

Towards a Strategy for improving the Practice of Missions in the Divine Grace
Church of God in the Chawama Compound, Lusaka, Zambia

By

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The opinions expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the South African Theological Seminary or the Supervisor (s) of the research.

Declaration

I hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any academic institution for degree purposes.

Signed:

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Dedication

First, I dedicate this work to the almighty God for granting me the grace to undertake my studies with the South African Theological Seminary in collaboration with the Theological College of Central Africa, now Evangelical University. Second, I dedicate this work to a number of people who have been a source of encouragement and support in this endeavour. These people include my beloved wife Faless and our precious children; Reverend Duncan Mboma (Principal at Bethel Bible College) and Bishop Israel Simbaya (National Overseer for the Church of God in Zambia). I recognise Bishop Albert Lukonde for having been used by the Holy Spirit to preach a message that brought me to a new life in Christ in the 1980s. The late Bishop Ephraim Shawa needs recognition posthumously for being my mentor and for being instrumental in securing a scholarship from Church of God World Missions for me to do my first degree in theology at Theological College of Central Africa (2000-2003).

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Abstract

This thesis is based on the realisation that the Divine Grace Church of God (DGCG) seems to be lacking in its operative theology in relation to missions in its ministry context. The main objective of the thesis is to formulate a theologically-informed strategic plan to ensure that the praxis of DGCG with regard to missions is faithful to God and optimally relevant to its ministry context. The secondary objectives are: (1) to interpret the operative theology of DGCG with respect to missions; (2) to determine what faithful praxis in relation to missions would look like for DGCG in its ministry context, and (3) to develop a communicative and strategic plan to strengthen the praxis of DGCG in relation to missions. The research design and methodology employed in this study are based on Browning's strategic practical theology (1991:55-74). It is a holistic approach that has four steps and each step covers a chapter in this thesis, except that steps 2 and 3 are included in one chapter. Both qualitative empirical and literary methods are employed to gather the needed data.

The thesis begins with an analysis and interpretation of empirical data to determine the operative missions theology of DGCG (chapter 2). It moves on to consider a theological analysis with a view to forming theological perspectives and imperatives to guide the practice of missions in DGCG (chapter 3). This leads to the formation of appropriate programmes to embody these theological imperatives. The final chapter (4) considers ways of communicating and implementing these strategic programmes.

The following are the findings of the thesis. First, though DGCG is found to have good programmes that seem to cover almost all areas of church life and witness, its operative theology in relation to missions is found to be lacking in holistic kingdom mission. The result is failure to adequately impact society by life, word and deed. Second, chapter 3 deals with this inadequacy by providing theological imperatives to inform beliefs and practices of missions which are more faithful to Scripture. Third, ways by which DGCG would effectively communicate and implement the resulting new praxis of missions are finally outlined.

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CHAPTER 1:

Introduction

1.1 Background

During the past twenty-seven years I have been a Minister in the Church of God denomination in Zambia. This denomination has its headquarters in Cleveland, Tennessee, USA. During the aforesaid period, I have had opportunities to visit and preach in a number of local churches across Zambia. One church I have been mostly acquainted with is the Chawama Compound congregation which is called the Divine Grace Church of God (DGCG). This congregation started in 1983 through the evangelistic ministry of two Evangelists and a few church members (residents of Chawama) from an already established congregation known as Kanyama Church of God. Engagement in serious door-to-door evangelism, demonstration of God's love through good deeds, home Bible study, and eventually Sunday worship service led to the establishment of this particular congregation. This missionary zeal and commitment, however, declined with the passing of time. Focus shifted to taking care of the internal needs of the church. My personal observation suggests that this congregation has been lacking in both its beliefs and practices with reference to holistic kingdom missions.

Further, a brief look at the 'missional' debate that has been going on suggests that there isn't yet an agreement among scholars concerning the theology and practice of missions. The following have been some of the efforts towards understanding mission: The World Congress on Evangelism held in Berlin in 1966 (Hesselgrave 2012:81); George Peters' (1972:11) classic work on biblical theology of missions, which made a distinction between mission (comprehensive sense) and missions (specific sense); and the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization held in Switzerland in 1974 and its establishment of an enduring partnership between evangelism and socio-political action in mission (Hesselgrave 2012:81).

It is also important to consider the efforts of David Bosch. In one of his Books (1980: 9-10), he considers theology as being concerned with reflection on the nature of the gospel and the theology of mission as being concerned with how the Church spreads this gospel. In another book (1991:368-510), Bosch presents and analyses various ideas or paradigms to serve as guiding themes toward constructing a mission theology. These paradigms reflect how variedly mission has been understood and practised in different historical and cultural contexts. Finally, note should be taken of Corwin, McGee and Moreau (2004:77) who have considered “the kingdom of God, Jesus Christ, the glory of God (or worship of God), and the Great Commission” as guiding themes in constructing a theology of mission. These few examples point to the kind of divergence that exists in the world of scholarship with regard to the theology and practice of missions.

This mini-thesis takes place against this background: the history and present state of DGCG with regards to missions and the flux in the scholarly literature on missions. The thesis attempts to develop a biblically-theologically theory and contextually-relevant praxis of missions for DGCG to help it improve its practice of missions in its ministry context.

1.2 Objectives

Primary Objective

The primary objective of this study is to formulate a communicative and theologically-informed strategic plan to help facilitate a more faithful missionpraxis at Divine Grace Church of God that is optimally relevant to its ministry context. This primary objective will guide the entire study. It will be realised by dividing it into three secondary objectives and each one will constitute a chapter in this mini-thesis.

Secondary Objectives

1. To interpret the operative theology of Divine Grace Church of God with respect to missions.
2. To determine what faithful operative theology looks like for Divine Grace Church of God in its context with respect to missions.

3. To develop communicative and strategic plans to improve the operative theology of Divine Grace Church of God with respect to missions.

1.3 Presuppositions and delimitations of the study

1.3.1 Presuppositions of the study

This mini-thesis is based on the presupposition that there is a lack of holistic kingdom missions in DGCG that needs to be adequately addressed if this church is to accomplish the purpose for its existence in its ministry context. The thesis recognises the Bible as being the revelation of God and his eternal purpose for his human creation. It also includes the theory and methods of missions related to this eternal purpose. Another position I take is that the Bible considers Jesus' life and ministry on earth as the Church's model and pattern for missions. The thesis also acknowledges that though God may have many programmes in the world, the salvation of lost humanity is primary. It also recognises Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation.

1.3.2 Delimitations of the study

This thesis has a number of delimitations. First, it focuses on the situation of missions in only one local church within the Church of God in Lusaka. Second, it has a conceptual delimitation as it does not intend to study all concepts and arguments presented in missiology. Instead, it limits itself to those issues that pertain to the missionary task of the local church. It is about what the Church has been sent to do in the World and how that is being and should be fulfilled. This therefore ensures that the literature to be studied is carefully selected. Third, it has a canonical delimitation as it does not intend to analyse all Scriptures on missions, but limits itself to key texts in both Testaments. The Old Testament texts, in this case, form the foundation upon which the New Testament builds. There is also a historical delimitation as the study intends to examine only a few key historical periods of the Church in relation to its understanding and practice of missions.

1.4 Definitions of key terms

Firstly, the thesis uses the term 'Church' to refer to the universal Church (the body of Christ) and the Denomination (Church of God) to which the congregation

(DGCG) belongs and that is the focus of this thesis. It also capitalises the word in the name of this local church: Divine Grace Church of God and most times abbreviates this to DGCG. Finally, when the term refers to a local congregation it is not capitalised.

Secondly, the study uses the terms ‘mission’ and ‘missions’ interchangeably to refer to the act of sending and the purpose for such sending: the sending of Christ by the Father, the sending of the Holy Spirit by God the Father and Christ, and the sending of the Church by Christ to bring about the salvation of sinners by the power of the gospel. I am aware that the term mission has been used by many to refer to biblical and theological perspectives on mission and missions to imply mission in a specific concrete sense (Peters 1972:11; Johnstone 1998:15; Smallman 2000:17; Wright 2010:25); and, further, such a distinction never existed in the past until the mid-1900s (Corwin, McGee and Moreau 2004:17). The second meaning has been captured in the term ‘missional’. This thesis comes to the view that a proper understanding of mission will lead to a missional approach and thus the two belong together – to speak of one is to speak of the other. Thus a biblical-theological perspective on mission would imply missions, i.e. that the church is to be mission-minded in its outlook and living. This means church structure, general and specific ministries, and every Christian must ultimately be about the work of missions. The church is intrinsically a sent church.

1.5 The Research Design and Methods

This mini-thesis employs Browning’s approach to theology as it is suited to achieving the above objectives. Both the research design and methods are based on Browning’s *strategic practical theology*, which has *four distinct steps* each of which answers a *question* (1991:55-74) (see below). It needs to be noted that with Browning (8-9) there are also *four movements*: descriptive theology; historical theology; systematic theology and strategic practical theology. The last movement of strategic practical theology constitutes answering the four questions noted above. But to achieve the answers to these four questions there is overlap with the other three movements. Browning’s approach therefore approximates an integrated or holistic approach to theology (Smith 2013:123). It is a comprehensive vision of doing theology that incorporates the other traditional

theological disciplines and thus “mirrors the vision of integrated theology” (Smith 2014:9).

1.5.1 The Research design

As already alluded to above, Browning’s four-step approach to strategic practical theology serves as my overall research design. However, 1.3.1 indicates that the approach to Browning’s movements will be from evangelical convictions. The four steps or questions constitute the chapters of my thesis with one exception. The first question, ‘*How do we understand the concrete situation in which we must act?*’ forms chapter two of the mini-thesis. The second and third questions combine to form chapter three: ‘*What should be our praxis in this concrete situation? How do we critically defend the norms of our praxis in this concrete situation?*’ The fourth question will form the fourth chapter: ‘*What means, strategies and rhetorics should we use in this concrete situation?*’ The mini-thesis thus comprises three main chapters and introduction and conclusion chapters. The following structure provides the chapter titles and explains the content of each chapter.

<i>Chapter 1: Introduction</i>	<i>This chapter introduces the research by providing the background, objectives, design, structure and methods and an overview of the argument or summary of the flow of thought.</i>
<i>Chapter 2: Interpreting the operative theology of missions at Divine Grace Church of God.</i>	<i>It covers Browning’s first question, namely, interpreting the present beliefs and praxis of DGCG in relation to missions and to see if they are harmonised.</i>
<i>Chapter 3: Determining and defending the normative operative theology of missions for Divine Grace Church of God.</i>	<i>It covers Browning’s second and third questions, namely, developing and defending a vision of a biblically faithful mission theology and missions praxis for DGCG in its ministry context.</i>
<i>Chapter 4: Developing communicative and strategic plans</i>	<i>It covers Browning’s fourth and final question, namely, formulating communicative and strategic</i>

<i>to improve the operative theology of missions at Divine Grace Church of God.</i>	<i>plans to improve and strengthen the theological understanding of missions and mission praxis at DGCG.</i>
<i>Chapter 5: Conclusion</i>	<i>This chapter concludes the research by reviewing the objectives, methods and findings.</i>

1.5.2 The Research Methods: steps, data and methods

Chapter 2: Interpreting the operative theology of missions at Divine Grace Church of God

This is where the answer is sought to Browning's first question. This chapter requires mostly data sourced from qualitative empirical research. This data was sourced by conducting a small-scale survey of the current state and context of the mission ministry in DGCG. The research used the interview method that involved the pastor and seven members of the said church to gather the needed information. This representative sample included leaders and members, adults and youths, both male and female. The study also considers the denomination and DGCG's official documents on theological and ethical convictions which are, or should be, imbedded in the DGCG's practices of missions. The information gathered is organised, analysed and interpreted to understand the concrete situation and its strengths and deficiencies with regard to mission praxis at DGCG. The IMRaD model (Smith 2014:14) provides the outline of this chapter: Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion.

Chapter 3: Developing and defending the normative operative theology of missions for Divine Grace Church of God

This is where the answer is sought to Browning's second and third questions. Chapter three relies heavily on literary data from biblical, historical and systematic perspectives (Browning's movements 2 and 3) to answer these questions. The summary of this investigation clarifies the normative understanding of missions. This provides the basis and standard for reflecting on and critiquing the results of chapter 2. This leads to the proposal of a theory of action to improve the

understanding and practices of missions at DGCG so that they are biblically faithful and culturally relevant. That theory of praxis is then defended.

Chapter 4: Developing communicative and strategic plans to improve the operative theology of missions at Divine Grace Church of God

The fourth chapter proposes communicative and strategic plans to gain acceptance and implementation of the new and more faithful mission praxis. The goal of this chapter is “to communicate specific recommendations for congregational ministries” (Smith 2013:21). This is the final phase of Browning’s strategic practical theology – the answer to his fourth question.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This is the final and concluding chapter of my thesis. It shows how my work has fulfilled what I set out to do as described in the introduction. It reviews the objectives to show how the study has fulfilled them, traces the argument of the thesis, and states the results of my investigation and their importance and implications. It also notes the limitations of the thesis and makes recommendations for further research.

1.6 Overview of the Argument

This section presents a summary of the flow of thought through the chapters that constitute the body of the thesis. The chapters are clearly logically connected and achieve the objective of the research.

Chapter two begins with my initial attempt to tentatively determine if DGCG has been faithful to the denominational vision of holistic kingdom missions. My personal analysis shows that DGCG’s vision and the undertakings of its various ministries, especially holistic missions, in a needy context do not match up to the denominational vision. This initial conclusion is then subjected to a more detailed empirical study that employs the method of interviews to source the required data. Analysis and interpretation of the data lead to the conclusion concerning the strengths and weaknesses of DGCG regarding its operative theology in relation to missions. This chapter deals with Browning’s first question.

The next logical phase of the thesis is presented in chapter 3. The conclusions in chapter 2 necessitate a fresh look at a normative perspective on missions from

biblical and theological perspectives for two reasons. The first reason is to be able to critically assess the denomination's mission vision and mission statements and elaboration of them. The second one is to provide a more detailed normative understanding of, and praxis, of missions for DGCG. DGCG's high view of Scripture and its evangelical beliefs requires that any mission praxis needs to be justified from a critical biblical reflection on the subject. This normative understanding of mission is achieved by drawing together biblical, historical and systematic theological perspectives. These theological imperatives are then integrated with DGCG's official and actual practice of missions and ministry context to form the preferred praxis of missions for this church. This preferred praxis of holistic kingdom mission is then defended (cf. Browning's third question) as the scripturally most faithful mission praxis in the life and ministry context of DGCG. This chapter thus covers answering Browning's questions 2 and 3 of his strategic practical theology.

The next chapter (chapter 4) considers how to effectively communicate the new theory of praxis. It also produces a detailed strategic structural plan to achieve and maintain this new mission praxis at DGCG. The communicative process is one that uses principles of ethical communication that embraces dialogue and other rational factors in order to achieve mutual understanding and acceptance of the preferred situation and fine adjustments where clearly required. The key stakeholders in this process are the pastor, the church council, other leaders and significant members. The process begins with reflection on the current situation of missions and its shortcomings at DGCG (cf. chapter 2) and sharing of the new vision of missions for DGCG (cf. chapter 3) and ethically defensible discussion to gain a final acceptable version. The process ends with sharing the plan to effect the new praxis and also gaining its acceptance.

Chapter 2:

Interpreting the operative theology with reference to Missions in Divine Grace Church of God

2.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the first step in Browning's strategic practical theology by answering the question, "How do we understand the concrete situation in which we must act?" (1991:55). The concrete situation in the context of this thesis refers to the ministry of missions in Divine Grace Church of God. In answering this question, the chapter fulfils one of the three secondary objectives of this study: describing the operative theology of DGCG with respect to the ministry of missions. This sub-objective thus fulfils one aspect of the primary objective of the thesis. The primary objective as stated in the first chapter is 'Formulating a theologically-informed communicative and strategic plan to ensure that the praxis of DGCG with respect to missions is faithful to God and optimally relevant to its ministry context'.

The research on the concrete situation begins with the presentation of essential background information gained through my observation and literary research. It first deals with the official position of the Church of God (as a denomination) on missions before considering the local situation. Further, it considers other relevant literary materials to help understand the ministry context better. The research then continues with a description of the empirical study that gathers relevant data concerning the existing situation of missions in the Church under scrutiny. The research is primarily qualitative though it also incorporates relevant quantitative to understand the situation better. The primary tool of research used is the personal interview.

Next, the results obtained from the research are summarily presented. Finally, the results of the research are discussed and interpreted in order to determine the existing beliefs and practices of missions in DGCG. This situational analysis of the church is important as "actions reflect beliefs and beliefs inform actions" (Smith 2014:13). This chapter employs the IMRaD model.

2.2 Background Information

This section has two parts. The first part presents the official position of the Church of God as a Denomination on mission(s) from the relevant literature. The second part considers the missional position of DGCG from my personal observations. I also consider some background data in relation to DGCG's church's history, theology, ministry context, vision and ministries to see if there have been changes with regards to missions vision and praxis. By comparing sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 one is enabled to note if there is an affinity between the denomination and DGCG in terms of mission beliefs and practices.

2.2.1 The official position of the Church of God on mission/s

The Church of God as a denomination started in 1886 with a strong mission orientation. "World evangelism has been the mission of the Church of God from the very beginning and each Congregation was primarily a mission effort itself" (Conn 1977:143). This focus on missions can be seen by the denominational mission statement: "Church of God World Missions is committed to obeying God by fulfilling Christ's Great Commission by proclaiming the Gospel through the power of the Holy Spirit to the unconverted everywhere and by discipling those Christ adds to His Kingdom (Matthew 28:19-20)" (Church of God World Missions Policy Manual 1984:9).

Several developments took place in relation to missions. For example, the first official foreign missionaries were Edmond and Rebecca Barr in 1909 (George 2010: 20); the first missions committee was appointed in 1913 to consider plans for foreign outreach and the foundational principle was for local churches to assume responsibility for the support of missions (p.26); in 1916 the Church started raising funds for home missions (Conn 1977:145). Interestingly, by the year 1920, the Church of God had every reason to rejoice as "it was reaching hungry souls with the message of the Bible; it had begun promising programs of home and foreign missions, of publications, education, and the care of orphans" (pp.153-154) and finally, the Missions Board was appointed in 1926 to look after the interests of World Missions on a regular basis (George 2010:27).

