centered, and pneumatologically oriented 'open arrangement' of worship, prayer, and praise." Clark *et al.* (1989:74) refer to this as the ideal Pentecostal liturgy; "a two-way street, a communication event, in which human beings and God alternate as subject and object." In terms of this interaction, God, as subject, gives people gifts with which to serve Him, and people, as subjects, praise, worship, and adore God.

Generally speaking, there are about five elements of Pentecostal liturgy, namely, praise and worship, prayer, the preached word or sermon, the sacraments, and the alter call and response (Freisen 2017:54; Davis 2021:73). These are not always done in a particular order. The reason for this is the central role Pentecostals put on the working of the Holy Spirit in their gatherings. Pentecostal theology is pneumatic and experiential (Vondey 2023:5). They always seek to be led by an endeavour not to hinder the flow of the Spirit. The core elements of Pentecostal liturgy are briefly discussed below.

The Pentecostal services usually start with prayer, followed by praise and worship. A number of things can happen or be said during this phase of service. For example, people may bow, kneel, clap or raise hands. Others could break into spontaneous shouts of "Praise the Lord," "Thank you, Jesus," or "hallelujah," dance, jump and stomp their feet, and even speak in tongues (*glossolalia*) among others (Davis 2021:75). According to Phillips and Riches (2018:1) Pentecostals regard worship as full-body, participatory engagement with God. All those mentioned above, including spiritual healing and miraculous events, are common hallmarks of Pentecostalism and manifest the presence of God through the Holy Spirit.

Again, during the same phase of service, there could be moments of tarrying to listen to the motion of the Spirit. Albrecht (1999:183 – 185) as cited by Davis (2021:77) says, "In

Pentecostal worship, tarrying could therefore be described as a time during the praise and worship phase of the gathering for everyone present to take part in actively waiting in expectation for God to transform them into empowered witnesses for Jesus as a community.” It is an attempt to simulate what happened during the Pentecost (Acts 2:1 – 4). All these must be done in an orderly manner. To this effect, Paul (1 Cor. 14:26 – 33) instructed the church on how worship should be conducted.

The preached word sermon usually follows worship service. The preaching of a sermon is intended to produce results. Hence, the altar call and response after the sermon (Acts 2:37 – 38; Davis 2021:73). The need for a response from the audience after preaching sometimes opens itself up to manipulation of the context of preaching by some preachers (White 2015:120). It would appear to some that preaching only has an impact when people see or experience supernatural results; hence, others manipulate the context of preaching.

Regarding sacraments, it is generally agreed among Pentecostals that there are two sacraments, namely, water baptism and the Lord’s Supper (Grudem 1994:951; Davis 2021:85). Sacraments are “prime symbols” or activities that God uses as means of grace within the fellowship of believers. They are also a way to obey Christ’s specific commandments (Mt. 28:19; 1Cor. 11:25; Grudem 1994:950; Davis 2021:86). Others, however, include the washing of feet. Baptisms are normally performed when there are new members, while the Lord’s Supper may be eaten once a week or once a month, depending on the preference of that particular congregation.

In conclusion, Pentecostal liturgy comprises prayer, praise and worship, preached word usually followed by a response and altar call, and in the main, the two sacraments, namely, baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

3.3.4 Worship

According to Van Leersum–Bekerbrede (2021:1), worship is “used as a stand-in for the more technical term liturgical ritual, which is broader than the regular use of the word worship.” On the contrary to the Pentecostals the word worship has a broad usage and represents a set of meanings. Albrecht (2014:n.p.) posits that Pentecostals understand the word to have three

main connotations, namely, “1) worship as a way of Christian life, particularly outside of the church services and activities. All of life is seen as worship, as an expression, a gift, offered to God; 2) worship as the entire liturgy, the whole of the Pentecostal service, and 3) worship as a specific portion, aspect, or rite within the overall liturgy.” The focus of this section is on the third part since the first two are covered above under liturgy.

Alvarado (2012:139) mentions the following as part of Pentecostal tenets of worship; “Spirit movement, passionate praise, emotional release, and spiritual gifts in operation, make its expression a transformative, vibrant, and moving encounter with the divine.” Again, Alvarado (2012:139 – 140), citing Tomberlin (2006), says, “Pentecostalism is a *Spirit-movement*; therefore, Pentecostals favor worship in which the Spirit *moves*. For Pentecostals, worship means experiencing the Holy Spirit in the fellowship of the Church.” They always strive to encounter the Spirit's presence in their worship services.

Churches are also oriented to the faith and life in the Spirit through the discipline of worship. Spirit-filled worship ushers the church into an authentic and meaningful relationship with God and each other.” To the Pentecostal, Spirit-filled worship is dynamic and cannot be predetermined, and as Jesus said, the wind blows where it wishes, and one hears the sound of it, but one does not know where it is coming from and where it is going (John 3:8).

Other characteristic features of Pentecostal worship service are oral liturgy, narrative theology and witness, maximum participation of the whole community in worship service, the inclusion of visions and dreams into public worship, and the understanding of the relationship between body and mind manifested by healing through prayer (Grudem 1994:763; Gooren 2004:n.p). Pentecostals believe in the priesthood of all believers. All members participate as equals and are open to the motion of the Spirit (1Pet. 2:9; Nel 2019:2), and the “Pentecostal hermeneutics involves an interplay between the Spirit, the community, and the Scripture, which generates biblical readings that shape the storied and shared life of Spirit-filled communities” (Clifton 2017:10). The Spirit empowers every member to play a role in the body of Christ as an equal. Members can contribute meaningfully to the body of Christ without an individual standing or rank.

Pentecostals have been grappling with and will continue to do so in the future is the challenge of allowing free movement of the Spirit while simultaneously minimizing the risk of counterfeit

experiences. Clark *et al.* (1989:70) caution that any movement striving for the ideal of freedom in the Spirit operates at a risk. Therefore, there is a need for some measure of structured worship in the form of formal liturgies, which would help the Spirit's movement while bringing some form of order. However, the researcher contends that the Scripture gives a guide in dealing with the matter. In 1Corinthians (14:26 – 33), Paul guides how Christian worship should be conducted. The researcher is of the opinion that following this guideline would minimize the risk.

3.3.5 *Didache* / teaching

Nel (2014:298) acknowledges the broad spectrum of Pentecostalism, appreciating the difficulty of explaining comprehensive Pentecostal teaching. However, he says their inclusive teaching manifests in what is generally known as "full gospel". Citing both Land (1993:6) and the Statement of Truth of the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America (1948) by Nichol (1966:4 – 5), he says the "full gospel" includes the following aspects: the salvation of the soul, healing for the body and baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues, and the premillennial return of Christ. Nel (2014:298) says that to some Pentecostals, the "full gospel" doctrine has five strands or aspects, while others prefer four strands, namely, salvation, healing, baptism in the Spirit, and the second coming of Christ. Moreover, these seemed to have gained more traction than the former.

First, in terms of the four strands of the "full gospel" regarding salvation or regeneration, every church member has to experience it, that is, salvation or be "born again". Grudem (1994:699) defines regeneration as "A secret act of God in which He imparts new spiritual life in us" (John 3:3 – 8). Nel (2014:301) says, "each member of the church must be able to testify of the conviction of sin as a function of the Spirit leading to a personal meeting with God, and the experience that one's sins have been forgiven." When a person acknowledges that she/he is a sinner through conviction by the Holy Spirit and needs forgiveness from God, would then pray to Him, and God, in turn, by His sovereign will, forgives him/her and makes him/her His child. Cartledge (2008:118 – 119) summarizes regeneration or new birth by citing Wakefield (2007), who claims that Christian life begins when a person is born again, while conversion

refers to how a person seeks God and, as a result, receives a new birth. Furthermore, when a person is born again, she/he is regarded as a child of God (John 1:12 – 13).

Second, concerning sanctification, it is believed that Jesus Christ is the Sanctifier of believers. All they need to do is live a life of prayer, seeking daily after the Spirit that sanctifies them. Sanctification is regarded not as a sinless life but rather as the empowerment by the Spirit to live triumphantly over sin. Nevertheless, the believer is subject to temptation but is given the power to choose against it (Nel 2014:301). Grudem (1994:747 – 754) says sanctification is a three-stage process. First, it starts with regeneration. Second, it increases throughout a lifetime. Third, it is completed at death. Again, sanctification has distinct roles for God and human beings. God's roles are to sanctify, discipline and cause them to want to do His will and work to His pleasure, as well as give them the power to do these. On the other hand, man's role is both passive and active. In terms of the former, man depends on God to sanctify him/her and concerning the latter, he/she has to strive to obey God by taking appropriate or necessary steps.

The third point is baptism in the Spirit. Tomberlin (2015:423) posits that “The singular distinctive of Pentecostalism is that the Holy Spirit moves.” He contends that the Holy Spirit inspires a diversity of tongues. This distinctive Pentecostal identity is interpreted as a visitation by the Holy Spirit, which is about the Day of Pentecost as described in Acts chapter 2 (Fer 2018:1725). It is the Spirit that gives utterance (Acts 2:4). Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues is regarded by many Pentecostals as normative (Bozung 2004:91; Nel 2014:302).

Moreover, Pentecostals generally agree that Spirit baptism is a post-conversion experience that empowers people to witness to the world (Grudem 1994:764-765; Cartledge 2012:589). The apportioning of the gifts of the Spirit is His prerogative (Grudem 1994:784; 1Cor. 12:11). There is no definite period within which this may occur. In some instances, it may happen at the same time when a person is being born again (Acts 9:17) or at a later stage (Acts 19:2; 6; Acts 10:44 – 46). To the Pentecostals, the primary purpose of Spirit baptism is to empower Christians to witness Christ. It also enables them to perform healing and miraculous signs evidenced during the first-century church (Acts 1:8; Mark 16:17 – 18).

Furthermore, even though Pentecostals are not a homogeneous group and represent a diverse spectrum of beliefs and practices, however, they "find their authentic identity in the experience of Spirit filling and/or baptism as a leap into a new dimension of encountering God 'and the experience of charismata' " (Nel 2016(b):1; Nel 2017:1). Many regard this experience as normative and consider it a distinctively Pentecostal phenomenon that gives them their identity. In some instances, people were filled with the Holy Spirit but did not speak in tongues (Luke 1:15; 41; Acts 4:31). What is evident, though, with the Spirit filling and/or baptism in the Holy Spirit, is that something would happen as evidence that either experience has taken place. The experience attests to an assertion by Tomberlin (2015:423) that "The Spirit moves".

Fourth is the eschatological expectation; early Pentecostals were preoccupied with the second coming of Christ to the extent that some refused to work. They believed that Jesus was about to return at any time. As a result, Paul wrote that those who refused to work should not be given food (2Thess. 3:10). This expectation has led to some not valuing education and believing that all they need is the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Nel (2014:303 – 304) contends that due to their overzealous eschatological expectation, Pentecostals interpret countless events as signs of the times pointing to the eminent end, which poses a danger in their view regarding the authority of the Bible. Citing Travis (1980:90), he accordingly advises them to understand that the imminence of the second coming refers to the suddenness with which it will occur as opposed to its immediacy. Furthermore, they need to "experience the Spirit's groaning in anticipation of God's reign in the new world." Therefore, Pentecostals must focus on doing God's work while waiting for Christ's return rather than paying more attention to the signs of the time since they have been there even during the first century.

3.3.6 *Koinonia* / fellowship

Kärkkäinen (2001(a):100 – 121) in Kärkkäinen (2007:2) says Pentecostals regard the church as a fellowship of persons that make up the body of Christ. Gheorghe-Luca (2021:97) and Toh (2019:22) add that it is a fellowship of holy people or saints and "a fellowship of committed believers, submitting their will to Christ's lordship in the power of the Spirit", respectively. Kärkkäinen (2007:4) further says, "In its basic meaning, *koinonia* denotes sharing,

participation, community, communion at the spiritual, social, even material level. There is a Trinitarian and pneumatological dimension to the biblical notion of *koinonia*." Moreover, Pentecostals seemed to limit or focus fellowship on the personal rather than its structural, sacramental, or ecumenical aspects.

However, Toh (2019:21) put Pentecostals' view of *koinonia* into a proper perspective by citing Ephesians (1: 4 – 14), emphasizing that the church is a spiritual reality that existed before the beginning of the world and individual Christians. They emphasize the role of the local congregation and opt for greater 'freedom' of the Spirit while regarding established church structures such as denominations and ecumenical as subordinate to the movement of the Spirit. They see the importance of those structures as guaranteeing order (Kärkkäinen 2007:6). Order is necessary for the proper functioning of any structure. However, it should not hinder the free movement of the Spirit.

Again, Kärkkäinen (2007:9), citing Macchia (2006:9; 205; 219), says the Pentecostal's view of *koinonia* is premised on Luke's theology of Spirit baptism as articulated in the book of Acts. Macchia stresses that the Spirit is the Spirit of communion. That is why it led "to shared love, shared meals, shared mission, and the proliferation/ enhancement of an interactive charismatic life." Moreover, even though the Spirit's baptismal is personal, it is not necessarily an individual experience. Furthermore, regarding Pentecostalism embracing the Spirit in the church, Kärkkäinen (2007:10) says that from the beginning, the early Pentecostals have done something at the heart of the biblical vision of *koinonia*.

Adding to that, he indicates that they, however, were not without theological error. The error was due to their sincere, intense eschatological hope, which to some extent blurred their focus concerning the link between *koinonia*, mission and social justice. They were missing that the Spirit's presence empowers the church now and sustains it as an eschatological community.

3.3.7 *Diakonia* / service

According to Osmer (2005:223), the core practices that embody *diakonia* in a congregation are (1) Eucharist – giving of thanks for Christ's love, (2) burden bearing, which is directed at the members during their difficult times, and (3) social outreach with ministries of service aimed at

those outside the church. In the Pentecostal theological context, the "movement of the Spirit" leads the ministry and involves the participation of all believers. Kärkkäinen (2000:40), citing Penney (N.d), says, Pentecostals regard Spirit-baptism, as seen in Luke-Acts 2, as a normative experience that empowers every Christian to preach the gospel or perform any act of service.

Clark *et al.* (1989:75 – 76) contend that even though Pentecostals believe in the priesthood of all believers (1Pet. 2:9), they also recognize that some among them are called to full-time ministry (Eph.4:11 – 12). In contrast, others may be called to do other services, such as song leaders, musicians, deacons, administrators, etc. In terms of Pentecostals, there are two distinctive rites regarding service within or without the church, namely, "(1) every Spirit-filled believer has a contribution to make, and (2) every contribution is only valid insofar as it can be traced back to the dynamic activity of God."

There have been criticisms from some quarters against Pentecostals regarding their approach to service. Kärkkäinen (2000:46), referring to the criticisms, says they "assumed Pentecostals are indifferent to and even obstructionist in their attitudes towards the fundamental issues of social injustice, repression, discrimination, corruption, and poverty." Their focus seems to be mainly on practical missions and evangelism. Again, Kärkkäinen (2000:38) says, "Holy Spirit and eschatology are the aspects that seem to be the most impending for any kind of distinctive Pentecostal theology of mission." This assertion is supported by Leland (2014:18), who contends that Pentecostals emphasize spiritual and eschatological salvation at the expense of the intrinsic value of social efforts. They do not usually take a holistic approach to balance proclamation with the works of mercy.

In response, Kärkkäinen (2000:47 – 48), citing Petersen (N.d), says Pentecostalism is a "social program" as opposed to just being a movement "for the people", and Pentecostals do not generally have written statements concerning "preferential option for the poor" since most of their churches are of the poor. Furthermore, citing McClung (1994), he says that:

Although the Pentecostal mission focuses on evangelization, it is not to the exclusion of social concern and never has been. So, the "broader mission" (holistic) has been part and parcel of the Pentecostal branch of the family "as an automatic outgrowth of its prioritization" of the Great Commission.

Leland (2014:25) highlights a growing consciousness concerning the two "pillars of mission" among the contemporary Pentecostals that call themselves "progressive Pentecostals". The group understands their mission as not one but two-pronged. They see *diakonia* and evangelism as part of the same mission and, therefore, seek to strike a balance between them.

In conclusion, Samuel (2015:1) says Pentecostals ground "their beliefs and practices in Scripture and consider experiences of the early apostles recorded in the Lukan narrative as a normative for their mission ventures." Nel (2017:1) posits that Pentecostals prefer to experience as a precondition for formulating doctrine and theology based on a hermeneutical lens that allows them to read the Bible in a specific way. Moreover, citing Asamoah-Gyadu (2012:66), he says, "From their experience, they speak about God in a certain way that one can perhaps call 'Pentecostal talk'."

There is, however, normativity to this, which enables them to distinguish the genuine one. Clark *et al.* (1989:48 – 89) clarify it as follows, "Normative experience is thus normally non-ecstatic, as far as Pentecostals are concerned. However, their perception of the sovereignty of God's Spirit does not deny the possibility of ecstatic. However, it demands nevertheless that it be clear and the working of God's Spirit, and not any other." He furthermore says that in cases involving emotions, they have a way of discerning authentic emotional experience by noting the longer-term effect of such experience in the subjects' lives.

These experiences, doctrines and theology based on a hermeneutical lens and the 'Pentecostal talk' give Pentecostals their unique identity. They also allow every Pentecostal to identify Pentecostal practices and those that are not, even though there are still some minor differences among them, hence the many forms of Pentecostals.

3.4 Theological Grounding of Pentecostal Children's Ministry Practices

These above were general Pentecostal ministries. Now, the focus is on Pentecostal children's ministry. This section discusses the following children's ministry practices: dedication of children to the Lord, Bible reading or memory verses, praying, praise and worship, partaking in Holy Communion, Christmas and Easter celebrations, evangelism, water baptism and baptism in the Holy Spirit. Attempts were made to give a theological grounding to these

practices. However, these should be seen in the context that Pentecostals are not a homogeneous group, and as such, there could be some differences among them even in this regard.

3.4.1 Dedication of infants and/or children to the Lord

According to Tomberlin (2018:15), infant dedication among Pentecostals “is understood to be a faith commitment by the parents and the local church to properly rear the child in the faith.” It is not believed to bring about salvation to a child. It is rather a sign by both the parents and the local congregation’s commitment of their intention to bring the child up in the ways of the Lord. It is pedagogical.

Infant dedication practice is equivalent to infant baptism in other Christian traditions. Contrasting the Roman Catholic spirituality against the Anabaptist, Tomberlin (2018:4) says with the former, “Original sin is remedied in infant baptism, mediated by the priest, through which the infant is born again through the agency of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, in Anabaptist spirituality, “Original sin is remedied by faith in Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit in a believer who possesses rational accountability. Pentecostals, therefore, believe baptism is for persons who are old enough to comprehend the teachings of the gospel, assimilate them and make a logical and conscious decision to accept them.

Theologically, Pentecostals premised the practice on the following Scriptures: I Sam. 1: 22; 25 – 28; Mt. 19:13 – 15; Mark 10:13 – 16 and Luke 2:27 – 28; 18:15 – 16. In 1Samuel chapter 1, Hannah asked for a child from God, and when God answered her prayer by giving her a male child she returned to the temple to “dedicate” the child to the Lord. She further said she lent the child to the Lord forever.

In Luke (2:27 – 28), Jesus, as a child, was brought to the temple to do to Him according to the law, and when that was done, Simeon took Him in his hands and blessed God. Concerning Matthew (19:13 – 15), Mark (10:13 – 16) and Luke (18:15 – 16), children were brought to Jesus to lay hands on them. In terms of the latter, it does not seem to be normative to bring children to Jesus to lay hands on them. However, Jesus rebuked those who prohibited the act and instead endorsed it.

In the light of the above-cited Scriptures, Pentecostals believe infants and/or children ought to be dedicated to the Lord through the laying on of hands by the church elders instead of having them baptized. Baptism is believed to be for those who are able to rationally make a confession of repentance from sin and put their faith in Jesus for salvation.

3.4.2 Bible-reading and memory verses

In the Pentecostal context, the reading to and teaching children the Word of God in the form of memory verses are largely premised on the following Scriptures: Deuteronomy (6:1 – 9; Gen. 18:19; Jos. 1:8 and Pro. 22:6) among others. Again, in the New Testament, Paul taught in house churches that had children and from time-to-time children were addressed or taught as well in those house churches (Eph. 6:1 – 3; Col. 3:20).

According to Deuteronomy (6:1–9), the greatest commandment, statutes and judgments that God commanded His people to keep were that they were to fear the Lord their God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, and this command extended to their children and grandchildren. They were to teach them diligently to their children wherever they were.

Regarding Abraham, since he had a covenant with God that included his offspring (Gen. 17:7) it was required of him to teach his children about the same. God (Gen. 18:19) expected him to command his children after him, including his entire household, to keep the way of the Lord. Moreover, God, after the passing of Moses, the servant of the Lord, instructed Joshua to make sure the book of the Law of God does not depart from his mouth, meditate in it day and night, and observe to do according to what is written in it. Furthermore, in Proverbs (22:6), the Bible commands parents to train a child in a way he/she should live so that when he/she is grown up, he/she will not depart from it.

Again, when Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians (6:1 – 3), he directly commanded children to obey and honour their parents as a commandment from the Lord with a promise. This command he stresses again in Colossians (3:20). Again, he instructed the fathers to bring their children up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

The above-cited Scriptures anchor the practice of Bible reading and teaching memory verses to children. Pentecostals believe by continually reading and teaching Scriptures to and making children memorize and repeat them in the course of that, they will be spiritually formed.

3.4.3 Prayer, praise and worship

In Pentecostal tradition, prayer, praise and worship go together. Every service starts with prayer. It is one of the foremost practices that are done with the children. Other Pentecostal children's ministry practices falling in this category include the following forms of praise and worship: singing while clapping or lifting hands, dancing, and playing musical instruments, among others.

Prayer is a way of communicating with God as our creator. Christ's disciples, after having observed Him praying, felt a need for Him to teach them how to pray. He, therefore, taught them what became commonly known as the Lord's Prayer (Mt. 6:9 – 13). In Pentecostal children's ministry, following this example, children are taught to pray. Prayer serves a number of purposes that include, among others, making supplication, expressing gratitude to God and not worrying about anything, but instead praying to God about everything (Phil. 4:6 – 7), prioritizing and showing dependence on God (Mark 1:35), trusting and perseverance (Luke 18:1), as well as guarding against temptation. Paul (1Thess. 5:17) encourages Christians to pray without ceasing. Basically, prayer covers every area of a Christian's life, and it is a daily matter.

Regarding praise and worship, God created human beings for the same reason. He explicitly states that He formed people for Himself that they shall declare His praise (Isa. 43:21). Again, the Bible commands, "everything that has breath praise the Lord." Children, as part of humanity, are also created to praise and worship God. The Bible gives different ways of praising and worshipping God. These include singing with harp, trumpet, and horn, making a joyful shout and dancing before the Lord (Psalm 47:1; 98:5; 100:2; 149:3; 2Sam. 6:14).

Again, God expects particular praise and worship from children, for He ordained them for that. When the chief priests and scribes saw signs and wonders performed by Jesus and children crying out in praise to Him, saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they became indignant and

asked Him to silence them. Instead, Jesus said to them, “Yes. Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise’?” (Mt. 21:15 – 16; Psalm 8:2). The declaration by Jesus concerning what the children were saying indicated that they were naturally doing what they were ordained to do.

Furthermore, in the practice of praise and worship, there is mutual benefit when adults listen and learn from the children (Hancock 2020:17). As the Psalmist (145:4) says, “One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts.” Adults are enlightened when they hear children glorify God, and equally, children are filled with joy and have a sense of being appreciated by the worshipping community.

3.4.4 Partaking in Holy Communion

As indicated earlier, Pentecostals are not a homogenous group. Others may allow children to partake in the Lord’s Supper, while others may not. However, theologically, this practice is based on the following Scriptures: Exodus 12:1–13; MK. 14:22 – 26; Luke 22:19 – 20; 1Cor. 11: 17 – 34). In Exodus (12:1 – 13) which foreshadowed the Lord’s Supper, God instructed Moses to speak to the children of Israel to slaughter a lamb or goat without a blemish. They were to roast this lamb on fire, eat its meat and put its blood on their doorposts and lintels of their houses. All members of each Israelite household, including children, were to eat the roasted meat and stay in the house whose lintel and doorposts were sprinkled with the blood in order to be safe when an angel of death came to kill the Egyptians.

Mark (14:22 – 26) and Luke (22:19 – 20) explain how the Lord conducted the Supper, while Paul (1Cor. 11:17 – 34) talks about the conduct of the partakers of the Lord’s Supper. In all these Scriptures, no reference is made to children’s participation or lack thereof.

For those who exclude children from partaking in the Lord’s Supper, they rely on the following Scriptures for justification: Romans (6:3 – 5), John (1:12), and Romans (10:9 – 10), among others. In Romans (6:3 – 5), Paul implies that those who have been baptized were baptized in His death and raised to walk in the newness of life. Based on the Pentecostal doctrine, baptism is only for those who believe in Christ as their saviour and Lord. Therefore, the same can claim

to have been baptized into Christ's death and are now walking in the newness of life and, as such, can partake in the Lord's Table.

Again, Paul in Romans (10:9 – 10) clarifies how a person gets saved. The process is supported by John (1:12) saying, for those who received Christ He gave them the right to become children of God. These Scriptures affirm that even children can become children of God, be baptized and partake of the Lord's Table.

3.4.5 Christmas and Easter celebrations

In Pentecostal traditions children take part in celebrating both Christmas and Easter. In the main part, they take part in drama and sketches where they play different roles. For example, one may play the role of Mary, the mother of Jesus, one as Joseph, while another as Jesus as a child lying in a manger. Others can play a part as angels proclaiming the birth of Jesus to the shepherds (Luke 2:1 – 20). During Easter celebrations, children depicting Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem were among those who shouted, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord" Peace in the heavens and glory in the highest." (Mt. 21:16; Luke 19:37 – 40).

3.4.6 Evangelism/preaching

Evangelism or preaching of the Word of God in children's ministry plays a central role. Almost in every service, the Word of God is proclaimed. Albrecht (2014:n.p) says, "Pentecostals employ the term *"the word"* to symbolize the belief that God speaks. And that "God speaks today," as in the past, i.e., that God speaks to God's people even as God spoke in the biblical times." The word is proclaimed in the hope that the Holy Spirit will convict the hearts of those who hear and receive it in their lives in the process (John 1:12; Acts 2:37; Heb. 4:12; Pro. 22:6). The Word of God plays a critical role in shaping and moulding children in the ways of God (2Tim. 3:16 – 17). Furthermore, children are taught the word in order to grow up observing the ways of God that will give them success in their lives (Jos. 1:8).

3.4.7 Water and Holy Spirit baptism

According to the Pentecostal tradition, children are dedicated to the Lord and not baptized. However, those who have reached the age of consent, that is, those who are able and choose to accept and put their trust in Christ as their Lord and saviour, are baptized (John 1:12; Roman 10:9 -10). There is no specific age for this. It is expected that if anyone is in Christ, she/he will bear fruit or walk not according to her/his former ways since now she/he is a new creation (Luke 3:8; 11 – 14; 2Cor. 5:17 – 18; Eph. 4:17 – 24).

Once a child has accepted Christ as the saviour and Lord of her/his life, he/she is considered eligible to be baptized in water. Pentecostals believe that baptism is a public confession of the inward faith (Luke 3: 3; Acts 16:31 – 33). Regarding baptism of the Holy Spirit, they believe that it is a gift of God to His children, which is given as per God's promise to His children (Mt. 3:11; Acts: 1:8; 38 – 39).

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is sovereignly given and, as such, is not dependent on people regarding who should have it and when (Acts 2:1 – 4; 10: 44 – 45; 1Cor. 12:11). Children like all other believers may be baptized with the Holy Spirit, and God does this through His Spirit at a time determined by Him.

3.5 Summary

Generally speaking, the main Pentecostal children's ministry has the following practices: dedication of children to the Lord, Bible-reading or memory verses, praying, praise and worship, partaking in Holy Communion, Christmas and Easter celebrations, evangelism, water baptism and baptism in the Holy Spirit. The theological grounding of these practices is premised on the following Scriptures: dedication (Luke 2:27 – 28; Mark 10:13 – 16), Scripture-reading and memory verses (Deut. 6:1 – 9; Gen. 18:19; Pro. 22:6), prayer, as well as praise and worship (Mt. 6:9 – 13; Phil. 4:6 – 7; 1 Thess. 5:17). Other practices such as water and Spirit baptisms may happen at certain stages of children's spiritual lives. While water baptism is dependent on the child's accepting Christ as a personal saviour (Mt. 28:19; Rom. 10:9 – 10), on the contrary, baptism of the Holy Spirit is a gift from God (Acts 2:38; 1Cor. 12:11). Partaking in Holy Communion by children is handled differently by different groupings. Others believe it

is for those who have made a faith confession (1Cor. 11:17 – 34) and, therefore, are able to understand what the Lord's Supper stands for, while others regard children as part of the covenant (Ex. 12:1 – 13). All these forms the core of the theological premise for Pentecostal children's ministry.

3.6 Proposed Normative Practices of Pentecostal Children's Ministry

The ultimate goal of Pentecostal children's ministry is the faith formation of the children through which it is hoped that children will be born again as this marks the beginning of their Christian life (Grudem 1994:699; Cartledge 2008:118; Tomberlin 2015:425; 430). It must, however, be noted that faith formation is not an activity but a process. Muller (2015:6) defines it as "the process of being formed and transformed to know, love and serve the Triune God. This process is done through the work of the Holy Spirit. It is an overall process and includes all the people (faith community), micro—and macro influences and processes that are consciously or unconsciously involved." Therefore, the practices/activities done in children's ministry and those done by the whole faith community together with or to the children or where children are part of those practices or services form part of this process. With Pentecostals, for children's ministry to be regarded as effective, it must achieve this goal.

Again, an effective children's ministry must be hospitable to children in its approach. Furthermore, it should have the following tenets: relational, intergenerational, narrative and missional (Coetsee and Grobbelaar 2013:1). Mans (2015:40), citing Malherbe (2004:1), proposes "a ministry that accommodates five distinct processes which entail a forming process, growing process, a nurturing process that focuses on care and protection, a socialization process where children are placed midst relationships and a healing process for the broken and wounded children. These processes are understood as happening within the contexts of the home, church, community and school." All these processes work in tandem to achieve a common objective.

This section attempts to propose normative children's ministry practices that accord with the hospitality paradigm as envisaged by Coetsee and Grobbelaar (2013:1) with the following principles: relational, intergenerational, narrative and missional. This approach would integrate the five distinct processes into it, mentioned by Malherbe (2004:1) above, as cited by Mans

(2015:40). These would then be applied to the existing Pentecostal practices/activities, namely, dedication, Bible-reading or memory verses, praying, praise and worship, partaking in Holy Communion, Christmas and Easter celebrations, evangelism, water baptism and baptism in the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, these practices would be subsumed under the core functions of the church.

3.6.1 *Kerugma* (Evangelism/proclamation)

According to Fredericks (2019:38), the evangelistic emphasis of Sunday school (Children's ministry) did not happen until both parents and pastors became aware of the ministry's potential to convert or win children to Christ. It is now envisioned as the primary purpose of having children's ministry. Children's ministry in Pentecostal congregations should aim at bringing children to Christ. The Scripture says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...." (Rom. 3:23). The message that is preached to adults must be preached to children as well, but in a language that they would understand.

Different methods should be applied when preaching to children. These may include but are not limited to storytelling, drama and role-play. Even in the leading church service, when children are part of it, the preaching should accommodate them. Coetsee and Grobbelaar (2013:31) say, "It is possible to 'preach' in such a way that even a child can understand, without compromising on the theological depth or radical appeal of the Word. Child-friendly preaching, however, is far more than a 'children's sermon' once in a while. A narrative approach to proclamation is one example of proper inclusive *kerugma*." Again, there should be times when children are given a chance to preach the gospel in whatever form they can.

Every attempt must be made to include children in the gospel proclamation. The emphasis here is to be alive to having children as part of the church. In order to achieve this, there must be a paradigm shift regarding how we usually conduct our church services.

3.6.2 Worship service

The children's ministry should strive to have a Christo-Pneumatic ecclesiology. The emphasis should be on encountering Christ and His Spirit during the worship service (Nel 2014:300 –

301). Again, in citing Tomberlin (2010:34), he says in this type of worship, "the values pursued are to encounter Christ and the Spirit in the course of the worship service." The worship service should create a conducive environment for the free movement of the Spirit. Children should be allowed to pray, read the Scripture, praise and worship, have quiet time in the Lord's presence and experience the Spirit's movement. They should also be allowed to express what they feel inside them. Sometimes they should be allowed to lead the worship service in children's ministry and the main service as well.

3.6.3 *Didache* / teaching

Regarding teaching children the Word of God, the goal should be to instruct them in the way of the Lord to the extent that they echo the words of the master (Lupi N.d). Instruction should include all the counsel of God (Acts 20:27), from Genesis to Revelation, and from the existence of God, the creation of all things, including that of man. This should also include the perfect state in which God created all things, the fall of man and the depravity of man. This must also comprise man's inability to save himself and God's plan of salvation through the promised Messiah. The coming of the Messiah, His reign, death and resurrection.

Among other essential teachings of the Pentecostals are water baptism, the Lord's Supper and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In terms of these, the following questions become essential: who should be baptized, and what does it mean? What is the meaning of the Lord's Supper, and how should it be observed? Questions that should be addressed are what it means to be baptized and/or filled with the Holy Spirit, what the gifts of the Holy Spirit are, and how they can be exercised. These and other topics, such as the second coming of Christ and final judgment, have to be taught.

The primary responsibility of teaching children the Word of God belongs to the parents. Parents must assume responsibility from the moment children are born. Nevertheless, if parents do not have the know-how, the church and the faith community must intervene by empowering them. The help could be in the form of leaflets, tracts or in person, whereby one member of the congregation can visit the family and have a devotion with them until they can do it on their own. Practices such as praying, Scripture-reading, teaching, memory verses and games may be done with the children as well.

When the children are old enough to be part of children's ministry, the church, through volunteer workers/teachers, should work together with parents and/or caretakers to teach the children the Word of God. After each service, parents at home should go through the lesson with a child/children to know what he/she or they learnt and establish if they understood it or not and assist where necessary.

The whole faith community at church or in the community, by its behaviour and exercising of its gifts when serving God and others, helps children learn important lessons regarding living out their faith.

3.6.4 *Koinonia* / fellowship

The core activities of *koinonia* in Pentecostal children's ministry start with the dedication of children to the Lord. This is a practice whereby children from infancy are brought to the church to be dedicated to the Lord by laying hands and praying for them by the pastors, as happened with Jesus (Luke 2:28). After that, the parents would go back home with a child and the leadership does not attempt to ensure the child is brought up in the discipline of the Lord. The parents may bring the child to church to join the children's ministry later. Some children do not return, especially if the other parent is not saved or is attending another church. Other activities include attendance of children's ministry services where children are taught the Scripture in general, including memory verses, as well as drama, among others. In some congregations, children are separated according to their age groups, while in others, they are placed together. The latter usually happens when there is a lack of resources in the form of infrastructure and enough teachers/volunteer workers.

Concerning the dedication of children to the Lord, it is proposed that a team comprising an elder, a volunteer worker/teacher and one or two parents should be formed. This team will follow up on children dedicated to the Lord regarding their spiritual nurturing and give parents support until they are absorbed in children's ministry.

Again, the same team should monitor the work of all the volunteer workers/teachers and the progress of different groups in the children's ministry to help or suggest intervention measures if needed. Furthermore, children of the same age group who may be in the same group or class

in children's ministry should be encouraged to form a network that they will use to share ideas and tips concerning raising their children in line with the Lord's discipline.

Children's ministry should have activities that all children participate in, irrespective of age, to socialize them across all age groups. They should be part of all other church activities such as baptism, the Lord's Supper, Easter and Christmas celebrations, not as spectators but playing a role commensurate with their gifts and abilities where possible.

3.6.5 *Diakonia* / service

Service or ministry should not be the mission of youth and/or adults only. Children must also be involved in all church activities of *diakonia*. Children's ministry must have activities in all the areas of service identified by the church and even in those that the Spirit may lead them to do. Some of the activities may include giving thanks for Christ's love by doing some acts of love, helping their fellow members during their difficult times, and reaching out to society not only through preaching but helping those in need, such as those in old age, hospices and hospitals (Osmer 2005:223). There should be specific dates set aside for children in this ministry.

3.6.6 *Marturia* / witness

The researcher concurs with Dean (2004:154) regarding her understanding of *marturia* (witness) as being at the centre of them all. She says every act of witness is braided thickly into other core functions of the church. Similarly, any other children's ministry act or practice that might not have been included in the above proposed normative practices would form part of the witness.

3.6.7 *Kubernesis* / administration

Lastly, administration must be normative in children's ministry. Every entity or organization needs an administration to run its affairs properly. The administration is required to organize, direct, allocate resources and address challenges whenever they arise. If there is no administration directly responsible for a particular organization or entity, its affairs or concerns

are not always attended to quickly enough. Again, a person assigned an oversight role in that organization should be of a higher-ranking position in order to make decisions whenever necessary without always having to refer them to a high authority. Nel (2018:239 – 240) refers to administration as a ministry Paul talks about in 1Corinthians (12:28), and he further says this ministry is about caring guidance and leadership to ensure that it achieves its goals.

3.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, Chapter 3 focused on the following five core normative functions of the church: *leitourgia*, *didache*, *kerugma*, *koinonia* and *diakonia*. Others add *marturia* or witness and *kubernesis* or administration to the list. In some instances, activities under the functions overlap; hence, Dean (2004:154) contends that *marturia* encompasses other core functions. All these core functions are also found in Pentecostal theology; however, the emphasis may be more on some than others.

The chapter also discussed Pentecostal theology, which is generally referred to as the "full gospel". The theology is premised on four pillars, namely, regeneration, sanctification, baptism of the Holy Spirit and eschatological expectation. Regarding the proposed normative practices in Pentecostal children's ministry, the chapter subsumed the existing practices under the core functions of the church. Again, the hospitality paradigm of Coetsee and Grobbelaar (2013:1) with the following principles: relational, intergenerational, narrative and missional was added. Furthermore, an attempt was made to infuse into the proposed normative practices the five distinct processes by Malherbe (2004:1) as cited by Mans (2015:40), namely, "a forming process, growing process, a nurturing process that focuses on care and protection, a socialization process where children are placed midst relationships and a healing process for the broken and wounded children." It is hoped that all these can work together to achieve a common objective.

In a nutshell, this chapter dealt with the normative regarding the ministry of the church and Pentecostal theologies and proposed the normative for Pentecostal children's ministry. The next chapter, that is, chapter 4 details how the study was conducted. The focus is on the research methodologies, methods and tools used to conduct the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES, METHODS AND TOOLS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 focused on the normative regarding the church's ministry, Pentecostal theologies, and Pentecostal children's ministry practices. This chapter discusses research methodologies, methods, and tools used to gather relevant data, which were analysed in order to respond to sub-questions 1 to 5 of the study stated in Chapter 1, namely sub-question 1: what are the challenges of volunteer workers/teachers regarding children's ministry? Sub-question 2: what are the current practices or activities of the congregations regarding children's ministry? Sub-question 3: what is the understanding of the pastors regarding children's ministry? Sub-question 4: what should be the role of the parents and volunteer workers/teachers in children's ministry? And sub-question 5: what would be the requirements for an effective children's ministry? All these sub-questions were factored into the interview schedule used during the interviews with the ministry teachers, the pastors and the focus groups with parents.

The study is mainly a qualitative empirical study where actual data were collected. Empirical research in theology plays an important part in a number of ways. For example, it deals with contextual realities of congregations in a particular geographical area and context (Nel and Schoeman 2015:86). In this case, the study was done in different parts of Mangaung Metro and Townships. One area is different from another. Again, empirical research allows the voice of a particular congregation to be heard in its context, even if it is a member of a regional, national or international denomination.

Furthermore, Nel and Schoeman (2015:87) say congregational identities are shaped not only by how they believe and understand the Bible but also by the local context. Empirical research, therefore, makes it possible for congregations to reveal their uniqueness. Qualitative research aims, among others, to seek a deeper understanding of human experience, and it also uses different methodologies and data collection tools to elicit thick and rich descriptions of phenomena (Bearman (2019:1). The study is also a literature study wherein relevant literature regarding the subject was studied.

First, a literature study was done to gain a better understanding of the research topic. This was followed by the empirical work where the actual data were collected from the purposely selected congregations and respondents using different research methodologies and data collection tools (Ebersöhn, Eloff, and Ferreira 2011:156 – 158; 330; Bryman 2012:432; Schoeman and Van den Berg 2015: 213 – 214; Draper 2015:36).

Data collection in this study was done in three phases. The first collection was done during the South African Church Life research project (2021) done by the University of the Free State Faculty of Theology and Religion, Department of Practical and Missional Theology, under the leadership of Professor Kobus Schoeman and Dr Joseph Pali. The project will herein be referred to as the National Church Life Survey South Africa 2021 (NCLS–SA 2021 survey project). The researcher participated in that project as part of the data collection team.

The first phase happened during the survey, whereby the researcher administered the questionnaires to both the church attendees and pastors. These are attached as Annexure A and Annexure B, respectively. During this phase, in some cases, data collection for NCLS SA 2021 happened simultaneously with observations of children's ministry practices. Again, he later visited other congregations to observe and take notes on how they, too, practiced their children's ministry (De Vos, Strydom, Fouchè and Delport 2011:329 – 335; Draper 2015:36).

The second phase was done when the researcher interviewed the pastors of the selected congregations as part of the NCLS–SA 2021 project during which he also included two questions related to his study since they were covered by the ethical clearance for the NCLS–SA 2021 research project.

The third phase of data collection was preceded by the piloting of the data collection tools he used in his study. After that, data were collected from the study participants or co-researchers, that is, children's ministry teachers, using semi-structured interview guides and parents through focus group meetings. Semi-structured interview guides were also used with the focus groups to collect data (Draper 2015:36; Bearman 2019:3; Aung, Razak and Nazry 2021:601). In this chapter, discussions are on the following: research procedure, choice of the study area, overview of the congregations, practical theology ecclesiology of the congregations, data collection methods and tools, and analysis tools used.

