

The church and mission: Challenges to and perspectives from the DRCA (NGKA) in the Free State

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Abstract

The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) is an important church which developed from the missionary work of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). To play a pivotal role in missions this church needs to re-establish its missional character. Research was therefore conducted to establish the challenges to and perspectives from the DRCA on missions. Although the church is involved in missionary work there is a lack of a clear understanding of the task of the church in this regard. Mission should be understood as holistic and the DRCA should take hold of its own future in this regard.

Opsomming

Die kerk en sending: Uitdagings vir en perspektiewe van die NG Kerk in Afrika (NGKA) in die Vrystaat

Die NG Kerk in Afrika (NGKA) is 'n belangrike kerk wat uit die NG Kerk se sending voortgekom het. Om 'n beslissende rol in sending te speel sal hierdie kerk weer sy sendingkarakter moet herstel. Navorsing is gedoen om die uitdagings vir en perspektiewe van die NG Kerk in Afrika (NGKA) te bepaal. Alhoewel die kerk wel by sendingwerk betrokke is, is daar tog 'n gebrek aan 'n duidelike begrip

van die kerk se sendingtaak. Sending moet omvattend verstaan word en die NGKA moet in hierdie verband sy toekoms self betrek.

1 Introduction

The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) came into existence as the result of the missionary work of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). The many congregations of the DRCA confirm the positive results of this mission. During the formation of the Uniting Reformed Church, many congregations, mostly in the Free State, remained as the DRCA. The DRCA is still a church of note in this and other areas, for instance in the Northern Cape. Mission was very important for the DRC. However, is this also the case for the DRCA? This needs to be researched.

2. Purpose of the study and problem statement

The purpose of the study is to determine the meaning of and the challenges encountered with regard to the mission concept by reviewing the literature of the DRCA and the empirical research done within the DRCA. The second purpose of the study is to provide motivation and positive guidelines for the revival of missionary work within the DRCA.

The problem investigated in this study was the realisation that the DRCA still has historical challenges regarding participating in mission, financial dependency and spiritual enrichment. Furthermore, more than 50% of the congregations of the DRCA that sent administration forms to the head office between 2008 and 2010 mention that nothing or not much was contributed to mission in Lesotho. Furthermore, more than 67% report that nothing or not many mission activities took place in their congregations between 2008 and 2010. The church that does not engage in mission is doomed to diminish or is transgressing the command of our Lord as in Mt 28:19. Briefly, the problems investigated are: What is the understanding of mission within the DRCA? and To what extent is the DRCA involved in mission?

The general background of the community of faith is evaluated. The relation between church and mission is ascertained by reviewing relevant literature. Empirical research was conducted among church leaders of the DRCA. The research was qualitative.

The main research question is What are the views of the DRCA regarding mission and how can it be changed if found lacking?

3. Narrative of the DRCA

The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) is the product of the mission work of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). Initially the church had different names in different provinces. For example: in the Free State it was known as the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (established in 1910); in the Transvaal as the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (established 1932); in the Western Cape as the Dutch Bantu Church in South Africa (established in 1935); and in Natal as the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (established in 1952). The four churches adopted the name Dutch Reformed Church in Africa in Kroonstad in 1963 (Crafford, 1982:564). The name DRCA was compiled by including DRC in respect for its mother church, and adding 'in Africa' to open it up to other reformed churches in Africa to join them (Crafford, 1982:564). The District Synod of the DRCA Transvaal was divided into the Northern and the Southern Transvaal regions in 1964. In 1966 the DRCA Phororo Synod was established, which included areas of the North West and the Northern Cape, and in 1976 the DRCA Eastern Cape was also established, which included areas such as Ciskei and Transkei. In summary, before 1994, the DRCA had seven synods, namely Northern and Southern Transvaal, the Orange Free State, Phororo, the Eastern Cape, Natal, and the Western Cape. After 1994, due to schism, the DRCA was left with two synods, namely that of Phororo and the Orange Free State. However, a third had been re-established in 2010, namely the Northern and Southern Transvaal Synod (Crafford, 1982:564).