Besides the above mission, the Church of God also has a clear vision that arises from an understanding of what the sovereign God purposes to do for and through his Church. Part of the vision indicates that the Church of God is to be “a movement that evidences love and concern for the hurts and loneliness of the unsaved through aggressive evangelistic, discipling, and nurturing ministries” (Church of God General Assembly Minutes 2012:37). And the local church is recognised “as God’s primary force in the evangelization of the world and discipling of believers in the fulfilment of the Great Commission ... and that the Great Commission...cannot be fulfilled unless believers take the responsibility to be a personal witness” (pp.44,46). Further, the Church has the following core values in regard to fulfilling its mission and vision: “Prayer, Pentecostal Worship, World Evangelization, Church planting, leadership development, care and interdependence” (pp.39-40). Care as a core value has to do with obedience to Matthew 25 (p.40). It is about meeting physical needs. It calls upon the local church to “cultivate compassion and show mercy to the unloved, the undesirable, and the unreached of our society” (p.40).

From the above, one is able to see that the Church of God as a denomination has a clear kingdom mission and vision. It is a holistic mission as it intends to minister to the total person, soul and body. In order to accomplish its vision and mission, the Church has a clear strategy as reflected in the core values. It involves making converts through the preaching of the gospel, discipling believers, helping the needy and equipping workers for ministry. Since no one church can fulfil the mission alone, the Church of God recognises the need to work together with other churches of similar faith. The Holy Spirit is the power of mission and believers in a local church are God’s instruments in missions.

2.2.2 The missional position of the Divine Grace Church of God

a. The Church’s History

Divine Grace Church of God (formerly Chawama Church of God) has been in existence since 1983. Initially, it was known as Chawama Church of God. This Congregation had a mission orientation at its beginning. The pioneers engaged in both spiritual ministry (evangelism and discipleship) and social ministry (demonstrating God’s love through good deeds). Since its inception, this

Congregation has had four Pastors. The current one has been there since 1992. Though the Pastor and a few committed members do find time to occasionally engage in evangelism and social ministry and even facilitated the planting of a new church at John Laing in 2000, the primary focus seems to be on church-maintenance through visitation of members and other maintenance-oriented programmes.

b. The Church's Tradition

The DGCG faces a challenge of embracing various church traditions. This is especially so because people from different churches and with different traditions have joined this Congregation over the years. For example, the current church membership comprises of people from Pentecostal, Baptist and Apostolic Churches. This could be a source of doctrinal conflict if not properly handled. However, it is encouraging that the Pastor himself knows the Pentecostal tradition of the Church of God. The Church of God as a denomination falls under classical Pentecostalism, with roots in the Wesleyan and Holiness Movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Arrington 1992:13). Therefore, the Church of Godre-affirms this “holiness/Pentecostal tradition” (Church of God General Assembly Minutes, 2012:47). A critical understanding of beliefs and practices from the past is important as it informs current beliefs and practices. For example, faith in and commitment to historical distinctives are emphasised by the Church of God as a denomination: “May we forever be known as a Church that is Christian, holiness, Pentecostal, evangelistic, benevolent and discipling” (p.48). From my observation, it seems that all members in the Divine Grace local church have not yet fully grasped this tradition. This presents the Pastor with the task of educating believers.

c. The Church's Theology

The Divine Grace local church is expected to subscribe to the denominational doctrine. For the Church of God as a denomination, the Declaration of Faith (containing 14 Articles of Faith) represents an accurate and effective statement of its theological position (Church of God General Assembly Minutes, 2012:47). The official beliefs of the Church of God firstly recognise the verbal inspiration of the Bible and consider the Bible as the basis of all teachings. Secondly, there is belief

in the eternal existence of God in three persons. Thirdly, there is belief in the virgin birth of Jesus, his being Son of God and his death, burial, resurrection and ascension. The fourth article recognises the sinfulness of humankind and the need for repentance in order to receive the forgiveness of sins. Other articles deal with justification, regeneration, sanctification, holiness of life, baptism with the Holy Spirit and utterance of other tongues, water baptism by immersion, divine healing, the Lord's supper and feet washing, the second coming of Jesus, the bodily resurrection and the final judgment (p.21).

What makes the Church of God distinct from other Evangelicals is "the Pentecostal experience and understanding of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual Christian, and in the life of the Church as a body" (Arrington 1992:13). This is relevant to missions as it enables missionaries, evangelists and lay witnesses to recognise the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation and to depend on him for guidance and empowerment in missions. Sadly, most members in this Congregation are yet to grasp these articles of faith. Right theology is cardinal. And the Bible is its primary source. Smith is right to state that beliefs "can be reflected in words or in works" (2014:13). Systematic teaching of the Christian doctrine is thus an imperative.

d. Ministry Context

The context here refers to the community surrounding DGCG. This church draws its membership from various Communities (or Compounds): Chawama, Jack, John Howard, Kuomboka, Misisi, Kamwala and Libala. Most of the members come from Chawama and Jack. Though the total membership stands at 461 people, the attendance during Sunday worship service is below average. For example, on Sunday 14th June 2015, the attendance was 183. Understanding the ministry context of this church is cardinal. Smith's assertion needs to be noted here: "Practical theology must understand the context in which Christians act, if it is to help the church to mediate the Christian faith effectively" (2013:88).

An analysis of the DGCG's ministry context revealed a number of characteristics. The context is characterised by the existence of so many churches with different traditions: Pentecostal, Protestant, Roman Catholic and Indigenous (Traditional African Churches) and the prevalence of sin (so many vices) and the spreading of

AIDS in what has been a Christian nation since 1991 (Johnstone 1993:595-597; Mandryk 2010:893-895). For example, the Times of Zambia Newspaper reported that “a 29-year old man of Lusaka’s Chawama Township has been sentenced to 20 years imprisonment with hard labour for defiling his 12-year old step-daughter” (July 16, 2015:3). This is just one of the numerous evil acts.

Other characteristics of the ministry context include the lack of employment and the resultant social and economic challenges (Mandryk 2010:893; McClung 1991:21); demonic oppression and the reality of spiritual warfare (Yong 2007:56); dense population (Conn and Ortiz 2001:79); religious pluralism as seen by the presence of other faiths like witchcraft and sorcery (based on animism which strongly affects the lives and worldview of many Christians), Baha’i, Hindu, Islam and Jehovah’s Witnesses (Mandryk 2010:893) and African traditional religions (Light 2012:2; O’ Donovan 1996:193; Sills 2011:191). It is important to realise that “religious pluralism challenges Christianity’s exclusive claims” (Light 2012:7). There is a need for “new ways of communicating the Gospel in a world that has turned into a strongly pluralistic society” (Thomsen 2013:16).

There is also the influence of modernism and postmodernism like elsewhere across the globe (Blomberg 2010:2; Light 2012:7; McAvoy 2001:145) - it is a global community due to global communication (the influence of social media and technology) and travel (McClung 2000:17; Sutton 2001:112; Wilson 2005:107). People may come from different parts of the Country and even from other Countries, but having English as an official language and Bemba and Nyanja as local languages makes communication easier. The Bible translation and distribution by the Bible Society (Johnstone 1993:597) must be noted as it is a great contribution toward the fulfilment of the Great Commission.

e. The Church’s Vision

My preliminary research showed that the vision of the DGCG is to grow the church whereby members will be able to identify, develop and use their gifts and talents in the service of God in and outside of the church. This seems to be a good vision if fully understood and implemented, though it falls short of the denominational one. The vision of the denomination is more extensive than that of DGCG as it

“arises from an understanding of what the sovereign God purposes to do for and through His Church” (Church of God General Assembly Minutes, 2012:37).

f. The Church's Ministries

The following constitute the key ministries in DGCG: Intercession, Youth ministry, Women's ministry, Men's ministry, Children's ministry and Worship ministry. My preliminary research showed that some of the practices of these ministries somewhat reflect some of the denominational core values that I have already mentioned above. What is lacking, however, is the fact that these ministries have very little, if anything, to do with evangelism, discipleship, social service (an expression of love and linked with evangelism) and equipping people for service. These ministries are nevertheless important as they provide opportunities for various people groups within the church to participate in the life and ministry of the local church to some extent.

2.2.3 Summary

The material presented in section 2.2 was my initial attempt, based on the denomination's official documents and my observation of DGCG. This was to tentatively see if it has been faithful to the official denominational and its own position concerning missions, that is, whether it is committed to the clear and extensive kingdom vision and strategy of both. The fact that evangelisation and care are stated among the core values above, implies that missions for the Church of God as a denomination is holistic in nature. The denomination also spells out its Christian doctrines to inform the beliefs and practices of believers. One would have expected the DGCG to fully subscribe to the denominational vision, mission, doctrine and core values in order to be effective in its ministry and to impact its context holistically. But my preliminary research showed this not to be the case, *that is*, the vision of this local church does not match up to the denominational one. The occasional engagement in evangelism and social ministry does not do justice to a context that presents so many opportunities for holistic mission. The fact that DGCG and its various ministries focus so much on the maintenance of church life is a clear sign that a kingdom vision of mission is lacking. It seems there hasn't been a deliberate effort to seriously reflect on the purpose for the existence of the church and to systematically teach Christian

doctrine. As a result, both beliefs about and practices of missions have been affected. This initial conclusion was further tested in a more detailed empirical research presented in section 2.3.

2.3 Methods used in the empirical study

The preceding section has provided background data that has helped to provide an initial picture of the church's operative theology regarding missions. This section describes the methods which were used in the empirical research, why those methods were used and how the study was carried out. In order to achieve the objective of this study, I chose to present the research using the IMRaD model¹. Specifically, a small-scale qualitative empirical method was used for data collection. Though the empirical research was primarily qualitative, it did not ignore the quantitative research dimension. The primary method of getting qualitative data was through interviews. But some responses from these interviews provided quantitative data. Any statistical information that could be harvested regarding the role of DGCG local church in the different areas of promoting and facilitating missions was considered useful to the research.

There were several reasons why qualitative research was considered the most suitable with regard to the objective of this study. Firstly, it provides an adequate analysis of the existing situation. As Smith notes, "interviews permit a deeper and fuller understanding of the attitudes of the respondents" (2013:12). Secondly, the research, through the use of interviews, enables one to obtain more quality information. Even those responses that may not have been very clear or transparent at first, could still be clarified by asking further questions as the interview progressed. Besides, with the interviewee's permission, the researcher recorded each interview with a view to playing it back later so as to have an accurate record of the responses. It is thus clear that this method of research was the most suitable.

The study was done as follows. Firstly, I visited DGCG to have discussions with the Pastor and seek his permission for the survey to be conducted in the church.

¹The IMRaD model is a study approach to empirical research that involves sections covering Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion.

Consent was duly given. Secondly, a list of the questions was compiled for the interviews (see Appendix 1). Thirdly, the Pastor created an opportunity for me to select eight (8) interviewees, with the Pastor himself agreeing to be one of them. The method used to select the interviewees was representative sampling. This representative sample included leaders and members, men and women, young and old, and recent and older members. The selected interviewees had been under the ministry of the Pastor for different lengths of time, with one year as the least and thirty-two years as the longest. The combined answers would thus provide an accurate picture concerning the beliefs and practices of missions in the DGCG.

Dates for interviews were set and time was allotted for each interview. The interviewees were privileged to have a look at the semi-structured interview questions before the actual interview. This was done to enable them to prepare to make adequate responses during the actual interview. The interviewees were guaranteed complete anonymity and confidentiality. They were also humbly asked to be as sincere and honest as they could in their responses in order for the outcome to be relevant and thus beneficial to the research.

The interviews were conducted at DGCG during June and July 2015. Each interviewee was met personally and privately. Whenever the interview was on, I made sure that the responses were carefully noted, in addition to recording the interview. At the end of each interview, I repeated my notes to confirm their accuracy. Then the gathered data (recording and my written notes) was organised, analysed and interpreted (see below). Analysis and discussion of the data ensured that accurate interpretations of the responses were achieved. The interpretation of the data led to drawing conclusions about the beliefs and practices of the church in relation to missions. This enabled me to gain further insight into the operative theology in the church regarding missions.

The interview questions were organised according to categories in order to make the analysis of the data somewhat easier. The first category had to do with the purpose of the church and its core values. The second category was on church growth and had seventeen questions. The third category was on the passion and participation of believers in evangelism. The fourth category was on motivations

for evangelism. The fifth category covered methods being utilised in evangelism. The sixth category dealt with sending and supporting official missionaries by the DGCG. The last category was about spreading of kingdom values in society through life, words and deeds by Christians in DGCG.

The questions used in the interviews were designed to glean vital data that would permit a better understanding of the operative theology in the church regarding missions. They served as a tool and springboard to adequately or deeply probe the church's beliefs and practices of missions. Though not all members of the church could be interviewed, the representative sample was considered adequate for providing a fair picture of the church's understanding and practice of its missionary purpose. The next section presents the interview results.

2.4 Results of the empirical study

This section presents the responses of the respondents. Each question is listed with a summary of how the interviewees answered it.

2.4.1 Purpose of the Church and core values

The first question was: *Does the church have a clear purpose for its existence? If the answer to this question is yes, what is that purpose and why does the church have it?* All the interviewees responded in the affirmative. They considered the purpose of their church as going out with the Gospel to bring people to Christ, from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. The reasons advanced were obedience to the will of God or Christ's command, to depopulate hell and populate heaven and help people to know God. When asked if all members understood the church's purpose, the responses were that less than ten percent of the membership had this understanding. When asked why so few members understood the purpose, the response was that people were not adequately taught about the church's purpose.

The second question was: *What are the core values of the church with regard to the church's mission and vision?* All the respondents considered the regular gathering of believers to worship God, prayer and visitation as the core values.

Only the first and the fifth respondents went further by regarding evangelising the lost and showing loving care to the needy as other core values.

2.4.2 Church Growth

The third question required stating the *numerical growth status* of this particular local church and the fourth one sought the *causes of such a situation*. All the respondents, except the fifth and the sixth, considered the growth status of the church as insignificant. The fifth respondent considered it stagnant and the sixth indicated rapid growth. The insignificant growth was due to lack of evangelism and care for new people who come to join the church. It's prayer that has helped to bring about this marginal growth. The reasons given for stagnation were failure to assimilate new comers into church membership and people's tendency to move from one church to another. The respondent who saw rapid growth considered the love that leaders and the church show to people as the cause. There was clearly some inconsistency in the results. Since only one claimed there was rapid growth, it can be assumed that this was an exaggerated assessment.

The fifth and sixth questions were: *In what way(s) are people mostly added to your church and how often are those being saved added?* Seven respondents considered conversion as the means by which people were added to their church, though the seventh also regarded biological growth as another means. The rate at which those who were being saved joined the church varied. Four respondents indicated weekly, one respondent indicated monthly and two indicated rarely. The second respondent just indicated monthly additions by biological growth.

The seventh question was: *What is the church doing or not doing that could cause the above situation?* The four respondents who indicated weekly conversions and the one who indicated monthly conversions attributed such conversions to invitations extended to people weekly and monthly to attend prayer meetings, where people have an opportunity to hear and respond to the word of God. The two respondents who indicated that conversions occurred rarely attributed such a situation to insufficient evangelism. And the second respondent who just considered monthly biological growth saw the lack of evangelism, failure to care for new people, and concentration on church maintenance as the causes.

The eighth question was: *Is the church growing spiritually, and if it is growing what are the indicators of such growth and what could be the causes?* All the respondents affirmed that there was spiritual growth, though minimal. This spiritual growth could be seen through an increase in people's commitment to church programmes during the week and on Sunday, an improvement in giving of offerings and tithes as an expression of obedience to God's word, changing of people's lives, unity among believers and identification and development of spiritual gifts. The average weekly offerings stood at about K300 (three hundred kwacha) and 30% of the total membership give tithes monthly. This spiritual growth could be attributed to the strengthening of the believers through the preaching and teaching ministry of the Pastor and his leaders.

The next two questions are closely related. The ninth question sought to know *how this church was handling new converts* and the tenth one sought to establish *how church leaders were helping believers to mature in Christ*. All the interviewees indicated that the church was visiting new converts to encourage and introduce them to their Cell Group leaders and take them through the New Converts and Baptism Classes. Thereafter, these converts are baptised in water by immersion and then accepted into church membership. The responses to the tenth question were that leaders helped believers to mature in Christ by encouraging them to attend Cell Groups, Bible Study during the week, Prayer meetings, Sunday Bible Study and the Main Worship Service every Sunday. They also encouraged them to develop a personal devotional life and to conduct a family altar every evening. When asked if all members were committed to the various church programmes, the responses were that most people attended the Main Sunday Worship Service. The attendance during Sunday Bible Study, Cell Group Bible Study and Prayer meetings was usually less than fifty percent of the average Sunday church attendance of two hundred people. Others either came late or did not attend because of personal commitments. When asked if the church had any written curriculum for Christian Education, the response from all interviewees was No. Any teaching conducted was randomly done and there was no consistency.

The eleventh question (in three subordinate questions) sought to know *how the church was addressing challenges of syncretism to ensure that the spiritual*

development of believers was not hindered: (a) What kind of Christians does your church aim to produce? (b) How does your church strive to produce such Christians? (c) In what ways do Christians reflect the lordship of Jesus over their lives? The responses were that this church strived to produce Christians who know God and his Word and were maturing in their faith in Christ. The church strived to produce such Christians by grounding them in the Word of God so that their faith and conduct could be shaped by the truth. The Christians were taught to reflect the lordship of Jesus over their lives by living obedient and godly lives and treating others with brotherly love. When further asked if the teaching was effective and if all believers were living obedient and godly lives, all the respondents said the teaching was not very effective as the number of believers who seemed to be obedient and godly was less than thirty percent of the total church membership of four hundred and sixty-one people.

The twelfth and thirteenth questions were: *How do believers demonstrate their love for God and their love for one another?* All the respondents indicated that believers demonstrated their love for God by being obedient to his Word, reaching out to the lost with the Gospel and helping the needy. Furthermore, love was demonstrated through having fellowship with one another, encouraging and praying for one another, and visiting and helping those in need. Asked if all members were obedient and demonstrated their love for one another, the responses from all Interviewees were that the number of believers who were obedient and demonstrated their love for one another was marginal when compared to the total membership.