4.2 Research Procedure

The first step in conducting this study was a review of the relevant literature on children's ministry in order to get a better understanding of the subject. Literature study was an ongoing phenomenon throughout the study. The second step was to select the target congregations for data collection purposes. The researcher mainly targeted Pentecostal congregations that participated in the National Church Life Survey South Africa 2021 (NCLS–SA 2021) project, which the University of the Free State Faculty of Theology did. He was part of the team that collected data for that study. The third step was data collection, which was done in three phases as already mentioned above.

The first phase of data collection was done during the NCLS–SA 2021 project. Schoeman (2020:143), citing Kaldor, Castle and Dixon (2002), says, “The NCLS project is a part of a bigger project which started in Australia in 1991. By its nature, NCLS is a quantitative research instrument that is used to evaluate congregational vitality by listening to the voices of attender validly and reliably” (Hermans and Schoeman, 2015:60 in Schoeman 2020:142 – 143). According to Schoeman (2020:142), it was decided to explore and use it in the South African context to evaluate congregational health. Again, NCLS is a church-based survey completed by individual congregations from different denominations. It is done on a five-yearly basis as a regular snapshot of the life and health of the churches. Erwich (2012:73) in Schoeman (2020:143) says, “A vital characteristic of the NCLS is that it listens to the voices of members of the congregation as the survey is completed by all the attendees attending a worship service”. In the South African context, all the attendees of the worship service 18 years and above were requested to complete an Attender Survey Questionnaire. This was mainly done after the Sunday church service.

The survey instrument comprises mainly two parts, namely, the demographic of the participants and the core qualities of congregational life. The latter is divided into internal core qualities, inspirational core qualities and outward core qualities. Internal core qualities focus on the following: faith that is alive and growing, worship–vital and nurturing, and a strong and growing sense of belonging, while inspirational core qualities focus on the vision of the congregation and inspiring and empowering leadership of the congregation, and lastly the

outward core qualities focuses on service, faith-sharing, and inclusion—intentional and welcoming by members of the congregations (Schoeman 2020:145 – 151).

With permission of the principal researcher, the researcher used that opportunity also to collect some data for this study. This was limited to observations only. During this phase, the researcher visited only one congregation, that is, the “Cornerstone” congregation, to administer attendee survey questionnaires and township congregational survey questionnaires to the congregants and the pastor, respectively. He simultaneously collected data regarding the practices of children’s ministry through observations. The data for NCLS–SA 2021 from the other three congregations were collected by colleagues from the NCLS–SA 2021 data collection team. The researcher visited those congregations at a later stage to observe their children’s ministry practices.

Regarding the use of some of the data obtained from the purposively selected congregations collected for the NCLS–SA 2021 project, the researcher again requested and obtained permission from the principal researcher of the NCLS–SA 2021 project to use some of the data collected from the congregations that participated in the NCLS–SA 2021 research for this study. He used the following data sets: (1) from the attendee survey questionnaire (Annexure A), he used some data regarding biographic factors of the attendees, such as race and the language they speak at home. He also used the data on matters of faith, that is, how they identified themselves concerning approaches to matters of faith and the data on the local church activities that they participated in, (2) from the township congregational survey 2021 (Annexure B), he used the data regarding estimated membership of the congregations, mission of the congregations and the pastors’ remarks on the ministry of their congregations. These are discussed below under 4.4 (overview of the congregation) and 5.2 (practical theology ecclesiological descriptions of the congregations in the study).

The second phase of data collection happened when the researcher visited the congregations to interview the pastors. He made appointments with the pastors of the four congregations to ask for permission to interview them concerning the children’s ministry of their congregations. Again, since interviewing the pastors was part of the NCLS–SA 2021 project that had ethical clearance (Approval number UFS-HSD2018/1075), the researcher used that opportunity to include two questions related to his study that he wanted to ask the pastors. After obtaining

their permission, he requested them to sign consent forms. The ethical clearance and a sample of a consent form are attached as Annexure C.

The last phase of data collection for the study was done after obtaining ethical clearance (Approval number UFS-HSD2022/1629/22). It was done through interviews with the children's ministry teachers/volunteer workers and focus groups of parents who had children attending children's ministry in those congregations. Just like in the case of interviewing the pastors, the researcher requested permission from the pastors to interview children's ministry teachers and do focus group interviews with the parents. Permissions were granted, and dates were agreed upon on which those were done. Both the children's ministry teachers/volunteers and parents who participated in focus groups interviews were also asked for permission to interview them. When they agreed, they were asked to sign consent forms before interviewing them. Their consent forms are like the ones signed by the pastors. The ethical clearance and a sample of a consent form are attached as Annexure D.

Before collecting data from the parents, the researcher did a pilot study in a different congregation that was not part of the study. Aung *et al.* (2021:600) reckon that a pilot study for an interview is a crucial and necessary process when conducting qualitative research. Again, through this process validity of data collection instruments is achieved. The purpose of the pilot study was twofold; namely, to test the data collection instruments, tools and questions to determine whether they worked properly, and that the questions were clear. Moreover, it was to see how the process would unfold during the data collection to make necessary adjustments if necessary.

Moreover, after the pilot study, the researcher made necessary adjustments, particularly regarding the final questions, which he used to collect the second data set. He used a semi-structured interview guide when interviewing the respondents, which is a list of topics and associated questions that the interviewer asks the participant. It is instrumental in helping the researcher to collect in-depth data that may provide a clearer and more complete picture of the phenomenon. The advantage of a semi-structured interview guide is its flexibility regarding changing the order of questions and for more extensive follow-ups of participants' responses (Bearman 2019:1; Aung *et al.* 2021:601).

4.3 Selection of Congregations for the Study

The study area comprised four congregations situated in Mangaung (Bloemfontein) and Thaba Nchu in Mangaung Metro in the Free State Province of the Republic of South Africa. The congregations for the study were purposely selected. This sampling methodology is called judgment sampling because it is based on the researcher's discretion. According to this methodology, the researcher chooses the subjects of the study based on what she/he needs to know. After that, he finds knowledgeable people willing to provide the information he is looking for (De Vos, Strydom, Fouchè and Delport 2011:232; Etikan, Musa and Alkassim 2016:3). The methodology is largely dependent on the judgment of the researcher. Hence, it is referred to as judgment sampling.

The congregations were selected based on their type, that is, classical Pentecostal or independent Pentecostal and their locality. Classical Pentecostal congregations were selected because they are denominational and have existed for a long time. They also have a hierarchal structure whereby the local church reports to a higher body, such as a regional or national body. On the contrary, independent churches run their affairs and usually do not report to any higher body. The pastors of those churches are the ones who have a final word in the church matters.

Another reason the researcher chose two congregations affiliating to classical Pentecostal denominations and two independent Pentecostal congregations, that is, not affiliated to any denominations, was to determine what was going on in both types of congregations in terms of children's ministry. The assumption was that the classical Pentecostal congregations might have more resources in the form of personnel and physical resources. As a result, they might run more effective children's ministries than the latter. One classical Pentecostal congregation and one independent Pentecostal congregation are located in Mangaung (Bloemfontein) Township. In contrast, the other two, one classical and one independent congregation, are based in Thaba Nchu, which is part of Mangaung Metro or greater Mangaung Township.

Regarding their locality the congregations were selected to represent different material conditions of Mangaung Metro residents, that is, urban and semi-urban areas. For confidentiality reasons, the congregations' real names would not be mentioned; instead,

pseudonyms would be used. They will be referred to as Cornerstone, Our Hope, New Life and Gift of Life, starting with the first to the last congregation surveyed.

The discussion below will first start with the overview of the congregations, that is, their location in Mangaung Metro, when and how they were started, the demographics of the congregations as per National Church Life Survey South Africa 2021 (NCLS–SA 2021), and the material conditions of their respective children's ministry. The discussion will then turn to the practical theological descriptions of the congregations, namely, the identities, missions and ministries of the four congregations.

4.4 Overview of the Congregations

The discussion in this section focuses on the geographical location of the congregations in Mangaung Metro, when and how the congregations were established, the demographics of their members and the material conditions of their respective children's ministries, starting with the one visited first to the last one.

4.4.1 “Cornerstone” congregation

“Cornerstone” congregation is a classical Pentecostal denomination (Verster and Ngesi 2019:157). It is situated in Mangaung Metro Bloemfontein Township. It was formed in 1996 after a crusade by one of the denomination's evangelists pitched a tent in that area. Immediately after the crusade, the church was established.

According to the NCLS–SA 2021 (TPCP0002:1) congregational survey, the estimated membership of the congregation is 120: 40 children (including those over 12 years to 18 years) and 80 adults, that is, older than 18 years of age. Again, according to the attender survey NCLS–SA 2021 (TPCP0002:11) conducted at the congregation, out of the 30 five people who participated in the study, 27 were females, 12 were married, 20 were employed, and 28 had either primary or secondary education. Regarding race and language(s) spoken, 34 were black and one coloured, and 24 spoke Sesotho while the rest spoke Setswana. The average age of the participants was 36 years of age. However, it must be noted that (1) only people 18 years

and above were allowed to participate in the attender survey, and (2) the survey was done during COVID-19 when certain restrictions were imposed on the congregations.`

Regarding material conditions in respect of the children's ministry of the "Cornerstone" congregation, the ministry had no building of its own or separate structure to use especially when other activities were happening at the church. It shared the same building that is being used by the whole congregation for its activities. The congregation had two female children's ministry teachers/volunteer workers.

4.4.2 "Our Hope" congregation

According to the pastor, the congregation started in 2004 after he left another ministry. He went on his own and started the congregation. It is an independent congregation and does not affiliate with any denomination (Anderson 2020:121 – 122). It is in Bloemfontein (Mangaung) Township.

The demographic profile of the people who completed the attender survey was as follows: a total of 37 adults completed the forms, 27 of those had primary and some secondary education, and eight had a trade certificate or diploma. Thirty-four were black, and 29 were female. The average age was 39 years (NCLS–SA TPCP0019:2). According to the pastor, the estimated membership of the congregation comprised 45 children and 70 adults.

Regarding the material conditions of the congregation in relation to children's ministry, the ministry did not have a separate building. Instead, it used a separate room within the same building that houses the lead service. A principal and three youth volunteers led the ministry. The pastor indicated that the youth volunteers were under training by him and the principal.

4.4.3 "New Life" congregation

The "New Life" congregation is a classical Pentecostal congregation belonging to a denomination. It is situated in Thaba Nchu Township Mangaung Metro. According to the pastor, the congregation was established in 1960 and was housed in one of the schools in the area until it bought land and erected a building.

The demographic profile of the people who participated during the NCLS–SA 2021 attender survey project was as follows: 37 adults participated, all of them were black, and the two main languages spoken are Setswana and Sesotho. Thirty-one participants were females. Concerning employment status, 14 and 11 were employed and retired, respectively (NCLS–SA 2021 TPCP0022:11 Report). The congregation had an estimated membership of 13 children and 42 adults (NCLS–SA 2021 TPCP0022:1 Report).

Concerning the material conditions of the congregation in relation to children’s ministry, the congregation had a shack attached to the church building that houses children’s ministry services. The ministry also used the church building for the same service in the morning before the main service commenced. Regarding teachers/volunteer workers it had two teachers and one volunteer.

4.4.4 “Gift of Life” congregation

The congregation is situated in one of the Thaba Nchu zones. It was established in 2018. The pastor and his wife started it after leaving a classical Pentecostal church in his neighbourhood. Another person joined them. They then started fellowshipping in his home garage until they bought land and erected a shack on it.

According to the pastor, the estimated membership of the congregation is 60, 20 children and 40 adults (NCLS– SA 2021 TPCP0021:1 Report). The demographics of the members who participated during the NCLS–2021 attender survey were as follows: the average age of the participants was 32 years, 13 of those were females and seven married, 19 had some primary or secondary education, and seven were employed. Concerning race, all of them were black, and the dominant languages they spoke were Sesotho and Setswana.

Regarding the material conditions of the children’s ministry of the congregation, the congregation had one teacher and one youth volunteer. Due to a lack of infrastructure, the ministry held its services on Saturdays.

4.5 Summary

In conclusion, the classical Pentecostal congregations were established relatively long before the independent ones. However, they had, on average, a similar number of members. Again, their material conditions were also similar. To some extent, the congregations seemed to be facing similar challenges in some respects regarding children's ministry.

4.6 Data Collection Methods and Tools Used

The following data collection methods were used in the study: questionnaires, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and observations. Attender survey and township congregational survey (2021) questionnaires were used with both the congregants and pastors, respectively. These were for the NCLS–2021 project. However, some of the data collected were used for the researcher's study. In-depth interviews were done using semi-structured interview schedules or guides with the pastors and children's ministry teachers of the four congregations that participated in the study. Lastly, focus group discussions were used to collect data from the parents of children who attended children's ministry in those four congregations. The methods and tools used, including how they were used, are discussed below.

4.6.1 Interviews with pastors and teachers/volunteer workers

One of the advantages of using qualitative research is that it enables one to get an in-depth understanding of an individual's experience (Ivankova *et al.* 2019:329; Bearman 2019:1). One way of achieving this is by conducting in-depth interviews. In this type of interview, a researcher uses a list of questions normally referred to as an interview guide. These questions do not necessarily have to follow the way they are outlined in the guide, and the interviewee is given a leeway regarding how to respond to the questions. Again, based on how the interviewee responds to the questions, questions that are not in the guide may be included during the interview to get more information (Bryman 2012:471). The questions asked are open-ended in nature, which allows the interviewee to give elaborative responses.

Before in-depth interviews with the pastors and teachers/volunteer workers could be done, the researcher made appointments with the pastors, agreed with them on the dates for interviews, and ultimately conducted the interviews as scheduled. The interviews with pastors formed part of the NCLS–SA 2021 project. As indicated before, concerning the pastors, the researcher used the opportunity to include his questions during the interviews. The purpose of the interviews was explained to the pastors, and when they agreed to have interviews, they were requested to sign the consent forms, which they did. The researcher conducted eight in-depth interviews, four with the pastors and another four with the teachers/volunteer workers of the congregations that were part of the study.

During the interviews, the researcher used semi-structured interview guides or schedules with interview questions and a cell phone to record the answers. The researcher would pose a question, and when the respondent answered, he would record the answer on a cell phone. He later transcribed the responses so that they could be analyzed. The interview guide, transcribed interviews, code book, and quotation report for children's ministry teachers are attached as Annexures E, F, G and H, respectively. The same procedure was followed before interviewing the pastors. Transcribed interviews with the pastors, the code book and the quotation report are attached as Annexures N, O and P respectively.

4.6.2 Focus group discussions with parents

When using a focus group discussion methodology, the following two important factors should be taken into consideration: (1) the purpose of or main aim of the study, which is to focus, and (2) the number of respondents invited for discussion (Nyumba *et al.* 2018:22 – 23; Schoeman 2017:127). People with similar characteristics are invited to a single session (Grudens-Schuck *et al.* 2004:3). A single focus group discussion was held at each congregation (Nyumba *et al.* 2018:24). Pastors were requested to select a minimum of five and a maximum of ten parents among the congregants who would be used to obtain the views of the parents regarding children's ministry. Preferably it was supposed to be parents who have children that were part of the children's ministry. The reason for that was to have people who had vested interests participate in the discussions and have experienced some particular concrete situation regarding children's ministry (Schoeman 2017:127). The responsible pastor was requested to

set up a meeting with the parents in each congregation where data were collected. Before commencing the meeting, a pastor introduced the researcher to them, explained the purpose of the meeting, and allowed the researcher to commence with the meeting. The researcher then introduced himself and again explained the purpose of the meeting and how the meeting would be conducted. The researcher, furthermore, asked them to sign consent forms.

The researcher then did an ice-breaking exercise by asking the parents to introduce themselves and their expectations about the meeting. He then allocated them numbers by which they would identify themselves whenever they wanted to speak to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. The researcher asked those questions relating to their role and opinions, among others, regarding the children's ministry of their congregation. The proceedings were recorded on a cell phone and later transcribed verbatim for data analysis. The biographic information of the focus group participants, interview guide, transcribed interviews, code book and quotation report, are attached as Annexures I, J, K, L and M, respectively.

4.6.3 Participatory action research: Participant observation

Lastly, the researcher employed participatory action research in the form of participant observation. De Vos *et al.* (2011:330) define it as “A qualitative research procedure that studies the natural and everyday set-up in a particular community or situation.” Nieuwenhuis (2019:105) adds to that by saying, “It is a systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of participants, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or communicating with them.” According to him, its purpose is to enable the researcher to gain a deeper insight into and understating of the phenomenon. Basically, as the name says, it is about observing and reflecting on the behaviour and actions of the participants without interrupting them in what they are doing.

The researcher can be involved in participant observation in various ways in the continuum, ranging from complete involvement to total observation (De Vos *et al.* 2011:328; Nieuwenhuis, 2019:106). It is, therefore, important for the researcher to decide on the role he/she will play beforehand since that role will influence the whole process of participant observation (De Vos *et al.* (2011:328. According to Nieuwenhuis (2019:105), the researcher's primary role when

observing the participants is to focus on what the participants are doing and how they do that so as to pick up any patterns in what is being done and what could be the meaning of that. He cautions of one's biases during observation since observation, by its nature, is biased because people tend to focus on specific events within the whole. The purpose and focus of the observation would assist the researcher in determining the type of observer he/she would like to be.

Regarding the type of involvement in the continuum mentioned above, the researcher decided to play the role of participant observation. Neiuwenhuis (2019:106) defines it as "The researcher gets into the situation but focuses mainly on his or her role as an observer in the situation. The researcher may look for patterns of behaviour in a particular community to understand the assumptions, values and beliefs of the participants, and to make sense of the social dynamics—the researcher remains uninvolved and does not influence the dynamics of the setting." Another important element in observation is to learn the social setting regarding power dynamics, communication lines, discourse and language (Nieuwenhuis 2019:105). This will help concerning how the researcher as an observer builds relationships with the participants as this will help him/her to do her work. This will ensure the validity of the observations.

The researcher chose not to get involved since this could have had the potential to influence the participants in one way or another. Another risk to that is that he could miss some important actions worth noting in the process. However, he only asked questions, when necessary, but did not interrupt the proceedings or were careful not to influence the participants in any way. The questions he asked were, for example, during breaks to find out what would happen next and how long the break would take. He wrote his observations in a notebook as well as the responses he got from the participants since gathering data boils down to the writing of actual observations and taking field notes (Ebersöhn, Eloff and Ferreira 2011:156 – 158; De Vos *et al.* 2011:335; Bryman 2012:420; Draper 2015:37). Ultimately, the notes taken during the actual observations would be used in compiling the report as part of the findings of the study.

From the first time, the researcher visited the congregations, he observed, asked questions and wrote down what he saw and the responses he got regarding how the congregations conducted their children's ministry in a notebook. Apart from the other visits he made to the

congregations either during the NCLS–SA 2021 project or when visiting to collect data for his study, he visited each congregation at least once to spend the entire time there among the children in their service, observing how the children's ministry was done. During that time, he wrote down all his observations and they formed part of his findings. Again, he also made some observations during focus group meetings and the same formed part of his findings.

4.7 Data Analysis Methods

The study used two data analysis methods, namely, descriptive and interpretive analysis. The latter was employed using ATLAS.TI 2023 software package as an analysis tool. These methods rely on linguistic, meaning-based rather than statistical numerical data. They are used to analyze data from “research questions leading to data collection, and analysis strategies are usually open-ended and exploratory in nature” (Elliott and Timulak 2005:147; 149). They are also rooted in an inductive research tradition whereby concepts are described, or everyday conscious experiences of the research participants are described (Reiners 2012:1). Imbeau *et al.* (2021:81) says that descriptive analysis “refers to the ‘what’ question, as the first step toward explanation.”

On the other hand, the interpretive analysis responds to the ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions. They further say, “An explanation involves relating what is to be explained (the explanandum) to what explains (the explanans), thus making a social phenomenon intelligible.” In this study, participants were observed on their actions, practices or behaviour either as individuals or as a group, which were described and interpreted (Draper 2015:36). The ATLAS. TI 2023 software package is mainly employed as a tool to analyze the data collected through interviews with the children’s ministry teachers, the pastors and parents’ focus groups of the congregations. The two analysis methods are further described below.

4.7.1 Observations

Observations that were made and written down in a notebook were described in terms of their implied meanings as per the theological understanding of the pastors, teachers and parents. The descriptions were enriched by the questions asked to the same participants, where clarity

was sought regarding the children's ministry practices. These observations and descriptions are reported in the next chapter, that is, chapter 5 of the study.

4.7.2 Data analysis using ATLAS.TI 2023 Software

During the pastors' and teachers' interviews and focus group discussions with the parents' data were recorded with a cell phone and later transcribed verbatim and analyzed using ATLAS.TI 2023 software package. First, the transcribed data per category of respondents, for example, pastors or teachers, were loaded on the computer ATLAS.TI 2023 software program to form a project. Then responses per each question asked were coded. Those codes were then grouped to form group codes. These were then given names corresponding to the questions asked of each category of respondents. The responses of the respondents were linked to their corresponding code group. The code groups were later used to form networks, which were used to understand their relationships. Ultimately, groups of networks were done to understand the relationships among them.

4.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, chapter four focused on the methods and tools used to conduct the study. It employed mixed methodologies. Ivankova *et al.* (2019:328) talk about the need for combining multiple methods to address the complexity of the real world and to study phenomena from different perspectives. The authors say this is important given the complex world we live in. The study used the following methods, namely, a literature review, to gain a better understanding of children's ministry in general and the role of different role players. In-depth interviews with the children's ministry teachers and pastors of the congregations enabled one to get an in-depth understanding of an individual's experience (Ivankova *et al.* 2019:329; Bearman 2019:1). Again, both focus group interviews and participant observations. The latter were used to get more insight regarding the behaviour of the participants in their natural and everyday set-up (De Vos *et al.* 2011:330).

Furthermore, the study used some of the data collected during the NCLS-SA 2021 project, which was a quantitative study. Ultimately, descriptive and interpretive analysis methods were

used to analyze the data using ATLAS.TI 2023 software package as an analysis tool. Now, the focus turns to chapter 5. Chapter 5 reports on the observations and reflections made during the visits to the congregations as part of the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 5

ECCLESIOLOGY AND MINISTRY PRACTICES OF THE CONGREGATIONS

5.1 Introduction

While the previous chapter explained the methods and tools used to conduct the study, chapter 5 reports the observations made during visits to the four congregations of the study. Chapter 5 attempts to respond to sub-questions 1 and 2 of the study, namely, “What are the challenges of the volunteer workers/teachers regarding children’s ministry?” and “What are the current practices or activities of the congregations regarding children’s ministry?” respectively. The questions are also linked with Osmer’s (2008:4) task 1, the descriptive-empirical task. The purpose here was to establish what was going on in the congregations regarding children’s ministry.

The researcher used participatory action research in the form of participant observations in collecting data (Ebersöhn, Eloff, & Ferreira 2011:156–159; Bryman 2012:420), whereby he observed how the congregations conducted children’s ministry. According to the authors, participants are “studied in the natural everyday set-up in a community or situation.” The researcher observed the participants’ behaviour, listened to what they did, wrote his observations in a notebook and asked questions where necessary (Bryman 2012:432). He mainly observed and did not take part in the activities of the ministry.

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 4, some of the data were collected simultaneously with data for the NCLS–SA 2021 project, in which the researcher participated as a data collector. Again, as indicated in chapter four, as he was busy collecting data for the NCLS–SA 2021 project in the “Cornerstone” congregation, he also made observations regarding how the congregation conducted its children’s ministry. However, due to restrictions that the government imposed as a result of Novel COVID-19 that included, among others, limited numbers of people allowed to attend services the congregation did not have children’s ministry service at the time. He again visited the congregation later on with the sole purpose of observing how it ran its children’s ministry. He did the same with the other three congregations, where he was not responsible for collecting data for the NCLS–SA 2021 survey project. During the entire duration of the visits, he spent his time observing children’s ministry practices of the congregations. In the case

where the congregations held separate children's ministry services and did not mix with the leading service, he joined the children's ministry instead of the leading service.

During the time he spent at the congregations, the researcher observed the ministry practices, asked questions where necessary and wrote in a notebook what he observed and the responses he got regarding how the congregations conducted their children's ministry. The observations made are reported below.

This section first discusses practical theology and ecclesiological descriptions of the congregations. Second, the results of the NCLS–SA 2021 survey project that were relevant to this study, and third, the observations made during the visits to the four congregations. Some of the observations were made during data collection for the NCLS–SA 2021 project, while others were made during visits to the congregations specifically to observe their children's ministry for the purpose of this study. Below are the findings from the observations made. The section then ends with a conclusion.

5.2 Practical Theology Ecclesiological Descriptions of the Congregations in the Study

Schoeman (2015:72 – 73), referencing Van Gelder (2000:37), says a congregation may be described from a theological perspective in terms of at least three aspects, namely, its identity, mission and ministry. Hendricks (2004:69) further adds an element of social context as another way of describing or analyzing a congregation, whether a congregation is missional in its approach or not. Nel (2015:44 – 46) says identity refers to a confessional identity, that is, what the congregation claim to believe. For example, the Apostolic Creed or Nicene Creed. Schoeman (2015:73) summarizes the two creeds in terms of four confessional characteristics of a local congregation, which are described below as follows:

One – congregations work in unity and together under the headship of Christ.

Holy – congregations are different from other institutions, and they are doing and living a life marked by love and forgiveness.

Catholic – congregations are not confined to one place, language, region or nation; it is a universal phenomenon in many societies.

Apostolic – the message of the apostles and the gospels are the content of the witness of congregations. They should be all about Jesus Christ and the coming of His kingdom.

Moreover, regarding a congregation's identity, Schoeman (2020:93) says, "The church needs to constantly look in the mirror and ask at least the following two questions: Who are we (an identity question)? Furthermore, what are we doing (a question about relevance)?" He claims that while the first question discusses its identity, the latter deals with a congregation's contextual ministry. The two go together. If the church cannot answer these questions, it is apparent that even the surrounding communities would find it difficult to know what it stands for and how it could serve them.

The mission of a congregation indicates the direction that it is taking (Schoeman 2015:74; Nel 2015:27 – 29). A congregation does not exist for its own sake. Instead, it has to witness Christ (Acts 1:8). Again, regarding the ministry of a congregation, Schoeman (2015:74), citing Burger (1999:104), says it "is a comprehensive understanding and description of all the activities that a congregation is doing and undertaking in order to fulfil its mission." The ministry activities that a congregation undertake are done in the core functions of a church, namely *kerugma*, *leitourgia*, *koinonia* and *diakonia* (Dean 2004:153; Schoeman 2015:75), and these are done within and without a congregation.

The results of the NCLS–SA 2021 project of the four congregations obtained from both the attender survey and township congregational survey (for the pastors) were used to determine the congregations' identities and missions. Below is the description of the congregations in the study in terms of their identities, missions and ministries, followed by the observations and reflections done in those congregations.

5.2.1 Identity of “Cornerstone” congregation

Regarding the confessional identity of the congregation, of the 35 attendees that participated in the study, when asked to choose up to two options in response to the question of how they identify themselves concerning matters of faith, 13, 12 and seven classified themselves as Charismatic, Evangelical and Pentecostal, respectively (NCLS-SA TPCP0002 Report 2021:16).

5.2.2 The mission of “Cornerstone” congregation

According to the pastor of the congregation, the mission of “Cornerstone” is to fulfil the Great Commission as stipulated in Matthew (28:19 – 20). Furthermore, the pastor indicated that they empower new converts so that they grow and fulfil their God’s calling (NCLS–SA 2021 TPCP0002:4 Report). The great commission instructs Christ’s disciples to make disciples of all nations and teach them to obey His commandments so that they in turn would go and make others disciples of Christ.

5.2.3 Ministry of “Cornerstone” congregation

According to the congregation’s (NCLS–SA 2021 TPCP0002:18) survey report, the majority of members (18) of the congregation were involved in evangelistic or outreach activities, followed by 17 who were involved in small prayer, discussion or Bible study, 15 in fellowship, clubs, social or other groups, and seven in community service, social justice or welfare activities. The numbers indicate that some members were involved in more than one activity.

5.2.4 “Cornerstone” congregation observations and reflections

The visit to this congregation was done on the 27th of June 2021, which was at the heart of the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a result, no children’s ministry services were held. The main service started at 10h00. Everybody participated in prayer, praise and worship with no special tasks allocated to children. Instead, they took part like everybody else in what was being done. After the service, the researcher asked the pastor whether they have a children’s ministry or separate service for children, to which he replied yes, but had temporarily stopped them due to COVID 19.

The researcher again visited the congregation on the 08th of July 2023, which was on Friday. The service was solely for children’s ministry. The ministry teacher indicated that sometimes they attended on Saturdays due to a lack of infrastructure since, on Sundays, they were unable to do some of their work. The congregation has one building which has to be used by all the ministries of the church and as a result, they are unable to use it whenever they would like to.

On that day, they were preparing for the children's ministry Sunday service and everything was expected to be done by them.

The service started at 15h30, and one of the children started a hymn and said an opening prayer. This was followed by the singing of a couple of songs, and another one preached a sermon. Another took an offering, while another closed with a prayer. The pastor and children's ministry teacher were both present. The former mainly observed what was done and only said a few encouraging remarks at the end of the service, while the latter directed the program for the day. She also encouraged them to continue to practice at home for the coming service.

The third visit to the congregation was done on the 10th of July, 2023. Coincidentally, the visit happened on the Sunday when the children ran the whole church service. It was called Children's Ministry Sunday. The whole service was dedicated to children's ministry. Every activity on the day was led by the children from the beginning of the service to the end. Children's ministry in this congregation is divided into two age groups. The first age group is from 2 to 11 years of age, and the other group is from 12 to ±18 years.

During this visit to the congregation, the following observations were made. First, the service started at 10h00 with a morning devotion. A child led the devotion from the latter age group. During the devotion, the church prayed for different items with the leader facilitating the service by asking different people in the congregation to pray for particular items. Second, when devotion time was over, another child took over as a program director for the day. In running the program the director involved different categories of congregants to take part in performing certain items during the service. For example, the former age group was involved in doing memory verses while adults were called upon to render musical items and pray for certain matters. Again, the worship team for the day comprised entirely of the children. Lastly, the preacher of the day was also a child from the latter age group. She delivered the sermon on her own. Nobody came after the sermon to either elaborate or emphasize what she said. The service closed with a hymn and prayer.

In a nutshell, the service was run by the children's ministry on behalf of the whole congregation. It was intergenerational (Espinoza 2014:17) with all members of the congregation taking part in doing certain tasks as requested or led by the children. Children's Ministry Sunday gave children an opportunity to put to use their God-given gifts and talents and the adults to

appreciate what God was doing in the children's lives and identify areas where they were lacking and might need help.

5.3 “Our Hope” Congregation Observations and Reflections

5.3.1 Identity of “Our Hope” congregation

The congregation is an independent Pentecostal congregation situated in Mangaung (Bloemfontein) Township. In this congregation, a total of 37 adult attendees completed the forms. Concerning how they identify themselves regarding approaches to matters of faith, the majority (14) said they were Charismatic. At the same time, 13 claimed to be Evangelical, and eight said they did not identify with such descriptions (NCLS-SA 2021 TPCP0019:16 Report). The respondents had the option to choose more than one option.

5.3.2 The mission of “Our Hope” congregation

According to the pastor, the “Our Hope” congregation’s mission is preaching and teaching the Word of God. The congregation also strives to help its members grow spiritually (NCLS-SA 2021TPCP0019:4 Report). The congregation’s mission is also premised on the Great Commission.

5.3.3 Ministry of “Our Hope” congregation

Thirty-seven attendees in the “Our Hope” congregation participated in the NCLS–SA 2021 study. Most members (38) indicated that they reached out to the surrounding community through the activities of the congregation, including 16 who participated in evangelistic activity, in particular. 18 participants indicated that they were not involved in group activities. Their lack of involvement in any of the groups’ activities should be a matter of concern to the leadership of the congregation. The participants were allowed to elect more than one option; hence the numbers do not add up to 37.

5.3.4 Observations and reflections made in “Our Hope” congregation

The first visit to the congregation was done on the 20th of February 2022. The children's ministry service started concurrently with the main service at 10h00. The main service held its service in the main hall while the children's ministry held its service in another room in the same building. The arrangement was not conducive to the proper running of the service since the noise of both the people singing accompanied by the musical instruments made it difficult for the children to hear what the teacher was saying, and it was difficult for them to focus as well.

Regarding the children's ministry of the congregation, the following observations were made. First, it was run by a principal who was a middle-aged lady and three volunteer workers/teachers. Second, about 15 children of different age groups were grouped in one room. Third, the principal facilitated the learning while the two volunteers observed and assisted in bringing order when the children started losing focus. Fourth, the room they were using was attached to the main hall where the main service was held, and when people sang, and instruments played, the noise thereof disturbed the children's ministry service. Now and then, when the noise became too loud, it disturbed the ministry's service, and the children became restless.

Concerning ministry practices, the service started with an opening prayer followed by singing a couple of songs. Then, the teacher gave the lesson of the day and she would stop now and then to ask questions to see if the children were following what was taught. Halfway through the service, the children were called to join the main service to render a musical item and do memory verses, and after that, they went back to their service. Before going back to their service, the children were given break time, where snacks were served and they were then allowed time to go to the bathrooms. After that, they resumed their service and remained there until the knock-off time.

The second visit, which also happened to be the last visit to the congregation, took place on the 14th of May 2023. The purpose of the visit was two-pronged. First, it was to collect data from both the parents via focus group interviews and the ministry teacher, and second, to continue observing the congregation's children's ministry practices. Concerning the ministry practices, everything was done just like the previous time; the children held their separate service and only joined the main service when they were called to render musical items and

do memory verses. After that took a break for refreshments and resumed their service until both services were knocked off.

In conclusion, the lack of adequate facilities for housing children's ministry services made it difficult for the teachers and children to have an effective service especially when it was conducted concurrently with the main service. The noise from the main service sometimes was too loud to the extent that both the children and teachers lost focus, and the teacher struggled to refocus them.

5.4 “New Life” Congregation Observations

5.4.1 Identity of “New Life” congregation

“New Life” congregation is situated in Thaba Nchu Township Mangaung Metro. It is a classical Pentecostal denomination congregation. According to the congregation’s report (NCLS-SA 2021 TPCP0022:16 Report) the data collected from the congregation, the majority (26) of the attendees identified themselves regarding matters of faith as Pentecostals, 11 as evangelicals, and eight said they did not identify with those descriptions. It should be noted that participants were allowed to make more than one choice; hence, the numbers do not add up to 37.

5.4.2 The mission of the “New Life” congregation

According to the pastor, the mission of the “New Life” congregation is to “win souls, make disciples and equip them to bring others” (NCLS-SA 2021 TPCP0022:4 Report). The pastor further said the congregation wanted to teach those (members) always to obey the Word of God.

5.4.3 Ministry of “New Life” congregation

The majority (17) of the attendees who participated in the NCLS-SA 2021 indicated that they participate in small prayer, discussion or Bible study groups and fellowship, clubs or other social groups, followed by 13 participants who claimed to participate in evangelistic or outreach activities, community service, social justice or welfare activities (NCLS-SA 2021 TPCP0022:7

Report). Again, the participants were free to make more than one choice. What is interesting about the results is that an equal number of participants chose similar activities. The researcher believes that there could be a reason for this.

The researcher visited the “New Life” congregation on the 27th of February 2022. According to the teacher who was the leader of the children's ministry at the church, they were meeting for the first time as children's ministry that year after COVID-19 restrictions. They met together in one place to form one group. However, according to the ministry leader, their children's ministry was divided into four classes, which were taught by three teachers and one supporter or assistant. The three teachers had received some form of training while the assistant had not. The assistant's role was mainly to observe what was being done and assist whenever necessary. The teacher said their classes were grouped as follows: Class 1 comprised of Grade R to Grade 3 children, class 2 from Grade 4 to 7, class 3 from Grade 8 to 10 and class 4 from Grade 11 to 12.

The following observations were made during the visit: first, the ministry held its services in the main church building and at the adjacent shack before the main service started, and when the main service commenced, they joined it. However, during the day of the visit, all three classes met in one place to form one group. The ministry leader indicated that they were still sorting out logistical issues and would start having separate classes the following week. Furthermore, their ideal starting time was 09h00. However, on that day, they started at about 09h30.

Second, the services were opened with prayer, and after that, the teachers and children took turns leading the songs. After singing a couple of songs, the teacher taught them the Word of God using a prepared lesson. Third, after the ministry of the word, the teachers asked children a few questions based on the lesson taught. Fourth, offering time; children were asked for offerings, and after taking the offering, the service was closed with prayer. Lastly, announcements regarding the next events were made, and children were given snacks before the beginning of the main service and after that, they joined the lead service.

The second visit to the congregation was on the 7th of May 2023. The purpose of the visit was dual. First, it was to collect data via parents' focus group interviews and interview the ministry leader and second, to observe the congregation's children's ministry practices. The children's ministry service was supposed to start at 09h00. However, it started a little bit late again

because many children arrived late. Children were divided into groups and housed in different places; one group in the main church hall and the other in a shack adjacent to it. The researcher visited the two groups to observe their practices. Only two groups met on the day and were doing similar practices to the ones performed during the first visit. When the main service started at 10h00, they all stopped their activities and joined in.

In conclusion, based on the observations made during the visits coupled with what was explained by the children's ministry leader at the congregation, the ministry has the following practices: praying, singing, teaching the Word of God and offering, and the children were divided into groups according to their ages. When the researcher asked if they had other activities, the leader of the ministry said they did, but only when they had a rally and during that time, the parents also joined in and played with the children. However, they have a rally once a year.

5.5 "Gift Of Life" Congregation Observations

5.5.1 Identity of "Gift of Life" congregation

The "Gift of Life" congregation is an independent Pentecostal congregation also based in Thaba Nchu Mangaung Metro. Twenty-one attendees participated in the NCLS–SA 2021 survey. Regarding confessional identity majority (14) of the participants understood themselves as Pentecostals. At the same time, four and two claimed to be Evangelicals and Catholic or Anglo-Catholic, respectively (NCLS–SA 2021 TPCP00021:16 Report). Like in other congregations, the participants were allowed to choose more than one option.

5.5.2 The mission of the "Gift of Life" congregation

Regarding the mission of the congregation the pastor for the congregation claimed that God gave him the vision to transform the communities where the congregation is situated. His mission is to offer programs that were missing in the church where he previously attended and served as a youth leader. He furthermore, claimed to have seen that as an opportunity to start a new church. In short, he said the mission of the congregation is "to empower lives of our communities" (NCLS–SA 2021 TPCP0021:4 Report).

The congregation's mission statement reads as follows:

- To worship and honour God
- To minister to the needs of people and empower them in all areas of life
- To proclaim the kingdom of God through outreach programs, discipleship and leadership empowerment for ministry
- Equipping the people for good works of service (Obtained from a teardrop in the congregation).

5.5.3 Ministry of “Gift of Life” congregation

Concerning the ministry of the congregation majority (nine) of the participants claimed to be involved in small prayer, discussion or Bible study groups, and fellowship, clubs or other social groups. They were followed by evangelistic or outreach activities with eight and two participants, respectively, who indicated that they were involved in community service, social justice or welfare activities (NCLS-SA 2021 TPCP0019:18 Report). The respondents could choose more than one option.

The first visit to the congregation was done on 21st May 2022 which was on a Saturday. The pastor indicated that they hold children's ministry services on Saturdays due to a lack of facilities. The congregation has one structure which is used for all church activities. Sundays are mainly used for the main service. The following observations were made: first, the ministry was led by one teacher and a youth worker who was an understudy of the teacher. It had one group of children (±nine) of different age groups. According to the children's ministry teacher, ideally, the congregation would like to have two groups: one for school Grades 4 to 7 and another one for Grades R to 3. However, at the time they were not yet able to.

Second, after opening the service with prayer children sang a couple of songs, and the teacher read the prepared lesson to the children while the youth worker observed. Third, after reading the text, she gave a couple of children and opportunity to read the same text she read. She then recapped what the text says, told them the purpose of the text and asked those questions. Fourth, in the end, the teacher gave the children a chance to reflect on what they learnt from the text. About three children gave impressions of what they learnt from the text and what it

meant to them. Five, she then gave them homework. They were to read the text again at home and write a summary of the text. The service closed with a prayer by all.

The second visit took place on the 4th of June 2023. The purpose of the visit was to do a focus group interview with parents and the teacher while at the same time observing the involvement of the children during the main service since they have children's ministry services on Saturdays. The children played no role during the service on that day. They were part of whatever was happening without any of them being allocated or asked to do any specific activity.

In conclusion, the children's ministry of the "Gift of Life" congregation comprised of one teacher and an assistant, and one group of children of different age groups. The teacher, however, felt a need to separate children into different age groups. The teacher ensured that children participated during the service and gave them homework to continue learning either on their own or by being helped by their parents. During the whole service, the assistant observed what was going on and did only what he was requested to do.

5.6 Summary

Concerning the identity of the four congregations, that is, how their members understood themselves bears testimony that there is no single definition that aptly defines Pentecostalism since there are many elements to it (Bangura 2016:2; Verster and Ngesi 2019:157; Anderson 2020:121–122). Most of the members of the four congregations surveyed during the NCLS–SA survey project regarded themselves as Charismatics, Evangelicals and Pentecostals. There were few differences among the congregations regarding how they identify themselves.

Regarding ecclesiology majority (38%) of “Cornerstone” congregants surveyed valued reaching out to other people who do not attend church with the gospel. They equally valued participating in the Lord’s Supper and listening to the sermons. Again, they value praying for one another. The majority (80%) of them believed the leadership should focus more on their spiritual growth, giving a clear vision of the church and helping them to discover their gifts (NCLS–SA TPCP0002 Report 2021:1). These are the characteristics of the Acts church in the New Testament (Acts 2:42). It appears to be a missional church. They also liked what was

happening in the congregation concerning people of their age, children and youth (NCLS–SA 2021 TPCP0002:7 Report).

Concerning their identity, “Our Hope” congregation regarded themselves as Charismatic and Evangelical (NCLS–SA 2021 TPCP0019:16 Report). They, however, valued most (46%) and more (43%) listening to the sermons and praying for one another, respectively (NCLS–SA 2021 TPCP0019:1 Report). Even though they claim to be evangelical they, however, seem to be internally focused by not valuing to do outreach above other things. The congregation members were satisfied with what was being offered to them, children and the youth (NCLS–SA 2021 TPCP0019:7 Report).