3.1 The narrative of the Free State DRCA Synod

Mission played an important role in the earliest synod meetings of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in the Free State. At the first Synod in 1864, Article 59 of the laws and statutes stated that each congregation is responsible for mission within its own congregation's borders. A mother church and a mission church were subsequently established. In the earliest days, the ministers of the DRC also served the people in the area. At the second Synod in 1867, a Synodic Mission Committee (SMK) was formed with three

members, namely PAC van Heyningen, CM Fraser and AP Meiring. They had to compile a mission statement. Mission was strongly emphasised and it was also emphasised that each of the congregations should do missionary work in their surrounding areas. It should have been mission from the church and the primary congregation had to do the missionary work. Each minister had to do missionary work in his own area. The literature of 1884 mentions for the first time a “plaaslike sending kommissie (PSK)” [local mission commission] from the church council of Bethlehem. Three phases can be identified. Firstly, the ministers of religion of a certain congregation took it upon themselves to proclaim the Word to the people. Some of these early ministers include Rev. Charles Petrus Theron, MacKenzie Fraser, Dirk Jacobus Minnaar, and Albertus Petrus Meiring. The second phase started with the introduction of black catechism (Swart kategese). Black catechists were appointed to work in the congregations of the people in the area. Buildings were later erected. The third phase involved appointing missionaries to proclaim the Word of God in the different areas. It is clear that, from the beginning, the DRC had a strong vision regarding mission in the Free State (Crafford, 1982:124).

The DRCA Synod in the Free State has about 65 ministers and 145 congregations. In 2012, about 60% of the ministers were older than 65 years, and about eight qualifying ministers did not have congregations.

3.2 Historical achievements

Throughout history the DRCA had engaged in mission. Since 1975 missionary work was done in areas such as Lesotho, Thaba 'Nchu, Qwaqwa, farms and in the hostels of the industrial and mining sectors in Sasolburg, Vierfontein and Welkom. As part of diaconia, the DRCA Free State was involved in projects to care for the orphans, the disabled, the elderly, and disabled young people in areas such as Thaba 'Nchu and Qwaqwa. The DRCA membership increased tremendously because of intensive missionary activities. For example, according to the minutes of the 20th Synod of the DRCA Free State at Reitz West, the 1975 membership of the DRCA in Lesotho increased by more than 60% since 1971. In other areas, such as mining and industrial hostels, Qwaqwa and Thaba 'Nchu, the church made great progress in terms of mission and membership growth.

It must be noted that mission was done in partnership with the DRC. The funding and leadership came mainly from the DRC. However, the role played by the DRCA leadership and its members should also be acknowledged. Within the DRCA social engagement consisted of medical, humanitarian and educational projects. With regard to education, schools such as the John Ross Junior School, Thiboloha and Tshiya College of Education in Qwaqwa and various theological seminaries in different parts of the country were built through partnership of the DRC and DRCA. In terms of medical mission, the Elizabeth Ross Hospital in Qwaqwa resulted from the partnership of the DRC and the DRCA. Humanitarian aid within the DRCA is in the form of food parcels, clothes and HIV/Aids education, presented randomly in the congregations. It is, however, more intensively done in Botshabelo (Crafford, 1982:304ff.).

3.3 Historical and contemporary challenges of the DRCA

The researcher realised that the DRCA still has many of its historical problems, as mentioned by Crafford (1982:119,120):

- participation in missionary activities and outreach;
- financial dependency;
- Christian and spiritual enrichment of leadership and lay people; and
- empowering the congregation.

In addition to the historical challenge, the DRCA currently has the following challenges:

- legacy of missionary activity;
- a shift from 'one size fits all' worship service;
- prosperity gospel;
- gospel-culture relationship;
- globalisation; and
- lack of ministers (which includes issues such as aging leadership and overworked ministers).

4. The church and mission

Huffman (2012:22) explains mission as "Mission, properly speaking, always involves the 'sentness' of the church. It has an outward, reaching or stretching, dynamic or moving character; we must clearly differentiate mission from tending the internal matters of the church, 'maintenance'."

In present day missiology, the view of the church and the role of the church in mission are again vigorously debated. Different groups have different views on the role of the church.

Bunkowske (2012:46) states that the evangelism process is to be natural, relevant, non-invasive, reproducible, transferable, and sustainable. The task of the church in this world and its view of mission must therefore be ascertained again. Wright (2006:392) writes:

“In short, as God’s covenant people, Christians are meant to be

- * a people who are light to the world by their good lives (1 Pet)
- * a people who are learning obedience and teaching it to the nations (Mt)
- * a people who love one another in order to show who they belong to (Jn)

It would be hard to find a more concise articulation of the integration of Christian ethics and Christian mission.”