The fourteenth question (with subordinate questions) was: *What avenues does your church use to conduct Bible Study? (a) Are most members committed to Bible study? (b) If they are, what makes them committed to Bible study? (c) If they are not committed, why?* The responses showed that DGCG conducted Bible Study through Sunday School Bible Study, Cell Groups, Family Training Hour, Women's Fellowship, Men's Fellowship and Youth Fellowship. The responses to the first sub-question indicated that four interviewees disagreed that all members were committed to Bible Study, while four agreed. One of the key leaders was among those who disagreed. Those who saw commitment advanced the following reasons: The topics for Bible Study were interesting, the teacher handled the

teachings well, and people enjoyed the teaching and desired to learn more. Others had no commitment to Bible Study because of lacking interest, not seeing the value of the Word of God, being complacent and familiar with the Word of God and being more committed to their own work than to God's work. This lack of commitment to Bible study could further be affirmed by the fact that only about twenty-five percent out of the average Sunday main worship service attendance of about two hundred people managed to participate.

The fifteenth question (with subordinate questions) was: *Are most members committed to church fellowship? (a) If they are, what makes them committed? (b) If they are not, why?* All the Interviewees responded in the affirmative to the primary question. Various reasons for people's commitment to church fellowship were advanced. For some, their commitment was due to an interest in programmes that went on during fellowship: singing, dancing and preaching. When asked what made preaching interesting, the response from all was that it dealt mostly with God's blessings, especially material and financial prosperity. A few also indicated the edification or strengthening of one another's faith.

Further, when asked if all members were committed to all other fellowships apart from the Sunday Worship Service, the response from all was dissenting. The attendance during weekly fellowships (mid-week service, Cell Groups, Men's Fellowship and Women's fellowship) was poor. I personally witnessed one mid-week service conducted on a Wednesday where the attendance was less than thirty people. The sixteenth question and its subordinate questions were: *Are most members committed to prayer? (a) If they are, what makes them committed? (b) If they are not, why?* All the Interviewees, except one, responded in the affirmative to the primary question and the reasons advanced for commitment were the testimonies of answered prayer and the desire to seek God's help in their personal and family needs. One respondent (the fifth one) disagreed and saw lack of interest in prayer by most members as the reason. Most of the members were busy with their own work whenever prayer meetings were being conducted.

The seventeenth and eighteenth questions were: *What are the key ministries in your church and why do you have them and how effective are they?* All the Interviewees mentioned the following ministries: Intercession, Women's ministry,

Men's ministry, Youth ministry, Children's ministry and Music ministry. These ministries presented an opportunity for believers to identify and use their spiritual gifts and talents to serve one another, meet the spiritual and physical needs of the church and thereby enhance the growth of the church. Though all these ministries were functional, they were not very effective. The effectiveness of the Women's ministry, Men's ministry and Children's ministry was seen as quite minimal while that of the Music, Intercession and Youth ministries was slightly better. Evangelism and Discipleship ministries were not mentioned.

The nineteenth question and its subordinate questions were: *How does the leadership help members to discover and use their spiritual gifts to serve God in the church? (a) Are most members able to use their gifts to serve God and so contribute to the growth of the church? (b) If not, why?* All the Interviewees indicated that the leadership helped members to identify and use their gifts by teaching them on spiritual gifts and how these gifts could be received and allowed to function, and they created opportunities for them to participate in various ministries. But when it comes to the use of gifts, very few members were using their spiritual gifts in the service of God and his people. According to the responses, this scenario had contributed to insufficient workers in the church. The result was that the Pastor carried most of the burden of ministry alone.

2.4.3 Passion and Participation of members in Evangelism

The twentieth question and its subordinate questions were: *Does your church have a passion to win non-Christians to Christ? (a) If yes, how is that passion expressed? (b) If yes, what is its basis? (c) If no, why?* Seven Respondents answered the primary question in the affirmative, though the passion they saw was shared by only a few leaders and members. Only one Interviewee disagreed that the church had a passion to win non-Christians. According to those who answered in the affirmative, the passion was expressed by always talking about winning the lost, the Pastor and some Youths making short mission trips to some rural places once in a while to preach the Gospel and help the needy, the Pastor and an Inter-denominational Evangelistic Team conducting open-air meetings in surrounding Communities, and inviting unbelievers to attend overnight prayer meetings whereby they are accorded an opportunity to hear and respond to the

Word of God. While the Interviewee who disagreed did not see the translation of passion into any meaningful and well-coordinated outreach ministry. As far as she was concerned, passion for the lost could only be seen in the Pastor who always did his best to encourage others to be involved. Those who saw the passion considered obedience to Christ's command to make disciples, love for the lost, and the desire to see as many people as possible turn to Jesus for salvation as the basis.

The next question with its subordinate questions was: *Does your church have a serious evangelistic outreach programme? (a) If yes, who participate in that programme? (b) If yes, whom do you reach out to? (c) Where is outreach done? (d) When is outreach done?* All the Interviewees indicated that their church did not have a serious evangelistic outreach programme that involved all members. This, however, did not mean that there was completely no evangelistic activity. The Pastor and some youths (about 25 to 30) did evangelise occasionally to whoever they got into contact with in surrounding communities.

Further, *if a few members in this church are evangelistic (as above): (a) what message do they share? (b) Why is that message shared? (c) What methods do they use? (d) How is having the Bible in the respondent's language valuable?* All the Interviewees indicated that the message was about the love of God through the death of Jesus Christ. That message was shared so that people could receive Jesus as Saviour and experience a new life in him. Further asked if all the members fully understood what the Gospel was, the response from all was No. The methods in use were open-air meetings, Family invitations, street evangelism and giving out gospel tracts and also pastoral evangelistic preaching in church on Sundays. Having the Bible in the language of the respondents was considered valuable as it made it easier for people to interpret and understand the word of God in their own language.

The twenty-third question was directed at each interviewee in his/her personal capacity: *Since you became a member of this church, have you ever led any person to Jesus Christ as his/her personal Saviour and Lord? (a) If yes, when and how did you do it? (b) If no, why?* Six Interviewees agreed that they had led someone to Christ since becoming members of this church and two disagreed.

Though not all the six remembered when they did it, they still recalled having invited a friend or a relative to church or having testified to the love of God to someone in need of God's help. Those who had never done it before held the assumption that at least everyone belonged to one church or another or has had an opportunity to hear the gospel somewhere. This assumption was backed by the belief that since Zambia has been a Christian nation from 1991 and since so many International Evangelists have been here several times, it is likely that all have heard the Gospel.

2.4.4 Motivations for Evangelism

The next three questions were: *In what ways does the church leadership motivate members to win others to Christ and how often does the Pulpit ministry challenge believers to win the lost and do church leaders show genuine concern for the lost in the surrounding community and how?* The responses were that leaders motivated members by finding time to talk with them about the value of winning the lost and the Pastor and a few others motivated members by being an example of witnessing themselves once in a while. On the use of the Pulpit to challenge members to be soul-winners, the response by all Interviewees was that not all who were given an opportunity to preach used the pulpit for that purpose. But the Pastor often exhorted believers to reach out and invite unsaved family members, neighbours and friends to attend overnight prayer meetings and the main Sunday Service.

The twenty-seventh question was: *Why should you and all other church members and leaders reach out to non-Christians?* Several responses were noted. Three considered fulfilling the Great Commission and showing obedience to God as the reasons. Two indicated love for the lost and the hurting as a reason. Others regarded reaching out to non-Christians as the duty of every Christian and failure to do so was seen as abandoning the purpose for which Christians exist on earth.

2.4.5 Methods in Evangelism

The twenty-eighth question was: *Does your church conduct training programmes to equip members to win others to Christ? (a) If yes, how is it done? (b) How effective is it? (c) If no, why?* Two of the Interviewees consented while six

dissented. Those who consented saw training as something that was done through occasional seminars for leaders. These leaders were then expected to train others. But the training was not as effective as it ought to be. The reason was that very few leaders showed commitment. The dissenting group gave negligence and not seeing the value of training as the reasons for the lack of training programmes. However, the Pastor indicated the need to develop serious training to enable members to do ministry holistically.

The next question was: *Does your church have an established Prayer and Intercession Ministry? (a) If yes, does it involve all members? (b) When are prayer and Intercession conducted? (c) What are the key prayer items? (d) How much intercession is done for the lost, missionaries and the mission field?* All Interviewees answered the primary question in the affirmative. Even if the Prayer ministry was meant for all members, the number of those who attended regularly was less than fifty percent of the average Sunday church attendance. Prayer and Intercession were done every Tuesday and Friday in the evening. There were also fasting and overnight prayers at least once every month. The key prayer items comprised the following: the numerical and spiritual growth of the church, healing and deliverance for the sick and the oppressed, salvation of the lost, and the peace of the nation. A lot of intercession was done for the lost in the surrounding community, but very little was done for the Missionaries and the mission field at large.

The thirty-first question was: *What evangelistic methods are more appropriate in your context and why?* This went together with the next question: *Do these evangelistic methods reflect a high view of Scripture, sin, the role of the Holy Spirit and the new birth?* The Interviewees considered the following methods as appropriate: door-to-door evangelism, street evangelism and open-air meetings. These methods were regarded as the most suitable because they were seen as the most commonly and easily used in the context in question and the responses were usually good. These methods, however, could reflect a high view of Scripture, sin, the role of the Holy Spirit and the new birth in conversion when used by the mature believers who know the word of God. It was noted that most of the believers did not participate in evangelism and the few that did still needed

help for them to have a high view of Scripture, sin, the role of the Holy Spirit and the new birth in conversion.

2.4.6 Sending and Supporting Official Missionaries

The thirty-third question was: *Does your church send messengers to other places to plant new churches? (a) If yes, to what places have you ever sent some? (b) If yes, what are the qualifications of those who are sent? (c) How are these messengers supported? (d) If no messengers are sent, why?* Six Interviewees consented that the church did send missionaries to plant new churches while two dissented. Those who agreed mentioned the church at John Laing as one that was started by members from DGCG in 2000. Thereafter, a trained Pastor was sent from this sending church to go and offer pastoral care. But this sending lacked formal financial and material support. This meant that the eight members who were the pioneers had to sacrifice their resources to support the work.

Since then, this daughter church has been working towards being indigenous, self-supporting and self-propagating without much support from the sending church. This answered question thirty-four: *If new churches are planted, are they helped to be indigenous, self-supporting and self-propagating?* Apart from facilitating the planting of the John Laing church, the Pastor and a few others occasionally conducted short mission trips to rural areas. The purpose of such trips was to preach the word of God and help the needy materially. Again, there was no formal financial support from the church coffers. Instead, it was those committed individuals who made the sacrifice to cover the cost of such trips.

2.4.7 Spreading Kingdom Values

The last four questions were meant *to establish how the church is spreading kingdom values in Society:*(35)*In what ways does your church show the love of God to the needy, the oppressed and the sick in the community and why is that love shown? (36) How do you and other Christians act in a responsible manner as citizens of your country? (37) In what ways do you and other Christians hinder moral decay in the society where you live and work? (38) In what ways do the lives of Christians witness to the society?* The responses to the thirty-fifth question were that the church showed the love of God to the needy, the oppressed and the

sick in the community by making some donations of foodstuffs to one of the Orphanages once in a while and inviting the oppressed and the sick to be prayed for in church during overnight prayer meetings. This was done to fulfil the command to love others as you love yourself. The responses to the thirty-sixth question were that Christians acted in a responsible manner as citizens of their country by participating in voting, paying taxes to the Government, respecting the authorities and the law of the land. A further question was asked: *In case of a conflict between loyalty to God and loyalty to the Political Authorities, what would be the decision of most of the believers?* All the eight respondents said most believers, except the mature and courageous ones, would incline to the Government.

The responses to the thirty-seventh question were that the Interviewees and other Christians hindered moral decay in the society by denouncing evil, preaching the word of God in order to bring as many people as possible to Jesus, and by living as models. When asked if all Christians did likewise, the answer from all Interviewees was dissenting. The responses to the last question were that the lives of Christians witnessed to the society by living lives that reflected the character of Christ, being examples of obedience to the word of God, and sharing the love of God through deeds of compassion. Asked if this situation applied to all Christians, the Interviewees dissented as they saw many Christians whose lives did not represent Christ at all.

The responses from the interviews presented here in section 2.4 have provided the required data to evaluate and clarify the real situation concerning the beliefs and practices of missions in DGCG. The next section conducts a discussion and interpretation of the data and draws conclusions concerning the operative theology of the DGCG in relation to missions.

2.5 Discussion of the results of the empirical study

This section analyses the data gathered from the interviews and discusses the most noticeable points in order to gain a better understanding of the operative theology (actual beliefs and practices) of the DGCG in relation to missions. The conclusions will determine whether the practice of missions reflects sound and

faithful beliefs or not. The responses have been organised according to distinct categories which are the same as in the preceding section.

2.5.1 Purpose of the Church and core values

From the responses on the purpose of the church and core values, one is able to see that DGCG has an idea concerning the purpose for its existence, though it is not conclusive. Sharing the gospel with the lost alone does not exhaust the Great Commission. Besides, when one considers the core values of the church under scrutiny, the evangelistic and discipleship components are not emphasised. Only two (recent believers), out of the eight respondents included evangelism and service as core values. Discipleship or nurturing of believers to maturity in Christ is only reflected somewhat inadequately in practice through Bible Study Groups. Doing visitation at the expense of evangelism and discipleship is not healthy.

The number of members who understand the reason for the church's existence is two out of eight respondents (25%). This statistic shows why in practice there is no established outreach programme that involves all members and only a few youths occasionally evangelise with the Pastor (section 2.4.3). The figure then of those who understand the church's purpose in relation to the total church membership of four hundred and sixty-one could be quite insignificant. This shows that apparently more than seventy-five percent of the members do not truly understand the church's primary purpose. Failure to conduct adequate teaching on the matter at hand may be the main reason for such a scenario. It entails a deficient theory or lack of a concrete theory on the church's primary purpose. It may also reflect a lack of spirituality or a lack of concern for the state of the lost (eternal damnation).

2.5.2 Church Growth

This second category looks at both the numerical and spiritual growth of the church. The fact that DGCG has a membership of about 460 people may suggest rapid numerical growth. But when the age of the church is noted (32 years) and the densely populated community where the church is situated, such a growth is reasonable, but could have been greater. Occasional evangelism by the Pastor and a few members (section 2.4.3) and inviting people from the community to be

prayed for and be given an opportunity to hear and respond to the word of God will not easily translate into significant numerical growth. With serious and regular evangelism that involves all believers (though it could be argued that regular evangelism backed by godly lives does not always lead to conversion), this church may have grown to a much bigger membership.

Apart from steady numerical growth, there has also been some level of spiritual growth. This spiritual growth can be seen in an increase in people's commitment to church programmes, especially prayer, improvement in giving of offerings and tithes, transformation of some people's lives, growth in unity among believers, identification and the use of spiritual gifts by some believers. This level of spiritual growth is realised by visiting new converts and conducting classes for new converts and water baptism. Those who go through these classes are baptised and assimilated into church membership. All believers are encouraged to attend weekly fellowships, Sunday fellowship, Bible study and prayer meetings to be grounded in the word of God and be strengthened in their faith so that they may grow in their obedience to God's word. By so doing, they can experience spiritual development, live godly lives and overcome syncretism.

While the commitment and the improvement in some areas of Christian life alluded to above may be commendable, only a few members (less than 25% of the average Sunday attendance of 200 people indicated under section 2.4.2) are involved. The attendance during Sunday Worship Service and weekly prayer meetings may be encouraging at times, but it matters what motivates people to attend. Most people are inspired by singing and dancing, preaching on prosperity, and having their needs met by God. While some of these things may be acceptable or commendable, they may not help much in maturing believers spiritually. The fact that there is no developed Christian Education curriculum shows that maturing believers to attain the character of Christ is not a priority and thus discipleship is not taken seriously.

There are further pointers to a lack of commitment of believers and thus a lack of spiritual maturity. The average Sunday Worship attendance is less than fifty percent of the total church membership (majority not committed for various reasons); most members do not tithe; and most have not yet discovered their

spiritual gifts and thus fail to participate in ministry and this has resulted in having very few workers and the Pastor being overburdened. It is true that the programmes on Sunday and throughout the week total a high number and thus leaves very little or no spare time for believers to evangelise. But if the majority of the believers do not attend the various week meetings (as suggested by the low attendance), then they still have spare time to evangelise. Unfortunately, they do not seem to be using their spare time to make Christ known. If the Church of God as a Denomination considers “the local church as God’s primary force in the evangelization of the world and discipling of believers in the fulfilment of the Great Commission” (Church of God General Assembly Minutes, 2012:44), one would expect all believers to participate and the result would be significant growth. But the present situation shows that the majority of believers are not involved in evangelism and they lack Christian maturity due to lack of adequate systematic Christian teaching. Therefore, a lot needs to be done in terms of evangelism and discipleship in order for this congregation to experience significant numerical and spiritual growth.

2.5.3 Passion and Participation in Evangelism

Here seven out of the eight respondents indicated that passion to win the lost is found in the Pastor and a few members (about 25 to 30 members). Just knowing that the message they are called to share is about the love of God through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ is not enough. It appears even the implications of the Gospel are not fully grasped. What they know should inform what they do. Instead of all believers participating in going out, only a few are doing so and just occasionally. This situation points to a great lack of passion for evangelism.

It is sad that instead of going with the Gospel where the sinners are, the church has resorted to inviting them to come and be blessed. It seems that the believers in DGCG do not fully understand the secular society around them, created by a post-modern worldview, religious pluralism and the influence of fallen human cultures through globalization and the misuse or abuse of improved technology. A lack of passion for the lost and having no serious outreach ministry are a reflection of a deficient theory or a theory that does not match the official Church’s beliefs on

growing mature Christians who are evangelistic. It is the desire of the researcher that DGCG would find time to study, understand and practice these official beliefs.

2.5.4 Motivations for Evangelism

From the responses received, it is evident that leaders do not motivate church members adequately to evangelise. The fact that leaders focus so much on the visitation of church members instead of reaching out to the lost in the community shows that there is lack of genuine concern for the lost. Even if some believers in this church may appreciate some of the theological reasons for them to reach out, such reasons have not convinced them enough to take appropriate action. If sin, the “lostness” of man without Christ, and the promised second coming of Christ to consummate the kingdom and close the opportunity for further conversions could be clearly understood and applied, the present situation of lack of genuine concern would not be there, at least to the same degree. These convictions are part of the Church of God Articles of Faith (Church of God General Assembly Minutes, 2012:21).