The “New Life” congregations’ majority said they regarded themselves as Pentecostals and valued most praying for one another followed by listening to preaching and Bible teaching. They also want to focus on spiritual growth (NCLS–SA 2021 TPCP0022:1 Report). Again, they claimed to be satisfied with what the congregation was offering to people of their age and children under 12 years (NCLS–SA 2021 TPCP0022:7 Report). The congregation’s mission seems to be internally focused; participating more in internal activities than outward ones.

Lastly, the majority of the “Gift of Life” congregation identified themselves as Pentecostals. Like the “New Life” congregation members, they valued most and focused more on listening to the sermons and Bible teaching (62%), followed by praying for each other (48%) and doing outreaches (38%). Concerning what the congregation was offering to people of their age, children and youth they claimed to be satisfied with that.

Mainly, the congregations’ mission was to preach the gospel, make disciples who, in turn, will disciple others, and teach the members to obey the Word of God. The ministry activities of the congregations included small prayer groups, Bible study or discussion, fellowship, evangelistic outreach, social justice and/or community service.

5.7 Conclusion

Chapter 5 reported the findings of the researcher regarding what he observed during the visits to the congregations. The researcher employed participatory action research methodology in observing the participants in the study. In the continuum ranging from complete involvement to

total observation (De Vos *et al.* (2011:328; Neiuwenhuis 2019:106), the researcher elected to be a participant observer. The researcher found out the following during his visits:

First, the ministry was facing the following challenges: lack of infrastructure in the form of adequate buildings or facilities for children's ministry. In one congregation children's ministry shared the same building with the main service only divided by a wall. This caused a serious disturbance as the services were run simultaneously. In congregations where children's ministry started before the main service, children arrived late for the service since parents were unable to bring them earlier. In another instance, children had to attend their service on Saturday instead of Sunday due to a lack of ministry facilities. However, some congregations mitigated the lack of infrastructure constraint by having their children's ministry services on Saturdays.

Again, the ministry lacked enough personnel. In some congregations, children of different age groups were grouped and taught by one teacher. This posed a challenge for both the teacher and the children. In such situations the teacher found herself having to focus more on older children at the expense of the young ones since their level of understanding is not the same.

Regarding children's ministry practices, it was found that the four congregations had similar children's ministry practices, namely, teaching the Word of God and praying, singing, and doing memory verses, among others. When asking the teachers about other practices that the ministry had they indicated that they also do dramas, plays and sketches. "Cornerstone" congregation went further to give children the opportunity to run an entire main service once a year. The "Gift of Life" congregation made their children's ministry service more interactive by ensuring maximum participation by the children during the service by reading the text and later on by giving them homework. Giving children homework allows parents to play a role by assisting their children to do homework and even to know what their children are being taught.

Now, the discussion will move to the next chapter, that is chapter 6. The chapter reports on the data analysis findings emanating from in-depth interviews with the children's ministry teachers, pastors and the parents' focus groups of the four congregations of the study, and it further discusses those findings.

CHAPTER 6

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE FINDINGS REGARDING MINISTRY PRACTICES

6.1 Introduction

While the previous chapter reported on the observations made during the researcher's visits to the congregations, this chapter reports on the analysis results of the empirical work and discusses its findings. The chapter attempts to respond to research sub-questions 1 to 4 of the research question based on the responses obtained from the respondents. It is divided into two parts. The first part of the report is divided into three parts. These are (1) biographical descriptions of the focus group participants of the four congregations. The congregations were given the following pseudonyms to conceal their identities: "Cornerstone", "Our Hope", "New Life", and "Gift of Life". (2) The analysis of data collected through interviews with the teachers and focus groups with the parents. Here, the report includes the code groups and their related aspects and/or themes, the challenges experienced by ministry teachers, the main focus of children's ministry according to the teachers, the practices of children's ministry, the role of children's ministry teachers, the perceptions of children's ministry teachers regarding improvement needed in children's ministry to make it function optimally, a good story to tell about children's ministry, the teachers' general comments regarding children's ministry, relationships of teachers' networks and it ends with a conclusion. (3) Lastly, focus turn to the results gleaned from the pastors' interviews.

The second part of the chapter starts with the definition of the code groups and their related aspects emanating from the parents' data analysis. Attention then turns to children's ministry challenges as perceived by the parents, the main focus of children's ministry, the role of parents in children's ministry, assistance needed by parents to play a role in children's ministry, improvement needed in children's ministry according to the parents, a good story to tell regarding children's ministry according to the parents, general comments by the parents concerning children's ministry, and the parents' relationships networks and a conclusion. Lastly, the report focuses on reflections by the pastors of the congregations. Here, attention is on the understanding of and practices of children's ministry by the pastors and relationship networks of pastors' code groups, and it ends with a conclusion.

The second section of this chapter discusses the findings of the study. In this section, the discussions are based on the findings emanating from data analysis of the teachers' interviews, focus groups of the parents, and interviews held with the pastors. The discussion follows the same pattern mentioned above, except in the case of the pastors. Concerning the pastors, the discussion focuses on their understanding of children's ministry and practices of children's ministry in their congregations. It also closes with a conclusion.

6.2 Biographical Description of the Focus Group Participants

This section gives a brief description of the biographic profiles of the participants in the four focus groups that participated in the study. A focus group is a type of group interview. It focuses on a homogeneous group of people in terms of similar characteristics (Grudens-Schuck, Allen and Larson 2004:3). Krueger and Casey (2000) in Nyumba *et al.* (2018:22 – 23) say a minimum number of six or eight participants is enough for a focus group. The composition of the group mainly depends on the aim of the research. Focus group methodology is known to generate trustworthy naturalistic data (Nyumba *et al.* 2018:22 – 23). To ensure the targeted participants were included in the focus groups, the researcher used the following criteria:

1. A participant was supposed to have been a member of a congregation for more than one year,
2. Have or be raising a child or children (age(s) between 00 – 12 years who or were in the children's ministry of the congregation and
3. Not more than one member from the same family was to participate in the focus group.

A total of 28 parents and/or grandparents participated in the focus group meetings held in the four selected congregations. In terms of gender, the majority were female (22), and males were six. "Cornerstone" had eight participants, "Our Hope" had seven, "New Life" and "Gift of Life" had six and seven, respectively. Below are the main characteristic features of the participants per congregation. Pseudonyms are used instead of the congregations' real names to protect their identity. These are depicted in the table below.

Table 6.1: Gender of participants per congregation (N = number of participants)

Gender	“Cornerstone” (N)	“Our Hope” (N)	“New Life” (N)	“Gift of Life” (N)
Male	2	2	1	1
Female	6	5	5	6
Total	8	7	6	7

The total number of focus group participants was 28, and the majority (22) of them were females.

Table 6.2: Age groups of participants per congregation (N = number of participants)

Age group (years)	“Cornerstone” (N)	“Our Hope” (N)	“New Life” (N)	“Gift of Life” (N)	Total (N)
15-20	0	0	0	0	0
21-30	2	2	0	1	5
31-40	4	1	0	3	8
41-50	1	2	2	2	7
51-60	0	2	1	1	4
61 and above	1	0	3	0	4
Total	8	7	6	7	28

The dominant age group was between the ages of 31 to 40, followed by the one between 41 to 50 age group.

Table 6.3: Employment status of the participants per congregation (N = number of participants)

Employment status	“Cornerstone” (N)	“Our Hope” (N)	“New Life” (N)	“Gift of Life” (N)	Total (N)
Employed	4	0	2	3	9
Unemployed	3	5	1	3	12
Self-employed	0	2	2	1	5
Student	0	0	0	0	0
Other	1	0	1	0	2
Total	8	7	6	7	28

× 2 people who marked other each indicated that they were pensioners.

The majority (12) of the participants were unemployed, followed by those who were employed (nine), and a significant number (five) were self-employed.

Table 6.4: Marital status of the participants per congregation (N = number of participants)

Marital status	“Cornerstone” (N)	“Our Hope” (N)	“New Life” (N)	“Gift of Life” (N)	Total (N)
Never married	2	2	1	1	6
Married	6	3	3	4	16
Divorced	0	0	0	2	2
Widowed	0	2	2	0	4
Total	8	7	6	7	28

The majority (16) of the participants were married, followed by those who claimed to have never been married.

Table 6.5: Education level of the participants per congregation

Education level	“Cornerstone” (N)	“Our Hope” (N)	“New Life” (N)	“Gift of Life” (N)	Total (N)
Primary school	0	2	1	0	3
Some secondary school	2	2	1	2	7
Completed secondary school	4	1	1	4	10
Trade certificate	1	2	1	0	4
Diploma	1	0	0	1	2
Degree and above	0	0	1	0	1
Total	8	7	5	7	27

✕ In “New Life”, one participant did not indicate his/her level of education

The majority (10) of the participants completed secondary school, followed by a significant number (seven) that had some secondary school education, while only one participant had a degree or above.

6.2.1 Summary

The majority of the participants were female (22). The dominant age groups were between 31 – 40 (eight) and 41 – 50 (seven). Regarding marital status, sixteen (16) were married, six (6) were never married, and four (4) were widowed. Another noteworthy statistic is the number of unemployed people at 12 while those employed were nine. Concerning level of education majority (10) of the participants completed secondary education, followed by a significant number (seven) that had some secondary school education, and only one (1) participant had a degree or above. The congregations must take note of the needs of these categories among their membership, especially those relating to children’s ministry and use them for planning and implementation of their programs.

6.3 Analysis of the Data Collected Through Interviews with Teachers

As indicated in Chapter 4, data were collected using a structured interview guide and a cellphone. The responses of the participants were recorded with a cellphone and later transcribed verbatim. Data were later analyzed using ATLAS.TI 2023 software version. To analyze it, data were inductively coded. Codes were highlighted with different colours corresponding to their questions. The codes were then grouped to form code groups. The code names were named according to the questions they represented. Given the huge number of codes used to form code groups, only the code groups will be given and defined in this section. Again, upon realizing that the size of the code groups was still too big, the codes in the code groups were further reduced. Similar codes under a code group were grouped and given a common name. Ultimately, a code group with few related aspects representing several codes were used for analysis purposes. Networks were later formed out of those. A codebook is attached as Annexure G. Below are the group codes for the children's ministry teachers and their definitions.

6.3.1 Definition of the group codes used

This section names and defines the group codes used when analyzing the data. These codes were inductively selected from the data. They were derived from the questions asked by the respondents. Firstly, the name of the code is given, defined, and mentioned regarding how to recognize it, what to exclude in that code and lastly an example of the code is then made.

6.3.1.1 Group code 1: Challenges

1. Group code name: Challenges
2. Definition: in this context, challenges refer to the hindrances or gaps that hamper or negatively affect the teachers when doing their work in children's ministry.
3. How to recognize it: in the case of the parents, the challenges refer to the gaps that they observe in the children's ministry that negatively affect the work of the ministry.

4. What to exclude: any other challenge that is not directly associated with the work of children's ministry teachers in congregations.
5. Example: lack of material or teaching aids they need to teach children.

6.3.1.2 *Group code 2: Main focus*

1. Group code name: Main focus
2. Definition: in this context, the main focus refers to the issues that the teachers and/or parents believe children's ministry in their congregations should give priority to and focus on.
3. How to recognize it: when used in coding to determine the primary focus of children's ministry, the question will be: what is the main focus of children's ministry?
4. What to exclude: any other thing that is not relevant to the activities either done or should be done in children's ministry.
5. Example: activities or practices that the children and their teachers should do whenever they meet during children's ministry service.

6.3.1.3 *Group code 3: Practices*

1. Group code name: Practices
2. Definition: practices refer to the activities that are performed in children's ministry.
3. How to recognize it: when used in coding, it will be in response to the question, what are the practices of children's ministry of this congregation?
4. What to exclude: any other thing that is not done in and is not relevant to children's ministry.
5. Examples: singing, praying, memory verses and teaching, among others.

6.3.1.4 *Group code 4: Role*

1. Group code name: Role

2. Definition: role refers to the actions done by the teachers of children's ministry, parents or any other role player as part of their responsibility or because they find them necessary to do due to their association with children's ministry.
3. How to recognize it: when used in coding, it will be to determine the role played by either the children's ministry teachers or parents in children's ministry.
4. What to exclude: it excludes activities performed outside the purview of children's ministry.
5. Example: teaching the children the Word of God, playing with them, disciplining them, among others.

6.3.1.5 *Group code 5: Improvement*

1. Group code name: Improvement
2. Definition: in this context, improvement refers to the things or actions that the teachers or parents think could or should be in place for the children's ministry to be effective.
3. How to recognize it: when used in coding it will be to determine the improvement that either the children's ministry teachers or parents would like to see in the ministry.
4. What to exclude: it does, however, exclude any improvement that is not either directly or indirectly related to children's ministry.
5. Example: the involvement of parents in the ministry and the availability of funds for addressing the needs of the ministry, among others

6.3.1.6 *Group code 6: Good story*

1. Code name: Good story
2. Definition: in this regard good story refers to a visible or tangible change or transformation that happened in the children's ministry of the congregations or the children's lives as a result of them having been part of children's ministry.
3. How to recognize it: when used in coding, it is used when asking the teachers and parents a good story that they can tell regarding children's ministry of their congregation.

4. What to exclude: it excludes the things that the children came to the ministry already knowing or able to do before joining the ministry.
5. Example: children who joined the ministry not knowing Bible stories, or how to pray but were now able to do those.

6.3.1.7 *Group code 7: Comments*

1. Code name: Comments
2. Definition: comments in this context refer to general remarks or comments that the teachers or parents made regarding children's ministry of their congregations. The remarks were limited or confined to what was currently happening or could/should happen in the children's ministry.
3. How to recognize it: when used in coding, it will be used to solicit comments from both the children's ministry teachers and parents regarding the ministry in general.
4. What to exclude: remarks which are either directly or indirectly not related to the children's ministry are excluded.
5. Example: our children are go-getters.

6.3.2 Analysis results of the code groups

The discussion in this section focuses on the seven code groups defined above and their related aspects. Attention will first be on the ministry challenges and the main focus of the ministry. The focus will then turn to the practices of the children's ministry, the role of the children's ministry teachers, and improvement that needs to be done for the ministry to be effective, that is, for it to perform ideally, a good story that can be told regarding children's ministry and lastly general comments of the teachers regarding the ministry and it ends with a conclusion.

6.3.3 Referencing method used in this section

Quotations of the participants that are used for referencing purposes were generated through ATLAS. TI 2023 software and were saved as code reports. There are three code reports for

the three categories of research participants, namely, children's ministry teachers, parents' focus groups and congregations' pastors. All quotations for both the parents' focus groups and the pastors start with numbers 1 to 4, with the exception of the ministry teachers. Number 1 stands for the congregation or pastor of the first congregation interviewed, which is "Cornerstone", 2 for the second pastor ("Our Hope", 3 and 4 - "New Life and "Gift of Life) for the third and fourth pastors respectively. The second number on the quotation stands for the quotation number. For example, quotation 1:39 stands for quotation number 39 under the selected code said by the pastor of congregation 1. In the same manner, concerning the parents, their quotation numbering starts from 1 to 4. These numbers stand for the congregation numbers. Every quotation that starts with 1 is from the first congregation, and the number following 1 is the quotation number. However, with children's ministry teachers, their numbering starts with five and ends with 8. 5 represents the first congregation, which is "Cornerstone", while 6, 7 and 8 represent "Our Hope", "New Life", and "Gift of Life" congregations, respectively. The numbers following those are for quotation numbers.

6.4 Challenges Experienced by Children's Ministry Teachers

In an attempt to understand the context of Pentecostal children's ministry in Margaung Metro, the ministry teachers were asked about their challenges regarding children's ministry in their respective congregations. The question was related to sub-question 1 (1.6.1) of the study, namely, what are the challenges of volunteer workers/teachers regarding children's ministry? The same data analysis method explained above was followed to analyze the respondents' responses. The following three aspects, namely, lack of parents' support, backslidden parents and lack of resources (facilities/ infrastructure), were then arrived at.

Figure 6.1 below is a graphic presentation of the aspects.

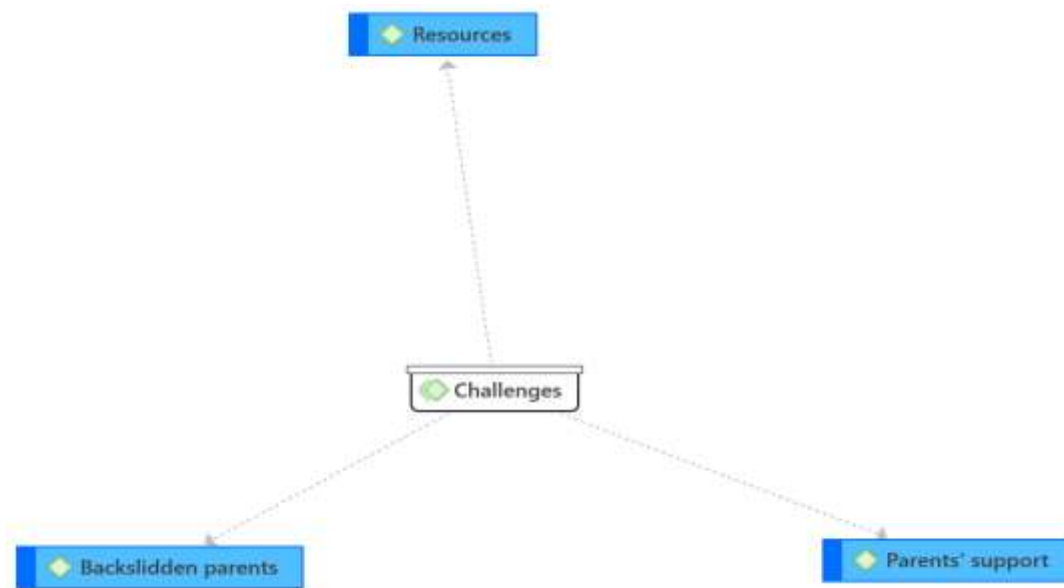


Figure 6.1: Children's ministry challenges according to the teachers

The children's ministry teachers indicated that one of their main challenges is the lack of support by the parents in matters concerning children's ministry. One of the teachers said, “Parents do not support the work” (5:924). Another one echoing the same sentiment said there is a “Lack of support from the parents” (7:1519). According to them, this is shown by poor attendance during ministry services by the children (5:1622; 7:1219) and lack of funds that the ministry experiences (7:1419).

Regarding the lack of support by the parents, the teachers indicated that when the children's ministry is supposed to start at 09h00, and the main service starts at 10h00, parents do not bring children at 09h00 for their service, but instead, they come with them at 10h00, and this hampers their work. Again, this lack of support manifests itself through a shortage of children's ministry teachers. A teacher from the “New Life” congregation, in her own words, said there is a shortage regarding the “number of children’s ministry teachers” (7:1623).

The other challenge mentioned by the teachers talk to the parents who have backslidden or forsaken God. Lamenting the situation, the teacher from congregation 8 said, “The parents have forsaken God” (8:1618) and, as a result, do not play a part in raising their children according to the Word of God. Furthermore, she said the only “Sound doctrine they hear is here in the church” (8:818).

Another challenge that negatively affected the work of children's ministry teachers was the lack of resources (facilities or infrastructure). The teachers indicated that they needed a separate space or room dedicated to the ministry (6:1124). "Our Hope" congregation teacher, to emphasize the magnitude of the problem, said, "Big is place" (6:816). Some congregations were using the same building where lead services were held; they either had to start their children's ministry services earlier before the main service or have their services on a different day.

6.4.1 The main focus of children's ministry, as per the teachers

In this section, the focus is on the responses of the teachers concerning "What should be the main focus of the children's ministry of the congregations?" This question was linked to sub-question 2 (1.6.2) of the study, namely, "What is the understanding of the pastors and volunteer workers/teachers regarding children's ministry?" Out of the many codes that were inductively selected from their responses, a code group was made and named the main focus. The core group's main focus and its related aspects, namely, love, salvation and spiritual, mental and physical growth, are depicted below in Figure 6.2:

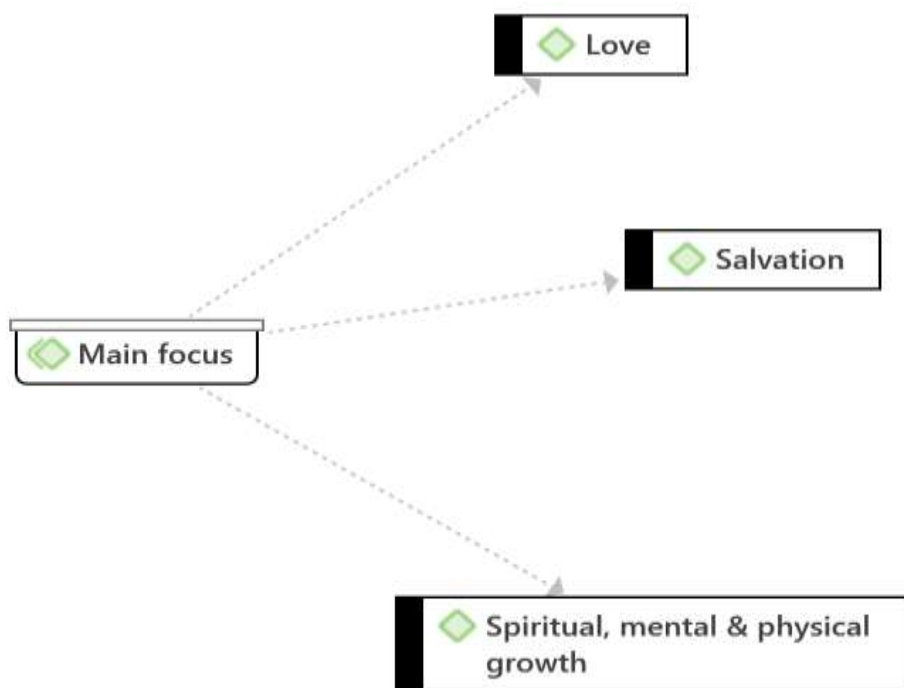


Figure 6.2: Main focus of children's ministry according to the teachers

The children's ministry teacher for the "Gift of Life" congregation felt that the children ought to be loved tangibly or visibly before anything else, that is, even before they could be taught about God or the love of Jesus. They need to see and feel that they are loved. The teacher just said, "Love them" (8:24). One of the tangible ways to show love is to provide for their needs in all respects (8:14). This was supported by the teacher for "Our Hope" congregation who said, "No child should appear to be in lack" (6:1020).

The second aspect relates to salvation. The teachers believed that the children should be taught about salvation and encouraged to experience it personally. In the context of Pentecostals, personal salvation refers to being born again by accepting Jesus Christ as a personal saviour. They also reckoned that the children should be taught to know and fear God (7:224) and be taught about Jesus and related matters. Regarding this matter the teacher at "Gift of Life" said, "Teach them Jesus and give them all that thing" (8:34), and the last aspect talks about ensuring that children grow spiritually, mentally and physically (7:14).

6.4.2 Practices of the children's ministry according to the teachers

The second question posed to the teachers was concerned with the practices of children's ministry in their congregations. The question was asked in an attempt to respond to sub-question 3 (1.6.3). The same process of data analysis was followed until the following three aspects, namely, teaching, singing and drama, sketches and gymnastics, were arrived at.

Below is a figure depicting aspects emanating from the code group practices followed by their discussion.

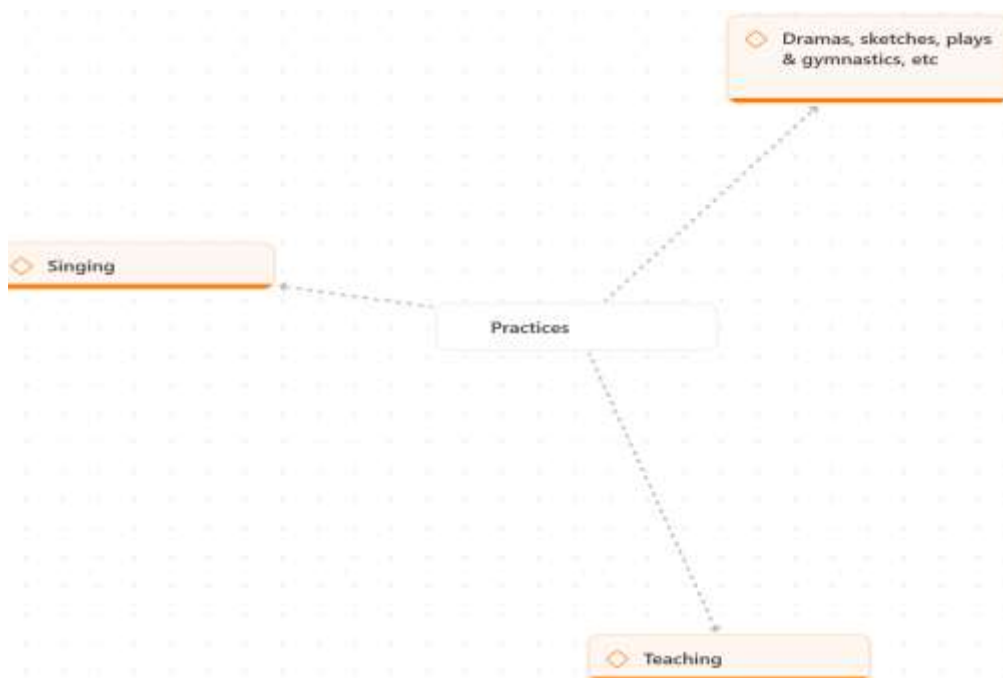


Figure 6.3: Practices of children’s ministry according to the teachers

Regarding the teaching aspect or theme, the children’s ministry teachers felt that children should mainly be taught the Word of God. The teachers said they “Teach them” (6:612; 7:1015), referring to children, and this could be done in different ways. Again, they should be taught how to pray (7:239). Others follow the church’s ministry syllabus in teaching the word (7:37). “New Life” teacher said they teach the children the “Word of God and memory verses” (7:247) and drama (6:178). “Cornerstone” congregation claimed to assist children with their schoolwork. (5:511). In this case, children who knew or understood certain subjects well were asked to help others during certain ministry services.

Singing was mentioned as an essential component of children's ministry practices. During ministry services, the children would sing choruses and worship songs (7:259; 8:158). Their services were opened by singing a few songs or choruses followed by prayer, and later, they would also sing again, even at the end of the service.

Another aspect mentioned regarding children's ministry practices was the performing of drama, sketches, plays and gymnastics (6:178; 7:811). The “New Life” said they do “Dramas, sketches, sometimes others do gymnastics and so on.” These were probably done as part of teaching

children the Word of God through Bible stories while, on the other hand, they were done as part of helping them “Grow spiritually, mentally and physically” (7:14).

6.4.3 Role of children’s ministry teachers

The respondents were asked about their role in children's ministry. The question was asked in an attempt to respond to sub-question 4 (1.6.4) of the study. A similar process as enunciated above was followed to analyze the data. Regarding the role teachers play in children's ministry the following aspects were identified, namely, leader, mother/provider and teacher. The teachers indicated that they did not only perform one function in the children's ministry as it might be thought to be the case but they did many other functions.

The figure below graphically depicts the role of children’s ministry teachers:

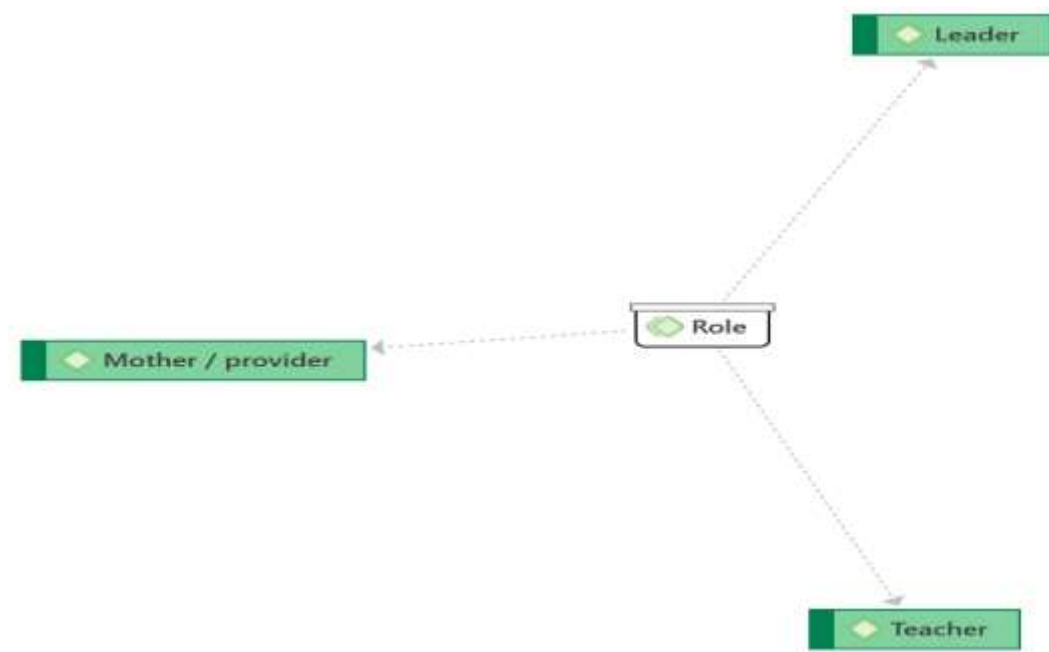


Figure 6.4: The role of the children’s ministry teachers

The teachers indicated that they were leaders of children's ministry in their congregations (5:618). As leaders, they have to organize all the activities about the ministry (7:915) and act as spokespersons for children's ministry to the congregation's leadership and parents (7:1115).

A teacher from the "Gift of Life" congregation said, "Everything about them (children) is on my shoulders" (8:612).

Another role children's ministry teachers had to fulfil was being a provider to all the children in the ministry. One teacher said, "I am like a mother to them" (5:818). One of the responsibilities that mothers or providers do is to provide for their children. The role mother/provider is not related to the gender of a teacher. It was coincidental that all the interviewed persons were female; hence, they regarded one of their roles as that of a mother. "Our Hope" children's ministry teacher said that, among other things she had to see to it that food was always available during their ministry service (6:1224).

The other familiar role of the children's ministry teachers is that of a teacher (5:718; 8:512). As teachers, they are responsible for teaching the children the Word of God (6:612; 7:1015; 7:224; 8:34) and the syllabus (7:37) in some cases and facilitating other children's ministry practices such as dramas, sketches, gymnastics and so on (7:811).

6.4.4 Improvement needed in children's ministry, according to the teachers

To respond to sub-question 5 (1.6.5), which sought to determine the requirements for an effective children's ministry, the respondents were asked, "How would you like children's ministry improved?" Again, the same analysis procedure was followed to arrive at the following aspects attached to the improvement code group, namely, the need for children's ministry resources, support by parents and the voice of the children to be heard. A graphic presentation of the aspects is depicted below, followed by their discussion.

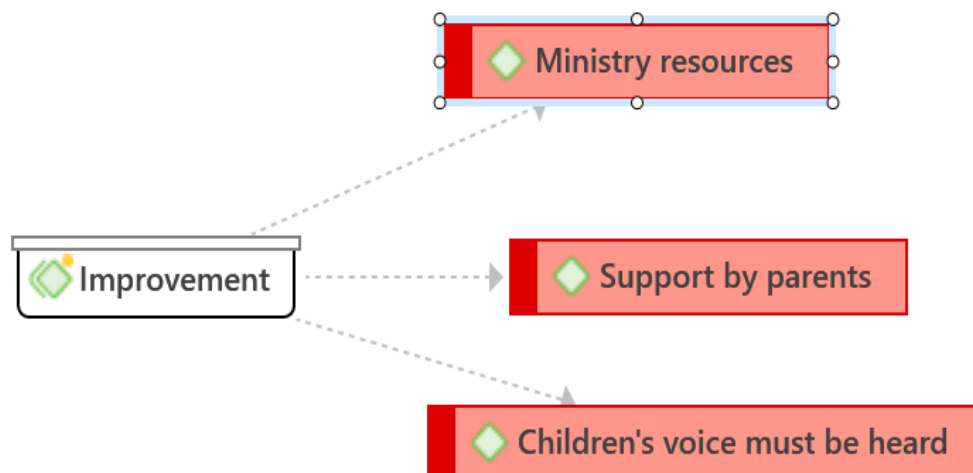


Figure 6.5: Improvement needed in children’s ministry according to the teachers

As mentioned earlier, the main challenge for teachers was the lack of ministry resources. They accordingly indicated that for the ministry to function optimally there is a need for facilities such as classrooms to be made available. The teacher at the “Our Hope” congregation said, as children’s ministry, the children need their “Our separate room” (6:1124) and another said they need to “have recreational facilities” (8:1022).

Again, concerning the lack of support by the parents, the teachers felt that for the ministry to improve there is a need for more parents to volunteer to support it (7:1723; 8:1722). One of them said they need “More parents who are willing to come and support” (8:922). According to them, this support would help improve the ministry in several ways. For example, it will improve the attendance of children in ministry services (7:1219) if parents bring children to the ministry services. Again, it could address the shortage of teachers (7:1623) if some parents volunteer to become ministry teachers.

Moreover, it could ensure the availability of food in children's ministry (6:1224) if some help in preparing meals for the children. Another important factor raised concerning the improvement of children's ministry was to afford children the opportunity to have a say regarding their ministry. “Cornerstone” teacher in her own words, said, “Their voice ought to be heard” (5:1232).

6.4.5 Good story to tell about children's ministry, according to the teachers

As explained earlier a good story refers to a change or transformation that happened in the children's lives as a result of them having been part of children's ministry. The figure below presents issues that the teachers regard as good stories that happened in their children's ministry.



Figure 6.6: Good story to tell about children's ministry according to the teachers

The teachers, when asked to tell a good story regarding children's ministry of their congregations, mentioned two things, namely, children's obedience and boldness. They claimed to have witnessed these in the children's lives since they started attending the children's ministry. "Our Hope" congregation teacher claimed, among other things, that "The Word of God is like germinating in them" (6:2032). Again, she said, "They grow up knowing the Word of God" (6:1632), and they practice what they have been told (6:1528). The "Gift of Life" congregation teacher expressing the change she was witnessing among the children said, "They are not like the time when I met them" (8:1229).

In contrast, the "New Life" congregation teacher said she saw some children who grew up in children's ministry become teenagers, and others went on to do Grade 12. Others went to tertiary institutions due to their obedience (7:1827). The teacher again said they once held a graduation ceremony for children's ministry children (7:1927).

Another visible change that the teachers noticed in children relates to the children's boldness in testifying about the goodness of the Lord. They said this was a result of their being part of the children's ministry. "Cornerstone," the teacher, in her own words, said, "Our children have love" (5:1340) and "Are go-getters" (5:1440). Among others they show no fear (6:1928) to the extent that they are bold to testify about the goodness of the Lord (8:1829). Furthermore, they

pass on what they were taught to other children (6:1428). One teacher said many children in their ministry came because their children's ministry children invited them.

6.4.6 Teachers' general comments regarding children's ministry

Lastly, the teachers were asked to make general comments concerning children's ministry of their congregations. The two aspects that they raised were awareness of the importance of children's ministry and the need for teacher training. Figure 6.7 below depicts the general comments made by the teachers.

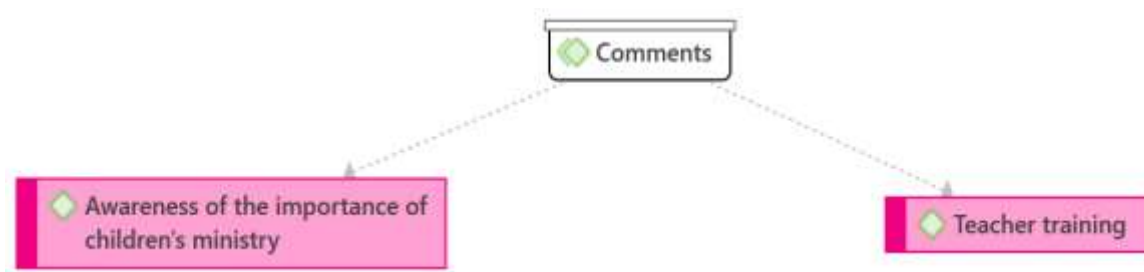


Figure 6.7: General comments by the teachers regarding children's ministry

There was a sense among the teachers that there was a need for awareness regarding the importance of children's ministry in the congregations; hence, they were experiencing a lack of support from the parents. "New Life" congregation teacher said there is a need, therefore, to "Encourage young people, encourage parents, and encourage even children to love children's ministry" (7:2031). Moreover, she stressed the importance of the ministry by saying, "Even in the list of the congregation's groups, it is included, but when we talk, we say it is tomorrow's congregation" (7:2131).

Regarding training, the "Cornerstone" congregation teacher felt strongly about teacher training. She said children's ministry teachers need training (5:1544) to be capacitated to the extent that they can deal with all types of children because God loves all children. Again, training should not only focus on the Bible but also soft skills such as first aid so that should a child get injured, they would be able to help that child and may also prevent things like infection because other children could be HIV positive.

6.4.7 Summary

The aspects that emanated from the seven code groups were put together to form another network to see how they relate to each other in a network. Several relationships came out in that network. Figure 6.8 below depicts the network of those aspects and their attending relationships, followed by the discussion thereof.

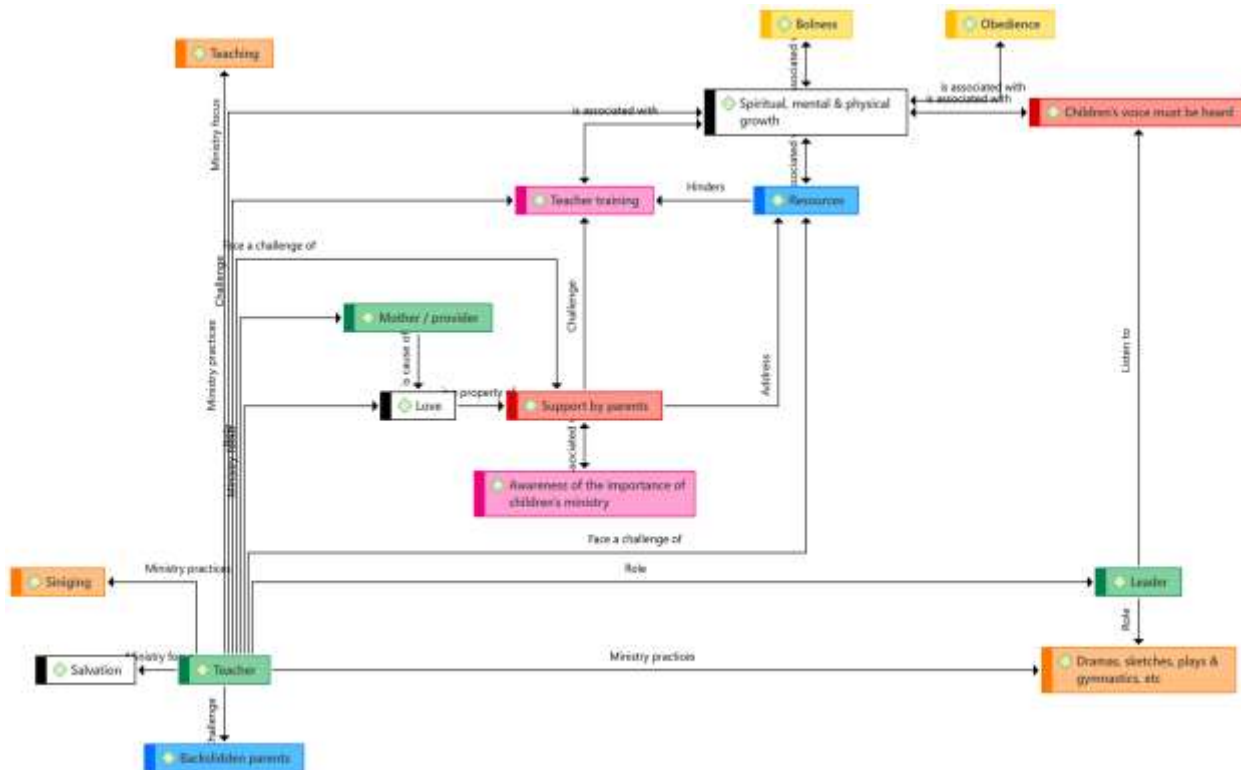


Figure 6.8: Relationships network of aspects raised by the teachers

Colour	Meaning
	Good story
	Practices
	Challenges
	Roles
	Improvements
	General comments
	Main focus

The figure above shows ministry challenges, its main focus and practices, the role of children's ministry teachers, a good story to tell about children's ministry and general comments by the teachers about the ministry. The teachers indicated that the ministry should first focus on loving the children, then their salvation through believing in Jesus Christ as their saviour and finally, their spiritual, mental and physical growth. However, this must be done simultaneously.

The ministry practices are teaching the Word of God, singing and performing dramas and plays and doing gymnastics. The teachers felt constrained by the lack of resources and support by the parents, and also lack of training. They believed for the ministry to improve, parents have to support it with resources, and they, need to be capacitated with training. There is, however, a good story to be told about the ministry: children show obedience to their parents and others. They are also bold to testify about the Lord and this is a result of the spiritual, mental and physical growth they are experiencing. Lastly, the teachers felt there has to be awareness about the importance of children's ministry in the congregations so that it gets the necessary support.

The Pentecostal children's ministry teachers believe the primary focus of the ministry should be on loving the children, teaching them about salvation and, after that, helping them to grow spiritually, mentally and physically. To achieve this, the teachers must teach the children the Word of God, how to sing and perform dramas, sketches, plays and gymnastics. They regard their role in the ministry as that of a leader, teacher and provider (mother). As leaders of the ministries they negotiate with church leadership and parents regarding ministry needs and activities, and they organize all activities of the ministry. Teaching the children the word in different ways is regarded as their primary responsibility. Other ways that they teach children the Word of God is through doing memory verses, plays and sketches. Again, as providers they have to see to it that all the children feel loved and are fed and catered for concerning their other needs.

In pursuit of their work, the teachers encounter some challenges. In the main are lack of resources and lack of the parents' support. They felt that these could be ameliorated through the provision of resources, parents supporting the ministry, and even listening to the children regarding matters that concern them in their ministry.

Notwithstanding the challenges, they feel that there is a good story that can be told regarding children's ministry. They are encouraged by the transformation that they see in the children now compared to how they were when they first came to the ministry. Among other things, they claim the children are now obedient. Their obedience is even attested to by the teachers in the schools where they attend. They are also bold to testify about the goodness of the Lord in their lives. Some even testify to others at school and further invite them to church.

Lastly, they appeal to the congregations to be aware of the importance of children's ministry, take it seriously and support it accordingly. They also acknowledge their need for training and appeal to the powers that be to assist them with the same. This will help them perform their job to the best of their abilities and become more effective.

6.5 Parents' Focus Groups Data Analysis Report

The analysis procedure followed in 4.5 above was also used in this section to analyze the data collected from the parents through focus groups. Again, the same code group definitions in 4.6.2 above are applicable in this section.

6.5.1 Children's ministry challenges, according to parents

Parents were asked regarding the challenges or gaps experienced in children's ministry in their congregations. The question was linked to sub-question 1 (1.6.1) of the study, which in turn sought to respond to objective 1.4.1, namely, to determine the challenges faced by volunteer workers/teachers regarding children's ministry. Code group challenges was formed out of which came the following aspects: shortage of teachers, lack of support by parents, training for teachers and lack of resources (building/facilities). These are depicted in the figure below.

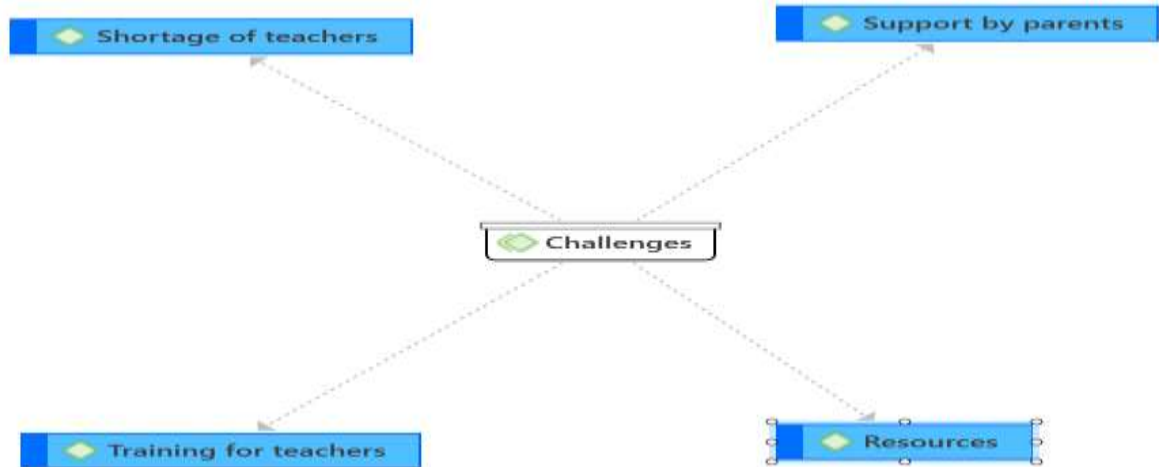


Figure 6.9: Challenges of children’s ministry according to the parents

The shortage of children's ministry teachers was mentioned as one of the critical challenges that the ministry was faced with (1:1831). According to one parent, this results in teachers focusing on the older children at the expense of the young ones (1:1630) and children being used unprepared (1:1932). Again, the lack of parents' support in children's ministry was a recurring aspect. The teachers also complained about the same aspect. Ironically, parents also mentioned that they did not bring children to attend ministry services as required. One of them said it is “A problem to (bring) send children to children’s ministry” (3:1727). However, in the “Our Hope” congregation, the situation was different. The challenge was that children of different age groups were grouped in one room (2:1328).

Teacher training was also another recurring aspect. The parents raised a need for children's ministry teachers to be well-trained and motivated (1:1731. In the words of one of them, “We need well-trained people in our teaching” (3:35). According to them this would require sending them to institutions where they will get accredited training which will equip them thoroughly. They felt teachers need to be “Trained how to teach children based on their age and understanding” (4:928). If, however, they cannot receive accredited training; at least they should attend training workshops (3:2137) to keep abreast of the developments in their area of work.

Just like the other aspects, the issue of lack of resources in the form of buildings/facilities was a major challenge in children's ministry. Parents stressed the need for the ministry to have its

own buildings and facilities. One parent said the children need “To have their church in a separate place” (1:2539; 3:1928).

6.5.2 The main focus of children’s ministry

The parents were asked, what should be the main focus of children's ministry of their congregations? The question was linked to sub-question 3 (1.6.3) of the study, namely, “What is the understanding of the pastors and volunteer workers/teachers regarding children's ministry?” Again, the similar process followed in 4.5 and 4.6.2 above was followed to arrive at the code group’s main focus, and the following three aspects emanated from it, namely, Scripture and doctrine, training of teachers, and children's needs. Again, the same analysis method was followed in all the subsequent code groups. The same procedure was used in all subsequent analyses in the study.

Figure 6.10 below is a graphic presentation of the aspects:

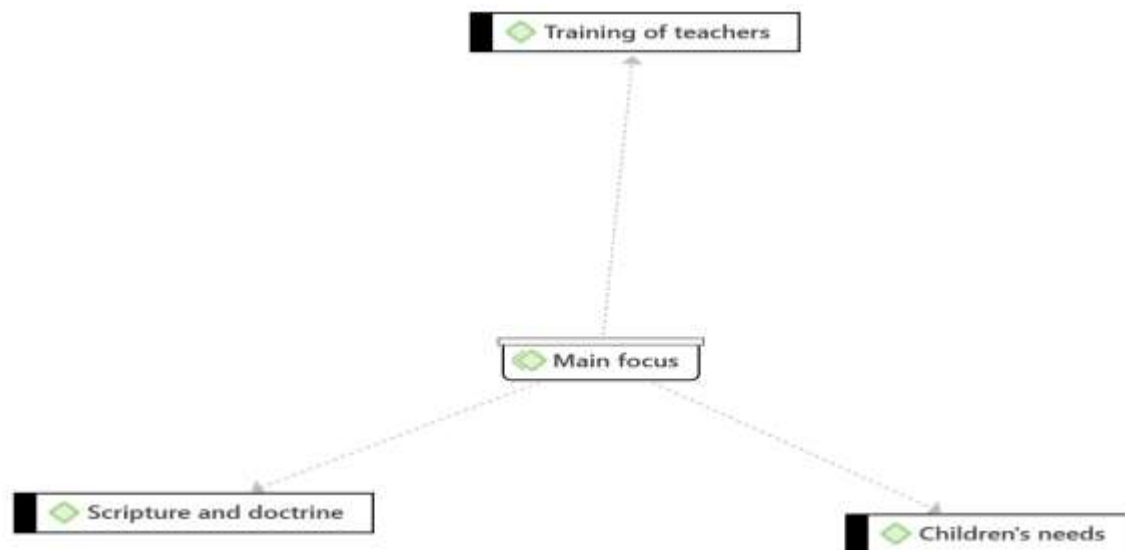


Figure 6.10: Main focus of children’s ministry according to the parents

The parents felt that, among other things, children’s ministry should mainly focus on the teaching of “Scripture and doctrine” (1:15). Children should be taught about the living God, His word and how to pray, and to respect themselves, people and life (3:24; 3:910; 4:46). Another

one said, “Children must be taught that the Lord Jesus died for them and the Lord Jesus saves” (4:25). Regarding the needs of the children some parents said, “Focus should on the needs” of the children” (1:36), they should be “taught what is appropriate to them” (2:1529).

Again, the parents were concerned about the training of children's ministry teachers (4:928). The said the teachers should attend regular workshops, saying, “People (teachers) could be taken to workshops” (3:2137) as this will empower them to know how to deal with children based on their age and level of understanding (4:928).

6.5.3 Role of parents in children’s ministry

The parents were asked about their role in children’s ministry. The question was linked to sub-question 4 (1.6.4) of the study. It sought to establish the role of parents and volunteer workers/teachers in children's ministry. The same analysis method mentioned earlier was followed even in this case. From the code group role, the following aspects came out: financial contributions/donations, no role, and support for teachers. These are graphically presented in Figure 6.11 below, followed by their discussion.

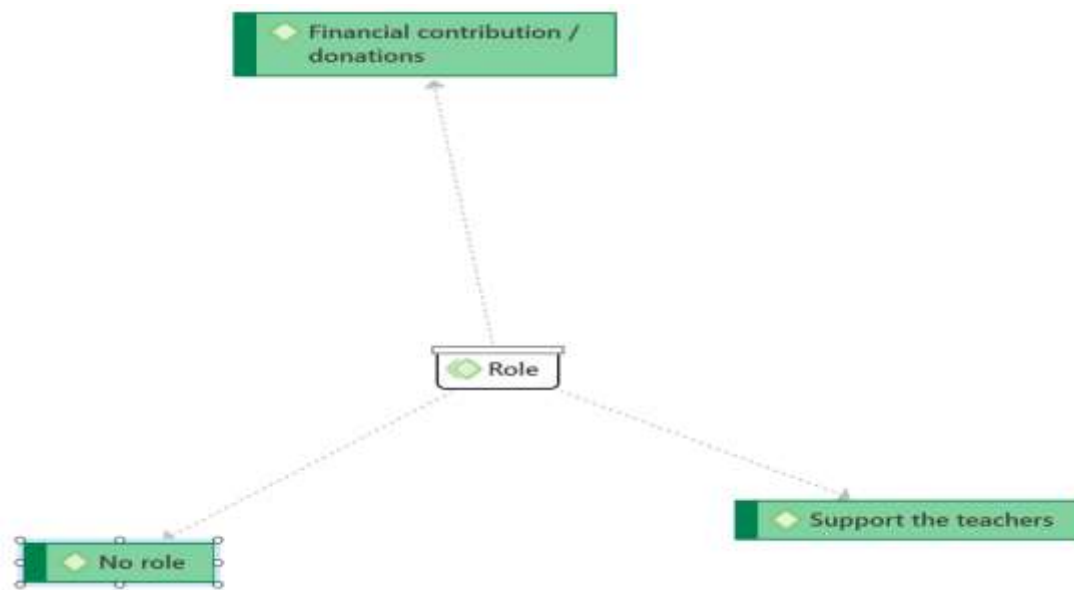


Figure 6.11: Role played by the parents in children’s ministry

Some parents indicated that they play a role in children's ministry by financially contributing to the ministry (1:514) and teaching the children the Word of God (1:816). Interestingly, one parent said, "I don't play any role" in the ministry (1:1018). However, another one said, "I help the lady who assists them" (the children) and cook them soup (2:715; 2:412). Another echoed a similar sentiment, saying, "I do whatever I am asked" (1:715), yet another one claimed to assist the teachers by disciplining and mentoring the children (2:1227). Other parents said they play a role by bringing their children to children's ministry, giving them everything that is needed and reprimanding them when necessary (3: 3215; 31317; 4:513).

6.5.4 Assistance needed by parents to play their role in children's ministry

To determine what type of assistance parents may need, if any, to play a role in children's ministry, they were asked how the congregations could assist them to play a role in children's ministry. From the code group assistance needed, these two aspects emerged, namely, communication and more activities. These are presented in Figure 6.12 below.



Figure 6.12: Assistance needed by the parents to play a role in children's ministry

The parents indicated that there was a need for communication between them and the children's ministry teachers. One parent said the teachers need to "Inform us" of what and how to assist them (2:921). They believed that if the teachers were to talk to them and request their participation in the ministry, they would be willing to take part. Furthermore, some said there should be "more activities" in children's ministry for them to be able to participate (1:397;

1:1124). Another parent said they could participate “If at least (children) were given homework” (1:1225).

6.5.5 Improvement needed in children’s ministry, according to parents

Parents were asked how they would like the ministry to improve, given the challenges they raised regarding the ministry. The question was linked to sub-question 5 (1.6.5) of the study, that is, “What would be the requirements for an effective children's ministry?” The sub-question was linked to objective 1.4.5, namely, to determine how children's ministry could be improved. The following four aspects emanated from the code group improvement, namely, resources, partnership between parents and teachers, increased number of teachers and teacher training/workshops. These are presented in Figure 6.13 below.

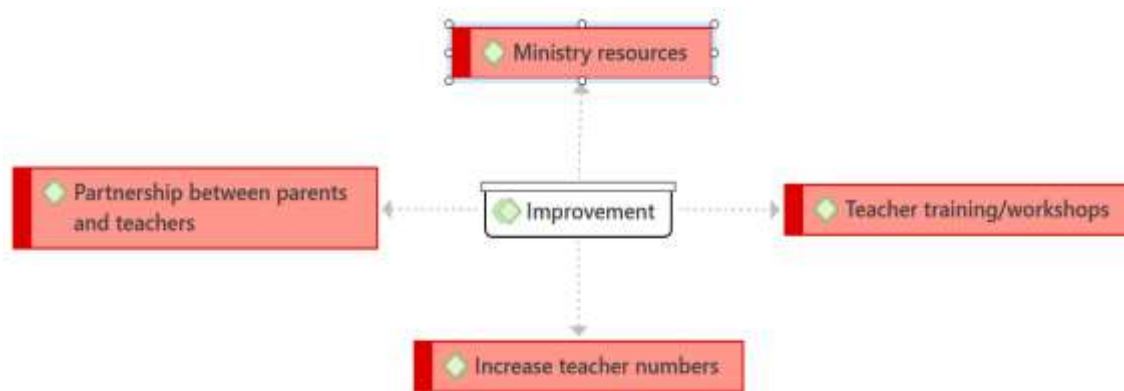


Figure 6.13: Improvement needed in children’s ministry according to the parents

Three aspects kept recurring, namely, ministry resources (mainly building/facilities), teacher training/workshops and an increased number of teachers (1:1831; 1:2539; 3:1928; 3:35). One parent said the congregation should “Increase the number of teachers” (1:2439), and those teachers should receive high standard training (3:2036). This will enable the teachers, among others, to “teach children according to different age groups’ and “nurture that talent at a young age” (2:1734; 2:2037). Again, at the “Our Hope” congregation, the parents felt that one way of lifting or encouraging the teachers spiritually was to give them a chance to attend the main service (2:1629). In support of that, another parent said, “Immediately after the music service, they should attend the lead service” (2:1935).

Parents indicated that these factors were hampering the growth and effectiveness of the ministry. They further suggested that for them to be addressed there has to be a partnership between them and teachers. One parent said, "Parents can have that thing that Sunday school is not a service for children; instead, it is a service where we are going to work together with teachers to grow children" (3:2442). Again, on the one hand, parents should assist the ministry as volunteers (3:2237; 1:3352), and on the other hand, the ministry should have other or more activities (3:2337) for them to participate. Furthermore, there should be finance to assist children regarding the matter of food (4:1030). Moreover, another parent felt that their congregation's children's ministry could visit another sister's congregation ministry (3:3057).

6.5.6 Good story to tell regarding children's ministry according to parents

The parents felt that the good story that can be told about children's ministry in their congregations concerns the children's spiritual growth. They indicated that they were witnessing spiritual growth among the children (4:1842). In the "Cornerstone" congregation during the children's month (1:3843), children were allowed to serve and even preach on a particular Sunday. On that Sunday, everything in the main service was led by them from directing the program to preaching. One parent said during such services, "children do everything" (1:2845). In support of that, another one said, "Doing all the things that we do in church; preaching, singing to us and doing all these other things" (1:2946). It is through such activities that parents can witness their children's spiritual growth.

The parents said the following as the good stories about their children's ministries: "These children love their church a lot" (4:2051), are free and happy, and are loving, and they also trust God a lot (4:1541; 4:1641; 4:2353). Another one said, "(Children) are always on time and come to church regularly", and are motivated, and they are able to repeat what they have learned (2:2141; 2:2242; 3:2647; 3:2748). Furthermore, "they always invite other children" (2:2342) to church. Another good story to tell happened in the "Gift of Life" congregation when the congregation hosted a party for the children and the parents came. The parent exclaimed, "and the parents said we are thankful we see that you are treating our children well" (4:2252).

6.5.7 Parents' general comments concerning children's ministry

When asked to make general comments regarding the ministry, the parents mentioned the following three aspects: transformation in children, teacher consistency and motivation for children. These are presented in the figure below:

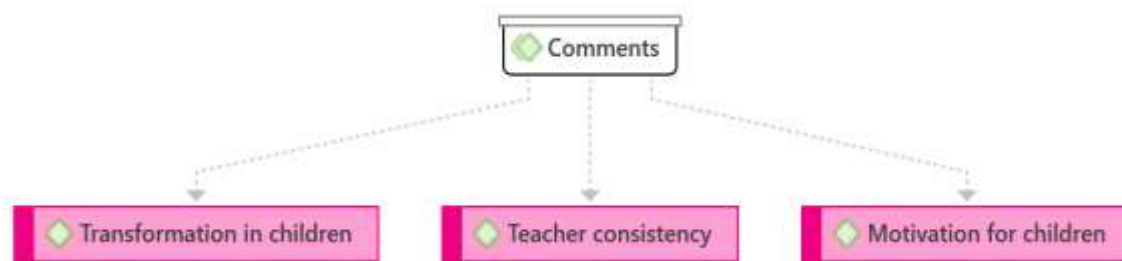


Figure 6.14: General comments by the parents concerning children's ministry

Regarding transformation in children, parents exclaimed that children were so transformed since attending children's ministry (4:2152). This claim supports the one made by the teachers that, among others, "they are not like the time when I met them" (8:1229). Again, the parents contended that teacher consistency regarding attending children's ministry and punctuality was critical to building rapport with the children. They indicated that when children arrive during their service they have to find the teachers already waiting for them (1:3757).

Furthermore, the parents highlighted a need for the children to be motivated or encouraged to attend children's ministry. One way of doing that would be to buy or make them t-shirts. In one parent's words, she said, "Sunday school of ours be made t-shirts" (2:2446). Other parents said they should be allowed to dance in front and be given a chance to teach and read in children's ministry (1:3046; 1:3251; 1:3653).

6.5.8 Summary

A network of relationships of the code group aspects emanating from the parents' focus group interviews was made to see how the aspects relate or affect one another. It is depicted below in Figure 6.15.

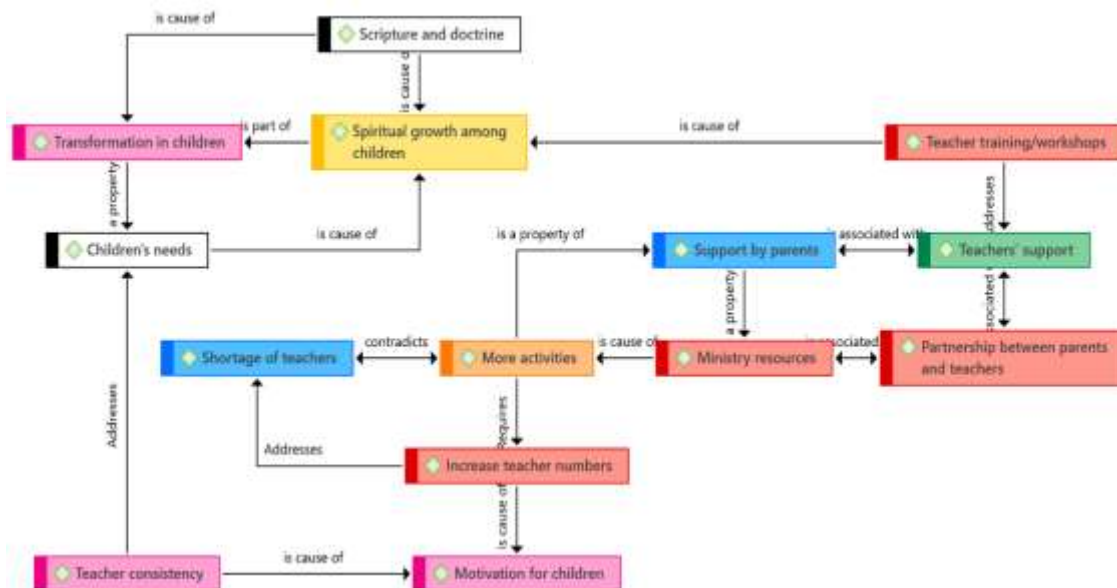


Figure 6.15: Relationships network of aspects raised by the parents

Colour	Meaning
Yellow	Good story
Orange	Practices
Blue	Challenges
Green	Roles
Red	Improvements
Pink	General comments
White	Main focus

According to Figure 6.15 above, the challenges of children's ministry are lack of human and other resources, support by the parents and teacher training/workshops. These challenges result in the ministry not doing more activities since more activities require more resources. Parents can, to some extent, help ameliorate these challenges by providing the resources. If

resources are provided, this will have a ripple effect on the ministry. It will enable the ministry to do more activities, increase teacher numbers and help to train them as well. However, for this to happen, there has to be communication between parents and teachers. This communication needs to culminate in forming a partnership between the two parties. The provision of resources will also result in the teachers performing their work consistently, which will motivate the children. Teacher consistency, in turn, will motivate the children, resulting in their spiritual growth which in turn will result in transformation in children. On the other hand, transformation and spiritual growth among children is a product of well-trained teachers who teach the children Scripture and doctrine.

In conclusion, parents felt that children's ministry faced the following challenges; shortage of teachers and lack of teacher training, lack of resources for the ministry and little or no support by the parents themselves. They believed the ministry must mainly focus on training teachers, teaching children Scripture and Pentecostal doctrine and children's needs.

Regarding the role they play as parents in children's ministry, it was found that some contribute financially to the ministry, others claim to support the teachers in one way or another, while others play no role altogether. They indicated that there has to be communication between the teachers and parents so that they are informed about the type of support that is needed, and the ministry should have more activities to enable them to participate.

For the ministry to improve from its current situation, the parents reckoned that the following issues must be addressed., namely, resources, that is, more resources must be provided, teacher numbers must be increased, teacher training must be prioritized, and there has to be a partnership between teachers and parents.

Parents also reckoned that despite the ministry's challenges, there was, however, a good story that can be told regarding children's ministry. They claimed to be witnessing spiritual growth among the children. Parents said they were seeing transformation in children's lives. They were, however, concerned about teachers' inconsistency in the way they did their work. For example, they expect the children, when attending the ministry activities, to always find teachers waiting for them. Lastly, they felt there was a need to keep children motivated to attend their services. For example, make them t-shirts, have graduation ceremonies at the end of the year and give them certificates, among others.

6.6 Reflections by the Pastors

Pastors of the four selected congregations were interviewed. Two questions posed to them concerning children's ministry of their congregations were as follows:

1. What is your understanding of the children's ministry of the congregation?
2. What practices/activities do you have in the congregation regarding your children's ministry?

On the one hand, question 1 was linked to sub-question 2 (1.6.2) of the study, namely, "What is the understanding of the pastors and volunteer workers/teachers regarding children's ministry?" Sub-question 2, in turn, is linked to objective 1.4.2 of the study. On the other hand, question 2 was also linked to sub-question 3 (1.6.3), namely, "What are the practices or activities of the congregations regarding children's ministry?" The sub-question was also linked to objective 1.4.3 (p. 13), namely, "To determine the practices or activities of children's ministry of Pentecostal congregations." The same data collection and analysis tools and methods described in Chapter 4 and 5.2 above were used even in this regard.

6.7 Understanding of the Pastors Regarding Children's Ministry

Concerning the first question posed to the pastors, code group understanding was inductively arrived at, and it yielded the following two aspects: an integral part of the church and future church. These are graphically depicted below in Figure 6.16.

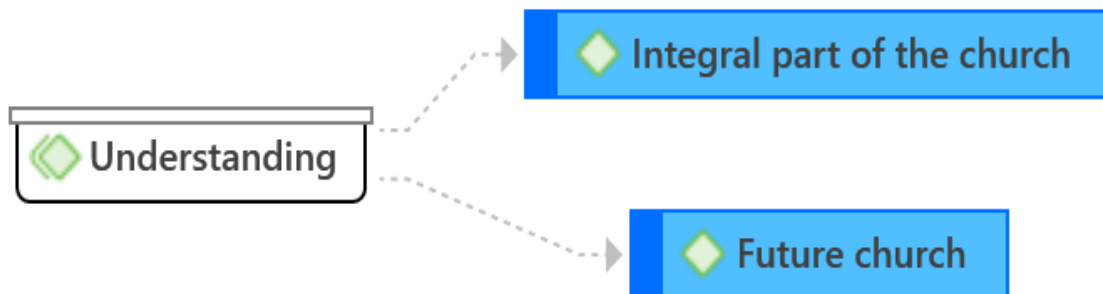


Figure 6.16: Understanding of the pastors concerning children's ministry

The pastors said they understood children’s ministry as an integral part of the congregations. One pastor said, “Children are a very important part of the church” (4:14). One likened them to a foundation of the church, another emphasized the importance of a strong foundation (2:14; and another said, “Foundation is fundamental” (3:15). He posited that the Lord wants the children from the young age. In his own words, he said, “The second part is the Lord wants these kids from a young age” (3:25). Another pastor said children are “like a field that is not yet ploughed” (2:24). Again, the pastors believed that children’s ministry is a future church and the children are future church leaders (1:15; 4:24: 1:25).

6.8 Practices of Children’s Ministry According to the Pastors

From the code group practices, the following three aspects attending to it came out, namely, teaching the Bible, singing and plays and/or sketches. These are presented in Figure 6.17 below.

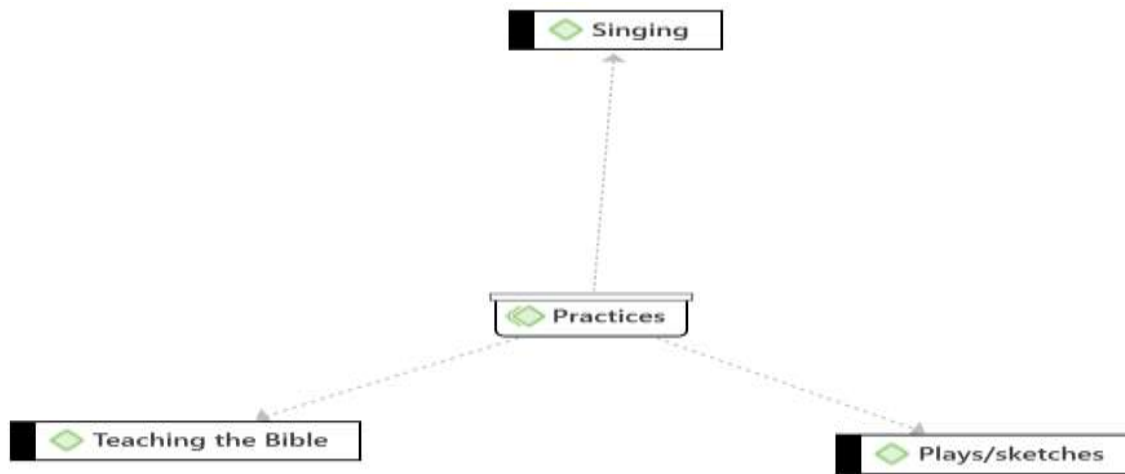


Figure 6.17: Practices of children’s ministry according to the pastors

The pastors said that children’s practices of children’s ministry were teaching the children the Bible or the Word of God. For example, memory verses and Christian values. One pastor said they are “taught about the Christian values, about the Bible” (1:39). This was done using Bible characters and Bible memory verses (2:38; 3:311; 4:48; 4:58). In “Cornerstone” they are also taught how to conduct a main service (1:59). Singing formed a great part of children’s ministry

practices (1:49; 2:58; 3:411; 4:38). Lastly, the pastors mentioned plays and/or sketches as other practices of children’s ministry. In “Our Hope” congregation the pastor said, children play “cast about Bible stories” (2:48).

6.8.1 Summary

The aspects in the two group codes emanating from the pastors’ interviews were used to form a relationship network. The purpose of this was to see how the aspects relate to one another in a network. The figure below portrays the relationships of aspects associated with the two code groups emanating from the pastors' interviews.

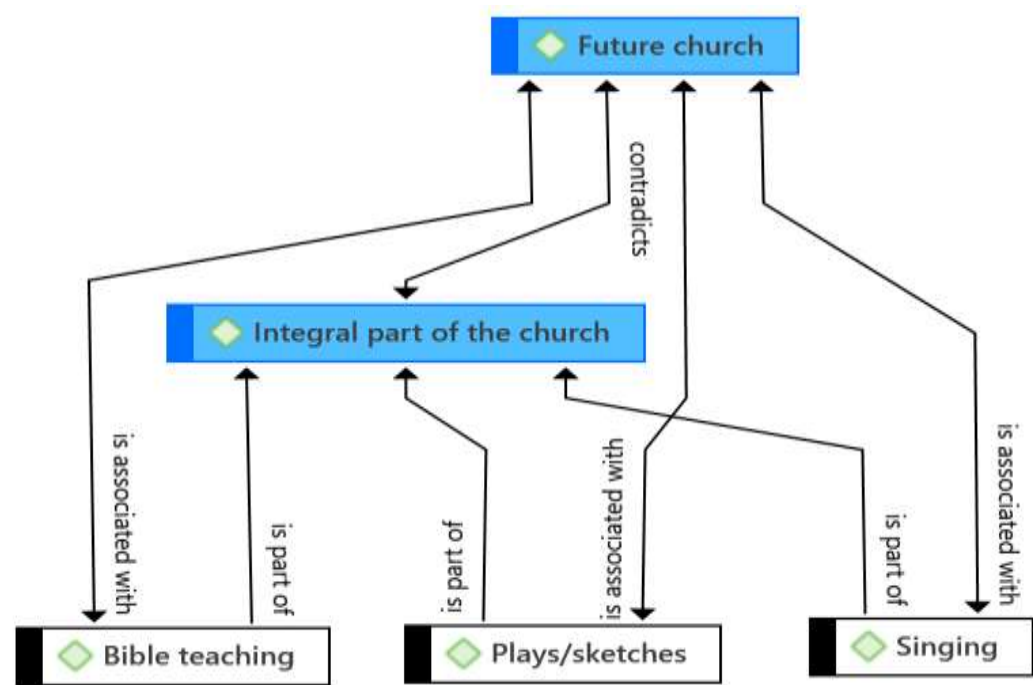


Figure 6.18: Relationships network of aspects raised by the pastors

Colour	Meaning
	Ministry understanding
	Practices

According to Figure 6.18 above children's ministry practices are an integral part of the church and would also form part of the future church. However, the notions of an integral part of the

church and future church seem to contradict one another. Therefore, there seems to be no basis for regarding children's ministry as a future church as opposed to seeing it as an integral part of the church since the ministry's practices are already an integral part of the church.

The pastors said they understood children's ministry as both an integral part of the church and the future church. Concerning ministry practices, they said the ministry practices were teachings of the Bible, singing and performing plays and/or sketches. These are Bible-related plays and/or sketches. Their perceptions of an integral part of the church and future church seem to contradict because what is done currently would still be done in the future. However, in one congregation, children are allowed to lead the service and preach in the lead service. In that congregation, the pastor indicated that they were building leaders for the future who would take the gospel forward when they, as an older generation, were no more. Maybe future churches should be understood as future leaders since children's ministry is an integral part of the church.

6.9 Discussions on the Findings of Critical Reflections on Best Practices in Children's Ministry

In this section, a critical reflection is made on the findings of the study against best practices in children's ministry. According to the Word of God, parents have a responsibility to teach their children the Word of God (Deut. (6:1 – 9). Again, in Roman Catholic tradition, in the case of families that are incapable of fulfilling their obligation to bring up children in a godly manner, the congregation assigns godparents to assist them (Directory for Masses with children (N.d:4). Moreover, according to Van Leersum-Bekerbrede (2021:17 – 18) in Netherlands reformed tradition during a church service, children welcome people, pray, enact stories and speak blessings to the congregation. This indicates that they are regarded as full members of the congregation. Both the parents and the congregation should work together towards the same goal of forming the children's faith and making them the disciples of Christ.

The critical reflection done here was based on the in-depth interviews with children's ministry teachers of the four congregations and with the parents' focus groups of those congregations, as well as interviews held with the pastors of those congregations. The findings are critically reflected on against both the Scripture and literature on children's ministry practices. First, the

discussions are based on the findings emanating from data analysis of the ministry teachers regarding challenges of children's ministry, the main focus of children's ministry, the role of ministry teachers, practices of children's ministry, improvement needed in children's ministry according to the teachers, a good story to tell about children's ministry according to the teachers and general comments of the teachers regarding the ministry.

Second, reflection is done on the parents' views regarding children's ministry challenges, the main focus of children's ministry according to the parents, their role in children's ministry, the assistance they need to play a role in children's ministry, improvement needed in children's ministry according to them, a good story to tell about children's ministry of their congregations and their general comments about children's ministry. Third, the focus then turns to the pastors' understanding of the children's ministry of their congregations and its practices. Lastly, the discussions close with a conclusion.

6.9.1 The findings of the teachers' interviews

Discussions in this section are on what the literature and the Scripture say regarding the challenges of children's ministry, the main focus of children's ministry, the teacher's role in children's ministry, practices of children's ministry, improvements that could be made in children's ministry, good stories about children's ministry and general comments regarding the ministry versus the findings of data analysis of in-depth interviews held with children's ministry teachers in the four congregations of the study.

6.9.2 Challenges of children's ministry according to the teachers

Chapter 2 reviewed the literature on children's ministry, its history and development up to its current state. Again, the chapter reviewed the roles of different role players in children's ministry as well as the challenges children are faced with. On the other hand, chapter 3 discussed the normative core mission and practices of the church which includes children's ministry. Now, the focus of this section is to critically reflect on the findings of the study in the light of both two chapters to see how the practices of the congregations in the study fair in

relation to what the literature says and what ought to be happening according to Osmer's (2008:4) task 3.

On the one hand, generally speaking, according to the literature, children everywhere are faced with the following challenges: famine, child labour, prostitution, rape, crime, poverty, lack of education, diseases, etc. (Mans 2015:6; Yust *et al.* N.d:17). Christian children are faced with Moralistic Therapeutic Deism and are not equipped to defend their faith, among others (Gieseke 2012:6; Dean 2010(b):33; Maphalla 2020:81).

On the other hand, the challenges facing congregations in children's ministry, especially in Pentecostal congregations pertain to the lack of resources that help to create a conducive environment for children's ministry to grow and flourish. These resources are in the form of but not limited to lack of budgets, staff, materials and support by parents. The congregations also lack a clear vision, mission, and guidance for the ministry (Dean 2010(a):15; Schoeman 2017:93; Maphalla 2020:78 – 79). Again, Bunge (2008:348) says programs for children are underfunded, and leaders are difficult to recruit and retain. All these determine, to a great extent, the success or lack thereof of the ministry.

Regarding parents' support in teaching children the Word of God, Bunge (2008:349 – 350) says that even though parents are the most important force in shaping a child's development, they however, (1) do not know what their children are learning in children's ministry, (2) are not made aware that they are responsible for their children's faith formation, and (3) they are not practicing religious activities that nurture children's faith at home. She further says parents are not involved in the lives of their children. However, Schoeman (2017:98) says that parents know that they have a responsibility to nurture their children's faith and contrary to the apparent apathy they seem to display, they are willing to play a role in nurturing their children in a godly way but need guidance regarding what they need to do.

The findings of the study regarding the challenges of children's ministry as experienced by the teachers were lack of resources, backslidden parents and lack of support by the parents. Regarding backslidden parents and lack of support by the same, one of the teachers said, "Parents do not support the work" (5:924), and another said, "The parents have forsaken God" (8:1618), respectively. These findings support what the literature says, namely that children's ministry lacks basic resources and parents' support. For example, Felix (2015:40) says

children's ministry teachers often work with inadequate and old materials. Moreover, they are understaffed.

Furthermore, no investment is being made to address these challenges. All these undermine the work of the ministry. For example, a shortage of teachers could lead to burnout among teachers, which in turn may lead to absenteeism. Again, it leads to a disproportionate teacher-learner ratio whereby, in some instances, one teacher has to work with an unmanageably high number of children of different age groups. In one congregation, the parents complained about teachers paying more attention to the older children at the expense of the younger ones. This could be due to the dilemma the teachers are faced with when dealing with children of different age groups.

Concerning the finding regarding backslidden parents, the assertion made by Bunge above of parents who are not practicing religious activities at home seems to support this finding. The finding regarding the lack of support by the parents could be attributed to, among others, the issues raised by Bunge above. Therefore, there is a need to bring them on board by addressing the same issues with them.

Some of the challenges cited by the teachers are at variance with the challenges besetting children outside the church, at home, in school and in public. These include crime, rape, poverty and diseases, among others. The teachers mainly cited challenges they experienced in children's ministry. While this might be true, however, children generally face more challenges than those, some of which emanate from their homes. This supports the assertion by Gillespie (1987:45) that when Sunday school, which was a precursor to children's ministry, was institutionalized by the church, it was relegated to the task of women, thereby devaluing it. In the process, it shifted its focus. There is a need for the ministry to widen its scope in order to try to address the needs of all the children holistically.

In conclusion, the literature cited above indicates, among others, that children's ministry lacks vision, mission and guidance. This implies that the ministry is run without a clear direction and with no specific outcomes in mind. Other factors that the literature highlights are the underfunding of children's ministry programs and the difficulty of recruiting and retaining volunteer workers/teachers. One wonders whether the very same factors are deterring people who might otherwise like to volunteer in children's ministry since the situation is not appealing

to them. Unless the leadership comes up with a clear vision and mission and adequately funds the ministry, the situation is unlikely to change. Furthermore, the leadership should support, guide, lead and influence the children's ministry team to do their work. According to Madanchian *et al.* (2017:1044), the effectiveness of a leader is determined to a great extent by his/her ability to influence the followers or teams he/she is leading.

6.9.3 The main focus of children's ministry

According to the literature, the focus of children's ministry cannot be divorced from that of *Missio Dei*. Nel (2018:23) says, "The church does not just have a mission but is a mission and in a mission" of God. According to Warren (2018:12 – 13), this mission is "to point everyone, but especially children, toward Christ for salvation while also carrying out the beginning steps of discipleship as they learn what it means to be a follower of Christ." He calls this the ultimate purpose of a local congregation. This view is supported by Fasipe (2021:39), who says, "Salvation of the children should be the concern of the children's ministry teachers. The teachers must not look at the children as too young to understand salvation and repentance...." In short, teachers should ensure that they preach salvation through Christ to the children.

The second focus of children's ministry, which runs concurrently with the first one, is discipleship of those who believe in Christ (Mt. 28:19 – 20). Congregations through their various ministries, including children's ministry, should focus on making disciples as their main goal (Maphalla 2020:80). That is their unchanging mandate; they exist for that reason. To this end, Woog (2007:22) says another outcome of children's ministry is to empower the children to understand and be able to communicate or defend their faith. Citing Ephesians (4:11 – 13) Hazel (2019:37) says the role of the church is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Discipleship is for everybody who believes, including children. Moreover, the church should also strive to be intergenerational if children are to be part of the unity of faith (Hazel 2019:37). Children are also members of the body of Christ.

Furthermore, children's ministry, as part of the faith formation process, should also consider the needs of the children (Aridas 2008:42). Children need to be nurtured holistically to become well-balanced individuals. Even Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and men (Luke 2:52 NKJV). It is, therefore, proper that children are raised similarly.

The findings indicate that children's ministry teachers regarded the following three aspects as those which the ministry should mainly focus on, namely, love towards children, the salvation of the children, and their spiritual, mental and physical growth. One of the teachers emphasized the issue of loving the children over everything else (8:24). This is consistent with the gospel because God showed us love in many ways, even when we were not deserving. First, He created human beings in His image (Gen. 1:26 – 27 NKJV). Second, He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life. His purpose was to save, not to condemn (John 3:16 – 17 NKJV). Third, God further demonstrated His unconditional love in that while we were still sinners, He sent His Son to die for us (Rom. 5:8 NKJV). Fourth, Jesus said the second commandment is to love one's neighbour as oneself (Mt. 22:39). Moreover, Felix (2015:39) says the number one qualification in doing this ministry is love. Furthermore, Paul (1Cor. 13:13) says, in the end, faith, hope and love will remain, but the greatest of them all is love. The findings are consistent with the Scripture because *Missio Dei* is a product of love.

The theme of love is thickly intertwined with that of salvation. As highlighted in the above-cited literature, salvation is the ultimate goal of the gospel. The ministry is right in focusing on teaching children about salvation because the gospel must be preached to everybody and whoever believes must be made a disciple of Christ. In as much as children can sin, they equally can repent and believe in Christ for salvation. Fasiye (2021:39) above emphasizes the importance of preaching salvation to the children, saying it should be the concern of every children's ministry teacher and that they should not deem the children too young to be saved.

Concerning spiritual, mental and physical growth the findings are also consistent with the literature. Children's ministry seemed to be conscious of and addressing children's needs. It is through attending to these three aspects of human beings that the ministry will raise well-balanced children. Harris (2014:18) says by nurturing, supporting and acknowledging all aspects of childhood consciousness the teachers liberate a child's spirituality. He further urges the teachers to maintain a vision of a 'holistic' whole child. Children's ministry may look to social sciences in this regard to formulate a program to address the same.

In a nutshell, the findings regarding the main focus of the congregation's children's ministry are in line with the literature. Children's ministry teachers were doing a great job by being faithful

to the gospel while at the same taking care of the children's needs. However, as mentioned earlier regarding the challenges of the ministry, even in this regard the ministry's focus is within the church only. Nothing is said about the children outside the church. Based on these findings, the children's ministries of the congregations in this study are not missional. According to the literature, children's ministry should not be separated from that of the church. And the church is not just a mission; instead, it is the mission of God (Nel 2018:23). Since children's ministry is part of the church, it must also be missional in its focus.

6.9.4 Role of children's ministry teachers

According to Van Tol (2019:10), the role of ministry teachers plays a central role in the work of the ministry. The literature mentions the following as roles of volunteer workers/teachers of children's ministry. They include, among others, inviting parents to the ministry, planning the ministry curriculum, teaching children the Word of God and giving them homework, making them disciples of Jesus Christ, creating a conducive environment for ministry stakeholders and building relationships with them.

The following are the findings of the study concerning the role of children's ministry teachers: leader, mother/provider and teacher. Also, see Figure 6.4. According to the findings, the teachers regarded themselves as leaders of the ministry. As leaders, they were responsible for all ministry activities that involved but were not limited to acting as spokespersons when engaging the church leadership and parents. Being leaders of the ministry demands a lot from them and sometimes takes them away from the actual work of the ministry. It would be better if this responsibility were allocated to another person who would focus entirely on that and who would not have to teach children as well.