2.5.5 Methods in Evangelism

This category on methods in evangelism shows that DGCG is aware of certain methods that are appropriate in its context. Prayer is really emphasised. Other methods used are home evangelism, street evangelism and open-air evangelism. While these may be good methods, their use needs to reflect a high view of Scripture, sin, the role of the Holy Spirit and the new birth in conversion. All genuine believers may use these and other methods, though doing so with a high view of these central Christian doctrines requires some level of maturity. It is very possible, and to be encouraged, for new converts and immature Christians to witness to unbelievers of the saving power of Jesus Christ.

However, DGCG needs to do everything possible to help address the dangers of syncretism so that the presentation of the complete Gospel is not hindered. If the complete Gospel is not correctly shared, no matter how good the methods, it may negatively affect the anticipated results and so lead to assimilating non-believers into the membership of the church. In a context where most people consider solving their financial or material problems as a priority instead of their spiritual

needs (2.2.4), this is likely to happen. Holistic ministry is needed to reveal the full love of God for humanity. This display of practical love is important, but if not at some point accompanied by the message of redemption from sin and God's wrath through Christ by repentance and faith it will stop short of evangelism.

2.5.6 Sending and Supporting Official Missionaries

Six out of eight respondents indicated that DGCG is involved in sending missionaries to preach the gospel and establish indigenous, self-supporting and self-propagating churches. While this may be true, one church planted about fifteen years ago does not fully validate such a claim. Besides, the team that planted the said church was not adequately supported financially and materially by the sending church. Further, this team of lay people was not adequately trained for the task. It is the conviction of the denomination that God-called church planters should be identified, trained and resourced if new life-giving churches are to be planted (Church of God General Assembly Minutes, 2012:39).

If the sending of missionaries to spread the gospel, plant and grow churches is truly a priority, it would have been reflected in the church budget. The Church of God, as a denomination, recognises church planting as an apostolic ministry for our day and expects the local church, state/regional offices and the International offices to focus their designated resources for planting new churches (Church of God General Assembly Minutes, 2012:39).

2.5.7 Spreading Kingdom Values

The few Christians in DGCG who demonstrate their love for the needy, the oppressed and the sick and also strive to live as responsible citizens in society and witness to society by living lives which reflect Christ's character, need to be commended. They do so because that is what the Bible teaches. However, one would expect all believers to impact society by their words, deeds of love and godly lives. This is what kingdom mission entails. But it is rarely seen in practice. This is not only the conclusion of my research. Three other individuals can be quoted to substantiate that the Church generally in Zambia is lacking in kingdom mission (taken from the Post Newspaper): The first one is Bishop John Mambo: "The Church has been compromised by the State" (August 28, 2015:7). The

second one is Rev. Willie Nyendwa: “Good people are to blame for the breakdown of good values in Society” (September 3, 2015:29). And the third one is a member of parliament: “It’s high time politicians, the Church and family brought the issue of child defilement into the mainstream debate” (Siliya 10 September, 2015:7).

These two Clergymen and one parliamentarian represent the few individuals who gather the courage to speak against the evils in society. When Christians who are perceived as good people fail to defend what they stand for by word, deed and life, the evil world around them has nowhere else to run to for help. Unfortunately, this is the scenario for the majority of Christians in Zambia. Certain issues that are morally wrong are treated as taboo in the traditional African culture. As such, most people avoid talking about such issues in public. Child defilement is one of the issues. If Christians allow aspects of traditional culture that are contrary to the gospel to influence them, their being true Disciples of Christ is compromised. Syncretistic tendencies need to be addressed by allowing the power of Christ’s Gospel to transform lives and culture.

Local churches, like the one under study, can do better, especially if what the denomination stands for is upheld and practised: “It should be our objective to fulfill our obligations to society by being good citizens, by correcting social injustices, and by protecting the sanctity of life” (Church of God General Assembly Minutes, 2012:31).

2.6 Summary and conclusion

This chapter has dealt with Browning’s first question: ‘How do we understand the concrete situation in which we must act?’ In this thesis, this entailed the objective of understanding the current beliefs and practices regarding missions in DGCG – in other words, of establishing the operative theology in this area of the Church’s life. The empirical research to achieve this goal is now summarized in this section with its conclusions.

The research had two components: (i) a preliminary research composed of a consideration of the doctrinal and missional position of the Church of God denomination and DGCG and based on my observations of DGCG’s mission beliefs and practices, and (ii) the presentation of qualitative research through the

conducting of interviews with eight DGCG members and presenting the research using the IMRaD model (Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion).

This chapter has led to a number of findings. DGCG needs to be commended for having programmes and structures that seem to cover every aspect of local church life and witness. Therefore, the church could be rated as a model church by many evangelical Pastors. However, this research has shown that while there are good programmes and structures, this church's operative theology, especially in missions, does not match up to the denomination's vision. A number of inadequacies or deficiencies were noted. There is lack of a well organised outreach ministry that involves all believers; no developed Christian Education curriculum; absence of a serious discipleship ministry to produce mature believers; no clear policy on selecting, sending and supporting of church planters; and inadequate involvement in compassionately addressing social and unjust ills in society. Further, there is little passion for the lost and insufficient motivation to win them; inadequate use of biblically appropriate and contextually relevant methods in evangelism that reflect a high view of Scripture, sin, the role of the Holy Spirit and the new birth in conversion; a lot of members who don't show Christian commitment; more concentration on ministries to maintain church life than to lead the Church to numerical growth; and a lack of serious instruction in the Christian life, witness and service.

It seems that what matters most is being a church that focuses on its internal life. It appears that the longer people are Christians the less evangelistic they become. If the impacting of society by Christian life, deed and word is insufficient or inadequate, it shows that DGCG is lacking in kingdom vision and mission. If beliefs inform actions and actions reflect beliefs, then one would not be wrong, in light of the above, to conclude that both the beliefs and practices of this church in relation to missions are inadequate, i.e. inadequate mission in practice implies that the beliefs of this local church are deficient or do not conform to those of the denomination.

The ministry context of DGCG is characterized, like at so many other churches, by religious pluralism, influence of modernism and postmodernism, the activity of demonic powers, moral decay, social and economic challenges, a common

language (Nyanja), and a high population. Therefore there is need for better discipleship in Christian life, witness and service and matched action in practice in order for this church to adequately, relevantly and faithfully carry out the kingdom mission. Those who have reasonable or full clarity concerning the denomination's missions vision and the biblical emphasis on evangelising and building new churches, but who have not responded appropriately, need a new spiritual dynamic to empower them for a more effective missions strategy and lifestyle.

The next chapter is concerned largely with gaining greater clarity on the normative perspective on missions as portrayed in Scripture – the next stage in the Browning model for practical theology, the blueprint for this thesis.

Chapter 3:

Determining and defending the normative theory of praxis for Missions for Divine Grace Church of God

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the second and third steps in Browning's strategic practical theology by answering two questions: (1) What should be our praxis in this concrete situation? (2) How do we critically defend the norms of our praxis in this concrete situation? (1991:55-56). By answering these questions, the chapter will fulfil the second secondary objective of my mini-thesis: determining what faithful theory of praxis in relation to missions ought to look like for DGCG in its ministry context. The findings of the preceding chapter have shown the need for a more normative perspective of missions. Providing greater clarity on what a faithful theory and praxis of missions would entail for DGCG is thus needed.

The first section proposes a normative theological theory of missions to inform mission actions of DGCG church. This is achieved through obtaining biblical, historical and systematic theology perspectives on missions. The relevant systematic theology is built on biblical and historical views concerning missions

The biblical perspective brings to light the teaching of the Gospels on the life and ministry of Jesus in relation to God's mission and his sending of the disciples to make disciples of all nations. The passages considered as key to understanding this sending are Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:46-49, and John 20:21-23. The historical perspective focuses on key historical periods and individuals to draw on the past understanding and practice of missions by the Church. Since DGCG belongs to a denomination (Church of God World Missions), it is appropriate to also consider this denomination's past understanding and practice of missions.

The next section deduces from the different perspectives the normative theory of praxis for missions and its defence. Specifically it formulates a holistic theological theory of praxis to guide the practice of missions in a contextually relevant

manner at DGCG. It also defends the praxis by showing that it takes into account not only the normative understanding of missions, but is also relevant to the contemporary situation of the church and its ministry context and is in harmony with much of sociology's concerns for achieving a better society.

3.2 The Normative theological perspective on Missions

This section brings together some biblical teaching on missions, the historical understanding and practice of missions, and a systematic theology view of missions in order to form a holistic theory of praxis for mission by the local church today, and especially DGCG.

3.2.1 The Biblical perspective on missions²

This sub-section presents an analysis of key texts in the Gospels in relation to missions. Christ's mission in the Gospels is seen as a fulfilment of God's Old Testament promises. The Old Testament is thus "fundamental to the understanding of mission in the New" (Bosch 2011:17). Next, Christ's life and ministry in word and deed is set as a pattern or model for his disciples' and ultimately the Church's mission in the world. I view the biblical understanding of Mission as important. We must therefore "listen to the Bible in order to discover, little by little, what mission really is or ought to be" (Spindler 1995:127).

a. Jesus' Mission

The Gospels show how the life, death and resurrection of Jesus fulfilled Old Testament predictions about the Messiah's mission in the world. The Old Testament itself shows that mission was and remains God's idea. God is revealed as one whose deeds and programmes are the products of his own perfections (Platt 2001:46). These deeds or acts of God reflect his mission. Firstly, God created all things perfect for his own glory (Gen. 1; Isa. 43:7). This creator is one "through whom and for whom all things exist" (Carson, France, Motyer and Wenham 1994:59). God's desire was that everything must be under his dominion as the sovereign creator (Ross 2008:34). Secondly, God is seen as judge after mankind rebelled against him (Gen. 3). The result was that man's relationship to

²Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

God, the world, others and to himself was broken (Ashford 2011:10). Life was replaced by death, holiness by wickedness, and blessings by curses.

Thirdly, God made a gracious promise to redeem mankind through the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15) and later through Abram and his seed (Gen. 12:3; 22:18). Fourthly, God is seen as one whose final work is to restore all things (Isaiah 65:17). Webb rightly comments: "The new world will be history perfected and paradise regained..." (1996:245). God is thus seen sending people as a way of accomplishing his purposes. For example, Joseph and Moses were sent as agents of deliverance (Gen. 45:4-8; 50:20; Ex. 3:10-15). God also sent Prophets to proclaim his word, so as to make him and his will known (Isa. 6:1-8; Jer. 1:7; Jon.1: 2; 3:2) and Kings to represent him as the supreme ruler (1 Sam. 16:13; 2 Sam. 7: 12-16).

From these happenings, one is able to see that God's mission in the Old Testament is focused on divine revelation, human redemption and restoration of his reign over creation. These components of God's mission look forward to fulfilment through Jesus Christ (Lk. 24:44). It is Jesus as the promised Son of David (Isa. 9:6-7; cf. 2 Sam. 7:12-16) and suffering Servant (Isa. 52:13-53:13) who would reveal God and provide redemption for humankind and be King of peace, justice and righteousness forever (Grogan 1986:74).

Analysis of the Gospels reveals how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies concerning God's mission. The Gospels, firstly, show that Jesus came as a sent one to make God and his will known (Matt. 1:23; Lk. 4:18; Jn. 1:14,18; 3:34; 5:36; 6:38; 7:21; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:4). This "revelation in Jesus Christ is the final revelation" (Milne 1993:35). As God-man, Jesus was able to reveal the Father in character, word and deed (Matt. 1:23; Jn. 1:14,18; 3:34; 5:19-21; 7:16; 8:24, 28, 29, 58; 10:30; 14:6-11; 17:3-8).

Secondly, Jesus came to provide redemption for lost mankind (Mk. 10:45; Lk. 19:10; Jn. 1:29; 3:14-16). He fulfilled the redemptive promises made to Abram and his seed (Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Matt. 1:1) by providing salvation for all humankind through his death, burial and resurrection (Isa. 52:13-53:13; Matt. 1:21; 20:28; Mk. 10:45; Lk. 2:29-32; Jn. 1:29; 3:14-17; 12:38). Jesus' genealogy in Matthew (1:1-16) and Luke (3:23-38) has "the effect of identifying Jesus not merely with the

covenant people but with the whole human race” (Jeffrey 2012:64). The object of redemption was therefore all peoples, Jews and Gentiles (Lk. 2:30-32). He is the giver of eternal life to those who believe (Jn. 3:16, 36; 5:21; 6:40, 68; 10:28; 17:2).

Thirdly, Jesus came to establish the kingdom (reign) of God. He came as the long-awaited Messiah or Son of David (heir to David’s throne) to fulfil Old Testament promises (2 Sam. 7:12; Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1; Matt. 1:1). By his life, prayer, teaching (through parables – Matt. 13:3-52) and preaching of the good news of the kingdom, Christ inaugurated the kingdom of God (Matt4:1-11, 17, 21; 6:9-15; 12:28; Mk. 1:12, 15; Lk. 4:1, 18; 6:12, 17-18; 17:21). Being anointed by the Spirit of God (Lk. 3:22; 4:18), Jesus carried out his prophetic role (Deut. 18:18) of proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. This prophetic role overlaps with his role as Messiah since the ministry of deliverance for the oppressed is messianic in character (Barker and Kohlenberger III 1994:225-25). Jesus was clear about the purpose for his coming (Lk. 19:10, 21).

Jesus employed various methods to proclaim the kingdom: personal evangelism (Jn. 4:7-30), house evangelism (Lk. 6:29-32; 19:5-10) and mass evangelism (Matt.13:1-2). His ministry was holistic as he addressed spiritual, physical and social needs (Matt. 4:17; 8:14-17; 14:15-21; 15:32-39; Lk. 4:18-19). He preached, healed and fed the hungry. He had compassion for the needy (Matt. 9:36; Lk. 10:37; 15:1-2). He demonstrated the power of the kingdom of God by casting out devils (Matt. 12:28). Through miracles, Jesus displayed the work of God (Kruse 2004:345).

Further, Jesus called, trained, empowered and sent his disciples into the world (Matt. 4:18-22; 9:9; Mk. 1:16-20; 3:13-19; 16:15-18; Lk. 5:1-11; 6:12-6; Jn. 17:18). Their initial mission was to the Jews (Matt. 10:1-10; Mk. 6:7-13; Lk. 9:1-6). Then, after his resurrection, Jesus finally sent these Apostles, “commissioned representatives” (Keener 1993:143), to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:16-20; Mk. 16:15-18; Lk. 24:45-49; Jn. 20:21-23). Although the mission was initially given to the Apostles, the link between the Church and the keys of the kingdom of God (Matt. 16:18-19) may cause one to assume that the Church was here meant to be “the agency of kingdom authority on earth” (Turner 2008:405).

In summary, the characteristics seen in Jesus' mission as a model for the mission of his disciples and ultimately the Church are: (1) Jesus knew God as his sender and endeavoured to bring him glory and honour; (2) Jesus had an intimate relationship with God the sender and endeavoured to follow his example; (3) Jesus testified to the sender and represented him well in all situations (made the sender known); (4) Jesus knew the purpose for his being sent and did the will of the sender by doing his deeds and speaking his words (i.e. he provided eternal salvation, inaugurated God's kingdom by spreading the good news of the King's presence, accompanied by good deeds and miracles); and (5) he mobilised, empowered and sent his followers for the eschatological harvest.

b. The Mandate of the Church

My study of the Gospels and the key Great Commission texts (Matt. 28:18- 20; Mk. 16:15-18; Lk. 24:45-49; Jn. 20:21-23) have shown that Jesus, by his life and ministry, set a pattern for his disciples' mandate (Jn. 17:18). "Apart from the unique work of saving the world through his atoning death, all that Jesus was sent to do, he in turn sent his disciples to do. In brief, they were to carry on Jesus' ministry after his departure..." (Kruse 2004:345).

Examination of Matthew 28:18-20 and other Great Commission texts (Mk. 16:15-18; Lk. 24:45-49; Jn. 20:21-23) presents a number of ideas concerning the nature of the mandate. First, the mandate was issued by one who had been given universal authority by the Father after his resurrection (Matt. 28:18). "The inference, that Matthew 28:16-20 should trigger recollection of Daniel (7:13-14), is hard to resist, and the common affirmation, that the resurrection Lord has fulfilled or proleptically realised the promise of the son of man's vindication, commends itself" (Dale and Davies 1997:683). Jesus appeared here as one who exercises absolute supremacy throughout all heaven and earth and serves as the mediatorial King through whom all of God's authority is mediated (Wilkins 2004:951). "His resurrection proves his authority over any power that can possibly be imagined" (Boice 2001:647).

Second, it was this universal authority of Jesus that formed the basis of the universal mandate of the disciples (Matt. 28:19) and ultimately the Church (Hagner 1995:886). The word 'therefore' (v.19) connects the going of the disciples

with the authority of the sender. The universality of the mandate is affirmed elsewhere (all creation, Mk. 16:15; all nations, Lk. 24:47).

Third, the purpose of the disciples' going was to 'make disciples' (Matt. 28:19). John (17:18; 20:21) indicates Jesus' mission as the pattern for his disciples. The task in Mark was to preach the Gospel (16:15); in Luke 24:48 and Acts 1:8 it was to be witnesses to Christ's death and resurrection as the means of human salvation from the power of sin and death, with repentance and faith as adequate responses to that gospel (Mk. 16:16; Lk. 24:46-47), the benefits being forgiveness of sins, salvation and living a life of the kingdom (Matt. 5:13-16; Lk. 24:47; Jn. 20:23).

These disciples were commanded to make other disciples for Jesus (Matt. 28:19). A disciple was a learner or pupil, follower and believer (Hagner 1995:887; Malphurs 2011:89). The task was to make believers in Christ who would be perpetual learners and his obedient followers. Thus a disciple should be regarded as a believer who follows Christ obediently.

Fourth, the means of making such disciples was by going, baptizing and teaching believers (vv.19, 20). These participles, go, baptize and teach, take on an imperatival force because of the main verb (make disciples), which is a command (Hagner 1995:886).