Two, mother/provider; as explained earlier, being a mother/provider in this context does not refer to the gender of a teacher. Instead, it refers to the role of caring for the children. Teachers, by dealing with children inevitably find themselves having to help children with their other needs, a work which ordinarily is supposed to be done by parents. This finding indicates that the teachers were going beyond the call of duty. They were going the extra mile in helping the children; beyond what is expected of them according to the literature.

Three, teaching the children the Word of God. The finding is consistent with the literature. Naturally, children's ministry teachers are expected to teach children the Word of God. They need to create a conducive environment for learning and all relevant stakeholders to be involved (Van Tol 2019:10). According to Grajczonek (2011:25), this plays a key role in the intentional nurturing of young children's spirituality.

Based on the findings, the children's ministry teachers seem to be falling short when it comes to building relationships with the parents (Maphalla 2020:82). Bunnell (2016:26) emphasizes the importance of inviting the parents, saying parents who know they are wanted will be far more likely to be involved. Schoeman (2017:98) says parents know they are supposed to play a role and are more than willing to do that but are asking for guidance. The teachers must build a relationship with the parents and invite them right at the beginning of the ministry.

Again, according to the findings, it does not seem like the teachers play any role in the curriculum development of the ministry. Grajczonek (2011:25) says the teachers' role is key during the planning stage of the curriculum. During that period, they should ensure that attention is paid to both cognitive and spiritual domains. Hay (1998) in Grajczonek (2011:25) posits that spiritual education or domain is the inverse of indoctrination. One wonders whether if the teachers are not involved in curriculum development and, again if they are not trained on how to implement it, would they be able to articulate it to children to the extent that they can achieve its intended outcomes.

In conclusion, children's ministry teachers should strive to bridge the gap between them and all relevant stakeholders, especially the parents. Parents are the primary role-players in the faith formation of their children, and without whom the ministry would not succeed. Parents should equally avail themselves and be willing to play a role since their participation is of critical importance.

6.9.5 Practices of children's ministry according to the teachers

As mentioned previously, Pentecostals are not a homogenous group; the reviewed literature, therefore, focused mainly on common traits among them. The following are the common children's ministry Pentecostal practices: dedication of children to the Lord, Bible reading or

memory verses, praying, praise and worship, partaking in Holy Communion, Christmas and Easter celebrations, evangelism, water baptism and baptism in the Holy Spirit. Some of these practices are done to or with the children as part of church liturgy, while others are done either during children's ministry services or with the whole congregation. Examples of the former are the dedication of children to the Lord and partaking in the Holy Communion.

The findings regarding children's ministry practices were as follows: teaching the Word of God, singing and playing dramas, sketches and gymnastics (see Figure 6.3). These practices are complementary and contribute toward achieving the main focus of children's ministry, namely, love, salvation and spiritual, mental and physical growth.

The Scripture and Pentecostal traditions support the findings. The researcher also found the same during his visits to the congregations to observe their children's ministry practices. The ministry services start with singing, followed by prayer and preaching the Word of God. Singing is in the form of praise and worship. The goal is to encounter Christ and His Spirit during the worship service (Nel 2014:300) while teaching or preaching aims at bringing children to Christ and establishing them in the Lord (Fredericks 2019:38). The latter is part of discipleship. The practice of teaching the Word of God was done in different ways which included preaching, memory verses, storytelling, drama and role-playing. This practice advertently or inadvertently achieves one of the main focuses of the ministry, that is, spiritual, mental and physical growth.

However, as mentioned earlier, under the findings on the main focus of children's ministry above, these practices were targeting children in the church not those outside the church. The children outside the church also need the same; they can equally benefit from them. Evangelism is more needed outside because once those inside are born again, all the ministry can do is disciple them and they would not need to be preached to be born again for the second time. Moreover, the ministry should serve as a salt or light to other children who are suffering as indicated earlier on.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that the children's ministry is doing relatively well in light of the Scripture and Pentecostal traditions. However, its practices are internally focused, targeting only those who are inside the church. Hamm and Beemer (2009) in Fredericks (2019:43) say the teaching programs that are used by the congregations do not equip children with enough coping skills to defend the faith. Could this be one of the reasons why they do not approach

those who are outside the church? If so, these findings may prove them right. Again, one may ask this question: do the practices of Pentecostal children's ministry empower the children to impact the children and the world outside?

6.9.6 Improvements needed in children's ministry, according to the teachers

In anticipation of the responses that the teachers would give concerning the challenges of children's ministry, they were also asked to suggest improvement(s) needed in children's ministry to alleviate those challenges. The purpose was to attempt to respond to sub-question 5 (1.6.5), namely, "What would be the requirements for an effective children's ministry?" and address objective 1.4.5 of the study, namely, to determine how children's ministry could be improved. The findings on improvements needed were related to ministry resources, support by parents and listening to children's voices.

Reference has been made earlier regarding the material conditions of Pentecostal congregations (Nel 2016(a):3; Verster 2020:78). All four congregations of the study were no different. Not a single one had proper facilities for children's ministry. All of them used the same building that hosted the lead service. They either had to conduct their services on Saturdays or an hour or so before the main service started on Sundays. It is the role of the local congregation to invest in children's ministry to create a conducive environment for nurturing the children's faith (Dean 2010(a):15). However, currently, it does not seem like the congregations are prioritizing children's ministry in any way.

Another challenge about resources mentioned is related to human resources, that is, ministry teachers. There were few teachers compared to the number of children they were supposed to teach. These teachers also lacked formal training, especially in child development (Wade 2019:3). Every volunteer worker/teacher needs training. Even those "Who have outstanding gifts and real aptitude for children's ministry need training and retraining, and even "natural-born" workers benefit from training and encouragement" (Felix 2015:41). The importance of teacher training cannot be overemphasized.

Regarding the lack of support by parents, Bunge (2008:349 – 350) and Schoeman (2017:98) stated the reasons why parents might not be supporting the ministry. This includes a lack of

knowledge on their part regarding what to do. They further suggested that the church needs to assist them by training and giving them materials to teach the children.

The finding concerning listening to the children's voices is an important one for several reasons. First, children always bear the brunt of social disorders since they are the most vulnerable members of society. Second, they are often approached as things to be changed as opposed to human beings even though, like everybody else, they bear the image of God (Schafer 2020:42). Third, Cloete (2022:65) says, "If they are viewed as future members of society that are, by large, still only becoming such and, therefore, not "full human beings", it could be difficult to cooperate with them." Children are often treated in the manner explained above despite the fact they have first-hand experience of the challenges referred to above.

Moreover, Cloete (2022:65) says, "Primarily, they should be recognized as people with insider knowledge of their communities, and their lived experience within these communities should be validated." Furthermore, Strandenaes (2004:494) says Jesus cited children as models of faith for entering and receiving the kingdom of God. He further says, "The needs and gifts, challenges and expectations of the worshipping children can only be identified if they are allowed to voice them." For this to happen, adults must acknowledge and honour "both the hunger and capability children have for a deep spiritual life" (Shaffer 2020:43). It is, therefore, imperative that they are listened to as they have important contributions to make.

In conclusion, the following improvements are needed to improve children's ministry in the congregations, local congregations and church leadership to invest in infrastructure and other resources for children's ministry to make it conducive for learning. Recruit more volunteers, train and ensure their retention. Georgina (2020:35) rightly said, the church must prioritize children's ministry by investing in it if it wants positive continuity regarding its faith. And lastly, children should be involved in planning and other activities of children's ministry as role players and important stakeholders. Their voices need to be heard in matters that affect them.

6.9.7 A good story to tell about children's ministry, according to teachers

In both the Bible and literature there are a lot of good stories to tell about children. Children are a blessing to God and bring happiness to parents (Gen. 18:12; 21:6 – 7). In some instances,

God used children for His purpose to demonstrate His power and grace (1Sam. 2:18; 2 Chr. 24:1). Also important to note is children's readiness to accept the gospel hence Jesus' admonition to His disciples to emulate children (Mk. 10:15). Todd (2009:93) citing both Bryant Myers (N.d) and Barna (2003) says 85% of them get saved between the ages of 4 and 14. This is encouraging to children's ministry teachers and everybody involved.

Concerning a good story to tell about children's ministry, the teachers reported that the children were bold and obedient. These findings indicate that there has been some transformation taking place in children's lives as a result of them being involved in children's ministry. This has Biblical reference (Acts 4:13), where boldness was observed in Peter and John, and that was attributed to their association with Jesus. Their boldness was juxtaposed with their demeanour before their association with Jesus. Children's obedience indicates the effect of the teachings they received in the ministry. According to the teachers, the children were demonstrating obedience even in other areas of their lives. For example, the way they relate with teachers and other children at school.

In conclusion, children's ministry seems to be bearing fruits despite its challenges. The findings support what Mans (2015:9; 12) and Wade (2019:11 – 12) say regarding the marginalization of children's ministry despite its importance. In light of this, Todd (2009:113) makes an impassionate plea to the church leaders to recognize the importance of children's ministry. They need not only recognize it but also to support it accordingly.

6.9.8 The teachers' general comments regarding children's ministry

For the findings regarding general comments by children's ministry teachers concerning the ministry, see Figure 6.7. Awareness of the importance of children and their admonition in the ways of the Lord abound in the Bible and literature. The awareness of the importance of both the children and their ministry, together with the training of ministry teachers, cannot be overemphasized.

The fact that the teachers raised it, including their training, indicates that the leadership and parents alike seem not to be aware of it. It is a cry for help. If the leadership and parents do not take it seriously, there is a danger that the same attitude will trickle down even to the children.

To include it as one of the church's programs is not enough. Both the congregations and the leadership must put their money where their mouth is. The congregations must back up their talk with resources.

Training of ministry teachers is of critical importance and warrants serious attention by congregations. Teachers face a myriad of challenges in children's ministry. These include but are not limited to children coming from different backgrounds, sick children, some with incurable diseases such as HIV/Aids, slow learners and children with disabilities. Felix (2015: 41) indicated that no person, even the naturally gifted, can manage all these successfully without training and re-training.

In conclusion, the teachers' cry for help and support to continue doing the noble work of teaching the children and making them disciples of Christ is a genuine one. This supports the view by Rains (2019:10) that children's ministry is a team effort comprising several groups of people. In terms of this team effort, the teachers have the responsibility to build and equip the parents and establish and maintain a relationship with them.

6.10 Discussion of the Findings of the Parents' Focus Group Interviews

This section discusses the findings of the data analysis of in-depth interviews with the four focus groups of parents in the four congregations of the study against the relevant literature. The discussions are on the findings on the following topics: challenges of children's ministry, the main focus of children's ministry, role played by the parents in children's ministry, assistance needed by the same to play a role in children's ministry and improvement needed in children's ministry, a good story to tell about children's ministry according to the parents and general comments by the same concerning children's ministry.

6.10.1 Challenges of children's ministry according to the parents

Literature and the Bible document numerous challenges that confront children daily. Some of these challenges are visited upon the children by parents and the church, albeit inadvertently. They include abuse, neglect, rejection, lack of proper care, and not being listened to, among others. A case in point is David. David shepherded his father's sheep alone as a boy and fought

with beasts in the veld. He was shunned both by his parents and brothers (1 Sam. 17:33 – 34 Good News Translation).

The findings on the challenges of children's ministry as perceived by the parents are depicted in Figure 9. The parents raised the same challenges mentioned by the teachers except one, which is, backslidden parents (see Figures 6.1 and 6.10). The shortage of teachers and lack of resources means the same thing because teachers are also resources in human form, while others might be physical or financial resources. The findings indicate that both the parents and teachers agreed regarding the challenges of children's ministry.

Again, both seem to be oblivious to the challenges children face outside the church, but which are in their immediate context. Alternatively, it could be that they do not see the children outside the church as part of their responsibility. The ministry is not missional in its approach.

6.10.2 The main focus of children's ministry, according to the parents

The literature highlighted the following three main areas that children's ministry should focus on, namely, salvation, discipleship and children's needs. On the other hand, the findings of the study regarding what should be the main focus of children's ministry according to the parents indicated the following three issues: training of ministry teachers, Scripture and doctrine, and children's needs. These findings are depicted in Figure 6.10.

The findings indicate that the parents were concerned about the training of ministry teachers. However, it must be noted that training of teachers is not an end in itself but a means to an end. This finding is consistent with the literature concerning the training or lack thereof of Pentecostal children's ministry teachers. Both Felix (2015:41) and Wade (2019:3) highlighted the lack of training in children's ministry as one of the challenges faced by the ministry. Terrel (N.d) in Fasipe (2021:31), to this end, appeals to the church, saying, "The teaching of God's Word is important, and those responsible for its communication should be trained to be more effective." The parents do not just want their children trained, but they want them to be well-trained by people who know what they are doing and are capable of producing the desired outcomes.

The finding regarding the focus on Scripture and doctrine is also an important one to the Pentecostals. According to the literature, there are many Pentecostal theologies. Again, in some instances, it is difficult to distinguish Pentecostals from Charismatics; hence, there is no single definition of Pentecostalism. However, there are some common distinctive Pentecostal characteristics and those that they generally agree on. This could be one of the reasons for this finding. The parents may not want their children to grow up not knowing their roots as Pentecostals, given the Pentecostal theologies out there.

The finding concerning the focus on children's needs is also consistent with the literature. According to Aridas (2008:42), this is part of faith formation, while Harris (2014:18) says that when the teachers consider children's needs, they liberate them spiritually. Children should not be treated like objects; like other human beings, they are also made in the image of God, and it is only fair that they have a say on matters that concern them.

In conclusion, the findings are consistent with the literature. Given different Pentecostal theologies out there it is understandable why the parents want the main focus of children's ministry to be on the Scripture and doctrine and training of the teachers. Again, considering the fluidity of the contemporary culture and the lived experience of children, children's ministry must focus on their needs since the ministry programs are meant for them.

6.10.3 The role of parents in children's ministry

A lot is said in the literature about the role of parents and/or caregivers concerning the faith formation of the children. Of utmost importance is that they have the primary responsibility of teaching children the Word of God since parents give birth to them, while in the case of caregivers, children are born into their care. This is a God-given responsibility (Deut. 6:6 – 7).

The findings on the role of parents in children's ministry are graphically presented in Figure 11. They indicate that parents mainly played a role in children's ministry through financial contribution and by supporting the teachers, while others played no role in the ministry.

Both the Scripture and the literature place parents at the centre of the faith formation of the children. However, according to the findings, the parents seem to be on the periphery in matters concerning children's ministry. Their role is largely limited to financial contributions and

occasional support of the teachers. Financial contribution is done mainly when the teachers request it. Others do not play a role altogether. According to the literature, parents' ought to be playing a significant role in children's ministry. Based on these findings, it is apparent that something needs to be done to address the situation.

6.10.4 Assistance needed by the parents to fulfil their role

Mention has been made several times regarding the role of parents/family in the faith formation of their children. Some parents are aware of their responsibility, but they also acknowledge their weakness concerning that (Espinoza 2011:12; Schoeman 2017:90). Notwithstanding that, their role needs to be balanced against the responsibilities of the church towards them. Among other things, the church, through ministry teachers, should invite the parents and build relationships with them (Bunnell 2016:26; Maphalla 2020:82). Again, the church has a responsibility to equip and support the parents to fulfil their responsibility (Brown 2014:50; Warren 2018:11). Moreover, Schoeman (2017:90) says, "Nurturing the faith of young people (children) means investing in the faith of their parents..." Therefore, if the church does not assist the parents to fulfil their role it is evident that they would fail; the church also would have failed in its responsibility towards the parents.

The findings regarding assistance needed by the parents to fulfil their role in children's ministry are graphically presented in Figure 6.12. According to the figure, the parents indicated that there must be communication between them and the children's ministry teachers. Again, the ministry should have more activities that either require their involvement or would enable them to participate.

Concerning a need for communication between the ministry teachers and the parents the finding is consistent with the literature to the extent that the teachers must formally invite the parents to be part of the ministry. Again, there is a need to build relationships between teachers and parents. In this regard, the teachers need to take the lead. Parents are aware of the chasm between them and teachers but are unable to do anything about it. They are waiting for the teachers to act.

Regarding more activities, on the one hand, due to lack of communication between the two parties, the parents may be assuming that their involvement might not be needed due to the few activities performed in the ministry. On the other hand, the teachers may be reluctant to introduce more activities because of a lack of support by the parents. This can easily be solved if both parties can meet and talk, as is supposed to be the case.

These findings support what the literature says: that the parents need guidance, material support, and a mandate from the teachers to develop their children's faith (Schoeman 2017:93). However, the teachers, in doing that should take care in ensuring that the theological understanding of parents is deepened (Bunge 2009:17 – 19). Once again, this requires team effort where each stakeholder understands his/her responsibilities.

In conclusion, on the one hand, parents are aware of their responsibility concerning the faith formation of their children and the role they need to play in children's ministry, but they need assistance to do that. On the other hand, the church has a responsibility to guide, support and equip the parents to perform their role. Faith formation of the children is a collaborative effort, and each party cannot succeed on its own.

6.10.5 Improvement needed in children's ministry, according to the parents

The literature suggests some factors that make for effective children's ministry. Four factors stand out in this regard: first, a partnership between the church and the parents (Bunge 2008:350; Bunnell 2016:26; Schoeman 2017:92 – 93; Rains 2019:10; Maphalla 2020:82). Second, recruitment, training and retention of teachers (Bunge 2008:348; Felix 2015:41; Fasipe 2021:31 – 32). Third, the provision of physical resources and the creation of a conducive environment for learning (Woog 2007:19; Grajczonek 2011:25; Osei 2019:33). Fourth, children's ministry programs and curriculum (Grajczonek 2011:25). These factors can play a critical role in improving children's ministry of the congregations.

The findings concerning improvement needed in children's ministry according to the parents are presented in Figure 6.13. According to this figure, the parents indicated that for the ministry to improve the following factors need to be addressed, namely, ministry resources,

partnerships between parents and teachers, increasing teacher numbers and teachers to receive training.

The findings corroborate what the literature highlighted above regarding partnership between parents and teachers, recruitment, training and retention of teachers, and provision of resources and creation of a conducive environment for learning. The teachers also raised the latter. However, even though the parents did not say anything regarding the ministry programs and curriculum, they raised this earlier on concerning the main focus of children's ministry, though in not so many words. They said the main focus of children's ministry should be on Scripture and doctrine, among others. This shows that they are concerned about them and have a sense of what their children should learn in children's ministry.

In conclusion, the improvement proposed by the parents concerning children's ministry is in agreement with what the literature says. These factors, namely, a partnership between parents and teachers, recruitment, training and retention of teachers, and provision of resources and creation of a conducive environment for learning, are the foundation for building an effective children's ministry; hence, they should be improved.

6.10.6 The good story to tell, according to the parents

The literature has a lot of examples regarding good stories to tell about children and children's ministry in general. These include examples of children in the Bible, such as Samuel, David and even Jesus Christ Himself. The following are some of the good stories to tell about children's ministry: contribution to the numeric growth of the congregations, some church leaders have attended children's ministry, many people's beliefs and morals are founded on the teachings they got during their days at children's ministry (Osei 2019:41 – 42). Moreover, some parents were brought to church by their children or as a result of their concern for them, as they did not want their children to grow up without attending church (Barna 2003:12). According to the literature, children's ministry plays a crucial role in the church as a whole even though it is usually taken for granted.

The findings about a good story to tell concerning children's ministry according to the parents were presented under 6.5.6. The parents mentioned that children exhibited spiritual growth as

a result of attending children's ministry when compared to when they first arrived at the ministry. The findings are encouraging and show that something good is happening in the ministry. According to the literature children's ministry brings a lot of benefits not only to the children but the congregations as well. A typical example is that of parents who come to church because of their children, and this has a ripple effect on the church.

In a nutshell, there are better stories to tell about children's ministry than what the findings indicated. Despite its shortcomings, the children's ministry is known for producing leaders for the church and contributing to its numerical growth. It will continue to do the same in the future, provided it gets the necessary support. Again, for years, it has shaped and continues to shape the moral beliefs of society as many people grew up in children's ministry.

6.10.7 General comments by parents concerning children's ministry

The comments by parents are presented in Figure 6.14. The parents commented on three themes, namely, transformation, consistency and motivation. Regarding transformation, the findings echo those of the teachers who also indicated they noticed transformation in children. The children's conduct was afterwards different when contrasted with the first time they attended the ministry.

Again, the parents raised a concern regarding the teachers' inconsistency in respect of attending ministry services. On the one hand, one can only speculate about the reasons for this behaviour. The fact that they are few, the absence of any of them at any given time amplifies the problem. When a teacher is sick or has a personal matter to attend to, nobody stands in for her/him. It becomes apparent to everyone that a teacher is absent.

On the other hand, notwithstanding their challenges, there is a need for the teachers to maintain consistency. Consistency builds children's trust in the teachers. The inverse is also true; when children arrive for service and most of the time do not find teachers, this leads to distrust toward their teachers.

The finding regarding motivating children to continue attending the ministry by making them t-shirts and having many activities sounds plausible. Still, parents should not use it to evade their responsibility. While having many activities might motivate the children and entice some of the

parents to be involved in children's ministry; however, it is imperative that parents' involvement or participation in children's ministry activities is a result of their understanding of their God-given mandate and not because there are lot of activities that entice them to come. Hence, Bunge (2009:17) says if we take the notion of faith formation seriously, we must entrench cooperation between the teachers and the parents by robustly articulating the parents' theological understanding. Making the parents understand their God-given responsibility should take precedence over enticing them to participate in children's ministry.

In conclusion, the findings indicated that there has been (1) a transformation in the lives of the children since they started attending children's ministry, and (2) the teachers' inconsistency in attending ministry services affects its effectiveness. However, the teachers' voices need to be heard in this regard, and (3) the parents' proposals regarding ways of motivating the children should be considered. However, they, too, must be robustly engaged with a view to deepen their theological understanding of the faith formation of their children.

6.11 Understanding of the Pastors Regarding Children's Ministry

Both the Scripture and the literature clearly articulate the work of the pastor in a local congregation. This may be summarized as follows: equip saints or disciples and shepherd them. According to Manala (2010:3), a pastor is like a church manager fulfilling managerial functions. Therefore, the understanding of the pastor regarding children's ministry may be deduced from his/her role to a local congregation as a whole. Basically, according to Wollschleger (2018:579; 591), pastors understand their role as that of leading and giving a congregation or ministry a theological framework and grounding.

Concerning the first question asked to the pastors the findings indicate that the pastors understood children's ministry of their congregations both as an integral part of the church and as a future church. First, the pastors' understanding of children's ministry as an integral part of the church at face value may imply that the congregations were intergenerational. All the members, including children were attending the main service together wherein they all participated. While this was the case to some degree in three of the four congregations, however, in one congregation, the children's ministry held its service separately. Even in the other three congregations, children did not fully participate like adults except in one

congregation where they were allocated one Sunday in a year to run the lead service on their own.

Second, the finding regarding children's ministry as a future church seems to suggest that children would only be considered full members of the church in the future. As yet, they were not considered full members of the congregations. They were just there to be taught and nurtured. This supports the notion that children are regarded like a field that is not yet ploughed, and they are there only to be ploughed or prepared for the future (2:24). This is contrary to how Jesus sees children, instead, He sees them as models of faith that must be emulated (Mark 10:15).

In conclusion, according to the findings, the pastors' understanding of children's ministry does not seem to be clear enough. On the one hand, they regard children's ministry as an integral part of the congregations. However, this does not seem to be the case when one observes the role that children's ministry plays in the church. On the other hand, the pastors say children's ministry is a future church, which implies that they do not yet recognize them as full members of the church.

6.12 Practices of Children's Ministry According to the Pastors

The focus of this section is on the discussions of the findings regarding the practices of children's ministry as per the interviewed pastors. The findings regarding practices of children's ministry according to the pastors are presented in Figure 6.17. These are teaching the Bible in various ways, such as prayer, singing (praise and worship) and playing sketches.

Children's ministry practices, according to the pastors, are similar to those mentioned by the ministry teachers earlier. Children start their services by singing a few choruses or songs, and again, they sing what are regarded as praise and worship songs during the service. Furthermore, they would sing when the service closed. Pentecostals regard praise and worship as participatory engagement with God and as the moment of waiting on God (Phillips and Riches 2018:1; Davis 2021:77). It is one of the most important moments of the service.

Pentecostals believe the Bible is the Word of God. They also believe in its sufficiency in teaching people about God and training them in all spiritual matters. Therefore, there must be

preaching of the Bible in every service which is intended to produce results. Again, the findings indicated that children's ministry has plays and sketches as part of its practices because these are necessary for children to maintain a balanced lifestyle, and according to Harris (2014:18), this liberates a child's spirituality. It must also be borne in mind that spiritual growth cannot be separated from other dimensions of growth (Espinoza 2014:10). Furthermore, children must be allowed to be children by having time to play while learning at the same time; some even learn more by playing.

In conclusion, the findings indicated that the pastors' views on children's ministry practices are in agreement with those of the ministry teachers. Again, as mentioned earlier these practices are unfortunately internally focused, that is, only targeting the children inside the church.

6.13 Conclusion

The study made many important findings most of which are supported by the Scripture and the literature. First, the study highlighted the following challenges besetting the ministry: lack of resources, backslidden parents, lack of support and shortage of teachers. Second, children's ministry must focus on loving the children, salvation, Scripture and doctrine, and children's needs, alternatively, their spiritual, mental and physical growth. Third, regarding the roles of both teachers and parents, the findings indicated that the teachers did not only work as teachers but also as leaders of the ministry and provided for the needs of the children. On the other hand, some parents financially supported the ministry and teachers when requested, while others played no role in the ministry. The findings indicated that for the parents to play a role in children's ministry and faith formation, there has to be communication between them and ministry teachers. This communication should culminate in a partnership between the two parties. The teachers must be the ones who initiate and lead this process.

Fourth, the study also found that the practices of Pentecostal congregations were singing, teaching the Word of God and plays, sketches or dramas. These were aligned to the main focus of the ministry. However, the ministry's practices are internally focused; only targeting children inside the church and not concerned about those outside it. Five, regarding improvement needed by the ministry to function optimally, the study found that the following need to be addressed: the church needs to invest in infrastructure and other resources, recruit,

train and retain teachers and children's voices to be heard. Moreover, there is a need for the church to be conscientised about the importance of children's ministry.

Lastly, the findings indicated that there are good stories to be told about children's ministry. The children were transformed, obedient and bold compared to when they first arrived at the ministry. Their transformation is evident even to people outside the church.

In conclusion, this chapter is followed by Chapter 7, which is the last chapter of the study. Chapter 7 concludes the whole study, highlights its limitations, and based on the findings, makes recommendations to the relevant stakeholders in children's ministry. Finally, it proposes a strategy for implementing children's ministry in Pentecostal congregations.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY OF PENTECOSTAL CONGREGATIONS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is the last chapter of the study. The chapter attempts to respond to Osmer's (2008:4) pragmatic task, namely, "How might we respond?" and the study's sub-question 5, namely, "What would be the requirements for an effective children's ministry?" stated in chapter 1. It first, gives a conclusion of the study, second, the limitations of the study and third, the recommendations of the study. Lastly, it proposes a strategy for doing children's ministry of Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung Township. Other Pentecostal and Non-Pentecostal congregations alike could also use the proposed strategy or adapt it suit their conditions.

7.2 Conclusion

The study had set out to do a practical theological investigation of children's ministry of Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung Township. The study was motivated by the previous study that the researcher did, which explored the role of Mangaung Township congregations in Early Childhood Development (ECD), which was prompted by the researcher's congregation being involved in a feeding scheme in the Township. The findings of that study further prompted the researcher to want to do more work on children's ministry of the congregations, especially Pentecostal congregations. Another reason is that the researcher is a member of one of the Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung Township. The congregation in which he is a member has been in existence for over 20 years but only started having children's ministry after seven years of its existence due to a host of challenges, which included, among others, infrastructure, trained personnel and other resources. Even now, the congregation still grapples with many other challenges related to its children's ministry. Since many Pentecostal congregations face similar challenges, the researcher felt a need to do a study regarding children's ministry of Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung Township.

The study commenced with a review of relevant literature about the challenges of children's ministry and the history of Sunday school, which is a precursor to children's ministry. It was found that the challenges of Pentecostal congregations included, among others, lack of trained personnel, inadequate and/or poor infrastructure, and unsuitable programs (Mans 2015:9; Fredericks 2019:43). Again, local congregations do not prioritize children's ministry and put less value on it (Wade 2019:10 – 12).

The researcher purposely selected four congregations wherein to collect data. These congregations participated in the NCLS–SA 2021 project, which the researcher participated in as a data collector. He held interviews with both the pastors and children's ministry teachers of those congregations. He also held focus group interviews with the parents and/or guardians of the children attending children's ministry of the same congregations.

The research question for the study was as follows:

How do the Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung Township understand and practice their children's ministry? This question was supported by the below secondary questions with their respective findings:

7.2.1 Sub-question 1

What are the challenges of volunteer workers/teachers regarding children's ministry?

Regarding sub-question 1, the ministry experiences the following challenges: lack of resources (infrastructure/facilities), lack of support for the ministry by the parents and shortage of teachers, including lack of teacher training.

7.2.2 Sub-question 2

What is the understanding of the pastors and volunteer workers/teachers regarding children's ministry?

Concerning sub-question 2, understanding of the pastors and volunteer workers/teachers regarding children's ministry, the findings indicated that there was a dichotomy regarding the pastors' understanding of children's ministry. First, they understood it as an integral part of the

church. And, second, they understood it as a future church. On the other hand, the teachers understood it as an integral part of the church. One teacher said, "Even in the list of the congregation's groups, it is included, but when we talk, we say it is tomorrow's congregation" (7:2131).

7.2.3 Sub-question 3

What are the current practices or activities of the congregations regarding children's ministry?

Concerning sub-question 3, the following findings were made: the ministry taught children the Word of God in different ways, they praised and worshipped God through singing, and they performed plays, dramas and sketches in an attempt to help the children grow spiritually, mentally and physically.

7.2.4 Sub-question 4

What should the role of parents and volunteer workers/teachers be in children's ministry?

Regarding this sub-question, the study found the following: on the one hand, the teachers acted as leaders and spokespersons of the ministry, providers of the children where they saw their lack and also as teachers teaching them the Word of God. On the other hand, the parents claimed just to support the teachers; this could mean supporting them in whatever way they deemed necessary, and others said they contributed financially to the ministry when asked. Some said they played no role altogether in children's ministry.

7.2.5 Sub-question 5

What would be the requirements of an effective children's ministry?

In response to this sub-question the following findings were made: provision of resources for the ministry, recruiting, training and retaining ministry teachers, and listening to the voice of children. The teachers should invite parents to children's ministry, train them and equip them to form the faith of their children. Moreover, the teachers need to initiate a partnership between them and the parents since children's ministry is a collaborative effort.

Lastly, the findings indicated that there is a good story to tell regarding children's ministry of the congregations. Both the teachers and parents noticed the transformation that was taking place in the children since they started attending children's ministry. The children were found to be bold and obedient. They also showed love and were go-getters, among others. This transformation is even evident at schools where the children were attending.

7.3 Limitations of the study

The study has the following limitations:

1. The researcher used four purposively selected Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung for the study. Therefore, its findings are not representative of all Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung Township. Furthermore, as explained when defining Pentecostalism, there is no single definition of Pentecostalism, hence the disclaimer that the findings are not a reflection of what might be happening in the children's ministry of all Pentecostal congregations.
2. The study is an empirical qualitative study and used qualitative methodologies and therefore cannot be replicated in other settings. However, the study is a true reflection of the views of the participants.
3. Some of the data were collected during the COVID-19 period when restrictions were imposed on the congregations resulting in fewer people attending church services and congregations on the other hand suspending some of their ministries or restricting their activities. Children's ministry was among the ministries that were negatively affected by these restrictions.
4. The researcher had less time over which to observe practices of children's ministry of the congregations due to COVID-19 restrictions than he had wished since he used participatory action research which required him to spend a considerable amount of time with the participants (Ebersöhn, Elof and Ferreira 2011:156 – 158; Bryman 2012: 420; Draper 2015:37). However, that was not possible due to COVID-19 as the churches were closed for some time. Even the researcher contracted the virus during the data collection phase of the study.

7.4 Recommendations

Below are the recommendations made to different categories of participants in the study, namely, the ministry teachers, pastors, parents and the local congregations.

7.4.1 Recommendations to children's ministry teachers

The following recommendations are made:

1. The teachers should formally invite the parents to be part of the ministry right at the beginning of children's ministry and build relationships with them since parents are critical stakeholders in the ministry and the ministry itself in a collaborative effort (Bunnell 2016:26; Maphalla 2020:82).
2. The teachers should first theologically deepen the understanding of parents regarding their role in the faith formation of their children, then train and guide them on how to do it at home (Bunge 2009:17; Schoeman 2017:98).
3. The teachers should give children an opportunity both to voice their opinions regarding the ministry and to serve in the ministry and congregation because children have an important contribution to make in the body of Christ (Shaffer 2020:45). Again, Cloete (2022:65) says, "they should be recognized as people with insider knowledge of their communities and their lived experience within these communities should be validated." Even Jesus used them as models of faith (Mark 10:14 – 15).
4. The ministry teachers should teach the children how to sense the movement of the Holy Spirit, create a conducive environment for the movement of the Holy Spirit, where there is spontaneity, and allow the children to be led by the Spirit and act accordingly. In doing so, care should be taken that the Spirit move in line with the Word of God and does not work against the Word of God (1John 4:1 – 3).
5. The teachers should learn to share some of the responsibilities of the ministry with the parents. For example, the role of being a provider to the children. Use the apostles as an example (Acts 6:1 – 4). Again, involve the parents by giving children homework which will require the parents' participation (Maphalla 2020: 82).
6. Given the challenges posed by, among others, the implication of the new National Policy on Religion and Education and Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (see 2.3.1 and 2.3.4

respectively), and the inability of Christian children to defend their faith (Gieseke 2012:1) the teachers should therefore consider expanding the current focus of the ministry to address these challenges.

7. The teachers should demand church leadership to send them for training, or in the case where the church cannot afford to fund such training, those who can afford to fund their training should do so.
8. The teachers should create a conducive environment for children to learn and express their faith and gifts and for all the stakeholders to participate (Woog 2007:19; Harris 2014:18; Van To 2019:10).

7.4.2 Recommendations to the parents

The following recommendations are made to the parents regarding children's ministry:

1. The parents should assume their God-given responsibility of forming the faith of their children by becoming "priests and bishops" to their children by nurturing their faith and helping them develop their gifts to serve others (Deut. 6: 5 – 9; Bunge 2009:17). In short. They must have a little family church. However, its role must go beyond talking; it must demonstrate faith in action.
2. The parents should take part or be involved in children's ministry to the extent that they know what their children are learning.
3. The parents should support the teachers in children's ministry. Their support should not be limited to contributing financially now and then when requested. Instead, they should be there as part of the ministry. Among others, they should bring children to the ministry services on time, help prepare meals for children and volunteer to teach children as well.

7.4.3 Recommendations to the pastors

The following recommendations are made to the pastors:

1. The pastors, as the leaders of the congregations, should develop a clear vision and mission for children's ministry and share this with volunteer workers/teachers (Manala

2010:2). They need to give a theological grounding for the work of the ministry (Wollschleger 2018:579; 581).

2. The pastors, together with the leadership of the congregations, should equip/train children's ministry teachers or ensure that they receive the requisite training to do their work (Eph. 4:11 – 13).
3. The pastors should guide, lead, influence and keep motivating the children's ministry team to achieve the ministry's goals (Madanchian *et al.* 2017:1044).

7.4.4 Recommendations to the local congregations

Concerning the local congregations, the following recommendations are made:

1. The church needs to restore the dignity of children like Jesus did and make everybody aware of their importance and that of children's ministry (Mark 10:14 – 16; Van Rensburg 2013:143). They should appoint a person in a position of authority, either an elder or a deacon, to lead the ministry and represent it in church board meetings.
2. Congregations need to invest in children's ministry, starting with training parents to fulfil their responsibility of teaching children the Word of God and supplying them with educational guides to use at home (Vieth 1960:171; Brown 2014:50).
3. They should also teach the parents to embody the values and practices they would like to pass on to their children (Yust *et al.* N.d:13).
4. Local congregations are the context of faith formation; they, therefore, have to transmit their faith traditions to both the parents and children by providing a place and space to view faith in action. Their practices should model faith in speech and action (Weber and De Beer 2017:5; Schoeman 2017:96). In the case of Pentecostals, congregations should not assume that children would automatically know Pentecostalism and how it differs from other Christian traditions, however they should make an effort to teach the children their Pentecostal traditions and explain to them what it means to be a Pentecostal and how to recognize one.
5. The congregations should invest in infrastructure, personnel and budgets for children's ministry to create a conducive environment for children's faith to grow. This should

include children with disabilities or special needs (Osei 2019:33; Van Tol 2019:4; Georgina 2020:35).

6. Since congregations in the Township context face similar challenges, such as a lack of resources and trained teachers/volunteer workers, it is recommended that they consider working together and sharing available resources. For example, use facilities of another congregation for their children's ministry when they are not being used or have joint ministry services and thereby share knowledge and skills.
7. Regarding training of aspiring children's ministry teachers/volunteer workers who might not have completed their secondary schooling, it is recommended that congregations assist them in acquiring some form of qualification particularly those relevant to children. They can send them to institutions where they could do some basic training. In the meantime, they could be trained through workshops by those among them who have relevant qualifications.

7.4.5 Proposed strategy for Pentecostal children's ministry in Mangaung Township

The below strategy is proposed for children's ministry in Pentecostal congregations. The strategy or parts thereof may be used by other congregations that may find it applicable to their context. It addresses the following areas of children's ministry: development of vision and mission for children's ministry, recruitment and training of ministry teachers/volunteer workers, Pentecostal liturgy related to the children, children's ministry practices that include evangelism, worship, teaching, fellowship, service, and witness and ministry administration. It is a response to Osmer's (2008:4) task 4, asking, *how might we respond?* Again, it is responding to Sub-question 5: What would be the requirements of an effective children's ministry?

7.4.5.1 *Development of a vision and mission for Pentecostal and Township children's ministry*

The pastor and the leadership of the congregation should facilitate the drafting of the vision and mission of the Pentecostal children's ministry. This vision and mission should take into account the Township context wherein the ministry is situated. For example, the poverty, crime,

health and disease, and education levels in the Township. The process may involve but is not limited to the following stakeholders: parents, pastors, elders, deacons and children or all representatives of the different ministries of the congregation. Before drafting those, it could be advisable to invite different social stakeholders such as the Police, Social Department Services, and NGOs to make presentations regarding the work that they are doing in the communities as well as the challenges they are facing.

7.4.5.2 Recruitment and training of volunteer workers/teachers of children's ministry

Before starting with children's ministry, the local congregations should:

1. Identify or request people who feel called or like to work in children's ministry to avail themselves.
2. Congregations should do background checks on those who avail themselves to work in children's ministry. The checklist should have a skills audit element, among others. This will help to determine the skills that they have and those that they need and identify potential problem areas that may disqualify them from working with children.
3. They should attend to whatever issues that might have been flagged by the background check done some of which might need counselling before allowing them to work with children or disqualifying them to work with children.
4. Identify suitable training for the recruits and send them to do the training. Both social scientists and educationists may be consulted in this regard for their input.

After training of volunteer workers/teachers:

1. The volunteer workers/teachers, and both the pastor and the relevant leaders responsible for the children's ministry of the congregation should formally invite the parents and relevant stakeholders to a meeting where they would outline the vision and mission of the congregation regarding children's ministry and establish a relationship with them.
2. They should also outline the roles and responsibilities of all the role players. This must include the role of the congregation. For example, the provision of resources that contribute to a conducive environment for the running of effective children's ministry.

3. During that meeting or subsequent one, they should theologically ground the understanding of parents regarding their important and sacred role in the faith formation of their children (Bunge 2009:17).

7.4.5.3 *Liturgy involving children*

The following are recommended as part of the Pentecostal children's ministry strategy regarding liturgy:

7.4.5.3.1 *Dedication of Children to the Lord*

The congregations should compile a register of the parents who would be bringing their children to be dedicated to the Lord. These parents and/or caregivers should be trained, guided and supported with materials regarding what and how they should teach their children the Word of God up until they start attending children's ministry. Regular workshops should be held with them to assist with whatever challenges they might be experiencing. A specific person with some authority in the congregation may be assigned to oversee this function.

7.4.5.3.2 *Christmas and Passover/Easter celebrations*

In the congregations where Christmas and Passover/Easter are celebrated, including liturgical practices accompanying them, children should be included or assigned some tasks to perform. This will motivate them or boost their self-esteem when their importance is affirmed, even during important days in the Christian church calendar.

7.4.5.3.3 *The Lord's Supper*

Depending on the traditions of different congregations' children, especially those who are born again, are allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper. However, in most cases, their participation is limited to that. Children should be allowed to serve on the altar to assist in the administration of the Lord's Supper. Activities should be identified that children could be able to do during the

Lord's Supper and be asked to do them. All liturgical practices of the congregations should involve children to make congregations intergenerational.

7.4.5.3.4 Children's ministry practices

The findings regarding the main focus of children's ministry indicated that the congregations mainly focused on loving the children, their salvation, and their mental, spiritual and physical growth. It was also found that they mainly had the following practices: singing, teaching children the Word of God and performing drams and sketches, among others. Both the ministry's focus and practices were internally focused, that is, targeting only children inside the church. It is proposed that the ministry should be aligned to *Missio Dei* and the following practices be undertaken:

1. Evangelism: The salvation of children should be one of the main focuses of children's ministry practices. It should first start with children inside the church and then the ones outside the church. Children should be involved in evangelism activities of the congregations either as part of the congregation or as part of children's ministry. The ministry itself should reach out to children outside the church; on the streets, schools, hospitals, etc. Children, too, need to hear the good news of the gospel. Coetsee and Grobbelaar (2013:31) say, "It is possible to 'preach' in such a way that even children can understand without compromising on the theological depth or radical appeal of the Word." These could be done in different methods such as storytelling, drama and role-playing.
2. Worship service: For children's ministry, worship service refers to proposed normative practices for Pentecostal children's ministry.
3. Teaching the Word of God: The aim in this regard should be to teach the children the Word of God and to make them disciples of Christ, who in turn will make others disciples of Christ as well. This practice should be done collaboratively with the parents. Teachers should give children homework that they will do together with their parents. As proposed earlier, parents should be trained and given materials that will equip them to help their children.