Fulfilling the mandate, first of all, required going everywhere with the Gospel of Christ to win the lost (Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:47). It is sharing the gospel (evangelism) of the kingdom of God and its implications (Matt. 24:14) with all peoples everywhere (Lk. 24:47; Acts 1:8). Since "the Great commission is the counterpart of the great commandment to love God and neighbour (Matt. 22:37-40)" (Green 2000:322), the preaching of the Gospel needs to have social implications: having compassion and helping the needy, underprivileged and the oppressed (Lk. 4:18).

Second, the mandate required baptizing in water those who respond to the gospel positively by repentance and faith (Matt. 28:19b; Mk. 16:16). This baptism of believers in the Triune names was "a sign of their union and commitment to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (Hagner 1995:888). Through baptism, new disciples are initiated into the Church (Community/Family) for Christian nurture

(Turner 2008:690). Next, the baptized believers, having been initiated into the Church, were now to be taught all that Jesus commanded through his teaching and by his personal life (Matt. 28:20a). It unifies word and deed (Dale and Davies 1997:686). The teaching had to go beyond just doctrine for it required obedience (v.20; Jn. 14:15, 23; 15:10). It called for righteous behaviour through obedience. It was thus ethical-living as the salt and the light of the world (Matt. 5:3-16).

Finally, the disciples were to carry out this mandate effectively by relying on Christ's power (Matt. 28:18) and presence (v.20). Jesus' promise to send the Holy Spirit from the Father (Lk. 24:49; Jn. 14:16-18; 15:26; 16:7-11; Acts 1:8) to empower and guide the disciples in missions was thus important. Peterson rightly comments: "...it is the resurrected and ascended Jesus who continues to work through his earthly agents as they proclaim his Word and minister in the power of his Spirit" (2009:57). Being assured of Christ's continued presence (Emmanuel-God with us, Matt. 1:23) until the end of time when he would consummate the kingdom (Matt. 24:14,29-31; 28:20; Mk. 13:10,13,24-27; Lk. 21:25-28; Acts 1:11), served as a great motivation and it shows that the mandate was "not only for the original eleven disciples but also for their disciples and their disciples' disciples in perpetuity until Jesus returns" (Turner 2008:691).

The biblical analysis above has revealed the characteristics of the Commission Jesus gave to his disciples before his ascension. Firstly, mission belongs to God and it means a sending to make God and his will known, spreading his salvation everywhere and thus extending his kingdom, with the ultimate goal being the restoration of all things for his own glory at the end of time. Secondly, since Jesus' mission is the model for the Church's mission, what Jesus did (except his death) the believers ought to do by life, word and deed. These include preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God that focuses on Christ's life, suffering and resurrection as the message of salvation and accompanied with its social implications and the demonstration of the power of the kingdom through miracles.

Thirdly, the recipients of the Gospel should be all peoples of the world (the lost). And those who respond positively by repentance and faith need to be baptized in order to publicly show their commitment to the lordship of Jesus and be subjected to systematic teaching of the word of God so as to be obedient followers of Christ

who in return can reproduce themselves. Those who participate in the fulfilment of the mandate should be believers themselves, Spirit-filled and living a kingdom kind of life that reflects the character of Christ. The motivations for mission ministry need to be love for God and neighbour, Christ's continued presence through the Holy Spirit, and the anticipated end of time when Christ would return to judge and restore all things.

3.2.2 The Historical Perspective on missions

This section presents a summary of how the Church in the past interpreted and applied Scripture to their context with regard to missions. Since the Church has been multifaceted from the time of the great schism in 1054 (Gallatin 1990:259) and the development of Protestant denominations thereafter, it may not be possible to consider beliefs and practices of all denominations or all historical periods in relation to missions. Space limitation also limits the scope of this study.

First, mission was understood variedly. It was Christ-centred and involved the sending of Christ's followers to proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God, to invite all peoples to become Jesus' disciples and responsible members of his Church (Matt. 28:18-20) during the first three centuries (Corwin, McGee and Moreau 2004:94, 96; Engen 2010:12; Bosch 2011:347). It became Church-centred and its purpose was Church extension and the fortification of the emperor (Engen 2010:13) during the medieval period. Mission was holistic as seen by John Wesley, who was a preacher of the gospel and a prophet of social righteousness during the era of revivalism (Stott 1999:4), and the Moravians (the most dedicated Protestant missionaries in the whole of 18th century) (Noll 2012:268).

The nineteenth century as the 'Great Century' of Christian missions (Hesselgrave 1988:48) was influenced by William Carey's understanding of Matthew 28:18-20. This caused him to describe the Church's primary responsibility as foreign missions and the task at hand as taking the Gospel from the western world to the world of pagans (Noll 2012:270). It was "a four-fold mission that included evangelism, education, health and industrial training" (Mombo 2010:37). This was a time of denominationalism. It was also the colonial period and Christianity was now perceived as westernization – teaching new converts the culture and civilization of the missionaries (Engen 2010:15). While Carey's influence and

missionary undertakings need commendation, his understanding of the Church's primary responsibility as cross-cultural outreach does not fully represent the scope of mission as given by Jesus Christ to his disciples – all nations or peoples (Matt.28:19a; Acts 1:8). The scope of missions should always be the entire world. This calls for both local and foreign missions. And social undertakings, while important, should not be done at the expense of the gospel that saves people (Matt. 6:33; 25:34-40).

This pairing of evangelistic and social responsibilities (relief, development and social political activity) (Stott 1999:7) seems to have been the norm throughout the history of the Christian Church up to the beginning of the twentieth century. However, the situation during the first thirty or so years of the twentieth century changed among evangelicals. The evangelical fundamentalists emphasised bringing people to Christ and eternal salvation, while Liberals focused on creating a gospel-centred civilization and the benefits it could bring to all nations (Bosch 2011:303-304). Some evangelicals still continued with both social and evangelical ministries (Stott 1999:11). It was sad that later on, after the Second World War, mission became humanization through the efforts of Ecumenism (Engen 2010:19). For the Church of God as a Denomination in the USA, during the twentieth century (1916) mission was both home and foreign (Conn 1977:55) and it was holistic in nature as it was characterised by evangelism, planting churches, discipling believers, equipping workers for ministry and social concern (Conn 1977: 48, 49, 52, 53,151-152; George 2010:25).

Second, mission was practised variedly. During the first three centuries, Spirit-filled believers, leaders, itinerant evangelists and local church members participated in spreading the gospel through cell groups, open-air preaching, preaching in places of worship, new converts' instruction classes, personal witness or friendship evangelism (the most common), family influence, influence of Christian life-style (seen in such virtues as kindness-visitingthe sick and helping the needy, honesty and personal purity), personal witness of Christian martyrs, prayer, and use of Christian literature and the translation of the Scriptures from Greek into other languages to commend the Christian faith to pagans (Bosch 2011:347; Corwin et al. 2004:94,96; Engen 2010:12; Smith 2003:78-81).These

were appropriate methods of spreading the gospel, unlike the methods of war or force and mass baptisms used during the medieval period.

During the world-wide Protestant missions (19th century), Mission Societies were instrumental as a vehicle to carry the gospel (Corwin et al.2004:129). Carey as a missionary to India, with his friends, distributed literature, translated and published the Bible, exhibited spiritual zeal, and also engaged in open-air preaching of the gospel, doctrinal debates, training of native preachers and leaders, and participation in social reform, as their church-planting strategy (Stauffer 2000:301-302). While these methods were good as they were drawn from the Scriptures and adapted to the culture, the results they produced in terms of harvest were not significant.

For the denominational Church of God, initially “each Congregation was a primary mission effort itself “(Conn 1977:143). Later on the Missions Board became a structured methodology to spearhead world missions (George 2010:27); and indigenous people participated in home missions and official missionaries were sent to foreign missions (George 2010:21-23). With dependence upon the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, they spread the Full Gospel through prayer, evangelism by personal witnessing, preaching, revival meetings and teaching, planting and growing local churches, which later reproduced themselves (Conn 1977:13, 51, 71, 72, 73, 77, 85, 86, 88). What is known as the Full Gospel here refers to “the Christocentric confession of Pentecostal missiology – that the centre is Christ and that he holds all things together and that Jesus Christ is Saviour, sanctifier, Spirit baptizer, healer and coming King” (McClung 1999:48).

Finally, it is important to consider some of the motivations for missions in the past. The Early Christians were motivated by their belief in the imminent return of Jesus Christ (Corwin et al. 2004:95). They were also motivated by the desire to bring all persons of all classes (the majority being common folk) who struggled with spiritual emptiness to a saving relationship with God through Christ and to membership in a loving community of fellow believers (pp.94,98). Luther’s primary motivation in the Reformation period was the glory of God (McGoldrick 1998:19). A number of preachers from the Reformation forward were motivated by judgment and eternal punishment (Hauser Jr. 2000:136). Some of them are Jonathan

Edwards, George Whitefield and Charles Spurgeon. Though this idea of judgment still continued at the beginning of the twentieth century, emphasis shifted to the salvation of the individual as a motivation for missions (p.138). The Church of God had the following as its motives for missions: “a heavy passion for the lost souls, a sense of divine calling (inner compulsion), love for fellowman, a sense of obligation and the dynamic influence of the Holy Spirit” (Conn 1977:55,68,103,104). There have been impure motives as well, for example, civilization, colonization, cultural superiority, ecclesial power, denominationalism, asceticism, adventure and romantic ideals (Ott, Strauss and Tennent 2010:167-176).

In conclusion, one is able to see that there have been both continuity and discontinuity in relation to the understanding and practice of missions when compared to Christ’s view and practice of mission. What Christ said and did should be treated as the standard. That being the case, solid biblical understanding of mission in the past is one that considers God’s mission through Christ as the Church’s mission. It is a sending that is Christ-centred and its purpose being bringing the lost to salvation in Christ and discipling believers to become faithful followers of Christ and committed members of his Church who live as light and salt in the world. These Christians need to be driven by right motives in missions.

3.2.3 The Systematic Perspective

This systematic segment aims at forming theological imperatives or themes to guide mission practice in the ministry context of DGCG. It is here presented with the conviction that systematic theology seeks to grasp the total biblical picture (thus partially covered in 3.2.1) on a particular matter and in this case missions. It thus provides the origin, message, method, purpose, and power of missions (Platt 2001:43).

a. Mission is rooted in the triune God

Biblical mission must be understood as having its origin in the nature of God in eternity past (Eph. 1:3-14) as revealed by Scripture. Understanding mission thus requires understanding what scripture teaches about God’s nature, will and

purpose. Wright (2010:20) asserts: “there should be no mission of the Church carried on without deep theological roots in the soil of the Bible”. Jesus upheld the authority of the word of God (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; Jn. 17:6, 8, 14, 17). The Reformers called the Church back to the Bible (Atkinson 1990:370). One characteristic of God’s nature or heart in this case is love (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 1:4-5; 1 Jn. 4:7-12). Wright (2006:128, 129) writes, “Life itself, in all its fullness and eternity, lies in knowing God...the God of justice, compassion, holiness, truth, integrity, love, faithfulness and sovereign power”. It is from that nature of God that mission is derived. What God does is a reflection of who he is (Ex. 15:11-13; Lev. 10:3; 11:44; 1 Pet. 1:16; 1 Jn. 4:9).

God’s mission can be seen right from the Old Testament and through the New Testament in a unified way (Peters 1972:173; McClung 2000:23; Ashford 2011:6; Coleman 2011:37). Although the New Testament mandate and the theme ‘missions’ cannot be found under every rock in the Old Testament (Platt 2001:55), it still has its foundation there. The call of Abram and the promise to bless all nations through him and his seed (Gen. 12:3; 22:18) and the ultimate fulfilment of that promise through Christ (Gal. 3:16-17) affirms it. Since all the three persons of the God-head are participants in mission (Jn. 3:16; 15:13, 26; Eph. 1:3, 7, 13-14), it is right to consider mission as belonging to the Triune God (Pratt 2011:57).

b. The purpose of mission

The Church must fully understand the purpose of God’s mission and its ultimate goal. The word mission carries “the notion of sending and being sent” (Wright 2010:23). This “reflects the definition of the Latin root ‘mitto’, which means to send” (Whitfield 2011:20). It is a sending that proceeds from the plan and purpose of God (Greenway 1999:11). In this context, it is the sending of the Church that is Christ-centred (Matt. 28:18; Lk. 24:47; Acts 1:8) and its purpose being the salvation of mankind and the restoration of God’s eternal reign over everything (Rom. 8:16-25; 2 Cor. 4:17-18; Eph. 1:3-10; 2 Pet. 3:13, 15; Rev. 21:1). It is a call for the Church to participate in the reconciling love of God, who reaches out to a fallen world in Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit brings strangers and enemies into his new and abiding community (Armstrong 2010:153; Ryken 2003:133).

God's mission in relation to his human creation is holistic as it involves both spiritual and physical salvation. God required his covenant people (Israelites) to express their religion through spiritual outreach (helping to release people from the bondage of sin), social concern, and responding to oppression and injustice (Isa. 58:6-7). This social concern called for sharing of food, housing and clothes. The Israelites as God's redeemed people were expected to know their redeemer (God) and make him known by reflecting his character in Society (Ex. 19:4-6; Mic. 6:8). The holistic nature of God's mission is also seen in Jesus' earthly life (it reflected the reign of God), preaching of the gospel of the kingdom of God, healing of the sick, and feeding of the hungry (Matt. 9:1-8; 14:21; Lk. 4:18; 9:11; Jn. 1:18; 14:9-11). There are also examples in the early Church and in the ministry of Paul (Acts 3:6-26; 4:31-37; 6:1-7; 14:7-11; Gal. 6:1-2, 9-10; 1 Pet. 2:9-10). In short, God's purpose has both spiritual and social aspects.

Therefore, Penney's argument that medical missions and Christian orphanages should be seen as a means to an end (2001:30) does not fully represent Christ's perspective on missions. Good deeds on their own have a role to demonstrate genuine love for both non-believers and fellow-believers (Matt. 22:39; Lk. 10:25-37; Gal. 6:9-10; 1 Jn. 3:16f). Deliverance from demonic oppression and healing reflect God's purpose to bring restoration (Matt. 8:14-17). Even the redemption in Christ is one that looks forward to the restoration of all things—the bringing about of a new earth and a new heaven (Rom. 8:18-25; Eph. 1:7-10; 1 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1-4). However, biblical missions never divorces mercy ministries from evangelism.

Further, it is evident that a number of scholars or theologians have captured this holistic nature of God's purpose in what may be termed as the 'wider view' of mission. For example, Wright (2006:51, 532) employs a missional hermeneutic that is based on the belief that "the whole Bible renders to us the story of God's mission through God's people in their engagement with God's World for the sake of the whole of God's creation...reconciling the whole creation to God through Christ by the cross (Col. 1:20)". Mission is God's comprehensive commitment to every dimension of human life (p.280). Wright's analysis of the Old Testament highlights the fact that the mission of God brings "election, ethics and mission into a single syntactical and theological sequence located in the will, action and desire

of God” and thus describes God’s people as “a community shaped by his own ethical character, with specific attention to righteousness and justice in a world filled with oppression and injustice”. Similarly, Seibel (2010:57) presents the missional identity of the church in society as one that is seen in its “witness to God’s redemptive purposes for the world by manifesting an alternative social order” – living in the world as “a colony of heaven (Phil. 3:20) that embodies and upholds the culture of God’s reign”. Thus, Christians need to be determined to witness to the reign of God by serving as agents of justice and shalom within their communities – living and serving as missionaries in their neighbourhoods (p.56).

Next is Gregory (2016:157,158), who considers the life, death and resurrection of Christ as the means God used to defeat sin and the accompanying alienation and death and thus creating the church (or community) that “embodies the atonement in Society by being a reconciling community and offering a public and subversive witness against the powers, principalities and narratives that rival God’s kingdom”. In this mission of God (*missio Dei*) that seeks to restore the whole of creation (p.154), the Triune God must be recognised as the agent of mission and the church as God’s instrument in the continuing work of reconciliation; a witness to the final act of the drama of salvation – the consummation of God’s kingdom in the eschaton (p.157). As such, the church as an alternative community has a task to confront the economic, political and social realities that are being overturned by God’s reign (p.159). The church becomes an influence in society when it lives the gospel.

Others have also stressed the holistic nature of mission:(1) Walton (2012:543, 556) describes missions in Acts as a sending that is both initiated and empowered by the Triune God and involves witness to Jesus and the kingdom of God and speaking the truth (challenging sin and injustice) in encounters between believers and religious, civil and political powers; and (2) Kostenberger (1999:348, 357), who also supports the wider view, though he highlights the primacy of the verbal, intentional, purposeful proclamation of the gospel message.

Raiter (2005:11), however, takes a somewhat exclusive approach by considering mission as “God’s sending of his Son, his Spirit and his Servants for one unified salvific purpose: to proclaim the gospel so that Churches can be established and

be brought to maturity on the day of Christ". However, he still considers works of compassion in their own right as inherently good and pleasing in the sight of God (p.20). The primacy of gospel proclamation (evangelical missions) is also supported by Hesselgrave (2012:85) in his analysis of the Cape Town 2010 Commitment in contrast to Edinburgh 1910 where the stress is on ecumenical missions. It is clear from the above that the wider approach to God's mission in the world opens quite a big area and would require separate investigation in another thesis as space does not permit for this in this thesis.