4. Fellowship: Children's ministry should have activities that encourage or support fellowship whereby all children participate, whether as children of the same age group and/or those that cut across all age groups.
5. Service: The ministry should have activities that allow children to serve for their gifts to be recognized and nurtured. These activities should not only happen in children's ministry but also in the congregation and outside. According to Osmer (2005:223), some of the activities that may be done are not through preaching but may include doing acts of love to fellow members during difficult times helping members of the society in nursing homes and hospices, to name but a few.
6. Witness: Since the witness is braided in all the activities mentioned above, children's ministry may decide on which activities to embark on as part of witnessing the love of Christ or do it as a stand-alone practice.
7. Administration: Children's ministry must have an administration that looks after its affairs and should be headed by a person with some authority in the congregation.

In the final analysis, the study has shown that Pentecostal children's ministry, particularly in Mangaung Township, has largely been operating in an uncoordinated manner where some of the role players seem not to know or do their role in the ministry. The ministry is beset with many challenges, some of which the members are aware of but seem not to be doing anything about them. One of the reasons for that could be a lack of leadership in children's ministry. Again, it could be that the people concerned do not know how to address them. Furthermore, it could be that some of the people concerned were born into such a situation and thought that it is how things should be, or simply put it is their congregation's tradition. This study has attempted to highlight or bring to the fore Pentecostal children's ministry practices and the challenges that it is faced with in Mangaung Township and juxtaposed it against best practices, that is, Osmer's (2008:4) task 3, namely, what ought to be happening.

Both the literature on children's ministry and participants in the study in the form of children's ministry teachers, parents who participated in focus groups, and the pastors of those congregations indicated the ministry challenges. Further, they made inputs regarding what should be done to alleviate those. The same has formed part of the recommendations made to each relevant stakeholder and was also included in the proposed strategy for Pentecostal children's ministry in Mangaung Township.

In conclusion, it is hoped that this proposed strategy will assist the Pentecostal congregations in Mangaung Township and in other areas, that is, regionally and nationally and even beyond, where there is a similar situation to implement a structured and coordinated children's ministry wherein all the stakeholders know and play their roles and also work together toward a common goal and as a result become more effective since children's ministry is a team effort.

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ANNEXURE A: NCLS Questionnaire

Thank you for taking part in this survey

☑☑ Please use a BLACK OR BLUE PEN or dark pencil and press firmly.

☑ FILL IN or CROSS the box next to the category that best describes your response (☐ or ☒). PLEASE DO NOT USE TICKS.

☑ Choose ONE ONLY for each question unless it states otherwise.

Example: Do you eat fruit? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Very Neutral Dissat- Very

satisfied Satisfied /Unsure isfied dissatisfied

1. How often do you go to church services (worship services) at this local church?

This is my first time

Once a month

Hardly ever/special

Two or three times a month

Occasions only Usually every week

Less than once a month More than once a week

2. How long have you been going to church services or activities at this local church?

Less than 1 year More than 20 years

1-2 years I am visiting from

3-5 years another local church

6-10 years I am visiting and do not

11-20 years regularly go anywhere else

3. Are you regularly involved in any group activities here? ***(Mark ALL that apply)***

Yes, in small prayer, discussion or Bible study groups

Yes, in fellowships, clubs, social or other groups

No, we have no such groups

No, I am not regularly involved

4. Do you regularly take part in any activities of this local church that reach out to the wider community?

(Mark ALL that apply)

Yes, in evangelistic or outreach activities

Yes, in community service, social justice or welfare activities of this local church

No, we don't have such activities

No, I am not regularly involved

5. Do you have a strong sense of belonging to this local church/congregation?

Yes, a strong sense of belonging, which is growing

Yes, a strong sense-about the same as last year

(Write time, e.g. 09:45 and mark am or pm, and day of week)

6. What is the STARTING TIME of the church service(s) that you regularly attend here? (Mark up to TWO)

This service

(Leave blank if you are a visitor)

• Am Sun M T W T F Sat

• Pm Sun M T W T F Sat

Another church service you regularly attend here

(Only fill this in if it applies to you)

☐ am Sun M T W T F Sat

☐ pm Sun M T W T F Sat

This form will be scanned-Please mark boxes ☐ and Scanning recognition code

WRITE NUMBERS CLEARLY to help scanning process Please do not write here

7. Before you started coming here, were you participating in another local church?

No, I've come here for most/all of my life

No, before coming here I had not been attending church for several years

No, before coming here I had never regularly attended a church

Yes, immediately prior to coming here, I was participating in another local church

8. Before you started coming here, what was the denomination of your previous church?

(Mark ONE only)

I did not attend elsewhere before coming here

Catholic

Anglican/Episcopalian

Baptist

Lutheran

Methodist

Presbyterian

Pentecostal/Charismatic

African Independent Church/African Initiated Church

Coptic Christian, Greek Orthodox, or Russian Orthodox

DR Church, Reformed Church, Ned Herv Church, Uniting

Reformed Church, or Christian Reformed Church

Jehovah's Witness

Seventh Day Adventist

Mormon

Mennonite

Quaker/Society of Friends

Congregationalist

Other

9. In what year were you born?

Please write the

year in the squares:

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10. What is your gender?

Female Male

11. What is the highest educational qualification you have completed?

Primary school

Some secondary school

Completed secondary school

Trade certificate

Diploma or associate diploma

Bachelor degree from a university or equivalent institution

Postgraduate degree or diploma

12. Which term best describes your present marital status?

Never married

In a defacto relationship

In first marriage Separated

Remarried after divorce Divorced

Remarried after widowed Widowed

13. Do you have a spouse or partner who is also completing a survey form here?

Yes /No

14. What is your employment status? (Mark ALL that apply)

Employed full-time (30 hours or more)
Employed part-time Self-employed
Unemployed Retired
Student Other
Full-time home duties/family responsibilities

15. What is the postcode of the place where you usually live?

Please write in
the squares:

16. What race are you?

White Coloured
Black Other
Asian Not applicable

17. What language do you use mostly as home language?

Afrikaans
English
IsiNdebele
IsiXhosa
IsiZulu
Sepedi
Sesotho
Setswana
Siswati
Tshivenda
Xitsonga
Other

About Your Faith

18. Over the last year, do you believe you have grown in your Christian faith?

No real growth
Some growth

Much growth, mainly through this local church
Much growth, mainly through other groups or churches
Much growth, mainly through my own private activity

19. How often do you spend time in private devotional activities (e.g. prayer, meditation, Bible reading alone)?

Every day/most days
Occasionally
A few times a week
Hardly ever
Once a week Never

20. Do you identify with any of the following approaches to matters of faith? (Mark up to TWO options)

Catholic or Anglo-Catholic Pentecostal
Charismatic Progressive
Evangelical Reformed
Liberal Traditionalist
Lutheranism I do not identify with
Moderate such descriptions

21. How important is God in your life?

God does not matter to me at all
Fairly important, but many other things are more important
God is more important to me than almost anything else
God is the most important reality in my life

About You and This Local Church

How often do you experience the following during the church services at this local church?
(Mark one box on EACH line)

22. Preaching very

helpful to my life Always Usually Sometimes Rarely/never

23. Music I appreciate	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely/never
24. Inspiration	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely/never
25. A sense of God's presence	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely/never

26. Growth in understanding of God	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely/never
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27. Being challenged to take action	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely/never
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Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

28. I would support the development of new initiatives in ministry and mission in this local church

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Neutral/Unsure

Disagree

Strongly disagree

29. I have found it easy to make friends within this local church

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Neutral/Unsure

Disagree

Strongly disagree

30. Which of the following aspects of this local church do you personally most value? (Mark up to THREE options)

Wider community care or social justice emphasis

Reaching those who do not attend church

Traditional style of worship or music
Contemporary style of worship or music
Sharing in Holy Communion/the Eucharist/Lord's Supper
Social activities or meeting new people
Sermons, preaching or Bible teaching
Small prayer, discussion or Bible study groups
Ministry to children or youth
Praying for one another
Practical care for one another in times of need
Openness to social or cultural diversity
Presence of a church school or pre-school

31. Are you involved in any community service, social action or other groups *not* connected to this local church?

(Mark ALL that apply)

Yes, community service, care or welfare groups
Yes, social action, justice or lobby groups
(e.g. environmental, human rights, local issues)
Yes, sports, recreation or hobby groups
Yes, school or youth groups (e.g. P&C, Scouts)
Yes, another kind of group (e.g. arts, cultural, political)
No, I'm not involved with such groups

32. Do you believe that Christians have a responsibility to actively care for the environment?

Yes, and I am very active No
Yes, and I am a little active Unsure
Yes, but I am currently not active

33. In the past 12 months, have you done any of the following? *(Mark ALL that apply)*

Lent or gave money to someone outside your family
Cared for someone who was very sick
Helped someone through a personal crisis (not sickness)
Visited someone in hospital

Given some of your possessions to someone in need
Tried to stop someone abusing alcohol or drugs
Donated money to a charitable organisation
Contacted a parliamentarian/councillor on a public issue
None of the above

34. Which of the following best describes your readiness to talk to others about your faith?

I do not have faith, so the question is not applicable
I do not like to talk about my faith; my life and actions are sufficient
I find it hard to talk about my faith in ordinary language
I mostly feel at ease to talk about my faith if it comes up
I feel at ease to talk about my faith and look for opportunities

35. Would you be prepared to invite to a church service here any of your friends and relatives who do not currently attend a church?

Yes, and I have done so in the past 12 months
Yes, but I have not done so in the past 12 months
Don't know
No, probably not
No, definitely not

36. If you know someone who is a new arrival here do you personally seek to make them welcome?

Yes, always rarely or never
Yes, mostly Not applicable (I don't meet
Yes, sometimes new arrivals here)

37. If you knew someone was drifting away from church involvement, how likely is it that you would take the time to talk with them about it?

Certain Hard to say
Very likely Unlikely
Likely

Leadership and Direction

38. Do you currently perform any of these leadership or ministry roles here? (Mark ALL that apply)

Teaching/preaching Lead/assist in church services

Music ministry

Council/board/elder/deacon

Children's ministry role

Committee/task force member

Youth ministry role

Pastoral care/visitation role

Small group leadership

Some other role

Administrator role No such role

39. Have this local church's leaders encouraged you to find and use your gifts and skills here?

Yes, to a great extent

Not at all

Yes, to some extent

Don't know

Yes, to a small extent

40. Does this local church have a clear vision, goals or direction for its ministry and mission?

I am not aware of such a vision, goals or direction

There are ideas but no clear vision, goals or direction

Yes, and I am strongly committed to them

Yes, and I am partly committed to them

Yes, but I am not committed to them

41. To what extent does this local church's leaders take into account the ideas of the people here?

A great extent
 Not at all
 Some extent
 Don't know
 A small extent
 There is currently no leader here

**42. How confident are you that this local church can
 achieve the vision, goals or directions it has set for itself?**

Fully confident
 Don't know how confident I am
 Partly confident
 The vision, goals or directions
 Not confident are not clear enough to me

**43. This local church is
 always ready to try**

something new Strongly agree Agree Neutral/unsure Disagree Strongly disagree

44. Leaders here

Inspire me to action Strongly agree Agree Neutral/unsure Disagree Strongly disagree

**45. Leaders here
 encourage innovation**

and creative thinking Strongly agree Agree Neutral/unsure Disagree Strongly disagree

**46. Leaders here keep us
 strongly focused on
 connecting with people**

in the wider community Strongly agree Agree Neutral/unsure Disagree Strongly disagree

**47. This local church has
 good and clear systems**

for how it operates Strongly agree Agree Neutral/unsure Disagree Strongly disagree

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

(Mark one box on EACH line)

48. Do you have gifts, skills or talents in any of the following?

(Mark ALL that apply)

Arts and Crafts: building, visual, textile

Communication: write, edit, speak

Education: teach, coach

Finances: accounts, financial management

Hospitality: welcome, host, provide food

Interpersonal: build relationships, care for people

Music: play, sing, write music

Leadership/Management: lead, manage, plan, organise

Research/Analytical: collect information, analyse, report

Technical: computers, sound, light

Other gift, skill or talent

Don't know

49. Do you agree or disagree that your gifts and skills

(selected above) are used well in this local church?

Strongly agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly disagree

Neutral/Mixed feelings

Don't know/Not applicable

50. Are you as involved at this local church as you would

like to be?

I would like to be more involved

I am happy with my current level of involvement

I would like to be less involved

I am unsure

The Church and Society

51. About how much do you give financially to this local church?

- I give 10% or more of net income regularly
- I give about 5% to 9% of net income regularly
- I give less than 5% of net income regularly
- I give a small amount whenever I am here
- I do not contribute financially here

Scanning recognition code

Please do not write here

How satisfied are you with what is offered here for each of the following age groups?
(Please answer even if nothing age-specific is offered)

52. For people your own age	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral/unsure	Very dissatisfied
--	----------------	-----------	----------------	-------------------

53. For children aged under 12 years	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral/unsure	Very dissatisfied
---	----------------	-----------	----------------	-------------------

54. For youth aged 12-18 years	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral/unsure	Very dissatisfied
---	----------------	-----------	----------------	-------------------

- Yes, although perhaps not as strongly as in the past
- No, but I am new here
- No, and I wish I did by now
- No, but I am happy as I am
- Don't know/Not applicable

The church and the society

55. In your opinion, which of the following should be given

priority by this local church in the next 12 months?

(Mark up to THREE options)

Spiritual growth (e.g. spiritual direction, prayer groups)

Worship services that are nurturing to people's faith

Building a strong sense of community within this local church

Creating a clear vision for this local church's future

Encouraging people here to discover/use their gifts

Encouraging new approaches to ministry and mission

Supporting social justice and aid to people in need

Encouraging people here to share their faith or invite others

Ensuring new people are included well in church life

Ministry to children and youth

Growing into a larger local church

Starting a new church or mission venture

Other area

Don't know

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

56. I feel positive about the future of our country

Strongly agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly disagree

Neutral/Unsure

57. The redistribution of land enhances justice in our country

Strongly agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly disagree

Neutral/Unsure

58. We as citizens have made progress in reconciliation since the end of apartheid

Strongly agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly disagree

Neutral/Unsure

59. Churches play an important role to improve race

relations in our country

Strongly agree	Disagree
Agree	Strongly disagree
Neutral/Unsure	

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

60. Believers of all churches should work together to build our country

Strongly agree	Disagree
Agree	Strongly disagree
Neutral/Unsure	

61. Faith is about my personal relationship with God and not about issues in the country

Strongly agree	Disagree
Agree	Strongly disagree
Neutral/Unsure	

62. Language and cultural differences hinder cooperation between believers in our community

Strongly agree	Disagree
Agree	Strongly disagree
Neutral/Unsure	

63. The congregation should focus on my personal faith rather than issues in the country

Strongly agree	Disagree
Agree	Strongly disagree
Neutral/Unsure	

64. The redistribution of land promotes division in our community

Strongly agree	Disagree
----------------	----------

Agree

Strongly disagree

Neutral/Unsure

About Your Children

65. How many children do you have (who are still living)?

None 1 2 3 4 5 or more

66. Please answer the questions below for each of your children who are still living, starting with the eldest.

If you have more than 5 children, answer for the first 5.

Eldest

Child

Child

No 2

Child

No 3

Child

No 4

Child

No 5

What is his/

her age in

years?

Does he/

she live

at home?

Yes

No

Does he/she attend church regularly? (Mark all that apply)

Yes, here

Yes, somewhere else,

same denomination

Yes, at another

denomination

No

Don't
know
years

Eldest
Child
Child
No 2
Child
No 3
Child
No 4
Child
No 5

Thank you for your help today

ANNEXURE B: Township congregational survey (2021)

V00			
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Instructions: Please use a BLACK OR BLUE PEN and press firmly. Choose ONE ONLY for each question unless it states otherwise. FILL IN or CROSS the box next to the category that best describes your response:

If you need to write 45 then write:

--	--	--	--

If your opinion is asked:

Yes	1
No	2

1. Name of the congregation (V01)

Congregation:

--	--

2. Describe the denominational affiliation or alliance of the congregation (V02)

--	--

3. To what external networks do the congregation belong? (V03)

We are part of a denomination	1
We are part of a network of association of churches/congregations	2
We are independent from other churches/congregations with some fraternal relationships	3
We are independent from other churches/congregations without any fraternal relationships	4

4. When was this congregation founded? (V04) Year ...

--	--	--	--

5. What is total estimated membership of the congregation?

Children (18 years and younger) (V05)				
Adults (older than 18years) (V06)				

6. Overall, about how many people attend the worship services at this congregation during an average week during 2020?

Children (18 years and younger) (V07)				
Adults (older than 18years) (V08)				

7. For each of the last six years, what is your best estimate of average weekly attendance (adults and children) at church services for this congregation? If there is more than one service here, add together average attendances for all services held over the week.

2019 (V09)				
2018 (V10)				
2017 (V11)				
2016 (V12)				
2015 (V13)				
2014 (V14)				

8. Name the different languages that you normally use during a worship service

		(V15)
		(V16)
		(V17)
		(V18)
		(V19)

9. Describe the overall vitality of this congregation (V20).

This congregation will not survive much longer	1
We are struggling but is still viable	2
We are stable	3
We are strong and steady	4
We are thriving and growing	5

10. Which of the following best describes the leadership of this congregation? (V21)

Single ordained leader (minister, pastor, priest)	1
Single lay or non-ordained leader	2
Team of ordained leaders	3
Team including both ordained and lay leaders	4
Team of lay leaders	5

11. Please write the current number of people in each type of group. (Congregations use these terms in different ways. If not applicable, write 'NA')

Minister/Pastor/Priest (V22)		
Pastoral Staff: (e.g. Associate, Youth, etc) (V23)		
Council: (e.g. Board, church/parish council) (V24)		
7.4.5.3.1.1.1 <i>Deacons</i> (V25)		
Elders (V26)		

7.4.5.3.1.1.2 <i>Other elected leaders</i> (V27)		
--	--	--

12. Describe the activities, programs and/or ministry the congregation has for preschool children (younger than 6 years) (V28, V29).

--	--

13. Describe the activities, programs and/or ministry the congregation has for primary school children (6 -12 years) (V30, V31).

--	--

14. Describe the activities, programs and/or ministry the congregation has for secondary school children (13-18 years) (V32, V33).

--	--

15. Has this congregation, during the lockdown in 2020, conducted any outreach or support activities in your local community? (V34)

Yes	No
1	2

If yes, give a short description of the activities (V35, V36):

--	--

16. Does this congregation have a special mission focus on a particular group of persons? (Mark all that apply)

	Yes	No
No, our concern is quite general (V37)	1	2
Yes, for young people (V38)	1	2
Yes, for families (V39)	1	2
Yes, for retirees or seniors (V40)	1	2
Yes, for a particular language or ethnic group (V41)	1	2
Yes, for a particular socio-economic or occupation group, e.g. public housing residents, professionals (V42)	1	2
Yes, for another group with a common interest or concern (V43)	1	2

17. The digital ministry of the congregation (V44)

We don't have a digital ministry	1
We started with a digital ministry during the lockdown and continued with it	2
We started with a digital ministry during the lockdown and stopped again with it	3
We intensified our digital ministry during the lockdown and continued with it	4
We intensified our digital ministry during the lockdown, but reduced it now as previously	5

If the congregation has digital ministry-which platforms do you use for your digital ministry (mark all that apply)

	Yes	No
SMS (V45)	1	2
WhatsApp (V46)	1	2
Webpage (V47)	1	2
Facebook (V48)	1	2
Email (V49)	1	2
YouTube (V50)	1	2
Live streaming (V51)	1	2

Do you post the weekly sermons on social media? (V52)

Yes	No
1	2

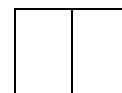
18. Which of the following best describes this congregation’s financial situation? (V53)

We have an increasing financial base	1
We have an essentially stable financial base	2
We have a declining financial base	3
Our financial situation is a serious threat to our ability to continue as a viable congregation	4

19. Describe the calling or mission of the congregation in single sentence (V54, V55).

--	--

20. Any other remarks on the ministry of the congregation (V56, V57)?



Thank you!

ANNEXURE C: Ethical clearance for NCLS–SA 2021 Project and consent form

RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

DATE *June 2021*

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: *The South African Church Life research project*

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR / RESEARCHER(S):

Prof Kobus Schoeman 0514012668; schoemanw@ufs.ac.za

Dr. Joseph Pali 0514017037; palikj@ufs.ac.za

Dr. Eugene Baron 0514013430; barone@ufs.ac.za

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT: *Faculty of Theology and Religion, Department of Practical and Missional Theology*

WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The project aims to get reliable information on the ministry of this congregation. The purpose of the interview is to hear your views on the leadership of the congregation and your role as a leader in the congregation.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

The research is being done by the Department of Practical and Missional Theology (UFS). We are lectures in the department.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

Approval number: UFS-HSD2018/1075

WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

You are selected for this interview because you are part of the leadership of this congregation. The church office provided a list, and a selection of about eight leaders was made to have an interview with.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The aim of the interview is to hear your views on the leadership of the congregation and your role as a leader in the congregation. The study involves an audio recording of the interview with you. Questions about your role and view of leadership in the congregation will be asked. The interview will take about half an hour to complete.

CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

Your participation is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Your congregation and the church will benefit from your participation in this study. Your responses are confidential, but the information will be used in a report on the results of the study.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

It is anticipated that your participation would not lead to any risk or inconvenience. Still, if you experience any, you are welcome to withdraw from the study or contact any of the researchers mentioned above.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

The confidentiality of information from the interview will be maintained, your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a fictitious code number or a pseudonym. You will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. The researchers are the only individuals who will have access to the data, and they will maintain confidentiality by signing a confidentiality agreement. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for ensuring that research is done correctly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study unless you give written permission for other people to see the records. The reports and publication of the results are anonymous. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

The researchers will store the electronic information of your answers for five years on a password-protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. The risk of identifying you from the electronic data is minimal, and the utmost precaution will be taken to prevent it.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

You will receive no payment or any incentive for participating in this study. If you experience any level of inconvenience and/or discomfort by participating in the study, you are welcome to contact the researchers.

HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact the researchers or visit the webpage of the department (www.ufs.ac.za/theology). A final report of the study will also be made available to your congregation. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Prof Kobus Schoeman (schoemanw@ufs.ac.za). Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Prof JA van den Berg, the HOD of the department (vdbergja@ufs.ac.za).

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study, as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable). I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications, and/or conference proceedings.

I agree with the recording of the interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Full Name of Participant:

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): _____

Signature of Researcher: _____ Date: _____

ANNEXURE D: Ethical clearance for this project

RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

DATE: // 2023

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: *The South African Church Life research project*

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR / RESEARCHER(S):

Prof Kobus Schoeman 0514012668; schoemanw@ufs.ac.za

Dr Joseph Pali 0514017037; palikj@ufs.ac.za

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT: *Faculty of Theology and Religion, Department of Practical and Missional Theology*

WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The project aims to get reliable information on the ministry of this congregation. The purpose of the interview is to hear your views on the children's ministry of the congregation and your role as a leader in the congregation.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

The research is being done by L.T. Maphalla from the Department of Practical and Missional Theology (UFS). He is a PhD student in the department.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

Approval number: UFS-HSD2022/1629/22

WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

You are selected for this interview because you are part of the parents and leadership of this congregation. The church office provided a list, and a selection of parents and leaders was made to have an interview with.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The aim of the interview is to hear your views on the children's ministry of the congregation and your role in the congregation. The study involves an audio recording of the interview with you. Questions about your role and view of children's ministry in the congregation will be asked. The interview will take about half an hour to complete.

CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

Your participation is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Your congregation and the church will benefit from your participation in this study. Your responses are confidential, but the information will be used in a report on the results of the study.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

It is anticipated that your participation would not lead to any risk or inconvenience. Still, if you experience any, you are welcome to withdraw from the study or contact any of the researchers mentioned above.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

The confidentiality of information from the interview will be maintained, your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a fictitious code number or a pseudonym. You will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. The researchers are the only individuals who will have access to the data, and they will maintain confidentiality by signing a confidentiality agreement. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for ensuring that research is done correctly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study unless you give written permission for other people to see the records. The reports and publication of the results are anonymous. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

The researchers will store the electronic information of your answers for five years on a password-protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. The risk of identifying you from the electronic data is minimal, and the utmost precaution will be taken to prevent it.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

You will receive no payment or any incentive for participating in this study. If you experience any level of inconvenience and/or discomfort by participating in the study, you are welcome to contact the researchers.

HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact the researcher or visit the webpage of the department (www.ufs.ac.za/theology). A final report of the study will also be made available to your congregation. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Prof Kobus Schoeman (schoemanw@ufs.ac.za). Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Prof Juanita Meyer, the HOD of the department (MeyerJ1@ufs.ac.za).

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

ANNEXURE E: Interview questions for volunteer workers /teachers

Selection criteria for volunteer workers/teachers for the interview:

- Preferably a more experienced member should be interviewed
- If the above is not available any member may be interviewed based on the level of experience in children's ministry

Individual interview to a volunteer worker/teacher:

1. What should be the main focus of children's ministry of this congregation?
2. What are the practices of children's ministry of this congregation?
3. What is your role in the children's ministry of this congregation?
4. What are the challenges of children's ministry of this congregation? (Gaps?)
5. How would you like children's ministry of this congregation be improved?
6. Can you tell a good story regarding children's ministry of this congregation or give an example of the work done in the children's ministry.
7. Do you have any other comments regarding children's ministry of this congregation?

ANNEXURE F: Transcribed teachers' interviews

“Cornerstone” Congregation–Teacher Interview

Question 1

Interviewer: What should be the main focus of the children's ministry of this congregation?

Teacher: I think the children must be led to God and children must be developed in totality like spiritually so they must be developed that they may know that Jesus is the Lord in their lives and that there is nothing, there is nothing that will stand in their way if they could know that, and they must be proud of their salvation. They must not be ashamed of God.

Question 2

Interviewer: What are the practices of children's ministry of this congregation?

Teacher: We have junior children's ministry and senior children's ministry, and we have two teachers and the Pastor assists us. And so many times there are books/materials that we use which differ according to age groups. Again, what I like is that it is not to say that they are always focused on the issue of books; there are activities that they do such as concerts and music festivals and staff, and there is this thing that we do we don't only focus on this thing that it should only be the Word that they read and we want that when they are developed spiritually they must know that their school work also come first. There are gaps sessions that we do before the schools reopen; the last week before the schools reopen we meet here. And one that know/master something (among them) we ask him/her to focus on a certain group of children and another one on another group of children. And our children who are over 16 years of age graduate.

Interviewer: I want to understand clearly; what do you mean when you say one of the children who knows something what do you mean?

Teacher: *For instance, one who knows NST she/he is able to help others with NST, One who knows social science is able to help and who knows mathematics is able to help so that they may know that even in the congregation it is not that we are only focusing on the Bible (but) other things that will develop them in school they also do them here at church.*

Question 3

Interviewer: What is your role in the children's ministry?

Teacher: *Me, I can say I am a leader to them (children). I am their teacher, I am their mother. When they need a mother figure, there are those learners who come here without parents. And when they need a parent to be there; I stand in the gap as a parent. I become an advisor. I become a motivational speaker to them. That is, I like to say, in a nutshell, I want that in whatever that I am doing they must copy what I am doing like when Jesus Christ has said, "That you may be seen that you are My children, it is when you follow Me?" So I want that the life that is good that I might be living should be a good life that has Jesus Christ in it.*

Question 4

Interviewer: What are the challenges of children's ministry of this congregation?

Teacher: *Lack of attendance. The place that we use, like the little children have a short attention spell. So they develop through playing and they learn by playing. So you cannot play with them during the lead service. I am an active person, so I need to see a child develop physically, emotionally, spiritually, that is, as a whole a child should develop according to all development stages. So mainly a lack of space to me is a thing that is bucking me; it is playing on my mind a lot. Because it is like I am failing those kids; I am not giving them enough of what they need.*

Interviewer: It is lack of space, and what else?

Teacher: *Yeah, and attendance. And parents that do not support the work of or things that pertain to children's ministry. There are parents that you see that they support.*

Interviewer: What are they doing to support children's ministry? How do you see that they are supporting?

Teacher: *Others do not support. So according to me, it is like all the parents could see that the extent of the development that their children are receiving; it is important (that they support us) because for them to be where they are right now they had to be part of children's ministry so they have to support us (teachers) and support children as well.*

Interviewer: How would you like them to support you?

Teacher: *To encourage them, like in the morning encourage and remind them (children) to come to the service. I see them many children are dragging their feet. Support in the sense that I know it is true they are my children but I am not supposed to always be thinking that on Sunday I must bring them simbas (snacks). They must eat, and when I am not available they (children) suffer, they feel my absence. They must know that when I am not there, there are mothers or fathers who will stand in the gap.*

Question 5

Interviewer: How would you like children's ministry of this congregation be improved?

Teacher: *Many activities; have many activities they that wish or dream to have. We know that some of those according to this era are activities that do not please God. But other activities we have to sit down with them and make them aware that us as teachers we feel that we can do certain activities like this and that. But they have to be given an opportunity to interact. We think that 1, 2, 3 and 4 could be done. So in other words their voice ought to be heard not only the teachers' voice.*

Interviewer: Let me take you back a little bit. When you responded to the question about the challenges that the children's ministry is facing, you mentioned lot of them but right

now I don't hear you saying anything regarding those challenges in terms of how they should be addressed if the ministry is improved.

Teacher: It is true, and even the challenges, we had talked that we want to work more in the area of activities. That we want to raise money so that we could have space, which we could build even using block outside. So that they may know that during their time (children) they have their own space. They need to hunger/wish to come to the service. Those activities need to ring in their minds so that if it happens that they are unable to come to their service they should know that they will miss out on those activities and have a desire on either Friday or Saturday to come to the service on Sunday.

Interviewer: I again go back to your response; are there other challenges that when improvement is done you would like to see addressed pertaining to parents' involvement?

Teacher: I want them (parents) to be engaged, we need their help. Not to say we want them to be children's ministry teachers because we are gifted differently but somehow their voice need to be heard that we have parents of our children. A little bit, I think this child needs a parent and teacher, and then a child. A three-legged pot. If they (legs) don't work together, if one leg breaks there is going to be a problem. It is either a pot will stand properly. Mosotho o re "Ngwana lekhala o tsamaya jwalo ka mmae (ka lekeke)." (Sesotho idiom) Loosely translated it means a crab's child walks like her mother.

Question 6

Interviewer: Can you tell a good story regarding children's ministry of this congregation or give an example of the work done in the children's ministry?

Teacher: Our children have love and what I like is they have warm welcome (towards other children), and they like to interact with other kids. And you will never see commotion whenever they meet with other children or wherever we meet together. And my children are go-getters. If ever my children when I am sick, I stay in Phase 4, they call each other or Mme "Grace" (not her real name) is sick; we have a group (WhatsApp group) and it is through their advice that

we have it so that we can communicate in that group. And what I like about them is that they are open. And they requested the Pastor to be part of that group because we feel that the servant of God should not be left out because whatever we are doing our Pastor should know. And the thing that I like about them is even though somewhere somehow they drag their feet there would be one among them that would say you know what Mme “Joyce” (not her real name) and Mme (Grace) would always be talking a lot encouraging us “Guys we need to stand up, we need to stand up and see what we can do.”

Question 7

Interviewer: The last one, do you have any other comments regarding children’s ministry of this congregation?

Teacher: According to me, I feel like we could receive some smaller training. Training like first aid training. As I have said we work with different children, sometimes you may find that you work with an asthmatic child you don’t know how are you going to help him/her and his/her parent is not a member of the congregation. You are going to be accountable (Should anything happen to her/him). You are going to account. And we (should) receive a training so to enable us how to help children with learning barriers. We have deaf children and we don’t know sign language and you don’t know how to teach such children and you cannot leave them out because the Word of God says, “Suffer little children to come to Me for the kingdom of heaven is for such as them.” It does not specify that this type, this type or that of children, it said all the children. So if we could be given an opportunity, I can say the congregation organize us such trainings because I love children with all my heart and I don’t want to leave other children outside and they too love me. So if we could look properly at ourselves we the teachers we are the mothers of these children, we are their fathers, their uncles, grandmothers and grandfathers, and sisters; we are their social workers, we are their psychologists. One (of them) is unable to talk to you like her/his father but she/he will tell you that I cannot talk to my mother 1,2,3,4 etc. so if we can receive training sometimes you can find that I would be talking to Faith only to find that whatever I will be talking to Faith about her parent would not like it Would not like; it is like I am leading her child in a wrong path. So if ever we could have training of other things that we don’t have. Even if it is not a through training, just the basics, so that we

know how to handle a particular child because certain parents are in denial. Let me say this, when a child is HIV positive a parent (of that child) would not tell you and anything can happen. He/she can bleed, say I have a cut I can become sick (infected) as well. Let us be open so that we can help build this foundation. So that we can build a strong and solid foundation. Because if we can once fail them what type of youth are we going to have? We are going to have confused mothers, we are going to have confused fathers. But they could know themselves because we have helped them with the little knowledge that we have we will see that the sides of whatever the house that we are going to build will be strong as well as its roof.

Interviewer: This is the end; thank you very much for your time.

“Our Hope” Congregation–Teacher interview

Question 1

Interviewer: What should be the main focus of children’s ministry of this congregation?

Teacher: *I think it should focus on the good nurturing of children basing ourselves on the Word of God.*

Question 2

Interviewer: What are the practices of children’s ministry of this congregation?

Teacher: *We have things like drama mostly during Easter or during when we have this thing of youth, that is, June 16 they like to perform this play of Sarafina. From there we make sure they have time to perform certain plays in order to keep them strong physically. We sing, ah they sing every Sunday. It is those dramas basing themselves on the Word of God and doing (memory) verses. From there I don’t know of other things.*

Question 3

Interviewer: What is your role in children’s ministry of this congregation?

Teacher: *I teach them the Word of God, I teach them (memory) verses and I also teach that the very same Word of God they must put into practice like when they arrive at school and are with other children especially when they do (memory) verses I tell them that when they see other children who do not have anything to eat at school they should learn to give them food. They must learn that when another child has done wrong to them, they should not pay back evil by doing evil. Instead they should do well. When they have conflict or confrontation with other children, they must forgive them. The main thing is that I teach them the Word of God that they must know verses and how to conduct themselves at school; that they must show that they are different and that they should encourage other children to know the Word of God and to do well, and also to get us many children at their schools by telling them what we are doing here in the Sunday school, that is those things; just like you see how many they are here that is because they tell others at school about what we do here. I make sure that they have*

snacks because others come here having no food and nothing to eat; I buy them snacks so that they appear like others because sometimes one would go to a shop while another would not be able to go to a shop because she/he has nothing. So for them to appear like others I must ensure that they have snacks. Just like we are in winter season I am going to make them soup.

Question 4

Interviewer: What are the challenges of children's ministry of this congregation? (Gaps)

Teacher: The challenge that I may say is big is place that we use, like you hear that it is noisy and somehow. I see that the place is too small but it is something that we are going to address, like you have seen that we have extended at the back over there. The other challenge I think is that thing that children come from different families. You find that one will disturb others. Then you see that the sisters I work with become impatient.

Interviewer: How do they disturb others?

Teacher: You may find that while they are being taught one would be busy playing and irritating others. Then I would find that sisters don't have patience and become fed up with them. So as a result I feel compelled to take over. I know how to deal with such a child, I sometimes make them sit closer to me so that such a child do not disturb others. Yeah, I think those are the main (challenges) that I can say they are the main ones.

Interviewer: You say it is the issue of small venue and children that disturb others.

Teacher: Yes, the small venue and children who disturb others. I think the other challenge is that I must see to it that no child should appear to be in lack. You may find that one may say he/she is afraid to say you ask one why she/he has not been attending Sunday school? She/he would say I saw that my shoes were torn, things like that I would say it is a challenge to me because it hurts me and I will have to make a plan. So regarding that I have to get them things where I am working. You may find that I will like today I have brought some things. What I do is I look at them and see that these children come from different families and this child did not come because of one, two, and three. So to ensure that they keep coming I must do with my strength what I can do.

Question 5

Interviewer: How would you like children's ministry of this congregation improved?

Teacher: *Oh, I think that there is a need that they should have their own separate room where we don't mix with others so that they are able to concentrate because when it is like this they are unable to concentrate that is why you find that we are struggling. Again, there is a need for food to be always available because these children come from different families. It should be a must that food always be available because as it is I am the one who would sometimes have to ask some ladies (in the church) that I will be doing one, two and three for the children so could you please give me something for that even a cup of rice so that we can be able to put together (a meal); and one of them bring something else. So according to me it is like, what can I say, there could be something that can help us so that these children could have something to eat, that is, food. Because at the moment what is available on weekly basis is a snack. Like I have mentioned that it is going to be winter I must make sure "kea phanda" (I try) so that they have soup. Indeed, just like it is the onset of winter I must make sure they have it every Sunday. So you find that as I am the one responsible for them, that responsibility falls on me. It is like somewhere somehow I could have some form of help.*

Question 6

Interviewer: Can you tell a good story regarding children's ministry of this congregation or give an example of the work done in the children' ministry.

Teacher: *Oh, I can say a good thing about them (children) what we teach them here I have observed that they pass it on to other children where they attend school. And the other good thing that I see them do is that when we attend conferences going wherever they like to perform dramas based on the life of Jesus Christ; they will stand showing no fear. During June 16 without me saying anything you will find, say that Sunday is the Sunday of the 16th of June, you just find them going in front only to find that they have practiced without my knowledge this thing of Sarafina. From there, I sometimes hear when they talk even when they are outside doing something; they are children who would be practicing what they have been told, they are*

able to talk about that word. You find that like last week, what we did last week; when I come in they will be talking about what we did last week. So that thing that they are interested in the Word of God is what I like the most.

Question 7

Interviewer: Do you have any other comments regarding children's ministry of this congregation?

Teacher: I feel like I like it the most because these children grow up knowing the Word of God. Even if they could go astray along the way but that word she/he was taught while still young and grew up knowing it at some point she/he will remember that she/he knows the truth but even if I am doing a certain (wrong) thing but I know the truth. I see them grow knowing and doing that is what I like. The Word of God is like it is germinating in them

Interviewer: Thanks a lot for your time.

“New Life” Congregation–Teacher interview

Question 1

Interviewer: What should be the main focus of children’s ministry of this congregation?

Teacher: *I think it should mainly focus on growing spiritually, mentally and physically, and it should also focus on teaching children in fearing God. These are the things that I believe we should focus on. Children should know and fear God; accept Christ as their Lord and personal savior.*

Question 2

Interviewer: What are the practices of children’s ministry of this congregation?

Teacher: *Here in Sunday school we teach children according to the syllabus that we get from National but it was not there in the past when we started Sunday school. You had to gather children and just teach them the Word of God; memory verses, let them sing and so on. But now we follow a syllabus.*

Interviewer: Basically what is it that you do based on the syllabus?

Teacher: *Actually we have different classes and in those different classes we start with opening (prayer), worship and from there we sing choruses, and sometimes we play short games or do story telling that is based on the lesson that you will be giving them on that day. And thereafter you start with the lesson and after the lesson you ask questions and the following weekend you do follow up on what you taught them and the memory verses.*

Interviewer: Are there more activities that you do other than those?

Teacher: *There are other activities that we do when we have rallies because on Sundays the time is short and as a result we are unable to do many activities in Sunday school. We are not able even to follow our Sunday program because when we have planned to start at 09h00 by 10h00 we must join the lead service. Now you find that our program is disturbed because sometimes children arrive late; they don’t arrive at 09h00 like they do at school. They arrive late and you find that there is a problem for us to follow our program as it is supposed to be the case. Sometimes you would like to do revision but you are unable to do that. But when we have Sunday school rallies; in those Sunday school rallies that’s where we have (more) activities.*

You will find that there are dramas, sketches, sometimes others do gymnastics and so on; different activities. Sometimes we have games that we do together with parents. And in some of those games we just want to show them that parents have interest in children's ministry we play those with parents. If, for example they (children) are supposed to run, there would be some parents that would compete with children. And the children will be happy that they have won against the parents. Sometimes it will be different games that we play together with parents. After the rallies there would be different sessions. For instance, there would be morning session, breakfast, followed by another session, then lunch and after lunch they disperse. When they disperse after lunch we give each one of them a food parcel to take home.

Question 3

Interviewer: What is your role in children's ministry of this congregation?

Teacher: My role is... because I have been with children's ministry for a long time my role is to help to organize Sunday school work. And then from there I am part of children's ministry teachers; I teach in Sunday school. And then sometimes I become a spokesperson for Sunday school to the leadership. I talk on their behalf, for example, if we have shortage of funds or any other problem. Like now we are going to host Sunday school rally and we don't have funds, I will have to check and consult leadership and inform them of our problem and so on so that they could help us.

Question 4

Interviewer: What are the challenges of children's ministry of this congregation? (Gaps)

Teacher: The challenges (of this ministry) are many especially after Covid 19 pandemic. Since after Covid, in Sunday school we don't find children (attendance). Again, I cannot say it is the children's problem. I think the problem lies with the parents. We cry every day to the parents that they sent children to Sunday school at 09h00 but children don't come. Instead they come together with them at 10h00. Like now it is 10h00 you will see when Sunday school is called there will be many of them. But you saw in the morning they were not there, it was about two or three of them that attended. Now, that is our main challenge that we experience and even

the syllabus that we say we work according to it we have not even started with it. We are from a workshop in January and we were given a new syllabus so that we could implement it but we have not yet started. Sunday school and classes; we are unable to divide classes because we are using this room which accommodates few chairs and the older ones no longer come. We usually had different groups and different classes including that of teenagers. The older ones no longer attends, only the little ones come. But even then they are not consistent. Today it is Sunday it is this group next week it's another different group. If you want to revise with them the work you did last weekend, you find that it is only few of them that were there last weekend others are new. It is a big challenge. Then the second challenge is the issue of funds. Because they don't attend we are unable to raise funds. Usually when their attendance is good when we raise funds we give fund raising envelopes in their groups which they take home to their parents for them to pledge how much they would give children's ministry. That is how we are able to raise funds. Another challenge is lack of support from the parents. We don't have parents' support at all.

Question 5

Interviewer: How would you like children's ministry of this congregation improved?