This wider view of God's mission (but including the imperative to declare the gospel) strengthens the understanding of mission presented in this thesis. LeBlanc's (2014:154) assertion that "Scripture is clear that redemption through Jesus' work on the cross has implications far beyond the generally limited focus of the restoration of human beings alienated from their creator" is vital. Mission should therefore involve salvation and reconciliation of the lost to God through Christ, maturing believers to be obedient followers of Christ and committed members of his Church who reflect the reign of God through life, word and deed in the world (living as salt and light), while looking forward to the restoration of all things at the end of time. Its ultimate goal is God's glorification (Penney 2001:59; Platt 2001:46) (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14).

c. The Church as the instrument of mission

The mission of God must be the Church's mission and this must therefore define the purpose of the Church. By its nature then, the Church is missionary. The Church, by definition, "is a people of God who are created by the Spirit to live as a missionary community" (Gelder 2000:25). The Reformers considered the Church as a community of believers, an organism or living body of which each believer was a member (Kuiper 1996:167). The Church consists of people who are called out of the world through the gospel and regenerated, being made holy and empowered by the Spirit and sent back into the world to minister (Jn. 17:16-18; Eph. 1:13; 2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 3:5). Both official and lay missionaries are participants in missions (Acts 8:4-5; 10:39-48; 11:19-24; 13:2-4; 1 Cor. 9:1-14; Phil. 4:10:19).

d. The message of mission

The message of mission is exclusive. This message has to do with Christ's work of "redemption through his perfect life, his atoning death and his victorious resurrection (Isa. 53:3-6; Rom. 3:21-26; 4:25; 5:6-11)" (Pratt 2011:57). It is exclusive in the sense that Christ is the only means of salvation (Lk. 24:44-47; Acts 3:15; 4:12; 1 Cor. 2:4; 15:1-8). For Classical Pentecostals like the Church of God, this message of redemption is the Full Gospel. It is "the Christocentric confession of Pentecostal missiology – that the centre is Christ and that he holds all things together and that Jesus Christ is Saviour, sanctifier, Spirit baptizer, healer and coming King" (McClung 1999:48). "Without a message of redemption, mission quickly degenerates into socio-political activism and relief work..." (Smallman 2000:205). It is a message that delivers from the power of sin and death.

e. The objects of mission

The good news of the kingdom is meant for all peoples, Jews and Gentiles (Lk. 24:47; Rom. 1:16). It is "sinful men and women who are beneficiaries of the redeeming work of Christ through repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ, which are themselves gifts of God through the work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:18; Eph. 2:8-9)" (Pratt 2011:58). Jesus came for lost sinners (Mk. 2:17; Lk. 19:10). All human beings are sinners and have fallen short of God's glory; they cannot save themselves; God has provided salvation only through Christ (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Fallen people are slaves to sin (Rom. 6:17), under the wrath of God (Eph. 2:3) and spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-2). This state of fallen humanity calls for salvation and reconciliation to God and to one another (Eph. 2:5-9; 11-19). This salvation begins at regeneration, continues through sanctification and will end with glorification at the consummation of the kingdom (Jn. 3:3-5; Rom. 8:15-18, 23-25; Eph. 1:13-14; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:13-15; Titus 3:5-7). The basis of this salvation is grace (Eph. 2:8). It is a gift of God's mercy through Christ's sacrifice.

f. The appropriate and relevant sharing of the Gospel in the cultural context

The Gospel must be shared in a biblically appropriate and contextually relevant manner for sinners to understand it and appropriate its benefits. This was true of

Jesus who used different approaches when he ministered to Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman (Jn. 3:3-15; 4:7-26). Peter and Paul also fashioned their sermons according to a particular context (Acts 2:14-41; 10:34-43; 13:16-41; 17:22-31). Ashford (2011:120) is right to assert that proclamation of the Gospel and planting of Churches must be done faithfully (Biblical fidelity is imperative), meaningfully (in a way that is meaningful for the socio-cultural context) and dialogically (the gospel critiquing the culture in which it is embodied and proclaimed).

g. The methods of mission

The methods of mission must be biblically appropriate and culturally relevant. The methods of mission involve communicating the gospel (with healing and deliverance from demonic oppression), baptizing believers, prayer, planting and growing churches, whose members are well nurtured so that they can live for Christ and serve him as Lord by word and deed using their spiritual gifts and talents, both in the church and in the world (Matt. 4:23-25; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 4:43-44; 24:47; Acts 2:40-47; 8:4-8, 12:24; 13:5; 14:21-22; Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-11, 28-31; Gal. 5:22-26; Eph. 4:7, 11-16). A look at Paul's model for the Church's mission (Acts 14:21-23) includes evangelizing the unsaved, edifying the believers and establishing local churches (Beals 1988:10-11). Taking Jesus as the model and the practice in the early Church, one is able to perceive what may be the most suitable methods. Various methods of sharing the gospel can be seen in Acts (Greenway 1999:51) and changes in the world bring on board appropriate contemporary methods in missions. These should be driven by pure motives as may be seen in the ministry of Jesus and the Apostle Paul.

h. The power for mission

The Holy Spirit is the power of missions. This could be seen in the ministry of Jesus as well as the early Church (Matt. 3:16; 4:1; 12:28; Lk. 24:49; Jn. 14:16-18; 16:7-11; Acts 1:8; 2:4; 4:31; 8:12-17; 10:45; 13:2-3; 16:6; 1 Cor. 2:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:7-11; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 1:13-14; 5:18; 6:18; 2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 3:5-6). The Holy Spirit is the administrator of missions as may be attested by the work he does: making people alive in Christ (Jn. 3:1-8), sealing believers for final redemption (Eph. 1:13-14), baptizing believers into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), putting

sin to death in believers (Rom.8:13), creating the character of Christ in believers (Gal. 5:22-23) and gifting and empowering believers for service (1 Cor. 12:4-11). He also sends and guides missionaries (Acts 13:2, 4; 16:6).

The systematic theology analysis has brought out important principles to guide the local church in its understanding and the ministry of missions today. First, mission must be understood as a sending that proceeds from God's eternal plan and purpose seen in God's revelation of himself and his mission of salvation of humankind leading eventually to the restoration of all things. Second, all the three persons of the Trinity have a role to play in the work of salvation. Third, the Church is missionary by nature and this should make all believers instruments of mission and it must understand its mission as Christ - centred and holistic in nature. Fourth, the message of the Church's mission is the exclusive gospel of Christ and its relevance is to all peoples everywhere. Fifth, the Church must employ methods that are faithful to Scripture and relevant to the socio-cultural context to make the gospel understandable and be driven by right motives. Finally, missions must be empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit.

3.3 A theory of praxis for missions for Divine Grace Church of God

This section stems from bringing together the normative theological perspective outlined in the preceding section and the empirical-descriptive perspective. It results in a theory of action or theory of praxis for missions at DGCG. It presents dimensions of the new theory of praxis for missions that will guide the actions for better preparing of DGCG for mission in its context and how to actually do it. It establishes a more faithful operative theology in relation to missions.

Dimension 1: Clarify a clear biblical and theological understanding of missions for DGCG

DGCG needs a clear and systematic understanding of missions that is rooted in its high view of the inspiration and authority of Scripture. A missions' policy rooted in a truly biblical foundation will incorporate the following: the need for redemption, recognition of God as the source of redemptive mission, Jesus as the only provider of redemption and the Holy Spirit as the one who applies the benefits of

Christ's redemptive work to people's lives. This is particularly relevant in the Church's context where (i) many Christians lack adequate knowledge of God and his will and (ii) belief in the Bible as absolute truth is challenged by worldviews of modernity and postmodernity and the African traditional religion. "Christianity that is devoid of clear biblical convictions which produce godly character will find little use both to the Lord and to the needy world" (Egbunu 2008:25).

This dimension includes understanding that the biblical view of man is that all humans have inherited a sinful nature and are sinners by practice needing salvation from God's judgment and this salvation is through Christ alone and through faith alone. This is in line with Jesus' model of mission that includes Jews and Gentiles - his Gospel of the kingdom for all nations (Matt. 4:23; 5:17; 10:5-8; 13:37-39; Matt. 24:14; Mk 11:17; 13:10). For faithful mission, the evangelistic ministry of the Church should reflect true passion for all fallen humanity, every people group. This means that DGCG needs a greater focus on the biblical declaration that all people without Christ are lost, dead spiritually, enemies of God, under God's wrath and thus need to be reconciled to God. However, mission should be driven by the higher goal that it leads to God being glorified.

This biblical and theological understanding of missions also needs to capture the holistic nature of mission that focuses on spiritual salvation and physical salvation and looks forward to the restoration of all things at the end of time; with spiritual salvation being a priority as modelled by Jesus' life and ministry and the early Church.

Dimension 2: Systematically and comprehensively teach DGCG members the biblical and theological understanding of missions

Considering the centrality of missions in God's plan for the earth, it would be inappropriate to conduct this teaching occasionally through a Sunday sermon or to simply have it as a mission statement in a Church document. DGCG needs to present this teaching in a systematic manner at every level and through various avenues to secure maximum comprehension by all members - children, youths and adults. Both new and old converts need to be involved so that their lives can be permeated and driven by God's eternal purpose for his own glory.

Dimension 3: Undergird the mission vision at DGCG through strengthening all ministries and deepening spirituality

Mission is spiritual work and therefore requires spiritual motivation (to obey and delight in the Great Commission) and spiritual methods. Spiritual vitality, and therefore renewal, if necessary, is needed to enable members to embrace missions in their personal and church lives (Acts 2:42-47; 4:31-37). Since the results of the empirical research into missions at DGCG pointed to many shortcomings, there is need for greater stress on spiritual empowerment to enable other areas of personal and church life to flourish and thereby cause missions to thrive. However, it can also be seen that success in missions will also provide a fresh incentive for spiritual health in all the other areas of the church's private and corporate life. Members at DGCG need to be regularly spiritually refreshed and empowered for worship, prayer, fellowships, Holy Communion and missions to operate more effectively.

The leadership will need to train all members in the spiritual disciplines of personal and corporate prayer and the study of the Scriptures, submission to God and resulting obedience to his Word, self-denial and cross-bearing, sensitivity to the leading of God's Spirit, the continuous infilling of the Holy Spirit, and resisting Satan and overcoming temptation (Mk.1:35; Lk. 6:12; 14:25-27; Jn.14:15; Acts 4:23-31; Gal.5:16; Eph.5:18; 6:18-20; 2 Tim.2:15; 3:16-17; Heb.12:9; James 1:22). Thus what the people are taught should strengthen their faith and translate into moral and ethical living in their social context (see also Matt. 5:13-16; Rom. 1:5; 4:13; Col. 2:6-7; 3:12-14; 1 Thess. 2: 10-12; 1 Pet. 2:11-12; 2 Pet. 1:5-8). Godly lives lived in society is seen as one means of missions as it eliminates a stumbling to unbelievers coming to Christ (Tit. 2:8-10; 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:1-4). Delivering people from spiritual darkness is spiritual warfare and so spiritual methods are vital (Matt. 11:12; 12:28; 16:18; Acts 8:6-8; 13:6-12; Eph. 6:10-18). This spiritual equipping in the African context with its worldview and specialist practitioners in the spirit-occult world is very important.

Dimension 4: Specific equipping of DGCG members for missions

is intended to be an instrument of mission and therefore needs to develop a more effective equipping model that trains believers in its cultural-ethnic context to: (i)

pray for, look for, and capitalize on opportunities for evangelism and appropriate use of the Bible in evangelism (Col. 4:2-6), (ii) root the Gospel in the cultural context but to also appropriately transform the culture (Acts 15:28-29; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11; Re. 5:9; 7:9; 15:4), (iii) identify, develop and use their spiritual gifts and talents, especially those that can help facilitate effective evangelism, (iv) be deployed with church support to serve God through proclamation of the Gospel by life and word and social service/action (as lay and official missionaries) in the local community/marketplace and sometimes beyond (in a context characterised by wickedness, poverty, social injustice, political conflict and unemployment) and (v) work in unity with other churches in reaching out to the community with the love of God in Christ without compromising key evangelical beliefs and teachings.

In a changing world that is influenced by modernity and its stress on individualism and improved technology, DGCG will need to adapt appropriate methods in order to fulfil the unchanging vision of reaching its context with the gospel (Plueddeman 2005: ix). The communal nature of African Society can still be seen among Africans in the midst of increasing individualism and this can be used as a tool of evangelism-communal or mass evangelism (Egbunu 2008:31)-people easily respond to invitations to public meetings. The gospel is for all nations and peoples and thus needs to take root in every culture, but in a transforming way. Jesus is a model here in his use of methods which were relevant to the context to ensure that the gospel was understood and contextually applied (Jn. 3:1-15; 4:7-26; 15:1-8). Thus DGCG needs to employ biblically appropriate and culturally relevant evangelistic methods in its ministry context in order to make a great impact for the kingdom of God.

3.4 Defence of the theory of praxis for missions for Divine Grace Church of God

This section critically defends the norms and structure of the new praxis outlined in the preceding section. It thus establishes the validity of the new mission theory of action in the ministry context of DGCG. For evangelicals, some of the norms flow out of Scripture, viewed as divinely inspired and therefore authoritative and other norms are rooted in a concern for the spiritual, physical and material well-being of a society that are embraced by any caring society.

3.4.1 The Bible claims to be the authoritative revelation of God and his will for *Humankind*

The underlying basis for the mission theory is DGCG's view of Scripture based on the plausibility and trustworthiness of its authoritative meta-narrative (plot-line of the Bible) (cf. Light 2012:16-28). The applicability and validity of the biblical gospel is seen in the way, if properly understood and applied, it leads to a safer and more prosperous society in which our social relationships can flourish and find true fulfilment, meaning and purpose. DGCG believes that knowing God and his saving purpose through Christ and by the Holy Spirit is only possible because God took the initiative to make himself and his will, ultimately through his incarnate Son Jesus Christ, known through the inspired and written Scriptures (Jn.1:14, 18; 2 Tim. 3:16; Heb.1:2-3). Such a belief, based on reasonable evidence, implies that DGCG must base its mission policy and practice on Scripture.

DGCG's interpretation of the biblical gospel implies that there is salvation only through Christ and faith in him. Understandably then this Church should seek to evangelise all non-Christians. Sadly, not every person can accept this statement with sincerity. The Church needs to be aware that there are worldviews or ideas that challenge the belief in the absolute truthfulness and authority of the Bible. Some of these forces are the following: modernism (rooted in secularism) and its emphasis on human reason and scientific investigation as the final authority; postmodernism and its denial of objective truth and understanding of the biblical writers' intended meaning, and religious pluralism and relativism which challenge the exclusive claims of Christianity (Light 2012:7-8). Penney sees these worldviews as Satan's strategy to convince Christians that the Bible is not true (modernism) or that truth is relative or there is no absolute truth (postmodernism) (2001:25).

The Pastor needs to establish a strong teaching ministry that critiques these worldviews and proves the sufficiency of Scripture for Christian faith and practice. As a leader, the Pastor needs to empower the Church to guard against departure from the objective truth of the Bible as it can destroy the very basis of Christian doctrine, faith, conduct and deeds. Learning from Jesus (Mt. 4:4, 7, 10; 5:17-18; Lk. 24:44) and the apostle Paul (1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 3:15-17), leaders in DGCG

really need to help all members to uphold a high view of Scripture (Beals 1988:14, 15). They clearly need to challenge relativism as “it neutralizes belief in the existence of the objective, unchangeable truth revealed to us in the Bible” (Sutton 2001:120). This is important if the theological deficiencies identified in the ministry at DGCG and its context are to be addressed. When Scripture is respected in this manner (as absolute and trustworthy truth), it will accomplish its intended purpose (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Faith that has a firm biblical basis is needed to inform right practices of mission.

DGCG’s has a commitment to a high view of Scripture. In the light of this, the place it gives to understanding the scriptural picture of missions and implementing the implications can be defended.

3.4.2 The holistic nature of kingdom mission

The kingdom mission of Jesus and the Church seeks holistic healing and wellbeing (spiritual, physical and social) – increasingly in this life and in perfection in the world to come. Such complete wholeness is what the human race desperately needs. It is a challenge for a local church to exist in a context where Christians or churches believe differently concerning the nature of God’s kingdom mission. Differences in belief are likely to be reflected in practice. For example, McGonigle and Quigley (1996:269) present the Roman Catholic understanding of mission: “The Catholic communion in the third millennium must continue to champion gospel humanism as servant of the world in service to the truth”. This kind of mission is human-centred as it focuses on addressing socio-political issues through human means. It is salvation of the body. It is done through social service. The goal is transformation of an oppressive and unjust society. This is one side of the coin. Cotterell (1996:267) writes as an evangelical and presents the other side of the coin: “there can be no question of an absolute prioritization of spiritual mission over social action.” Another evangelical, Bloesch (2002:247), argues that though the spiritual mandate and the cultural mandate are interrelated, they should not be confused as the latter aims at “bringing the implications of the claims of faith to bear upon the moral and social issues of the time”.

These varied views, however, can be harmonized by considering the ministry of Jesus Christ, our model. His ministry involved preaching and teaching of the

Gospel of the kingdom, healing the sick, setting captives free and feeding the hungry (Matt. 4:3-25; 8:14-17; Lk. 4:18). His ministry was holistic. But that is not all. Within his holistic ministry, Jesus prioritized the spiritual aspect (Matt. 6:33; Lk. 19:10). If death and social problems are consequences of sin (Gen. 3:16-24; Rom. 6:23), then the priority must be given to bringing mankind to reconciliation with God and with one another (Wagner 1990:20,21), that is, spiritual healing and health (Jn. 3:16-17; 20:30-31; Acts 4:12; 16:30-31; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Eph. 1:3-7, 13-14; 2 Pet. 3:9). It is transformed individuals who in turn can transform society as they become salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16). The spiritual ministry must involve bringing sinners to salvation in Christ, maturing believers spiritually to be able to reflect the character of Christ in life, witness and service and establishing new churches. A right relationship between the spiritual and the physical is important. Clearly even materialists and other non-Christians see the value of what Christianity at its purest can do for societies. The holistic nature of a kingdom vision can thus be defended.

3.4.3 The need of a more effective discipleship model

Holistic mission, with union with God through Christ as the priority, clearly needs an appropriate discipleship approach for maximum achievement by Church members. Such a discipleship model is needed to address the lack of spiritual maturity among believers in the church and to awaken those who may have slumbered, as at DGCG. Growth in spirituality (including holiness) for most believers at DGCG seems to be hindered by syncretistic tendencies and the fact that most of the members are not committed to the lordship of Christ in life, word and deed. Very little or no proper inspiring instruction in these areas at DGCG has no doubt contributed to this situation. Spiritual vitality is important if DGCG is to make a kingdom impact in a context characterised by moral decay, demonic oppression and other social ills. The church at Jerusalem is a good example (Acts 2:40-47). It was a spiritually awakened church resulting from dynamic discipleship (Acts 2:1-4; 4:31). DGCG clearly needs a more effective discipleship model to support and motivate a truly powerful mission vision. A church that has experienced kingdom vision and life can effectively evangelise the lost, disciple believers, plant new churches and practise true social compassion (Cordell 2011:107; Roberts 2006:25). Such a vision can thus be defended.