Teacher: Another challenge that I did not mention relates to the number of children's ministry teachers. We lack Sunday school teachers. Even when we want to divide classes in case more children attend but we don't have teachers. It is only myself and another lady, from there there is another lady who just joined us this year. The thing that I would like to see happen is to have the parents' support. We want them to be involved in children's ministry. Even if they don't attend everyday but they should be part and parcel of our children's ministry. When we say at 09h00 Sunday school service starts they should also be there so that they could see the problems that we experience. I think if they are there they would be able to work with us to tackle our challenges. That could help our work to grow. Regarding the pastor we don't have a problem, he joins and help us but if the parents do not support there is no way that our ministry will grow. Because if they support when we give the children homework the parents would be able to help us just like it happens at school; children bring work home from school and the parents help them with that work. Sometimes we give them work such as quiz to do at home.

When they come back next week children who did not do the work because parents did not help decide not to attend the service because they are afraid they would be asked about the work they were given the previous Sunday. They therefore skip the next service and come again the one following that. In that way our work does not grow. I think that, I don't know what we are supposed to do because there is always a call by the pastor in the congregation asking for people to volunteer as Sunday school teachers but we don't know what to do for people to volunteer. I think the thing that parents can do if they decide to be part of us, they will realize that there is a need for Sunday school teachers. And amongst them there might be some who may decide to volunteer to assist Sunday school teachers.

Question 6

Interviewer: Can you tell a good story regarding children's ministry of this congregation or give an example of the work done in children's ministry.

Teacher: The good thing that happened, I think that this issue of children's ministry that we know as Sunday school has a great thing that it does in children's lives. I am talking from experience because I grew up in Sunday school. I grew up in Sunday school and I am now 65 years old, I turned 65 on the 26th of April. I am what I am because of children's ministry that we grew up knowing it as Sunday school. Because it teaches you a way of focusing on God. In some instancesin Psalm 119 (verse 11) we grew up knowing that "I hid Your word in my heart that I may not sin against You." Now every time when the Word of God is in your heart as a child you grow up having the fear of God. Each an everything bad that you may want to do you have that fear of God because if you do that you know the eyes of God are watching you and again if I do another thing the eye of God is upon me. You are afraid to curse and steal. I grew up having these things (in my mind) until now. It (children's ministry) does a great job. In the time past even with us as Sunday school teachers we were happy when we saw some children growing up in Sunday school until they became teenagers and others went on to do Grade 12. I don't remember which year before Covid there were activities that we planned to do on annual basis but were disturbed by Covid. In 2018 we promoted some children to join the youth as teenagers who started here in Sunday school. They became teenagers and went on to do Grade 12. And now we saw that they had grown up. Some of them are now in TVET

colleges and others in universities. We made them a graduation ceremony which was nice and we had invited church elders, graduates, educated people in the community, and policemen with uniforms, firefighters, and people from different disciplines in an attempt to show them if you are saved in Sunday school it does not end here. It doesn't mean that when you grow up and go to college, university or elsewhere you should not continue fearing God nor do away with your salvation. We were trying to show them that sometimes when they look at their parents they think they are not educated. But that thing motivated them and they started realizing that a particular lady was a prosecutor, one something else and another something else also because they came wearing their uniforms. Those who have graduation gowns, it is a pity that I no longer have their photos in my phone, they were wearing their gowns. And the thing that we honoured them with was that there is a certain school whose learners when they are bid farewell, they have gowns; Albert Moroka has red gowns and matching caps, and hired those for them. They wore them and entered (the hall) in a procession and our pastor also had put on his gown and hoods as well. It was a beautiful thing. However we could not continue doing it annually because of Covid.

Question 7

Interviewer: Do you have any other comments regarding children's ministry of this congregation?

Teacher: *I can only comment that here in children's ministry, I would like to encourage young people, encourage parents, and encourage even children to love children's ministry because it is important to an extent that each and every congregation that does not have children's ministry does not have a future. Because future of every congregation starts at the base. Sometimes in the congregation I reprimand people when they say children are tomorrow's congregation. I say they are not tomorrow's church; they are today's congregation because we have fathers, mothers and youth, and then we have Sunday school. Even in the list of the congregation's groups it is included but when we talk we say it is tomorrow's congregation. Now this makes them even when they are there to look down on themselves and say to themselves we are tomorrow's congregation; maybe we can go our way and we will come back when we are grown up. Now I want that the issue of children's ministry could be taken seriously*

and even the children to realize that they are part of Sunday school and apart from them there is no way that the congregation can continue to exist; it does not have a future.

Interviewer: Thank a lot for your time; this brings us to the end of our interview.

“Gift of Life” Congregation–Teacher interview

Question 1

Interviewer: What should be the main focus of children’s ministry of this congregation?

Teacher: *Ah! I think the first thing that we should do as the church is that, is to give them ...is provision in all respects because most of them are here without their parents; most of them are just, ah! living in dysfunctional families. So when they arrive here even before we give them God we must look at them and address their basic needs differently and start to cater for that. For example, others come without having bathed, not putting on shoes properly and so on. So before we could move forward with them in matters regarding God in any way, we must have an eye that see and thereafter reach them there. And when we come to teaching them and whatever, we should have managed to convince them that we love them and ah! They have not left their homes by mistake; and have to come to us and discovered that we have love and care for them, and have support. And then when we have achieved those things it is going to be easy to now introduce them to the teaching of God, teach them His way and teach them Jesus and give them all that thing.*

Question 2

Interviewer: What are the practices of children’s ministry of this congregation?

Teacher: *In this congregation in the children’s ministry we teach the word. We teach them the word, we do plays, we do plays using the word, sketches, and ah... we give them opportunity to participate and ah... but everything that we do with them we don’t believe the thing that say for instance when children come from the township we, ah... when we work with or play with them that we would play things that are outside the Word of God. Everything that we do with them we do within the confines of the word. Singing, playing or whatever; dwelling in the Bible, the verses and in everything we try to infuse them in that way that we give them God. So we have time to teach each other. We teach them straight from the word, ah! Starting them there, teaching them what is creation, what was in the heart of God pertaining to creation, teaching them that after God created man man defiled himself in the eyes of God; taking them to Eden. From there coming with Jesus showing them that that thing God corrected it with Jesus*

because He loved people and all that thing. And from there those things we demonstrate them by performing sketches; the birth of Christ perform it practically and do it practically and so on, those things that you teach them do them in a form of a play again so that you can do. From there on other days, ah! when it is during certain times we are able to make them happy while still under the issue of God go with them to nice places like lodges and let them swim while we braai meat for them and so on, but in everything we base ourselves on the issue of God knowing that we went there with them on account of the issue of God because sometimes other people have gone there on worldly way instead you would be there with them in your corner and everything that you do would be godly, singing choruses and whatever, and swimming and whatever; eating and whatever, enjoying and coming in and out.

Question 3

Interviewer: What is your role in the children's ministry of this congregation?

Teacher: I am their teacher, ah...almost about their ministry, everything about them is on my shoulders because the pastor is working, the pastor's wife and we have young people whom are mostly new and are shy. So I bring them closer and I teach them that they may be confident so that we can share but mainly at the moment everything related to children's ministry is on me because I am their teacher, everything concerning them is done by me; all their needs ...everything, the pastor helps but regarding everything they come to me and I in turn pass it on to the pastor, to the congregation, ah.. That is that issue.

Question 4

Interviewer: What are the challenges of children's ministry of this congregation? (Gaps)

Teacher: Ah, the main challenge is that the children here 90% of them are children who came on their own like when they see us pass by (coming here) they followed us; they came on their own from the neighbouring community. So the challenge is that the only sound doctrine they hear it here in the church. It is only now that one is fetching them from far away; they don't understand anything because our children now we see that they did not grow up the same way we grew up. In the families, children when you speak to them about Jesus and whatever, they

become surprised at you, you struggle because they don't understand. With us when we came to church it was easy because that ah... ah.. was a fundamental teaching from home. So when you came to church it was not a problem you were able to flow with the teacher because you understood klaar that what the teacher was saying linked with what you were taught at home that is why at that time even at schools it was easy because it was at home, at church and at school they only added. But now things are difficult because we are able to see that the society we live in the main damage is in the homes. Parents have forsaken God, parents have lost the fear of God and have lost the knowledge of God. So these children when they come here everything and everything they start to hear it from you. That is why when they go home from here with the things that we teach them even the parents are getting excited and will give us reports and do whatever but what is remaining is that they also must follow; we are expecting them to come and see this thing that the children bring back home that is lacking in the homes all along and the reports that we receive, the feedback from the parents just casually when you pass by you are able to hear that these children mean business with God, that is, there is one thing that I have realized these children here like I said they came on their own, we did not invite them to start with. They just saw that these people are going there and all of a sudden we saw them following us in numbers and they are more (in number) than the adults in actual fact. So we are able to see that God more than that these children come to children's ministry, God Himself there is something that He want to do with these children that we do not know. So truly, truly, truly that is that my father.

Question 5

Interviewer: How would you like children's ministry of this congregation improved?

Teacher: Ah! I would like to see more parents who are willing to come and support as we have children of different grades and at school different ages, different whatever. When you are alone it is difficult to categorize them. Just do them that group and you find that their level of intellect is not the same, ah... and all that. So if we could have more parents coming in we could be able to group them and know that when we do activities we do them according to their level of maturity and understanding. When you are with these ones you know, ah... I am trying but it is difficult. Ah... when you are in this group and try to reach each one of them some are

too young but you must see how you cater for them. So if there could be more parents volunteering to come and we start sharing them; that thing will bring about change. The other thing is that here at church we have a big yard and one of the things that can improve our children's ministry is if we could have recreational facilities for them outside the church, that is, when we are here there should be nothing lacking. When we are done with the things here and now they want to play they should just play and when we want to sit here one afternoon braaing meat for them sitting that should be possible because ah... church if we could make it more homely for these children (in regard to) many things they could grow up well because at their homes it is evident that there is a challenge. So we plant the seed but it would seem that most of the time... most of the time they could be with us here. That is, this be more like a centre to cater for their needs because children do not only end here when they get back at the township they wish for other things. This is where we lose them because when she/he goes to township play at facilities she/he meet children who use vulgar language and those who smoke nyaope. So, if ales is here, when we part here they go to school, (come) here, and they go home. Many things would be minimized, that is, their heart and mind would be kept clean.

Question 6

Interviewer: Can you tell a good story regarding children's ministry of this congregation or give an example of the work done in children's ministry.

Teacher: *The good story that I can tell is that last year (2022) December we had a big function for them whereby it was just their day celebrating the birth of Christ. On that day they did sketches and whatever. We decorated for them; the day was just about them. We had decorated the place for them. They came well-dressed; girls were dressed in white gowns and boys black and white with bowties and their parents were there as well and it was nice, and we had cooked for them. And from there their parents were physically here seeing with their eyes where their children are taken to and it was nice because ah... we shared those pictures with the parents and they are there. They know now that when their children come here what is it that is happening here.*

Question 7

Interviewer: Do you have any other comments regarding children's ministry of this congregation.

Teacher: I can only say I see that it helps them, ah... I see they are not like the time when I met them. I see that the teachings of this place and whatever are working. It is true that children do not catch at the same time in the same way. But with those that have understood in this regard you are able to hear them even when they stand in front during the time for testimony they are bold to come and testify the goodness of the Lord. At schools where they are few principals sometime ask me about them because they (children) say they attend Sunday school here. Ah... where they attend some of them are different even in their classrooms because that is what I emphasize that you can't say you are in children's ministry and when the teacher talks of children who did not write homework and you also are part of those children. When you are in children's ministry you must do distinguishable things that show that you are a child who is taught a way of God.

ANNEXURE G: Teachers' code book

Code	Comment	Code Group 1	Code Group 2	Code Group 3	Code Group 4	Code Group 5	Code Group 6	Code Group 7
(memory) verses							Practices	
accept Christ as their Lord and personal savior.								
also focus on teaching children in fearing God								
And my children are go-getters				Good Story				
And parents that do not support the work of or things that pertain to	Challenges							
children come from different families	Challenges							
children must be led to God and children must be developed in totality						Main focus of children's ministry		
convince them that we love them and ah! they have not left their homes								
Developed in totality								
even before we give them God we must look at them and address their ba						Main focus of children's ministry		
good nurturing of children basing ourselves on the word of God.								
have many activities they that wish or dream to have				Improvement				
help to organize Sunday school work								
how to conduct themselves at school								Role
I am a leader to them (children)								Role
I am their mother.								Role
I am their teacher								Role
I feel like we could receive some smaller training. Training like first			Comments					
I make sure that they have snacks								Role
I must see to it that no child should appear to be in lack	Challenges							
I say they are not tomorrow's church; they are today's congregation be								
I teach in Sunday school								
I teach them the word of God								Role
I want them (parents) to be engaged, we need their help				Improvement				
I would like to encourage young people, encourage parents, and encoura		Comments						
Lack of attendance	Challenges							
lack of support from the parents								
mainly focus on growing spiritually, mentally and physically								
need for food to be always available because these children come from				Improvement				
now introduce them to the teaching of God, teach them His way and teac								
number of children's ministry teachers								
Our children have love and what I like is they have warm welcome (towa				Good Story				
perform certain plays in order to keep them strong physically.							Practices	
promoted some children to join the youth as teenagers who started here								
sometimes I become a spokesperson for Sunday school to the leadership.								
start with the lesson and after the lesson you ask questions and the f								
teach them the word of God; memory verses, let them sing and so on								
The place that we use	Challenges							
the second challenge is the issue of funds								
The word of God is like it is germinating in them		Comments						
their voice need to be heard that we have parents of our children				Improvement				
their voice ought to be heard not only the teachers' voice.				Improvement				
there are activities that they do such as concerts and music festivals							Practices	
There are gaps sessions that we do before the schools reopen							Practices	
these children grow up knowing the word of God								
they are children who would be practicing what they have been told, th								
they are interested in the word of God				Good Story				
they are not consistent								
they are open				Good Story				
They became teenagers and went on to do Grade 12. And now we saw that				Good Story				
they like to perform dramas based on the life of Jesus Christ; they wi						Main focus of children's ministry		
they must be developed that they may know that Jesus is the Lord in th						Main focus of children's ministry		
they must be proud of their salvation. They must not be ashamed of God								
they should have their own separate room								
they sing every Sunday							Practices	
to get us many children at their schools by telling them what we are d								Role
to give them ...is provision in all respects								
to have the parents' support								
unday school rallies that's where we have (more) activities. You will								
we (should) receive a training so to be able us how to help children w		Comments						
we are unable to divide classes because we are using this room which a								
we don't find children (attendance)								
We have things like drama mostly during Easter							Practices	
We made them a graduation ceremony which was nice and we had invited c								
we start with opening (prayer), worship and from there we sing choruse								
we teach children according to the syllabus								
what we teach them here I have observed that they pass it on to other								

ANNEXURE H: Teachers' quotation report

Project: Children's ministry teachers

Report created by Lefu Maphalla on 11/2/2023

Quotation Report

All (56) quotations

5:2 ¶ 6 in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview

Salvation

1 Codes:

- Salvation

2 Quotations:

5:2 ¶ 6, salvation in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview / 8:3 ¶ 4, teach them Jesus and give them all that thing in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

5:5 ¶ 11 in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview

Gaps sessions

0 Codes

5:6 ¶ 18 in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview

Leader

1 Codes:

- Leader

1 Quotations:

5:6 ¶ 18, leader in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview

5:7 ¶ 18 in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview

Teacher

1 Codes:

- Teacher

4 Quotations:

5:7 ¶ 18, teacher in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview / 6:6 ¶ 12, teach them in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview / 7:10 ¶ 15, teach in New Life congregation-Teacher interview / 8:5 ¶ 12, teacher in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

5:8 ¶ 18 in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview

Mother

1 Codes:

- Mother / provider

1 Quotations:

5:8 ¶ 18, mother in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview

5:9 ¶ 24 in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview

Parents that do not support the work

1 Codes:

- Parents' support

2 Quotations:

5:9 ¶ 24, parents that do not support the work in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview / 7:15 ¶ 19, lack of support from the parents in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

5:10 ¶ 32 in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview

Many activities

0 Codes

5:12 ¶ 32 in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview

Their voice ought to be heard

1 Codes:

- **Children's voice must be heard**

1 Quotations:

5:12 ¶ 32, their voice ought to be heard in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview

5:13 ¶ 40 in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview

Our children have love

0 Codes

5:14 ¶ 40 in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview

Are go-getters

0 Codes

5:15 ¶ 44 in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview

Training

1 Codes:

- **Teacher training**

1 Quotations:

5:15 ¶ 44, training in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview

5:16 ¶ 22 in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview

Attendance

0 Codes

6:6 ¶ 12 in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview

Teach them

1 Codes:

- **Teacher**

4 Quotations:

5:7 ¶ 18, teacher in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview / 6:6 ¶ 12, teach them in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview / 7:10 ¶ 15, teach in New Life congregation-Teacher interview / 8:5 ¶ 12, teacher in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

6:8 ¶ 16 in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview

Big is place

1 Codes:

- **Facilities/infrastructure**

1 Quotations:

6:8 ¶ 16, big is place in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview

6:10 ¶ 20 in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview

No child should appear to be in lack

0 Codes

6:11 ¶ 24 in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview

Own separate room

1 Codes:

- **Need for children's ministry facilities**

1 Quotations:

6:11 ¶ 24, own separate room in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview

6:12 ¶ 24 in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview

Food always be available

0 Codes

6:14 ¶ 28 in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview

They pass it on to other children

1 Codes:

- **Boldness**

1 Quotations:

6:14 ¶ 28, they pass it on to other children in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview

6:15 ¶ 28 in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview

Children who would be practicing what they have been told

1 Codes:

- **Obedience**

1 Quotations:

6:15 ¶ 28, children who would be practicing what they have been told in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview

6:16 ¶ 32 in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview

Children grow up knowing the Word of God

0 Codes

6:17 ¶ 8 in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview

Drama

1 Codes:

- **Dramas, sketches, plays & gymnastics, etc.**

2 Quotations:

6:17 ¶ 8, drama in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview / 7:8 ¶ 11, dramas, sketches, sometimes others do gymnastics and so on in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

6:19 ¶ 28 in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview

Showing no fear

0 Codes

6:20 ¶ 32 in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview

The Word of God is like it is germinating in them

0 Codes

7:1 ¶ 4 in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

Growing spiritually, mentally and physically

1 Codes:

- **Spiritual, mental & physical growth**

1 Quotations:

7:1 ¶ 4, growing spiritually, mentally and physically in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

7:3 ¶ 7 in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

Syllabus

1 Codes:

- **Teaching**

1 Quotations:

7:3 ¶ 7, syllabus in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

7:8 ¶ 11 in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

Dramas, sketches, sometimes others do gymnastics and so on

1 Codes:

- Dramas, sketches, plays & gymnastics, etc.

2 Quotations:

6:17 ¶ 8, drama in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview / 7:8 ¶ 11, dramas, sketches, sometimes others do gymnastics and so on in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

7:9 ¶ 15 in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

Organize

0 Codes

7:10 ¶ 15 in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

Teach

1 Codes:

- Teacher

4 Quotations:

5:7 ¶ 18, teacher in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview / 6:6 ¶ 12, teach them in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview / 7:10 ¶ 15, teach in New Life congregation-Teacher interview / 8:5 ¶ 12, teacher in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

7:11 ¶ 15 in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

Spokesperson

0 Codes

7:12 ¶ 19 in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

Attendance

0 Codes

7:14 ¶ 19 in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

Funds

0 Codes

7:15 ¶ 19 in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

Lack of support from the parents

1 Codes:

- **Parents' support**

2 Quotations:

5:9 ¶ 24, parents that do not support the work in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview / 7:15 ¶ 19, lack of support from the parents in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

7:16 ¶ 23 in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

Number of children's ministry teachers

0 Codes

7:17 ¶ 23 in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

Parents' support.

1 Codes:

- **Support by parents**

2 Quotations:

7:17 ¶ 23, parents' support in New Life congregation-Teacher interview / 8:9 ¶ 22, more parents who are willing to come and support in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

7:18 ¶ 27 in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

Some children growing up in Sunday school until they became teenagers and others went on to do Grade 12

0 Codes

7:19 ¶ 27 in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

Graduation ceremony

0 Codes

7:20 ¶ 31 in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

Encourage young people, encourage parents, and encourage even children to love children's ministry

1 Codes:

- Awareness of the importance of children's ministry

1 Quotations:

7:20 ¶ 31, encourage young people, encourage parents, and encourage even children... in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

7:21 ¶ 31 in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

Even in the list of the congregation's groups it is included but when we talk we say it is tomorrow's congregation

0 Codes

7:22 ¶ 4 in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

Know and fear God

0 Codes

7:23 ¶ 9 in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

Prayer

0 Codes

7:24 ¶ 7 in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

Word of God; memory verses

0 Codes

7:25 ¶ 9 in New Life congregation-Teacher interview

Sing

1 Codes:

- Singing

2 Quotations:

7:25 ¶ 9, sing in New Life congregation-Teacher interview / 8:15 ¶ 8, singing in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

8:1 ¶ 4 in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

Provision in all respect

0 Codes

8:2 ¶ 4 in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

Love them

1 Codes:

- Love

1 Quotations:

8:2 ¶ 4, love them in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

8:3 ¶ 4 in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

Teach them Jesus and give them all that thing.

1 Codes:

- Salvation

2 Quotations:

5:2 ¶ 6, salvation in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview / 8:3 ¶ 4, teach them Jesus and give them all that thing in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

8:5 ¶ 12 in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

Teacher

1 Codes:

- Teacher

4 Quotations:

5:7 ¶ 18, teacher in Cornerstone congregation teacher interview / 6:6 ¶ 12, teach them in Our Hope congregation-Teacher interview / 7:10 ¶ 15, teach in New Life congregation-Teacher interview / 8:5 ¶ 12, teacher in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

8:6 ¶ 12 in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

Everything about them is on my shoulders

0 Codes

8:8 ¶ 18 in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

Sound doctrine they hear it here in the church

0 Codes

8:9 ¶ 22 in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

More parents who are willing to come and support

1 Codes:

- **Support by parents**

2 Quotations:

7:17 ¶ 23, parents' support in New Life congregation-Teacher interview / 8:9 ¶ 22, more parents who are willing to come and support in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

8:10 ¶ 22 in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

Have recreational facilities

0 Codes

8:11 ¶ 25 in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

We had a big function

0 Codes

8:12 ¶ 29 in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

They are not like the time when I met them

0 Codes

8:15 ¶ 8 in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

Singing

1 Codes:

- **Singing**

2 Quotations:

7:25 ¶ 9, sing in New Life congregation-Teacher interview / 8:15 ¶ 8, singing in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

8:16 ¶ 18 in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

Parents have forsaken God

1 Codes:

- **Backslidden parents**

1 Quotations:

8:16 ¶ 18, Parents have forsaken God in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

8:17 ¶ 22 in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

More parents volunteering

0 Codes

8:18 ¶ 29 in Gift of Life congregation-Teacher interview

They are bold to come and testify the goodness of the Lord

0 Codes

ANNEXURE I: Biographical information of focus groups participants

Introduction and consent

Explanation of the concept of “children’s ministry” in this congregation

Biographical information of focus group participants (Instructions: Fill in or make a cross next to the selected category)

1. Gender

Male

Female

2. Age (years)

15–20

21–30

31–40

41–50

51–60

61 and above

3. Employment status

Employed

Unemployed

Self-employed

Student

Other (explain)

4. Number of children and age

.....

.....

5. Marital status

Never married

Married

Divorced

Widowed

Remarried after divorce

Remarried after widowed

6. Education level

Primary school

Some secondary school

Completed secondary school

Trade certificate

Diploma

Degree and above

ANNEXURE J: Questions for focus groups participant

Questions for focus groups with parents-2023

Focus groups

Selection criteria:

- Be a member of the congregation for more than 1 year
- Have a child or children (Age(s) between 00–12 years) in the children's ministry of this congregation
- Not more than one member from the same family may participate (No couples)

Questions to the parents participating in focus groups:

1. What should be the main focus of children's ministry of this congregation?
2. What role do you as a parent play in children's ministry of this congregation?
3. How may this congregation assist you to play a role in the children's ministry?
4. What are the challenges of the children's ministry? (Gaps?)
4. How would you like the ministry to be improved?
5. Can you tell a good story or give an example of the work done in the children's ministry.
6. Any other comments regarding children's ministry of this congregation?

ANNEXURE K: Transcribed focus groups interviews

“Cornerstone” Congregation–Focus group interview

Question 1

Interviewer: What should be the main focus of children’s ministry of this congregation?

No. 8: *Scripture and doctrine*

No. 3: *I think again in children’s ministry focus should be on the needs and because children are not equal, they come from unequal families. Focus should be on the needs of the children. Look at how to help those who are in need. I think that could encourage them to continue attending because you may find that there are some among them that can afford but there is another one who cannot afford, his/her family has nothing and when they are asked to give an offering she/he does not have even ten cents offering. She/he come clothed unlike other children and as a result feel like she/he does not fit in with other children and ultimately no longer come to church. Sometimes you may find that a child comes to church alone or with a parent or guardian but because of looking at a situation within the church he/she end up not coming to church.*

No.4: *Myself I think if focus should be on doing more activities so to keep children around things of God because outside they are tempted by wrong things. For example, you may find that they end up going to wrong places especially those who are around twelve years of age have matured early. So if there are more activities at church to enable them to come and on Saturdays have things to do; have Sunday school trips to keep their minds busy. Maybe they come to play games even here at church. The Sunday one actually happens; they meet here at 09h00.*

Question 2

Interviewer: What role do you as a parent play in children's ministry of this congregation?

No.4: *I play a role by contributing financially. Sometimes there are things that need money in children's ministry so that the work of God can advance even in this ministry and parents are asked to contribute obviously because children do not have money. Sometimes they have to go on a camp, I also have to contribute financially.*

No.6: *Sometimes we don't know how to assist because the teachers don't give children homework so that we could help. If they were given work to do at home I would be able to assist. At the moment I do whatever I am asked to do at church regarding children's ministry but I don't get to assist them regarding what they are taught in children's ministry because they are not given work to do at home which requires parents' participation. I wish they could be given homework so that we could help them.*

No.1: *Me, I can say the role that I play concerning Sunday school children sometimes I arrive on Sundays and find that their teacher has not yet arrived, so when I get there and their teacher is not yet there I take them and start teaching them the Word of God and sing with them. That's the role I think I am playing in children's ministry because that is what they usually do when their teacher is there. They share the word, do memory verses and sing. So when I have arrived earlier than their teacher I do the same.*

No.7: *Currently I am not playing any role*

No.3: *I think majority of us do not play any role. I don't play any role because the children's ministry teachers/volunteers have not asked or given us a role to play. There is nothing much that is done in Sunday school that warrants our involvement. That is why I do not play any part.*

Question 3

Interviewer: How may this congregation assist you to play a role in children's ministry?

No.3: *I think if we are to take part there has to be more activities in children's ministry that will require our involvement as parents. They should do things like for instance a concert whereby*

children are asked to attend together with their parents. There has to be something that Sunday school does that need us as parents so that we can become part of them. If that doesn't happen we are unable to be involved.

No. 6: That's what I said earlier that if at least they (children) were given homework. At least you would seat down with your child and teach him/her what she/he would be expected to do at church or together as a group. So sometimes when a child comes back from church sometimes she/he comes back discouraged because she/he attended alone there were neither children nor teachers at Sunday school. On Saturdays there (sometimes) are no other people attending. It is better if she/he can come together with an older child so that she/he is not alone. We are unable to get into children's shoes. I know I can read him/her a Bible and pray for her/him but you cannot get into a child's shoes. I cannot go over to read a Bible for your child when she/he is asked to in the church.

No. 7: I would like to take part provided there is a time table or it is said you and you bring snacks this week, and we know that this week it is certain people who would be bringing some things to Sunday school and next week it is another group. It would be better in that way because a person would know what is expected of him/her. Even if there is a shortage of books or writing materials they (teachers/ volunteers) have to tell us because I know that there is materials. They need to tell us that books/materials are not enough so that we can contribute in order to buy more.

No. 5: My children are still young and there is nothing much that is done here that involves them that much because I realize that most of the activities done are for older children. So if they could have some activities for them as well such as drawing or other activities for children of their age, that is, between two and four then I could take part.

Question 4

Interviewer: What are the challenges of children's ministry of this congregation? (Gaps)

No. 6: My observation is that children's ministry teachers are focusing more on the older children. It seems like they think the older children understand them better than the younger ones. And according to my observation even when they make examples they are looking at

the older ones. There is a need to have one teacher focusing on the young ones so that they could also learn from them. If they don't look at them I feel like there is nothing for them.

No. 1: I see a gap as the teachers themselves. Sunday school teachers do not put enough effort. So that is why I say there is a gap; children come like Mme has said. They come to church even on Saturdays when they are told that there is a rehearsal. Children come but they don't find a mistress and go back home tot (until) they become discouraged. That's why when children have to come to church on Saturday when she (teacher) is there or whoever is there at that time to teach children then the children say they are not coming because the mistress is not attending, you hear! So I see the gap as being the mistresses of Sunday school. It is like there could be or their number should be increased at least so that if one is absent (another one is there), it is true that we are people and we have commitments and we might not know her commitments during that time and why she did not come this week. But I think if the number of mistresses could be increased like it was said at the conference that the teachers' numbers must be increased, if their number is increased that gap would be closed. I think even the children would find that thing that we know that even mistress A is absent mistress B would be there.

No. 4: Me I think the challenges that are there relates to a month that is said to be a Sunday school month. When it is Sunday school month children are used unprepared for the sake that it is Sunday school month. Children are not given time to prepare themselves. You may find that a child is informed on Saturday day that tomorrow she/he will be preaching, of which is wrong. And I think even pastors prepare themselves from the beginning of a week for Sunday's sermon. So when a child is like that finds herself/himself under pressure. And these little children have that thing that when they have heard that one of them is going to do a certain they come in numbers just to come and see how that child would perform only to find that child is unprepared because she/he was informed on Saturday and has been given a new task. So I think the thing of Sunday school should not be done on a certain month only. They (teachers) should continue to do the work that they are supposed to do; they (children) are prepared knowing that during the course the year there is a month when they would be required to minister. By then they should be familiar with that.

Question 5

Interviewer: How would you like the children's ministry improved?

No. 7: *I would like them to have their own little church (building) outside. These children of ours do not concentrate. They have attended their service and then morning devotion, and then the lead service. They are asleep during the main service. They can still attend their service but I am not sure how long will they attend our service (lead). But like at school they can be allowed to play. They can play because a 5 year old person do not hear that much. They should have a place to play where they will be supervised. They should have their own service.*

No. 3: *I think what the brother said is what I wanted to say. The thing is when they are in their own service, it is said they have materials and books but I have never seen them in my eyes. Those books could be used to them when they are in their own church. And there should be teachers who teach them, reading Psalms and teaching them even the little ones (showing by hand). The little ones are able to understand if you teach them by the use of pictures. Showing them pictures saying this is Jesus Christ when He was born, so on and so on. They should be taught those things in their own service because when they are in here it is true they don't concentrate, they would be sleeping and when we stand up they would be sitting down. But when they are in their service the teachers would be doing things that are appropriate to their development stage and they will be able to concentrate and a child will leave the service knowing and when he/she gets home he/she can tell the parent that today we were taught this and that. I think it can be simple in that way.*

No. 4: *Adding to what is said. Children actually are not able to listen for a long period. So you can imagine if they came at 09h00 and they attend their 09h00 service and after 09h00 they come to this one and get out from here at 13h30; there is no food and one came without a snack and he/she looking at another one who is eating. Adding to that even if there could be a thing that brother mentioned when he said maybe if they can say we assist financially in order to buy snacks. And even when we have their service outside there would be that time whereby they would not be doing only the serious staff and would be playing but playing things that have to do with godly issues so that they could refresh their minds.*

No. 5: *And me I was thinking that at the time children are coming, like children are coming at 09h00 and I stay in Phase 6. You hear I am unable to bring them here at 09h00. They will come*

with me by the time I am coming to church. So, I think it is best if they can their own church in a separate place so that it can accommodate the young ones because they are too young. At least there they will draw and do other things. And they should increase the number of teachers so that they could rotate because the challenge is that there would be one teacher like she is one. She will spend time in that church not in the adults' church. Their number has to be increased so that they can rotate. Maybe one Sunday it is one teacher in their church and the next Sunday it is one or more so that even the teachers as well get a chance to attend the service (lead) while at the sametime they are able to supervise children in their own church.

Question 6

Interviewer: Can you tell a good story or give an example of the work done in the children's ministry?

No. 5: Me I think the same thing that they have their own month that is theirs whereby we sit and listen to them and we see growth in terms of how they move from one stage to another, and you know they are now able to lead the worship team and even sing alone. And they are able like the sister explained that they also preach. I see that as an impressive activity because it shows that there is a process going on leading to growth.

Interviewer: Which activities are done during their month?

No. 5: What happens is that every Sunday during that month the service is led by a child like all, same as like in adult service everything is done by children except announcements, I think the announcements are the only things that are done by an adult. It's the MC, the worshippers, the preacher and the one who takes offering are all children.

No. 1: Me, I can say, it was the thing that we saw for the first time this year that they came and just preached and doing all the things that we do in church; preaching, singing to us and doing all these other things but then but what excited me...excited me the most like last year their mistress (teacher) was able to take them, dance and come to dance in front. You see that, not just to come and stand at the pulpit. That thing I see it as a good thing because children other children like it because we are gifted in the same way. You are not able to stand in front either

to preach or sing but when you stand in front and perform those spiritual dances I see it as a good thing and they liked to do them a lot.

No. 7: One thing that I liked, that I saw happening in their activities they like to ask about the Bibles, those little New Testament Bibles, saying, and daddy when you read the Bibles in church I have never seen these ones read. So that thing that they saw in Botshabelo of a young child preaching, I saw the little child when I arrived at work reading the Bible aloud because she saw another child who is not even five years older than her (preaching). She is not able to stand and read the Bible or ask somebody else or even preach. I have now seen her at home reading the Bible asking what is being said. It is apparent that by her coming to Sunday school indeed she is learning some lessons.

Question 7

Interviewer: Any other remarks or comments regarding children's ministry of this congregation.

No. 2: I am asking if it is possible when they (children) come to their classes it should not only be Mme (teacher) who would stand in front and teach as their teacher. Sometimes one of the children should every Sunday if possible be given a chance to teach, make her/him a teacher so that she/he can teach other children so that when she (teacher) is tired she could be helped. Or when on a Sunday she (teacher) is unable to attend that child could continue with work reminding others of where they read last Sunday and continuing from there telling them that she/he is the one who would be teaching them that Sunday. We should not be looking at each other when the mistress is not there asking ourselves who would teach the children on that day. Instead these children should be the same ones who are keen to do the work.

No. 3: Again, what I am thinking is that it would seem like if the teachers could understand how children are. Our problem here at church is high teacher turn over. Teachers keep changing. In one instance it is this teacher and in another instance is that one. In the meantime a child was used to that one and again when a child get used to the new one she is no longer there as well and the church now looks for a new teacher, and that confuses a child because he/she is used to a particular teacher and knew how that teacher teaches, talks with him/her; one, two,

three the mistress no longer comes, and the church has to choose a new teacher again. Only if they (teachers) could have a heart to volunteer and not be chosen because when it gets to where they become tired, they are tired and no longer comes. But if she has volunteered and understands she will be able to work with children I think she would be able to persevere and hold on. The only problem is the changing of teachers.

No. 4: Me, I am saying, there are those (children) who are little bit matured, they will not attend a junior Sunday school. If they could be given an opportunity to take part in reading the Scripture when the pastor says today we would be reading a particular text which would be read from the floor. They (children) also it is as if they could be given a chance to read because at school we know they read and participate in debates especially those who are in high school, and that helps them not to be shy.

No. 7: It is true that our Sunday school is active but now that they would be going to Masselspoort you will see them, they will be more active. All along they are not that active and they don't come that often, they say the teacher is not there. But I know now they are going to be lively because they will be attending children's ministry camp in Masselspoort. Mine is already asking me if I would be taking and fetching her from there and how many days are we going to spend there. She already has eagerness to go there. I wish it could always be there even on Sunday. I wish it could always be like that not only once because they are going to Masselspoort and would be meeting other children; she has been there once.

Interviewer: What needs to be done to keep it that way?

No. 7: On Sundays the person who supposed to be here should always be here. Because even myself I sometimes come and don't find anyone there. Even us we are at fault because when we don't find teachers there we have to teach them (children) as well. We are wrong; we have to teach them, the teacher is absent I have to take over, do what she was supposed to do.

No. 3: I think the very same thing that the brother is talking about is needed. It talks to the issue regarding teachers because the teachers are responsible for ensuring that these children are motivated or inspired. But every time when the children arrive here they don't find them (teachers) they become discouraged. But when they arrive they find the teachers already there

..... even if the teacher can come sit there and find no children or only two of them, she is able on Sunday when they are there in the church in numbers she can take them outside and ask them why they did not attend their service because she was there. Children in that way will be encouraged. A child would have that thing that I don't want to be asked on Sunday where I were so I stand and attend the service. So the thing that makes children to end up enjoying activities done outside (during camps) is because here they are absent. Because now they are eager to go to Masselspoort because there they will be many, they are going to gather together, sing, enjoy do whatever which is what is lacking here, because when they come back here the teachers are not available.

“Our Hope” Congregation–Parents focus group interview

Question 1

Interviewer: What should be the main focus of children’s ministry of this congregation?

No. 6: *Me, I think (with) little children priority should be for them to know Bible stories. Priority for Sunday school children should be to know stories like those of Moses, the Lord Jesus; the must know the basics of the stories in the Bible. I feel that will help them a lot with knowledge as they grow up.*

No. 4: *I concur with the previous speaker that it could be a good thing that our Sunday school children that they could know (stories) from Adam, from the creation until.....where the Bible started*

No. 7: *I support the previous speakers especially when they are taught memory verses, know how to rehearse them and to explain them; when they have read a verse they must be able to explain it in terms what he/she understand concerning that verse.*

No. 2: *I support what the previous speakers have said that the children should be taught about the Bible stories and be shown pictures. Pictures help a child to remember a story she/he was taught. So as they are taught they (teachers) should show them a picture. For example, if they are taught about Adam and Eve when they ate the apple, a child is able to grasp when the see by their eyes. And also the thing that they should memorize the verses that helps them to, for example, as I teach a child I am able to see if she/he has grasped what I am teaching; if she/he is able to remember the memory verse. So that thing make me to really see that “ha kea hamela letanteng” translated I did not labour in vain.*

Question 2

Interviewer: What role do you as a parent play in children’s ministry of this congregation?

No. 3: *The role that I play, like now that is winter I like to cook them (children) soup. That is the role that I play and would like to continue playing.*

No. 5: *I, the role that I play in children (children's ministry) is that at the end of the year we normally entertain them by taking them out so that they feel happy. Like in December we take them out to swimming pools so that they feel it is nice at church....the young ones. That is a role that I play in children as number 5.*

No.7: *The role that I play in children (ministry) is music, to encourage them to sing and not to be ashamed because they are learning and they will grow up knowing music.*

No. 2: *I also like to encourage children to sing and movements as they sing. Ah, even on the issue of supporting when they go out at the end of the year. I am able to support, help the lady who assists them (children) during the time because children are people who are troublesome and when there is two or three of you you are able to discipline them. Even here at church sometimes they don't hear when they are called to sing I go. Sometimes they are disruptive and quarrel outside I to go there and discipline them.*

No. 6: *I understand that as a parent it is my responsibility to take part in children's ministry. For example, if we are required to contribute financially, I am supposed to as a parent contribute. I believe that in every activity that is done here at church pertaining to children's ministry, as a parent contribute especially finances; I know that in most cases those activities are run through finances. Even children's ministry require for example, sometimes they are asked to print papers and others so when their fund grow as a parent it is your responsibility to give your child money so that she/he knows that there is money that is contributed; 5 rand every Sunday it is my responsibility.*

Question 3

Interviewer: How may this congregation assist you in order to play a role as a parent?

No. 7: *I believe that the congregation can assist me by contributing, to support financially and to support the ministry to progress. That is what is needed the most. Even to advance the economy of the church forward. Even when there is a building project or whatever the congregation has to support by all means to carry forward the congregation of God.*

No. 6: *I believe this takes me to what I said that if they inform us, say write us letters or things like that to parents it makes things easy so that I know what movement can I do. Because*

sometimes it is difficult; you don't know what is happening in there but if they issue letters to parents it become simple for me to know what is needed. Maybe they can say as parents we need you to contribute old clothes for children. That's what I can do, sometimes I want to contribute but I don't have an idea of what I can do.

No. 2: I like music a lot and children, songs that have rhythm and those children at children's church are not of the same age. There are those who feel that they don't like certain songs while some like those songs. In other words every person has his/her choice in regard to songs. Now there is a problem when I want to help because there is no one who talk to the children to make them understand that every song is welcome. Let me make an example, maybe there are children who are still young, I can take those little children who like music with rhythm but I am unable because the older ones are the ones who take decision to say we don't like that song. I need the leadership's support, me by talking to the children's ministry leadership to say I would like to play a part in the ministry. If that happens I can be able to contribute in terms what I am capable of doing.

No. 3: Just like an unemployed woman who like to always cook the children soup, I like where I am unable, to be assisted in whichever way I could be assisted. I would like to be assisted with contributions because I sometimes like to buy them (children) simbas. I sometimes like to cook like I used to cook soup. Like it is winter now children easily catch flu or common cold I need money to buy them oranges so that they attend Sunday school in numbers.

Question 4

Interviewer: What are the challenges of children's ministry of this congregation? (Gaps).

No. 6: I personally I have seen the problem as discipline and mentorship. You may find that its leaders, I have not seen clearly what is their way, let me say discipline. I have not seen an elderly person who takes full charge of children. I feel that is a need for minor touches regarding discipline.

No. 1: Ah, I think what the challenge I have seen relates to age difference. There was a time that when you teach them there were those that what you teach them they were unable to understand because it was either they were too young or others were too old. Maybe if they

could separate them so that the young ones are taught certain things and the older ones are taught different things rather than that they are all taught at the same time because they differ in terms of age.