3.4.4 The need of a more effective equipping and sending model

It is one thing to teach on missions, but experience indicates that holistic missions necessitate the addition of a specific equipping and sending model (the Apostle Paul's conversion, lengthy ministerial training – mostly on the job and special divine revelation, and official launching into missionary life from the church at Antioch is a good example, Acts 9:1-18,20-30; 11:25-26,30; 12:25; 13:1-3; Gal. 1:11-2:2). Clearly more is needed in a situation where, as in DGCG, very few members in the church find time to participate in ministry, even occasionally with the Pastor, and where there is no clear policy on selection, training, sending and supporting church-planters; and where very little is done to influence the majority to get involved in mission ministry. Partnership with other churches of similar faith may be needed in the context of DGCG if Christians are to reflect a united body of Christ and be able to make a truly great impact for the kingdom of God (Jn.17:21; Eph.3:10). Jesus' approach must be considered as a model. He called, trained and then sent out his disciples (Mk. 1:16-20; 3:13-15). Jesus' model must surely be the blueprint for the Church today.

In the light of DGCG's commitment to Scripture and especially the example of Christ, an equipping and sending training model at DGCG can be defended.

3.4.5 The condition of fallen humankind motivates and calls for effective passionate mission

Any assessment of the human race will reveal its great potential but also its moral deficiency. Our world 'is simultaneously resplendent with glory and awash in shame' (Carson cited in Light 2012:20). The sciences of anthropology, sociology, and psychology have all come about largely as an attempt to understand human functioning in order to improve it. Secular anthropologists 'have signally failed to come up with the answers and by their very bankruptcy have thrown into relief the relevance of the Christian answer' (Milne cited in Light 2012:21). Christianity that is faithful to Christ and the mission of God in the world is designed, and able, to bring about peace, love, high morals, purpose, meaning, development, safety, fulfilment, and eternal hope.

The message that provides the solution for the moral problems in society that the Bible designates as sin with eternal consequences needs to be made available. This is especially so in a context where sin is downplayed and morality is treated as being relative. A serious view of sin and its consequences (Rom. 6:23) in a context where sin is rife is important if people's need for spiritual salvation is to be accorded its utmost attention. Jesus had a high view of sin and God's judgment of sin and this caused him to be a friend of sinners (Matt. 11:24; 12:36; Lk. 13:1-9; 15:2; Jn. 5:22) and inspired his redemptive ministry to them (Mk. 10:45; Lk. 19:10; Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:21). Clearly the condition of the human race and the world justifies a Christian intervention with its proven and credible gospel.

3.4.6 Presenting the exclusive full gospel effectively

Evangelicals believe that general or natural revelation and the beliefs of other religions, even African traditional religions, cannot secure the spiritual salvation that brings eternal life and leads to restoration (Rom. 1:18-23). Only Jesus Christ can deliver people from the divine penalty for sin and the power of sin, death and evil demonic powers, and empower to live the life of the kingdom of God (Lk. 24:46-47; Jn. 1:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Cor. 15:3-8). This message must therefore be preached or shared clearly and uncompromisingly in a context characterised by religious pluralism and the social gospel. Light's book (2012) includes a detailed approach to explaining in a traditional African context why the gospel is superior to African traditional religion and can be viewed in some senses as a fulfilment of all its hopes. According to Ashford (2011:120), sharing the Gospel must be done by being faithful to Scripture, being meaningful to people in their context, and include a critique of the cultural context. By so doing, syncretism will be neutralized and the church will overcome the temptation to bring people who are not genuinely converted and regenerated into its membership.

3.4.7 Summary

Section 3.4 has been included because Browning's approach, which is used in this thesis, entails a defence of the new praxis. It has presented solid reasons for the theory of praxis regarding missions at DGCG developed in this chapter, especially from a biblical and theological perspective, but also from a social perspective. Without doubt, history has demonstrated the positive transforming

power of the gospel in society when the gospel is presented and lived most faithfully.

3.5. Summary and conclusion

This chapter first of all presented a normative theological theory of praxis to guide the understanding and practice of missions of any church. It emerged from a biblical, historical and systematic theology study of missions. The biblical study focused on the life and ministry of Jesus as portrayed in the Gospels and his fulfilment of the Father's mission as the model for the church's mission. Further, the biblical perspective also considered Jesus' mandate to the Church through his first disciples (and to be continued throughout church history) and appropriate spiritual empowerment. It involves making obedient followers of Christ whose lives, words and deeds reflect God's reign and mission as they serve him in the church and in the world. The historical perspective on missions highlighted different understandings and practices of mission in Church history. The systematic perspective built upon the biblical and historical views resulting in theological imperatives or themes that are to guide the practice of missions in the context of DGCG.

Secondly, the chapter also integrated the systematic theology of missions, DGCG's official mission statements and its actual practice of missions (chapter 2), and the context of ministry (also in chapter 2) to form a more faithful and therefore preferred mission praxis for DGCG. Then the norms of the new praxis of holistic kingdom missions were defended because (i) they are scripturally the most faithful mission praxis in the life and ministry context of DGCG, and (ii) because Christians' norms produce results that truly benefit the wider society.

This chapter thus has achieved the goal of developing a more faithful operative theology of missions for DGCG that takes into account its history, beliefs, a fresh look at a theology of missions and the wider society where this church is found. The next chapter builds upon this one by considering how to communicate effectively the new theory of praxis and a strategy to achieve this new praxis.

Chapter 4:

A Strategy to communicate and implement an improved praxis of missions for Divine Grace Church of God

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a communicative and strategic plan to achieve the new praxis of missions developed in chapter 3 for DGCG in its ministry context. It seeks to answer Browning's fourth question: *What means, strategies and rhetorics should we use in this concrete situation?* The chapter considers the best means of communicating the new praxis of missions and presents a strategy for implementing it so that DGCG can make a more positive impact in the advancement of the kingdom of God in the world, the major purpose of the Church. Maximum implementation and success of the new praxis of missions will require all other areas of the church's spirituality, life and ministry to be healthy and growing. It is thus appropriate for DGCG to adapt the holistic Church growth models of Malphurs (1999:51-57,151-221) and Warren (1995:75-392) to achieve this.

4.2 Communicative plan for gaining acceptance of the new praxis of missions at DGCG

The communicative plan being outlined here is one that is intended to inspire and persuade the pastor and his leaders to accept and effectively communicate to the whole church the need for the new praxis of missions (theory and resulting actions, i.e., operative theology). The stakeholders at DGCG (pastor, church board/council, other lay leaders and significant members) will find the new praxis challenging and hence will need convincing if they are to support or allow its implementation. "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed" (Prov.15:22). It seems such a verse in the context of this thesis calls for the leaders and then the other stakeholders at DGCG to be able to be part of fine-tuning the details of the praxis to ensure a more relevant, acceptable and achievable praxis totally suitable to the church's context. Similarly, this verse would also possibly invite the same procedure to be repeated with the rest of the

congregation. Leaders and all significant members need at some level to be part of the process of defining the operative mission theology and the strategy to achieve the new mission praxis.

4.2.1 Convincing the Pastor on the need for the change of the missions operative theology

The pastor's role in achieving change at DGCG is crucial. His appreciation of the shortcomings of the current praxis, clarity on and the need to accept the new praxis, and agreement on the strategic implementation are most important. My personal contribution to achieving this would be spending significant time with him reflecting on the current missions praxis (as emerged in chapter 2 of this thesis) and the more faithful praxis (as developed in chapter 3) and lastly on a strategic communicative plan to achieve the successful launching of the latter at DGCG (developed in this chapter). To help this process, I would recommend that he reads the relevant section in this thesis before each meeting. Through dialogue and negotiation and with adequate and clear convincing reasons I would hope that the pastor would be able to reach a point of full understanding and acceptance of the new praxis, allowing for some improvements where necessary. It is only after the pastor is completely in agreement with the new mission praxis and how to present it and its implementation strategy that he would share the new vision of missions with the church council and other leaders. Without his ownership of the project, it will not get further than my thesis.

4.2.2 Pastor's task of effectively facilitating the communication for the need for the change

The church council and other leaders, as well as other key members, need to be persuaded of the necessity of the new praxis if it is to stand a chance of successful operation. The pastor has a pivotal communicative role to play if the leaders and the rest of the congregation are to embrace change. Here I see the role of the pastor as key. The following steps would help the process of achieving ownership by the church council and other leaders of specific ministries in the church and finally the rest of the congregation. From here on the word 'leaders' will be used to describe the combined group of council members and other key leaders of various ministries.

a. Reflecting on the current situation and the need for change with the leaders

The strategy I recommend is that the Pastor first, through a number of informal and formal conversations with individual leaders and the leaders as a group, undertakes an analysis of the following: (i) the current situation with regards to missions, and (ii) other internal areas of church life and ministry and the church's context that impact missions directly or indirectly. These conversations must allow for ethical discourse that involves reciprocity, symmetry and understanding (Habermas 2016:14). Ethical discourse emphasises the importance of achieving mutual understanding and determining ethical truths through dialogue as opposed to monologue (p.12). It is about expressing a mutual relationship in a discussion. It is a two-way kind of communication. Ethical discourse accords all participants an opportunity to contribute and everybody's contribution is valued.

In order to achieve mutual understanding and thus the ability to be able to appreciate the shortcomings of the current situation and see the need and urgency for change, these discussions must observe four rational conditions (Habermas 2016:7): comprehensibility (using simple terms and a clear language for all to comprehend what is being discussed); truth (all ideas and concepts being discussed should be acknowledged as having concrete existence); trustworthiness (approaching communication with honesty, transparency and openness); and legitimacy (acting in accordance with quasi-universal values and norms). Clearly accepting a critique of the current mission praxis at DGCG will need to entail truthful demonstrable facts, and not just opinions. There must be no hidden agendas and manipulation. Also there needs to be conviction that the current missions situation does not fully reflect biblical values and norms and that therefore change would be for the greater good of both missionaries and recipients of mission. Appreciating the shortcomings of the present mission operative theology will inspire the leaders to recognise the need and urgency for change.

However, they will need to grasp that a transformation in the praxis of missions will only be fully achievable and sustainable if transformation in other key areas of the church also takes place, for example, improving leadership to lead change; growth in spirituality to make the Christians more sensitive to the profound spiritual needs of the unbeliever; enriching fellowship necessary to motivate

personal ministry like one-on-one missions; and strengthening all the ministries which should in turn strengthen the vision for a successful missions ministry.

b. Communicating the new vision of mission to the leaders

It is only after (a) is achieved that the leaders will likely be ready to accept the need for a new mission praxis. But they cannot also be expected to consider and facilitate change before being persuaded that there is an option that more faithfully reflects the biblical view and passion for missions and that it is achievable. To arrive at this point the same process as in (a) needs to be followed, but this time with reference to the new praxis. The Pastor may need to prepare more basic training material than in this thesis on biblical missions to educate and empower these leaders to be able to help implement the new praxis. This training, as in my thesis, also needs to cover the kind of church and church structures and ministries in which mission passion and ministry are most likely to thrive.

c. The leaders communicating the new mission praxis to other church members

The next phase in the communicative plan is for the leaders to persuade the rest of the congregation of the need for change and the kind of change envisaged in the new praxis. "Change initiatives are likely to remain on the margins of a congregation unless leaders convince others of the need for change and empower them to shape this process" (Osmer 2008:197). So the process described in (a) and (b), but at a less formal and more basic level, needs to be followed with the members. But the leaders will need to play a key leadership role in effectively managing the praxis change. In order to achieve this, the leaders will need to understand and exhibit three important forms of *servant leadership* according to Osmer (2008:176-178). The Pastor will have demonstrated these to them in (a) and (b) above. However, he would need to conduct some training sessions with leaders on these different forms of servant leadership.

Osmer (2008:176) describes these three forms of leadership as *task competence leadership*, which deals with the ability to excel in performing the tasks of a leadership role in an organization (e.g. teaching, preaching, running committees, leading worship, etc.); *transactional leadership*, which is the ability to lead change

by influencing others through a process of trade-offs – it involves reciprocity and mutual exchange and can thus enable different coalitions in a congregation to negotiate and work together; and *transforming leadership*(p.176-178), which influences people by empowering them to shape the process of change. This process of leadership by the leaders would need to work from a point of appreciation by the members of the prior work done by the leaders (the more mature members). This is because this endeavour would have been largely at a level beyond the ability of the other congregational members. In spite of this necessary provision, the servant leadership described by Osmer would be vital if the support of the whole church for any change is to be gained.

The communicative process should aim at achieving acceptance at the different levels at DGCG (individual, group and congregational) of the new praxis (with possible modifications through the mutual dialogue the communicative process facilitates) and its long term support. The process may require that leaders confront any “undiscussable assumptions” (Osmer 2008:197) that may be maintained by some dominant coalition in the church. I recommend that this communicative process uses small Bible study groups in the church (Sunday school classes, cell groups, men’s group, women’s group, youths’ group, children’s church) and a series of sermons on biblical missions by the pastor to challenge the entire congregation to be open to a new and more biblical vision and programme of missions for the church.

4.3 Strategic plan for implementing the new missions praxis at Divine Grace Church of God

4.3.1 Areas of the strategic plan

The new praxis of mission has four dimensions or elements that need to be facilitated:

1. Clarify a clear biblical and theological understanding of missions for DGCG.
2. Systematically and comprehensively teach DGCG members the biblical and theological understanding of missions.
3. Undergird the mission vision at DGCG through strengthening all ministries and deepening spirituality.

4. Specific equipping of DGCG members for missions.

The strategy to achieve the inauguration of the new mission policy is linked to achieving the four areas of the new operative theology. The strategy will largely apply to the four areas in that order. The achievement of the new praxis will entail specific actions, ministry personnel, ministry facilities, finances and timeframes (Malphurs 1999:161-182).

It often happens in a first generation church that new converts are usually the best at spontaneous sharing of their new faith and life with unbelievers. They might not be able to clearly explain the gospel, but they effectively draw people to consider Christ (e.g. Jn. 1:41, 45; 4:28-29, 39; Rev.2:4). First generation churches usually grow faster because of the initial mission zeal and resulting new converts and their ready witness (cf. the Jesus Movement in the sixties and early seventies where the new converts became church planters). Once a church plant has been established and functioned for many years, the members tend to lose their passion for missions. When an occasional person is converted in this context they seldom have good examples of passionate sharing of their faith to win others to Christ. This because they too soon join the second generation converts or the third, etc., in a lack of zeal for evangelism. In such situations a more dynamic discipleship in the faith, especially in God's mission in the world, is urgently needed and that launches them again into active missions.

Effective discipleship achieves at least the majority of a church's members playing their role in edifying fellow believers through the exercise of their gifts. When this happens the church is best equipped to let its light shine in a spiritually dark world (evangelism) and bring the harvest to maturity in Christ (discipleship), the latter being the final stage of missions (cf. Phil.1:3-6; Col. 1:27-28; Rom. 8:29-30).

4.3.2 Specific Actions and goals in the strategic plan

Step 1: Clarify a clear biblical and theological understanding of missions (from 1st to 6th month, first year)

Goal: *The goal is to produce a mission policy that is scripturally-rooted and theologically sound to guide mission practices at DGCG.*

Actions:

1. Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis were the first action.
2. The communicative strategic plan described above is the next action step and results in a broad overview of missions (summarized in the four dimensions of the new praxis) and the acceptance of a final version.
3. The Pastor and other leaders to appoint a Missions Team/Committee comprising of not less than five members, with one of them being elected as the Missions Director (from among the mature, zealous and committed members).
4. The Missions Team, other leaders and the Pastor to conduct meetings to reflect deeply on the new praxis of missions and its biblical and theological underpinnings and draw up a Missions Policy containing the following elements:
 - (a) Mission Statement
 - (b) Vision Statement
 - (c) Core Values: What should capture and drive the mission ethos at DGCG and be related to DGCG's Mission and Vision? DGCG may adapt the denominational core values: prayer, Pentecostal worship, world evangelisation, church-planting, leadership development, care for others and interdependence with other members of the body of Christ.
 - (d) Foundation for mission ministry: The Triune Missionary God
 - (e) Authority for Ministry: The Holy Spirit and the Word of God as the power of Mission, with emphasis on the exclusive gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - (f) Leadership of the mission ministry: The Missions Director and missions committee to systematically and regularly promote missions by example and encouragement so that the church is led into and sustained in missions and is accountable to the church council (the Pastor as Chairperson of the council).
 - (g) Instruments/Personnel for Missions Ministry: The local church (DGCG) as an instrument of missions – all believers as witnesses and servants and some gifted for evangelism and those called by God to be sent as church-planters

- (h) Objects of mission: all human beings without Christ; needy people who need compassionate love centred in the gospel
- (i) Ministry Context: unbelievers attending the church, local communities and beyond
- (j) Methods of mission: all kinds of evangelism, water baptism, discipleship of converts, planting new churches (various evangelistic methods where in each case the most suitable is chosen as led by the Holy Spirit)
- (k) Resources for mission: With strong emphasis on stewardship of God-given resources (finances, time and human resources) and with advancement of God's kingdom as a motivation, members to be encouraged to give generously to a special account for missions; also a certain percentage should be agreed upon by the leaders and members from the annual church budget to be allotted for missions.

Step 2: Systematically and comprehensively teach DGCG members the biblical and theological understanding of missions (from 7th to 12th month, first year)

Goal: *The goal is for the believers to be so well taught on missions at DGCG that they are driven by the advancement of God's kingdom and glory as the main purpose for their lives.*

This second dimension of the praxis focuses on establishing a more effective systematic and comprehensive teaching ministry on missions that permeates all areas of the life of DGCG and fills the hearts of all members with God's passion for lost humanity and the rest of creation. It is intended to develop a kind of church that is driven by God's holistic kingdom purpose. This would be demonstrated in the church being an alternative society and promoting God's kingdom standards, including the restoration of his creation of which the climax will only be at the Parousia at the end of the age.

Actions:

1. The Pastor, the Missions Director and Missions Team will prepare teachings on missions in a systematic and suitable manner and make the same available for use by all leaders.
2. Leaders of ministries will teach this material section by section during weekly and Sunday evening gatherings in small groups with the goal of reaching all members (1700-1800h). These sessions should also make use of participatory discussion as is appropriate for each group.

Step 3: Undergird the mission vision at DGCG through strengthening of all ministries and deepening spirituality (2nd year)

Goal: The goal is to bring all the Christians to greater spiritual maturity and spiritual vitality and also strengthen all the church's ministries so that the mission policy and programme will be well supported and cause the church to be a mission force.

Actions:

1. The Discipleship Team, other leaders and the Pastor to form the 'watchmen/women ministry for intercession, spiritual warfare and spiritual renewal prayers for one hour' (Matt.26:40-41) weekly (Friday, 1700 -1800h) –rotating from one leader's home to another; then later involve all members in small groups.
2. The Discipleship Team and Director (with Pastor's guidance) to provide a curriculum and teachings on Christian spiritual disciplines for leaders to teach all members at Sunday school, Bible studies, Cell groups, family training hour, Women's fellowship, Men's fellowship and youth fellowship – dynamic discipleship that emphasises relating teachings to the cultural context in which DGCG operates (Tuesdays and Saturdays, 1600-1730h). Believers in DGCG will be enabled to live as a holy people of God shaped by his own ethical character, with specific attention to righteousness and justice in a context characterised by wickedness, oppression and injustice.
3. The Pastor and other leaders will need to adapt Warren's holistic approach to ministry (1995:148-9) by organising DGCG around purpose-based teams: (1) the Missions Team for evangelism and social compassion; (2) the Worship Team; (3) the Membership Team for the purpose of fellowship;

- (4) the Maturity Team for discipleship and (5) the Ministry Team to turn members into ministers.
4. DGCG to organise its fellowship at three levels: (a) Cell meetings (under Cell Shepherds) in homes of believers (weekly) for intimate fellowship, personal development, Bible study, prayer for spiritual enrichment, intercession and spiritual warfare and Christian witness (through evangelism and social service) in the surrounding community; (b) Zonal or Congregational level for wider fellowship and stronger witness to the community by bringing Cell groups together once every month. Each community surrounding DGCG will be a Zone under a Zone Elder, who reports to the Pastor; and (c) the Celebration level at the Sunday gathering for all believers in DGCG for mass witness and release of spiritual power through corporate prayer, Spirit-directed worship of God and inspiring preaching and teaching of God's Word (Sundays, 0900-1200h)

Step 4: Specific equipping of members for missions (3rd Year)

Goal: *The goal is to have Christians who are well equipped to mediate the Christian faith faithfully and effectively in their surrounding communities or context by life, word and deed.*

Actions:

1. The Director and Missions Team (with Pastor's guidance) to develop lessons on evangelism and social ministry and involve other leaders in teaching all members to know how to choose the most suitable methods of evangelism and how to share the Gospel effectively and marked by a compassionate love that goes beyond witnessing to unbelievers of the saving power of Jesus Christ (including those belonging to other faiths) but also practical acts of sacrificial love to the needy in society.
2. The Ministry Team and Director (with Pastor's guidance) to prepare teachings on discovering and developing God-given abilities and partnership in ministry. It is only as all the members function in love primarily through exercising their spiritual and natural gifts that the church will be built up to be all that God intends including its witness to the world (Eph. 4:11-12,14; Phil. 2:12-15). Training sessions will be conducted on Sundays (1600 to 1800h) with an

emphasis on 'living a purposeful life' through Christian faith and exercising gifts. Warren (1995:149) extends this focus which is captured in the acronym 'SHAPE'. In the word 'SHAPE', S stands for spiritual gifts; H is for heart (passion); A is for talents; P is for personality and E is for experience. The emphasis is to be on using all these to serve God in the church and to strengthen and enrich its ministries.

3. The Missions Team to work together with all leaders to mobilise members and form mission teams and church-based Youth clubs to carry out witnessing and social ministries in the communities around (from 11th month, 3rd year).
4. The Missions Team and Director to work together with other leaders to establish:
 - (a) Agape Counseling Center for people in crisis (at DGCG premises and in Zones) – appropriate use of the Bible as a resource Book to provide biblical solutions to people's problems (in a context full of challenges).
 - (b) Establishment of Agape Business Department for skills training and economic empowerment of people to enable them learn to work, earn an income and become givers to God's glory (Eph. 4:28).
 - (c) Establishment of Agape Hope for the Hopeless Center for feeding the hungry (including street kids), attending to malnourished children and visiting Hospitals and Prisons (monthly or quarterly).
5. The Director and Missions Team (with spiritual, financial and material support by DGCG) to send God-called church-planters out for a church-planting mission as led by the Spirit (Acts 13:1-3); and through the Pastor to share the missionary vision with other Evangelical churches in order to work together for the extension of the kingdom of God.

Once the process of change is underway and moving towards the set proposed dates, the Pastor and the church council will need to own the change process. If they fail to do so, the momentum will be lost and the whole new mission praxis will never be achieved or sustained. They will at times need to make necessary changes to the operating procedures, continue developing new leaders and conducting periodical implementation review meetings with necessary adjustments where necessary (Osmer 2008:215).

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the approach needed for DGCG to effectively communicate and achieve the new praxis of missions. The four dimensions of the new praxis of missions (established in chapter 3) provides the basic framework on which the strategy is built. The chapter involves a number of structures and ministries for the realization of the strategic plan. Though some of these are not directly related to missions, they are essential for a successful sustaining of the new missions vision. The challenge is enormous and therefore the full dedication to the process of change and specific support by the leadership (especially the Pastor) and the other stakeholders are vital if there is to be any chance of success.

CHAPTER 5:

Conclusion

5.1 Review of Objectives

The primary objective of my thesis was to formulate a theologically-informed communicative and strategic plan to ensure that the praxis of Divine Grace Church of God with respect to missions is faithful to God and optimally relevant to its ministry context. This main objective was met by breaking it into three secondary objectives. A chapter was devoted to each sub-objective. Browning's model for strategic practical theology was used as it ideally suited the purpose of my thesis. His model's design answers four questions: *How do we understand the concrete situation in which we must act? What should be our praxis in this concrete situation? How do we critically defend the norms of our praxis in this concrete situation? What means, strategies and rhetorics should we use in this concrete situation?* The answer to the first question achieved the first secondary objective; the answers to the second and third questions, achieved the second secondary objective; and the answer to the fourth question, the last secondary objective.

The first secondary objective, 'interpreting the operative theology of the Divine Grace Church of God with respect to missions', was met in chapter 2 through, firstly, my preliminary research on the doctrinal and missional position of both the Church of God denomination and DGCG and evaluating the latter in terms of the former. Next, the objective was met through an empirical study using interviews to determine DGCG's beliefs and practices regarding missions.

The second secondary objective, 'determining what faithful praxis of missions might look like for DGCG in its context' was fulfilled in chapter 3. Theological perspectives and imperatives developed through the study were dialogued and correlated with the empirical perspective attained in chapter 2 to form the preferred praxis of missions for DGCG.

The third and final secondary objective, 'developing a strategic communicative plan to strengthen the praxis of DGCG in relation to missions' was fulfilled in chapter 4. This objective was achieved by presenting a communicative and

strategic plan for DGCG to achieve the new praxis of missions in its ministry context. Fulfilling these three objectives means that the primary objective of the study was achieved.

5.2 Tracing the Argument

This second section of my closing chapter traces the argument of the thesis. A number of steps were needed in order to achieve the secondary research objectives. Chapter 2 focused on the first secondary objective which was to establish the beliefs and practices of DGCG in relation to missions. The first step involved presenting some essential background information regarding the history, tradition, theology, context, vision and ministries of DGCG. This information was acquired through personal observation and literary research. The next step was the undertaking of a small-scale qualitative empirical study covering eight members of DGCG, with the interview as the primary means of research. The data collected was organized, analysed and interpreted under the following headings: purpose of the church and core values; church growth; passion and participation in evangelism; motivations for evangelism; methods in evangelism; sending and supporting official missionaries; and spreading kingdom values. The discussion of the data led to some conclusions concerning the beliefs and practices regarding missions at DGCG in its context. The conclusion of chapter 2 was that the beliefs and practices of this congregation were found lacking in missions and vision based on its denomination's and its own mission statements.

Chapter 3 took up the second secondary objective which was to seek and defend a biblically faithful mission vision and ministry for DGCG. This theory of mission praxis needed to take into account the results of chapter 2 to ensure an optimal impact at DGCG. For any evangelical, the desired praxis of missions is to be one that is deliberately faithful to the nature, will and purposes of God as revealed in the Bible. It was therefore important to begin chapter 3 with establishing a normative theological perspective on missions. This was achieved through research into biblical, historical and systematic theology perspectives on missions. This is covered in the part of Browning's approach to theology known as the second and third movements. The fourth movement is strategic practical theology which overlaps or builds on all the other three movements. Next, this normative

theological perspective was brought into dialogue with the findings of the empirical perspective (chapter 2) to form a theory of praxis for missions for DGCG. The more faithful operative theology developed was then defended in the light of DGCG's ministry context, Scripture, Jesus' ministry as a model, the writings of some contemporary theologians, and the results of true Christianity.

Chapter 4 brought the argument of this thesis to its logical ending. Its aim was to present a communicative and strategic plan to implement the normative praxis of missions established in chapter 3. This chapter first considered the best ways by which the stakeholders in DGCG could effectively communicate the need for change where ethical communication plays a key role. The Pastor was seen as the key person in the communicative process, followed by other leaders and then all significant members of DGCG.

It was shown that the introduction of the new mission praxis needed specific structures, programmes, facilities, finances, personnel and deadlines together with the need for improvement in all other areas of life and ministry at DGCG to achieve maximum implementation of the preferred praxis and its success. The strategic plan includes the role of personnel, ministry facilities and finances to achieve the new praxis of missions in a needy ministry context.

5.3 Summary of findings and their significance

The research has brought to light a number of important findings. It was found that although DGCG belongs to a denomination that has a clear and extensive kingdom vision and strategy in relation to missions, it has not been faithful to that official denominational position. Further, and related to this, it was revealed that DGCG does not fully subscribe to the denominational vision, mission, doctrine and core values. In spite of this local church having good programmes and structures that seem to cover every aspect of church life and witness, its operative theology is lacking in holistic kingdom vision and mission and growth. As such, impacting of society by life, word and deed is inadequate.

Chapter 3 has responded to this situation by presenting more biblically and theologically faithful mission beliefs and practices. First, it showed that missions must be understood as a sending to specific action that involves all the three

persons of the Trinity and proceeds from God's eternal plan and purpose. Second, the purpose of missions is primarily revealed by God through the truth, the life and ministry of Christ and the plan of salvation of fallen humankind.

Third, the church, as the people of God created by the Holy Spirit, is meant to be the instrument of mission or a missionary community in the world. Fourth, fallen and lost humanity are the objects of mission. Fifth, the exclusive gospel of Christ is the message of mission. Sixth, the gospel must be shared in a biblically-appropriate and contextually-relevant manner in order to work transformation in people's lives and culture. Seventh, the methods of mission include: communicating the gospel (evangelism), deeds of mercy (social ministry), baptizing believers, Spirit-empowered prayer, and planting and growing churches. Finally, the Holy Spirit must be recognised as the power and guide of missions.

In order to turn the biblical and theological perspectives on missions into a theory of praxis, the following four steps were developed:

1. Clarify a clear biblical and theological understanding of missions for DGCG
2. Systematically and comprehensively teach DGCG members the biblical and theological understanding of missions
3. Undergird the mission vision at DGCG through strengthening all ministries and deepening spirituality
4. Specific equipping of DGCG members for missions.

Chapter 4 brought the thesis to a climax by (i) devising a communicative plan to effectively gain acceptance of the new praxis, and (ii) crafting a strategic plan for the full implementation of the praxis. A practical theology thesis would be incomplete without serious attention to transformation. The chapter highlighted both the ethical means of communicating the need for change and the structures and programmes DGCG would need to take to achieve this preferred praxis. The plan is quite detailed encompassing all areas of DGCG's ministries as greater levels of spirituality in every area of the church's life have positive spinoffs for missions. Certainly the reverse is true as well. The plan aims to establish a well organised outreach ministry that involves all believers flowing from, and undergirded by, serious discipleship and mutual love and gift-based ministry, Spirit

- empowered worship and life. If the strategic plan is successfully applied DGCG should be able to fulfil its missionary mandate in its unique context.

My research limited itself by focusing on one local church (DGCG) and its missions beliefs and practices. It has limitations as it did not explore all concepts and arguments presented in missiology, especially how (i) mercy ministry focusing more on poverty contexts and (ii) restoration of the physical world fit into missions from a kingdom of God perspective. This research was also selective in terms of literature consultation. The study would have grown too long if further literary research had been attempted. There is therefore an opportunity for future research on the theory and practice of missions, particularly with reference to the surrounding areas of DGCG that are packed with opportunities for demonstrating missions – missions that is truly holistic where the gospel ministers to the total person in his/her place in the world.

APPENDIX

A SMALL-SCALE EMPIRICAL STUDY ON BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF THE DIVINE GRACE (CHAWAMA) CHURCH OF GOD IN RELATION TO MISSIONS

Questionnaire for semi-structured Interviews

A. PRELIMINARIES AND BACKGROUND

1. Interviewee: (Identity not to be included in thesis)
2. Sex:3. Age: Adult/ Youth 4. Status in church:
3. How long has Interviewee been a Christian (believer)?
5. How long has Interviewee been a member of this church?
6. How did Interviewee become a Christian?
7. When was this church planted?
8. Who planted it?
9. How was it planted?
10. What is this church's tradition?
11. What is its vision (in just a sentence or two)?

B. BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

CATEGORY 1: PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH AND CORE VALUES

12. Does your church have a clear purpose for its existence?
 - (a) If yes, what is it (in just a sentence or two)?
 - (b) If yes, why does your church have such a purpose?
 - (c) If no, why doesn't your church have a purpose for its existence?
13. What are the core values of your church in regard to fulfilling your vision and Mission?

CATEGORY 2: CHURCH GROWTH

14. What is the growth status (numerical) of your Church?
 - (a) Declined
 - (b) Stagnant
 - (c) Slow growth
 - (d) Rapid growth
15. In what way(s) are people mostly added to your church?
 - (a) By conversion
 - (b) By transfer
 - (c) By being born and growing up in the church
16. How often are people who are being saved added to your church?
 - (a) Daily
 - (b) Weekly
 - (c) Monthly
 - (d) Rarely
17. What is your church doing or not doing that could cause the above (16) situation?
18. Is your church growing spiritually?
 - (a) If there is growth, what are some indicators of that growth?
 - (b) If there is growth, what can you attribute it to?
 - (c) If there is no spiritual growth, why?
19. What does your church do with new converts?
20. In what ways does the church leadership help believers to mature in Christ?
21. Syncretism may be one of the dangers believers may face in your context (Syncretism is when we mix elements of traditional African religion and traditions that cannot be harmonized with the Gospel and which prevents spiritual development).
 - (a) If so, what kind of Christians does your church strive to produce?
 - (b) How does your church strive to produce such kind of Christians?
 - (c) In what ways do Christians reflect the lordship of Jesus over their lives?
22. How do believers demonstrate their love for God?
23. How is love for one another demonstrated?

24. What avenues does your church use to conduct Bible study?
- (a) Are most of the members committed to Bible study?
 - (b) If they are, what makes them committed to Bible study?
 - (a) If they are not committed, why?
25. Are most members committed to church fellowship?
- (a) If they are, what makes them committed?
 - (b) If they are not, why?
26. Are most members committed to prayer?
- (a) If they are, what makes them committed?
 - (b) If they are not, why?
27. What are the key ministries in your church?
28. Why do you have these ministries?
29. How does the leadership help members to discover and use their spiritual gifts to serve God in the church? Are most members able to use their gifts to serve God and so contribute to the growth of the church? If not, why?

CATEGORY 3: PASSION AND PARTICIPATION OF MEMBERS IN EVANGELISM

30. Does your church have a passion to win non-Christians to Christ?
- (a) If yes, how is that passion expressed?
 - (b) If yes, what is its basis?
 - (c) If no, why?
31. Does your church have a serious evangelistic outreach programme?
- (a) If yes, who participate in that programme?
 - (b) Whom do you reach out to?
 - (c) Where is outreach done?
 - (d) When is outreach done?
32. Are all church members zealous to reach out to others with the gospel?
- (a) If yes, what makes them zealous?
 - (b) If no, why?
33. If your church is evangelistic:
- a) What message do you share?
 - b) Why is that message shared?
 - c) What methods do you use?

- d) How is having the Bible in the respondent's language valuable?
34. Since you became a member of this church, have you ever led any person to Jesus Christ as his/her personal Saviour and Lord?
- (a) If yes, when and how did you do it?
- (b) If no, why?

CATEGORY 4: MOTIVATIONS FOR EVANGELISM

35. In what ways does the church leadership motivate members to win others to Christ?
36. How often does the pulpit ministry challenge believers to go and win non-Christians?
37. Do church leaders show genuine concern for the lost in the surrounding Community?
- (a) If yes, how?
- (b) If no, why?
38. Why should you and all other church members and leaders reach out to non-Christians?

CATEGORY 5: METHODS IN EVANGELISM

39. Does your church conduct training programs to equip members to win others to Christ?
- a) If yes, how is it done?
- b) How effective is it
- c) If no, why not?
40. Does the training of members deal with holistic ministry (to evangelise with the demonstration of practical love)?
- a) If yes, what are the major components of that training?
- (b) If no, why?
41. Does your church have an established Prayer and Intercession ministry?
- (a) If yes, does it involve all members?
- (b) When are prayers and Intercession conducted?
- (c) What are the key prayer items?
- (d) How much intercession is done for the following?
- (i) The lost

(ii) Missionaries

(iii) The community where missionaries work

42. What evangelistic methods are more appropriate in your context and why?

43. Do these evangelistic methods reflect a high view of Scripture, Sin, the role of the Holy Spirit and the new birth in conversion?

(a) If yes, explain briefly how

(b) If no, why?

CATEGORY 6: SENDING AND SUPPORTING OFFICIAL MISSIONARIES

44. Does your church send messengers to other places to plant new churches?

(a) If yes, to what places have you ever sent some?

(b) If yes what are the qualifications of those who are sent?

(c) How are these messengers supported?

(d) If no messengers are sent, why?

45. If new churches are planted, are they helped to be indigenous, self-supporting and self-propagating?

CATEGORY 7: SPREADING KINGDOM VALUES IN SOCIETY

46. In what ways does your church show the love of God to the needy, the oppressed and the sick in the community?

(a) If love is shown, how and why?

(b) If no love is shown, why?

47. How do you and other Christians act in a responsible manner as citizens of your Country?

48. In what ways do you and other Christians hinder moral decay in the society where you live and work?

49. In what ways do the lives of Christians witness to the Society?

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