No. 6: I would like the Sunday school teachers to be at least three in number because there is a group of very young ones, there is also a middle – aged group and there are older ones. Older ones when they are taught using the Bible they understand well but the younger ones ought to be taught how to pray and sing. The ones in the middle should be taught what is appropriate to them. When the service starts it should be a turn for the older ones, followed by the middle ones and then the very young ones who sing. When they join the lead service they should all know the song they are all going to sing together. It must be the same song. Even their leaders, ah, ah, they are three but most of the time it is the only one; they don't alternate. I wish that they can alternate so that one can have a chance to attend the (lead) service this Sunday and another the next Sunday. They should alternate weeks that is what I wish.

No. 4: Right there on the issue of children's church I would like the children be assisted....just like the previous speakers have indicated that the children are of different age groups, it is true what is said. I realize when it comes to the music issue the person who teach them they sometimes confuse her because they are many; sometimes they attend in big numbers and when she fetch them they don't conduct themselves in a manner she taught them when she was teaching them to sing. So I see that when it comes to that there is confusion, it is like they could somehow be motivated so that they could have that thing just like no. 5 has indicated that they could be taught according to their age groups because they are those who are very young and some tend to differ with others particularly those who are a little bit older because among them we have Grade eight, grade 5, grade 6 and grade 7. Now I would like to have that addressed.

Question 5

Interviewer: How would you like the ministry improved?

No. 2: Children be taught according to their ages. Be grouped so that they could understand because if one person teach children of different ages it becomes a problem. So if the number

of teachers could be increased; those who teach children according to different age groups I believe that could work.

No. 7: I support the previous speaker, I especially encourage that after the Sunday school children have rendered a musical item they should attend the lead service so to hear the word because when they go back to their service they are no longer taught nor listen and start fighting. Immediately after the music service they should attend the lead service so that they grow in grace.

No. 4: Ah, right there I would like the children like what the former speaker has said that after they have sung during the time for the word they should come into the lead service to listen to the Word of God because I have observed that they no longer focus at all and they make noise where they are and fight as well. So to avoid that they should join the lead service to listen to the word so that they grow; grow because it only the word that will help them grow. The little ones, little one also need to be have a person who would guide them in order to know. They need to be taught according to their age until. I would like as they differ in terms of age because I have observed that we have grade eight, grade 9 and so on in Sunday school. We once had youth choir of that age group which comprised of only that age group; that should be done again. We rather have little Sunday school sing followed by other choirs singing according to different age groups.

No. 6: Again, I would like here at church to know personally as a parent that there is something that my child would gain when she/he come to church which are deeper than the basic things. It is like at some stage they could bring a professional keyboard player; they hire him/her for children who would like to play a keyboard at a young age or maybe the church do something for children who are talented to nurture that talent at a younger age. I feel like there are things that the church can offer children, things like that. Even if we have to start a soccer team as a church to play soccer. Let us be proactive and do things that Let us think out of the box regarding our children. There was a time before when we had teams that were playing and I am telling you even now there is this guy who used to play for church soccer teams and he is now playing for one in the PSL, big teams. So those are things that we take lightly but that's where the church can contribute in the things that will nurture their talents not just the basic things in the church.

Question 6

Interviewer: Can you tell a good story or give an example of the work done in children's ministry of this congregation?

No. 7: *The thing that is good is that they (children) are always on time and come to church regularly and even when the Sunday school is closed they always attend the lead service to hear the word.*

No. 2: *The children always come to church and are motivated. Furthermore, they always invite other children and that shows that teachings of the Word of God that they get here at church they are able to spread it because when a child get home she/he talks about what was preached at church. Maybe the parent do not know anything about the Word of God; the child is able to talk. So that thing that they are able to bring new children to church is the thing that motivate because it is what God likes because if you know the truth you need to share it with others. These children do (this) even more than us adults, they always bring other children. So as they keep on bringing them ultimately they will become adults who have a good foundation because they were taught as children even though they were raised in families that did not know God.*

Question 7

Interviewer: Any other comments regarding children's ministry of this congregation.

No. 7: *I encourage that this Sunday school of ours be made t-shirts so that they feel welcomed.*

No. 2: *I would like us not only focus on teaching the children the word. There are many things that they can do that will motivate them to keep coming when they think that at church I might be asked to sing or do a contest, do a ballet or something else. There are many things so when we focus on those things that make children happy so that their bodies become fit. Keep fit by doing aerobics and so on..... Even us as adults even if I did not have knowledge I will seek it for the sake of the children to keep them close so that when they grow up they grow up having a good foundation.*

No. 4: *I could be happy when the older ones when they go on to do grade 12....we struggle with people who play (music instruments); I would like that we start with these ones so that they give each other space so that by the time they reach that there would still be others who are playing.*

“New Life” Congregation–Focus group interview with parents

Question 1

Interviewer: What should be the main focus of children’s ministry of this congregation?

No. 5: *According to my observation, especially these days, it would seem like these children can be taught about godliness because there are many teachings now. So my view is that they should be taught (about) the living God because there are many gods; they should be made to understand that God....they can find Him in their lives while they are still children. They should grow up knowing that.*

No. 2: *Mine is almost similar to that of Mme; just like the Muslim children if you happen to see them. Their issue pertaining to their God has filtered deeply (in them) and you cannot remove them at all. So, even us the people who teaches Sunday school it is like it could be well trained people in our teaching, not just to teach them about God. But they must teach about the living God in-depth to the extent that it cannot be removed by anything when they are grown up.*

No. 4: *Ah, I am adding to what has been said by the previous speakers that children must be taught (about) God. Because what I have realized is that, I young child catches very fast and when you have taught a child while still young that (thing) remains in that child’s mind. For example, I am not going to mention the church’s name; I have a child that I have raised and that child attends that church, they have been taught in that church. So if I make an example, if I ask the child this question, “Who owns a mountain?” The child would say, “Jehovah”. If I say it is not owned by Jehovah but God, the child would say no, it doesn’t belong to God but Jehovah; that is what a child has been taught and she/he caught that while still young and will grow up holding on to that. So if we teach our children while still young according to the Bible; it says, we should “teach children the way they should go and when they are grown up they will not depart from it”.*

No. 6: *To teach a child while still young; I am raising two children and these two children I teach them, that is, to know God above everything else that they do. Many times when they go to school, I call them and we pray, and then they go to school. But should there be something that distracts me and when the car is outside, they have this thing, Mama abuti Tshepo is already outside and we have not yet prayed! I take their time so to pray while the car is waiting*

outside for them. When I pray I like many times to teach them to pray for them, the car and even at school the things they have learned. For example, last time when I called my child she said to me “Mama Teacher said to me I am intelligent. I am intelligent regarding my studies but I am also naughty.” I said to her, for the fact that those things are happening to you it is because you are being prayed for when you leave home. So, to teach her that thing of prayer she holds on to it and live accordingly wherever she is. When she is asked (about) something she doesn’t say anything other than what she has been taught at home, that is, “God does this.” So that thing many times makes me happy that the teachings about God that we do at home are well received. Both my children are wise in the things of God.

No. 3: I want to add on what others have said, I also believe that children should be taught about God. They should know what God requires of them, the way they are supposed to please Him, and what they are not supposed to know because during our time when we were growing up at school there was religious education during which we were read the Bible and taught things like “Do not commit murder or something else.” We grew up with those things; we knew that God did not want murder. So children of nowadays if they can come to Sunday school and taught those things that God want I believe that they will be strong because now when you look outside children of nowadays they have nothing that anchor them, they have no stability because they know nothing regarding living for God. So I am saying if we can emphasize on God’s commandments that what is it that God like His child to do and what not to do. They will know what is wrong and what is right and they will be able to stand their ground outside. I know with my children, I teach them certain things like there is something that I said to them when they hear in the news that a person has committed suicide I take an opportunity to teach them that committing suicide is not something that God likes; you will go to hell if you commit suicide. So when they meet others they will tell me that they have told so and so that somebody has gone to hell because that person committed suicide. So I also believe that at school children believe more what the teacher tell them. In the same manner since here we have Sunday school teachers if they can be serious about the Word of God that will serve as a stronghold in children.

No. 5: Like I have explained in the beginning as per the question, in actual fact children have to be taught about the Living God. That is what we long for just like the previous speaker explained that a Muslim child hold on to what he/she has been taught. Just the sister has said

that “teach a child in a way he/she should go and when he/she is grown up he/she will not depart from it.” In other words our desire is for these children to be taught about the Living God; that there is the Living God. That is what we long for.

No.6: We like if the children are taught to be obedient children. Teach them to pray. Teach them the Word of God. For example, many times....I don't know English, there is a leaflet on prayer in my house that teaches how to pray. Many times I give it to Mpho to read for me. She will ask me, “Have you heard? Then tell me what that word says.” That tells me that she understands something in what I am teaching her. Many times in the evening when we are to pray, I make her read that book; it teaches in English how to pray. That she knows how to pray. I teach her that it (prayer) is able to fight for her in everything. Prayer is a key for her life.

No.1: All the things that have been said here are true but here we want when children are being taught they should also do certain activities. When they are at location or school there are lot of activities that people do such as dancing and others so they also imitate them; they should know where they are. When they are here at church they should glorify God and thank Him just like those who perform outside do; they must enjoy their being here at church. They should not be lured by those ones (outside) instead they should show them that even them they are enjoying at church. They are doing these and that.

Question 2

Interviewer: What role do you as a parent play in children's ministry of this congregation?

No. 2: The role that I play is to bring a child to Sunday school in the morning.

No. 5: Just like I have explained how we would like the children to be treated (taught) in order for this thing to indwell them from their childhood; just we have the service for these children, they have different activities so I as a parent just like I work with children I am able to bring games so that they don't become bored with what would be done we should look for different things. Sometimes, maybe it is said that it is a Sunday school rally and there would be different activities so I contribute by bringing toys so that they could play games. Maybe there are little children since they are not of the same age like you have indicated that they are from zero to

twelve years, maybe things (games) like constructions just as we know that children have to develop I bring such things to help ensure that there is such development.

No. 4: Ah, me I don't have a child in Sunday school but I have her. I have taken my neighbour's child because at her home they don't attend church. So I have taken her and every Sunday I make sure that she attends (children's ministry). When she is in church I make sure that she gets everything that other children have like all other Sunday school children. If they're asked for offering I make sure she also have it. If there are Sunday school activities like next week it's going to be Sunday school rally I make sure that I come to support the children. I don't say I don't have a child so I won't attend Sunday school, I come in order to support the children.

No. 3: I assist with donations when they need those.

Question 3

Interviewer: How may this congregation assist you in order to play a role (as a parent)?

No. 1: Ah, when we come to children I would like the congregation to help us to assist the children to do their own thing because sometimes when the pastor is preaching you know the children disturbs, they would be going in and out, and sometimes during offering when they go out and when they come back others would be doing like that. So to avoid disturbing the pastor and when children are in and the pastor is preaching they don't hear. The pastor's sermon is not for them, they don't hear so they disturb. It is like there could have their own thing there and their teachers have things to do with them even those TV games and to watch those children's games that teach them.

No. 4: I think maybe there is a need for a person to help the teachers in preparing breakfast for children while they are busy teaching them but there has never been such as request but if they approach me I can avail myself.

Question 4

Interviewer: What are the challenges of children's ministry in this congregation (gaps)?

No. 5: *What I have observed, ah, it's not that there is lack of communication between the teachers and the parents but the parents are the ones who have a problem to (bring) send children to children's ministry. There are many children but there are those that have to be brought closer to children's ministry. They (teachers) would be waiting for the children but the response from the parents is very weak.*

No. 3: *Lack of funding. Like there has been a mention regarding things like breakfast, sometimes Sunday school does not have enough money to make ...children like when they have come early things like breakfast Like what no.1 has said like there could be a separate building to house children's ministry during the lead service, they should do everything there because they lose focus when they are in here. They end up disturbing the service*

No. 2: *Me the challenges that I see concerning Sunday school is lack of building where they will have their services. Sometimes here in the morning there is intercession and during that time they don't know have a place to conduct their service. Sometimes a quarter (regional service) is held here in the morning and there is nowhere they may conduct their service. So if they could have their own building for their services things would be fine.*

Question 5

Interviewer: How would you like the ministry improved?

No. 2: *Me, what I see need to be improved is if there could be a high standard of teaching. For example, I can say we should have our institution whereby for example, if this lady is elected to be a teacher, she must be send to that place to be trained in order to able to teach Sunday school children. That's the thing that I think could develop our school to higher level.*

No. 5: *Me, I think that as the gentleman has explained maybe people could be taken to workshops and another one I think even though there are teachers we as parents can assist as volunteers because sometimes you have that thing of children's ministry but you don't have time but if you volunteer maybe coming up with certain activities so that children are interested. It shouldn't be that they come in the morning sing and be taught only but there should be other activities that they would do so that they come again next week.*

Interviewer: Can you make example of those activities

No. 5: *Let me say they do write sometimes and then with the games, for example, I have a crèche maybe I ask for children of a certain age group; I bring a lagoon (some form of a game) and assist them to develop mentally, physically and socially, and so on.*

No. 2: *I just wanted to explain this thing that when I talk of Sunday school being trained I don't refer to this one whereby we are told that Sunday school teachers are attending a workshop. It must be a real training whereby the one who fails and it should be said of such a person he/she must go back he/she failed and another one must be selected. That's the type of training I am talking about. A person must pass and it should be declared that this one has passed and qualifies to teach Sunday school children. It is only then we can say we have a Sunday school where we can say these children could be taught properly about godly teaching which they will cling to.*

No. 1: *Ah, I like to haveah just like they have already indicated that they would like to have activities that they do, if they could have as I have said before their building. It could be good when they are there to have many things. For example, have TVs; these TVs children are able to learn using them. They learn the Bible and see there many things and there are shown on TV children's Christian programs. And children grow, and right now we are talking of technology and when they are in Sunday school they learn when they see it and they don't get bored, they enjoy there for a certain period and they are given questions to answer and thereafter they go to another room for meals. They must enjoy coming and when they remember Sunday and know that at home they won't find those things they will be motivated to come to their ministry.*

No. 4: *I think that if we as parents can have that thing that Sunday school is not a service for children instead it is service where we are going to work together with teachers to grow children in it. It should be that on Sundays when children come to Sunday school we come together with them, we attend their service with them. Even the children would enjoy that. You know a child likes it when he/she say I am going to school and the parent would say I am going with you. That thing makes a child happy. So the same would apply in Sunday school as well; at least I am going to Sunday school with my mother and I am going with my father she/he supports me; this thing that she/he takes me to is important.*

Question 6

Interviewer: Can you tell a good story or give example of the work done in children's ministry of this congregation?

No.1: *There are good things that make us happy, ah... when there is a Sunday school rally there is a parent that offers to buy gifts or presents and give all of them (children). No one is left out who would say I did not get something. Let's say there are some of them whom he/she did not buy something for them because he/she did not know their sizes she/he would buy them chocolates and caps. He/she would buy for everyone; it is a good thing that happens and it is like it can happen again.*

No. 3: *Me I can say it is concerning my children, they always come to Sunday school. They like to fight. So since they start attending Sunday school if for instance they start fighting one would correct another one (saying) at Sunday school they said we must not do this, God does not like this. So for me, it is a good story.*

No. 5: *Me I remember that these children what they have learned, they are able to....many times we like to say when you have heard something you should do it again. In other words these children what I observe in them what they have learned they are able to repeat it or just like the lady has said her children like to fight and when they do that they also remind each other what they are being taught at the children's ministry that we are told not to do this, the Word of God says this. So I think in what they are taught they are benefiting something which they understand because you will pick up that from their actions and when they talk that there is something they are catching.*

No. 4: *The good story that I remember about children's ministry is that, there was a time when they were writing exams. And then when they had written exams those who achieved good marks that were impressive were given tickets. It was that thing that motivated even those ones who achieved lower marks and those who did not attend had that thing of saying I also am going to attend Sunday school next year so that I could get Sunday school certificate.*

Question 7

Interviewer: Are there any remarks or comments regarding children's ministry of this congregation?

No. 5: *Just like the previous speaker explained that there were exams and the children who performed well were given certificates, it is like there could be graduations; graduation ceremony whereby they could wear gowns. Something that they will never forget; that they passed and graduated. It gives them something that will keep motivated even when they are grown up.*

No. 5: *Just like you came to us, I mean that just you are researching what is the benefit that we can get from you?*

Interviewer: The question relates to children's ministry of this congregation?

No. 4: *What the lady wants to know from you is, what is it that this congregation can get from you?*

No. 5: *Since we have responded to your questions it is like there could be, that is, just like here in Thaba Nchu we have two branches, I feel like both our children's ministries can visit each other. Let me say like in the past there were music competitions, we can discuss to say our children's ministry would be meeting with (children's ministries from) the zones and do this may be to fund raise something like that or to make them certain activities; we would copy from them and they in turn copy from us, things such as those.*

Interviewer: Thanks very much for your time and perseverance.

“Gift of Life” Congregation–Focus group interview

Question 1

Interviewer: What should be the main focus of children’s ministry of this congregation?

No. 8: *I think it should focus on reminding children how much God love them because majority of them come from different families, so it is that thing that many times it is not always that their parents would give them that love because we live in kasi (township) and mama would be raising us with that thing of you are a child just go out and leave. It is not always that they would treat a child well and give them love. It should remind them well that God love them and they did not do wrong by coming to church.*

No. 1: *The church must emphasize more on children in that children must be taught that the Lord Jesus died for them and Lord Jesus saves, that is, children must be saved. They must know what salvation is. They must know that even if they are alone they have Jesus who is supposed to be in their heart and do His will.*

No. 6: *The other thing is children should be taught that they are going to be mothers and fathers of tomorrow and that they must respect themselves, respect people, and respect life.*

Question 2

Interviewer: What role do you as a parent play in children’s ministry of this congregation?

No. 6: *We teach children to read a Bible, pray, to know that everything that they do ah... foundation of everything pertaining life is God. So we think that when we have equipped them with that knowledge to know the word and live according to it, know how to pray. In that way life and its struggles when they get to them they have that thing that they have shield to say I know that I pray, I will talk to God and by the time he/she talk to me she/he start first at school talking to God and when she/he tell me she/he and I together we take it to God that matter.*

Interviewer: Is that the role you play in children’s ministry of this congregation?

No. 7: *The role that I play to the child is that she/he must be respectful. The first thing is that she/he must respect own self first so to be able to respect and when she/he is respecting she/he will be able to respect the elders and respect at his/her home respect the parents and respect everybody especially in the community.*

No.2: *Ah... the other one that I play is to reprimand them. We don't say their parents are not here because majority of the children we have their parents are not here so when we are here we make sure that when something is wrong is wrong we show them that it is wrong.*

No. 1: *Children again, I encourage them that they need to be consistent, that is, in the thing that he/she do, when you read Psalm 23 he/she must read and continue to read, read, that is, continually. God's things are pursued and that when she/he has a problem, children also have their own childhood problems and so on I teach them that they must pursue God even if that thing has not yet been answered today they must pursue and continue praying remain in hope what she/he want will happen, Amen.*

Question 3

Interviewer: How can this congregation assist you as a parent in order to play a role in children's ministry?

No. 5: *They can help me whenever I need children on Saturdays or when there are practices that children be here on time and come according to their numbers and not be behind.*

Interviewer: Are you a children's ministry teacher?

No. 5: No.

Interviewer: You respond as if you are one. Question clarified again.

No. 1: *In this church there is nothing that the leadership is prohibiting us from doing. Our pastor told us that here we are going to use our talents for the sake of the whole body of Christ. Now for the sake of the children they don't prohibit us in any way. It depends on me whether I feel like approaching them today and say something.*

No. 8: *They can assist us by telling us the times for Sunday school services and where. Like the mother (teacher) has started today and whenever they lack something because we don't work with them tell us on time.*

No. 3: *I because mostly I don't have time, most of the time I am at work, I can assist with Sunday school matters when there, they can assist me by telling me on time when they need things so that we can assist with finances for anything that they need. Being for instance when they need toys or sweets for children, things like that because when you don't have time it doesn't mean there is nothing that you can do, you can still do something.*

Question 4

Interviewer: What are the challenges of children's ministry of this congregation? (Gaps)

No. 3: *I see gaps as being a need for people who can teach because there are different age groups so I think every category of children need to be taught in a particular way according to their level of understanding. So if we can maybe have three teachers so that we know that children of this age are taught by a certain lady in a certain way, another age group is taught by this one and the Sunday school teachers be trained how to teach children based on their age and understanding.*

No. 2: *Ah...mainly there are no challenges but I can add on what the previous speaker said that there is a need for teachers to help the lady who is currently teaching them and that we should try to approach them more than we are doing.*

No. 7: *One of the challenges is the issue of finance, to assist the children ah... on the matter of food so that they could persevere in learning and to persevere.*

No. 5: *Another one is a challenge of our assistants or teachers that they should not only know children here at church, they should also know where they come from to know how is the situation of their lives and how they live there.*

Question 5

Interviewer: How would you like the ministry improved?

No. 5: *We would like our church to have a shelter for Sunday school children whereby when we have visitors they must not come and go, they should be in order and in here be only adults.*

No. 1: *Improvement that can be done in Sunday school is that just like the lady has said if the church could have space where children are taught so that when they are here just like there is a challenge that they are unable to attend on Sunday they should attend even on Sunday and when they have come we should be able to make them food. Make food for children, you know children often get hungry and when they are hungry you will notice them by moving up and down in the church. So when they have their own place where they are taught when they have started at 09h00 a person who cook for them on that day would already be there and when they get out she gives them food and at 10h00 when they come for intercession they had already eaten.*

Question 6

Interviewer: Can you tell a good story regarding children's ministry of this congregation or give an example of the work done in the children's ministry.

No. 1: *These children of this congregation are not shy. They are not the type of children that when you call them to come and sing and they would err, they are not such children. When you call them to sing they just come and sing. When they are asked to come and testify they just come and again, again, what I like about them is that their mind is full of the word. Even during Easter you remember, Basetsana said "I enter with a particular Psalm in Easter." Hah! Hah! hah! (Laughs)you see that thing is impressive that the word is there in their heart.*

No. 3: *Despite the challenges that they come from different homes and they are not equal when they get in here a good story that I can tell is that they feel at home when they arrive here, they are free, they are free children, happy. When they get here they find love and even if others don't find love at home but when get here they find love, they find people with clear faces, people who approach and people who love them, and people who take interest in them. So it is good story because it is like ah... there way they are consistent in their attendance it is like even during the course of the week they can hardly wait for Sunday you know because this is their second home, it's a home for them, that is how children here feel like. They are loving,*

when they come here they are smiling, they are happy. When they come here they come running, we find them here, they arrive before us. So it shows that this place is (a) good place more so for their mental health and for them as children.

No. 7: One of the good things that I see here in children is one, that is, they are growing spiritually. Every Sunday when we come each and every Sunday they grow spiritually and they learn the word a lot.

No. 6: Ah... they are again, children that listens, like they are children. During Easters we would be cooking erecting a tent at the back there serving. They are the ones who would come and clean up and burn the litter, and they would ask me what should we do with them and I would tell, and they would say "give us some more". They have taken us the same way as their own parents. They have accepted us and love us, and we also love them.

Question 7

Interviewer: Any other comments regarding children's ministry of this congregation

No. 2: Ah... what we can say is that these children love their church a lot. I remember one day the pastor was saying to us "heh you were absent and it was cold, and it was only myself and these children and it was nice, I vouch for these children." So these children like their church a lot.

No. 3: As the vision of our church is to transform, I see through these children, like I see their being here from the beginning upto now they are so transformed. It shows that what is being done here is working in them. And we believe that if this thing works in them it is also going to work in families. I remember there was a day in which they were made a party and parents came, and the parents said we are thankful we see that you are treating our children well. So transformation that God want to see in people, we see Him doing also in children through children's ministry of this congregation. We see they are going to grow up to be good citizens of our world because of what they get here. Whatever they are lacking outside but when they get here they find that transformation.

No. 5: Again, our children trust God a lot. If they happen to be sick, one would say I just came but my ear was blocked but I knew that if I come here I will be strong and God will do me good.

They are active children and sometimes you wonder as a parent that you wish you got saved at their age I think I could truly be like them.

No. 7: These Sunday school children according to me they make me feel revived spiritually. They encourage me a lot, especially on Sundays when I have a commitment and as a result feel not going to church but when I think of Sunday school I put that commitment aside and then come to church. In other words they encourage me a lot. The way they do things and the way they are devoted to God.

ANNEXURE L: Focus groups interviews code book

Code	Comment	Code Group 1	Code Group 2	Code Group 3	Code Group 4	Code Group 5	Code Group 6	Code Group 7
Awareness of the importance of children's ministry			Comments					
Backsliden parents		Challenges						
Bolness				Good story				
Children's voice must be heard					Improvement			
Dramas, sketches, plays & gymnastics, etc							Practices	
Facilities/infrastructure		Challenges						
Leader								Role
Love						Main focus		
Mother / provider								Role
Need for children's ministry facilities					Improvement			
Obedience				Good story				
Parents' support		Challenges						
Salvation						Main focus		
Siniging							Practices	
Spiritual, mental & physical growth						Main focus		
Support by parents					Improvement			
Teacher								Role
Teacher training			Comments					
Teaching							Practices	

ANNEXURE M: Project: Parents focus groups

Report created by Lefu Maphalla on 11/1/2023

Quotation Report

Selected quotations (81)

1:1 ¶ 5 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

Scripture and doctrine

1 Codes:

- Scripture and doctrine

1 Quotations:

1:1 ¶ 5, Scripture and doctrine in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

1:3 ¶ 6 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

focus should be on the needs

1 Codes:

- Children's needs

1 Quotations:

1:3 ¶ 6, focus should be on the needs in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

1:5 ¶ 14 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

contributing financially

1 Codes:

- Financial contribution / donations

1 Quotations:

1:5 ¶ 14, contributing financially in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

1:7 ¶ 15 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

I do whatever I am asked

0 Codes

1:8 ¶ 16 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

teaching them the Word of God and sing with them

0 Codes

1:10 ¶ 18 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

I don't play any role

1 Codes:

- Nothing

1 Quotations:

1:10 ¶ 18, I don't play any role in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

1:11 ¶ 24 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

more activities

1 Codes:

- More activities

1 Quotations:

1:11 ¶ 24, more activities in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

1:12 ¶ 25 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

if at least they (children) were given homework

0 Codes

1:13 ¶ 26 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

provided there is a time table

0 Codes

1:16 ¶ 30 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

teachers are focusing more on the older children

0 Codes

1:17 ¶ 31 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

teachers do not put enough effort

0 Codes

1:18 ¶ 31 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

teachers' numbers

1 Codes:

- Shortage of teachers

1 Quotations:

1:18 ¶ 31, teachers' numbers in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

1:19 ¶ 32 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

children are used unprepared

0 Codes

1:20 ¶ 36 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

They should have their own service

0 Codes

1:21 ¶ 37 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

there should be teachers who teach them

0 Codes

1:22 ¶ 37 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

teach them by the use of pictures

0 Codes

1:23 ¶ 38 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

we assist financially in order to buy snacks

0 Codes

1:24 ¶ 39 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

increase the number of teachers

1 Codes:

- Increase teacher numbers

1 Quotations:

1:24 ¶ 39, increase the number of teachers in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

1:25 ¶ 39 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

have their own church in a separate place

1 Codes:

- Building/ facilities

1 Quotations:

1:25 ¶ 39, have their own church in a separate place in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

1:28 ¶ 45 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

everything is done by children

0 Codes

1:29 ¶ 46 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

doing all the things that we do in church; preaching, singing to us and doing all these other things

0 Codes

1:30 ¶ 46 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

dance in front

0 Codes

1:32 ¶ 51 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

be given a chance to teach

0 Codes

1:33 ¶ 52 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

have a heart to volunteer

0 Codes

1:36 ¶ 53 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

(children) also it is as if they could be given a chance to read

0 Codes

1:37 ¶ 57 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

But when they arrive they find the teachers already there

1 Codes:

● Teacher consistency

1 Quotations:

1:37 ¶ 57, But when they arrive they find the teachers already there in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

1:38 ¶ 43 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

own month

0 Codes

1:39 ¶ 7 in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

more activities

1 Codes:

● More activities for children

1 Quotations:

1:39 ¶ 7, more activities in Cornerstone congregation-Focus group interview

2:1 ¶ 5 in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview

for them to know Bible stories

0 Codes

2:2 ¶ 7 in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview

taught memory verses

0 Codes

2:4 ¶ 12 in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview

cook them (children) soup

0 Codes

2:5 ¶ 13 in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview

at the end of the year we normally entertain them

0 Codes

2:6 ¶ 14 in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview

encourage them to sing

0 Codes

2:7 ¶ 15 in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview

help the lady who assists them

1 Codes:

● Support the teachers

1 Quotations:

2:7 ¶ 15, help the lady who assists them in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview

2:9 ¶ 21 in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview

inform us

1 Codes:

● Communication

1 Quotations:

2:9 ¶ 21, inform us in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview

2:10 ¶ 22 in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview

talking to the children's ministry leadership to say I would like to play a part in the ministry

0 Codes

2:12 ¶ 27 in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview

discipline and mentorship

0 Codes

2:13 ¶ 28 in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview

age difference

0 Codes

2:15 ¶ 29 in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview

taught what is appropriate to them

0 Codes

2:16 ¶ 29 in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview

have a chance to attend the (lead) service

0 Codes

2:17 ¶ 34 in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview

teach children according to different age groups

0 Codes

2:19 ¶ 35 in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview

Immediately after the music service they should attend the lead service

0 Codes

2:20 ¶ 37 in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview
nurture that talent at a younger age

0 Codes

2:21 ¶ 41 in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview
(children) are always on time and come to church regularly

0 Codes

2:22 ¶ 42 in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview
children always come to church and are motivated

0 Codes

2:23 ¶ 42 in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview
they always invite other children

0 Codes

2:24 ¶ 46 in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview
Sunday school of ours be made t-shirts

1 Codes:

● Motivation for children

1 Quotations:

2:24 ¶ 46, Sunday school of ours be made t-shirts in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview

2:25 ¶ 47 in Our Hope congregation-Parents focus group interview
not only focus on teaching the children the word

0 Codes

3:2 ¶ 4 in New Life congregation-Focus group interview

they should be taught (about) the living God

0 Codes

3:3 ¶ 5 in New Life congregation-Focus group interview

well trained people in our teaching

1 Codes:

- Training of teachers

1 Quotations:

3:3 ¶ 5, well trained people in our teaching in New Life congregation-Focus group interview

3:9 ¶ 10 in New Life congregation-Focus group interview

Teach them to pray. Teach then the Word of God.

0 Codes

3:12 ¶ 16 in New Life congregation-Focus group interview

bring games

0 Codes

3:13 ¶ 17 in New Life congregation-Focus group interview

I make sure that she gets everything that other children

0 Codes

3:17 ¶ 27 in New Life congregation-Focus group interview

a problem to (bring) send children to children's ministry

1 Codes:

- Support by parents

1 Quotations:

3:17 ¶ 27, a problem to (bring) send children to children's ministry in New Life congregation-Focus group interview

3:19 ¶ 28 in New Life congregation-Focus group interview

separate building to house children's ministry

1 Codes:

- Building / facilities

1 Quotations:

3:19 ¶ 28, separate building to house children's ministry in New Life congregation-Focus group interview

3:20 ¶ 36 in New Life congregation-Focus group interview

high standard of teaching

0 Codes

3:21 ¶ 37 in New Life congregation-Focus group interview

people could be taken to workshops

1 Codes:

- Teacher training/workshops

1 Quotations:

3:21 ¶ 37, people could be taken to workshops in New Life congregation-Focus group interview

3:22 ¶ 37 in New Life congregation-Focus group interview

parents can assist as volunteers

0 Codes

3:23 ¶ 37 in New Life congregation-Focus group interview

there should be other activities

0 Codes

3:24 ¶ 42 in New Life congregation-Focus group interview

parents can have that thing that Sunday school is not a service for children instead it is service where we are going to work together with teachers to grow children

1 Codes:

- Partnership between parents and teachers

1 Quotations:

3:24 ¶ 42, parents can have that thing that Sunday school is not a service for ch... in New Life congregation-Focus group interview

3:26 ¶ 47 in New Life congregation-Focus group interview
my children, they always come to Sunday school

0 Codes

3:27 ¶ 48 in New Life congregation-Focus group interview
what they have learned they are able to repeat it

0 Codes

3:28 ¶ 49 in New Life congregation-Focus group interview
Sunday school certificate

0 Codes

3:29 ¶ 53 in New Life congregation-Focus group interview
it is like there could be graduations

0 Codes

3:30 ¶ 57 in New Life congregation-Focus group interview
our children's ministries can visit each other

0 Codes

3:32 ¶ 15 in New Life congregation-Focus group interview
bring a child to Sunday school

0 Codes

4:2 ¶ 5 in Gift of Life congregation-Parents focus group interview

children must be taught that the Lord Jesus died for them and Lord Jesus saves

0 Codes

4:4 ¶ 6 in Gift of Life congregation-Parents focus group interview

they must respect themselves, respect people, and respect life

0 Codes

4:5 ¶ 13 in Gift of Life congregation-Parents focus group interview

reprimand them

0 Codes

4:9 ¶ 28 in Gift of Life congregation-Parents focus group interview

teachers be trained how to teach children based on their age and understanding.

1 Codes:

● Training for teachers

1 Quotations:

4:9 ¶ 28, teachers be trained how to teach children based on their age and under... in Gift of Life congregation-Parents focus group interview

4:10 ¶ 30 in Gift of Life congregation-Parents focus group interview

finance, to assist the children ah... on the matter of food

0 Codes

4:13 ¶ 40 in Gift of Life congregation-Parents focus group interview

children of this congregation are not shy

0 Codes

4:14 ¶ 40 in Gift of Life congregation-Parents focus group interview

their mind is full of the word

0 Codes

4:15 ¶ 41 in Gift of Life congregation-Parents focus group interview

they are free children, happy

0 Codes

4:16 ¶ 41 in Gift of Life congregation-Parents focus group interview

They are loving

0 Codes

4:18 ¶ 42 in Gift of Life congregation-Parents focus group interview

they are growing spiritually

1 Codes:

● Spiritual growth among children

1 Quotations:

4:18 ¶ 42, they are growing spiritually in Gift of Life congregation-Parents focus group interview

4:19 ¶ 43 in Gift of Life congregation-Parents focus group interview

children that listens

0 Codes

4:20 ¶ 51 in Gift of Life congregation-Parents focus group interview

these children love their church a lot

0 Codes

4:21 ¶ 52 in Gift of Life congregation-Parents focus group interview

they are so transformed

1 Codes:

● Transformation in children

1 Quotations:

4:21 ¶ 52, they are so transformed in Gift of Life congregation-Parents focus group interview

4:22 ¶ 52 in Gift of Life congregation-Parents focus group interview

they were made a party and parents came, and the parents said we are thankful we see that you are treating our children well

0 Codes

4:23 ¶ 53 in Gift of Life congregation-Parents focus group interview

our children trust God a lot

0 Codes

ANNEXURE N: Transcribed pastors' interviews

“Cornerstone Congregation”–Pastor Interview

Question 1

Interviewer: What is your understanding of Children's Ministry of this congregation?

Pastor: *Children's Ministry is the future church so in other words a church without children's ministry will have a problem because now there will be no one to carry on with the gospel when the elderly is no longer there. In other words, the children's ministry are the ones that will take the gospel further when we are no longer there. We should take care of the younger ones and teach them so that tomorrow they can become leaders as well.*

Question 2

Interviewer: What practices/activities do you have in the congregation regarding your children's ministry?

Pastor: *Our children's ministry has sessions where they are being taught about the Christian values, about the Bible and they are given the space and opportunity to express themselves as well by using their talents such as singing, pronunciations of Bible verses and at the same time it does not end there. In the Apostolic Faith Mission, we have a Sunday that is dedicated to the children's ministry once in a year that is in October on that day as a Pastor, I sit back and the children with the help of their teachers are the ones conducting the service. From the worship team to the programme director and one of the children will give us a sermon that is one of the opportunities the children in our congregation are given to exercise.*

“Our Hope Congregation”–Pastor Interview

Question 1

Interviewer: What is your understanding of children’s ministry of this congregation?

Pastor: *When it comes to the children’s ministry I like it, because I sometimes compare children to a candle that is still long, that means it still has a long time to live unlike the one that has been lit for many, many years. That’s why I like the children, I love the children because I used to work with them while I was still teaching the small children. Now I believe that the children are the foundation the church because if we can catch the children sometimes it becomes easy to catch their parents to the church, that’s what happens sometimes even in this church. When the children are just singing in the choir their parents sometimes wanted to come and see their children sing and then they come to the church and they are touched by the presence of God that is what I understand about the children’s ministry. It is a very important ministry in our church because the children are still a field that is not yet ploughed and when we teach them they can receive anything, if we give them the Word of God they receive it that is why Jesus said, “those who accept or believe God like the children or as children they are the people that can enter the Kingdom of God” because what you tell children they take it as it is, that is what I understand about the children’s ministry.*

Question 2

Interviewer: What practices/activities do you have in the congregation regarding children’s ministry?

Pastor: *Sometimes you know what they do, they recite the Bible verses sometimes they make it a cast about the Bible stories, during this time of December we take them out; they play and another activity is they sing, they like to sing so we put them in a choir they practice before the church, in the church we allow them to sing.*

“New Life Congregation”–Pastor Interview

Question 1

Interviewer: What is your understanding of children’s ministry of this congregation?

Pastor: *What I think needs to happen in children’s ministry is to raise our children, the Bible says “raise a child with the good news so that when they are older they will not depart from it”, and now foundation is a fundamental part right now in raising a child. Let us say the foundation is wrong then the house will also be in a wrong state, the second part is the Lord wants these kids from a young age as well as the devil now what I have learned from what I have been reading is that if the foundation was not well instilled from a young age that grown person will be lost. So it is really important to instill a good, well-built foundation in the children at a young age so they will not be lost.*

Question 2

Interviewer: What practices/activities do you have in the congregation regarding children’s ministry?

Pastor: *They do teach, what I was hearing was the message about Christ but even though I could not hear or understand the rest because I do not understand Setswana as I am struggling to understand Sesotho as well but the main thing is they teach them music and feed them food.*

“Gift of Life Congregation”–Pastor Interview

Question 1

Interviewer: What is your understanding of children’s ministry of this congregation?

Pastor: *My understanding is that children are very important integral part of the church, they are not and must never be taken as outsiders within the church they must be included in everything we do, we must focus and we must have programs that enriches their love for Christ, that ignite their love for God and obviously discipline towards following the right path. Children are part of the church and must be included in every activity that the church is doing, they must be seen as an important part of the church of the future, you know, people that will be used by God in the future.*

Question 2

Interviewer: What practices or activities do you have in the congregation regarding children’s ministry?

Pastor: *Okay, children in the church take part in the day-to-day services that we have sometimes there will be a time for them to sing as a group in the main service. There will be a time for them to do memory verses in the church and also share on what they have learnt, as a pastor I try by all means that in my message include a lot of kids talk when preaching my messages so that they are also part of the message even after completing a series of messages I will pick them one by one ask them what have they learnt , in making sure that I reach and include them as well I my preaching based on the examples, type and level of preaching I made that I take through, also having their own services where they can be taught as children. It’s one thing I upheld highly in my heart.*

ANNEXURE O: Pastors' code book

Code	Comment	Code Group 1	Code Group 2
Future church			Understanding
Integral part of the church			Understanding
Bible teaching		Practice	
Plays/sketches		Practices	
Singing		Practices	

ANNEXURE P: Pastors' quotation report

Report created by Lefu Maphalla on 7/14/2024

Code Report

Selected codes (19)

● Bible teaching

1 Quotations:

1:3 ¶ 9 in Pastor Interview-Cornerstone congregation
taught about the Christian values, about the Bible

○ Bible verses

1 Quotations:

2:8 ¶ 8 in Pastor interview-Our Hope Congregation
Bible verses

○ Cast about Bible stories

1 Quotations:

2:4 ¶ 8 in Pastor interview-Our Hope Congregation
cast about the Bible stories

○ Children are the foundation of the church

1 Quotations:

2:6 ¶ 4 in Pastor interview-Our Hope Congregation
children are the foundation the church

○ Church of the future

1 Quotations:

4:7 ¶ 4 in Pastor interview-Gift of Life Congregation

important part of the church of the future

○ Conduct the service

1 Quotations:

1:7 ¶ 9 in Pastor interview-Cornerstone congregation

conducting the service

○ Do memory verses

1 Quotations:

4:9 ¶ 8 in Pastor interview-Gift of Life Congregation

do memory verses in the church

○ Field that is not yet ploughed

1 Quotations:

2:7 ¶ 4 in Pastor interview-Our Hope Congregation

field that is not yet ploughed

○ Foundation

1 Quotations:

3:5 ¶ 5 in Pastor interview-New Life Congregation

foundation is a fundamental

● Future church

1 Quotations:

1:1 ¶ 5 in Pastor interview-Cornerstone congregation
future church

- Integral part of the church

2 Quotations:

4:1 ¶ 4 in Pastor interview-Gift of Life Congregation
children are very important integral part of the church

4:6 ¶ 4 in Pastor interview-Gift of Life Congregation
integral part of the church

- Leaders of tomorrow

1 Quotations:

1:6 ¶ 5 in Pastor interview-Cornerstone congregation
tomorrow they can become leaders

- Music

1 Quotations:

3:7 ¶ 11 in Pastor interview-New Life Congregation
music

- Plays/sketches

1 Quotations:

2:4 ¶ 8 in Pastor interview-Our Hope Congregation
cast about the Bible stories

- Sing as a group in the main service

1 Quotations:

4:8 ¶ 8 in Pastor interview-Gift of Life Congregation
sing as a group in the main service

● Singing

5 Quotations:

1:4 ¶ 9 in Pastor interview-Cornerstone congregation
singing

2:5 ¶ 8 in Pastor interview-Our Hope Congregation
sing

2:9 ¶ 8 in Pastor interview-Our Hope Congregation
sing

3:4 ¶ 11 in Pastor interview-New Life Congregation
teach them music

4:3 ¶ 8 in Pastor interview-Gift of Life Congregation
sing

○ Taught as children

1 Quotations:

4:10 ¶ 8 in Pastor interview-Gift of Life Congregation
taught as children

○ Teaching

1 Quotations:

3:3 ¶ 11 in Pastor interview-New Life Congregation
teach

○ The Lord want children from young age

1 Quotations:

3:6 ¶ 5 in Pastor interview-New Life Congregation

Lord wants these kids from a young age