It is very important to ask whether it is still possible to speak of mission in the church and it is also very important to ask What is the role of the church when we speak about mission in the church? What is the specific role and task of the church in this regard?

Although the concept of *Missio Dei* is still widely accepted and still very relevant, Duraisingh (2010:20) also refers to the concept of *Concursus Dei* as a vision for the church’s mission. The broadness of this concept is acceptable as long as it does not infringe on the *Missio Dei*: “A reconstruction of the vision of *Concursus Dei* will provide us with a pregnant motif for re-framing the shape of the church’s responsive mission. It also can broaden our understanding of the nature of the relationship between God and the world and enrich our reformulation of the nature of the church within that relation. For at the base of *Concursus Dei* is a vision of God’s unceasing accompaniment with creation, calling and evoking its participation in God-movement as God leads it patiently and persuasively, both in judgment and grace, to its future in God’s future.”

Mission is a comprehensive concept. Missiologists of the previous century elaborated on the vast implications of mission in the world. It is no longer only the salvation of the soul and the proclamation of the Good News to the individual. Mission entails much more: it entails a person’s whole life and therefore the main issues of

mission must always be taken into consideration. Kirk (1999:231) explains, "Finally, some will continue to strive hard to integrate the best aspects of all the different emphases. Their missiology will stress the need to work with others on common social and political agendas, even where motivations may be quite distinct. At the same time, they will be cautious in interpreting this work as in itself redemptive. Indeed, they will wish to witness salvation in Jesus Christ at appropriate times in their co-operative work with people of other faiths and none."

Steinbronn (2012:60) writes that each believer has the task of getting involved. "Moreover, God is working out His saving plan in and through His chosen and redeemed people, and **each believer** has a responsibility for advancing the saving purposes of God in the world. Furthermore, each lampstand must realize that it is the Church, the body of Christ, in its locality and must corporately fulfil its mission and ministry in that place (and to the ends of the earth)."

Kolb (2012:15) explains that love must be central in mission: "What is also clear is that the church ceases to be all that it can be according to Christ's command and expectation when it does not practice its sentness, in love. For to the end of time, it is called to give witness that Jesus is the Messiah who delivers people trapped in the sinfulness of this world, that He is the One like a son of man who has everlasting and indestructible dominion, glory, and kingships, whom all peoples, nations, and languages serve, yet who came Himself to serve and to be a ransom for many."

Mission entails kerugma. Proclaiming the Word of God remains essential. It is very important to acknowledge that the kerugma touches each person in his or her heart so that it must be proclaimed that the person be acknowledged and acknowledge him- or herself the fullness of the glory of God.

Secondly, mission also entails diaconia, which means service. The implication of Jesus' washing of the feet in John 13 highlights the fact that He, as servant, also served others. Diaconia means that in all aspects, others must also be served, including economic and social aspects of this life in the world.

Frambach (2010:9) writes, "The purpose of mission and evangelical living is not merely for the sake of the church. Rather, it is to express God's faithfulness to God's saving intention for the entire creation."

Diaconia means that the fullness of mission includes service to the poorest of the poor and those who are struggling with ailments and sickness. The fullness of the Gospel of Christ must come to people so that they can experience the presence of the life of God and the applications of his wonderful presence. Mission, as diaconia, and as service, therefore, includes a definite and specific outreach of the church in the congregation to people in need of service.

Du Plessis (2009:119) explains that even in difficult circumstances service and witness is important. “Unlike in Paul’s letters, in Acts the regular *imprisonment of Jesus’ followers* (of both Peter and Paul) does not present opportunities to write letters to congregations, but provides the ideal opportunities to witness. The prison indeed became one of the primary and most fruitful spaces preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. As such it was a fulfilment of Jesus’ promise in Luke 21:12-19. In both Luke and Acts the outcome of this legal procedure against Jesus (and later also against members of the faith community) attests to the righteousness/integrity of Jesus (and his followers) – it being a case of ethical persuasion (Aristotle’s ethos).”

Thirdly, *koinonia*, which means fellowship, is very important. Mission emphasises that, in this present world where people are pulled apart, *koinonia* is essential, reaching out to one another, being present in one another’s presence in the presence of God – reaching out to one another because God reached out to us. This *koinonia*, this fellowship, means that mission also has an aspect where love between human beings will be emphasised in the fact that they reach out to one another. This must also be proclaimed to different people and different groups so that the Christians, in themselves reaching out in mission to others, not only do this from their own perspective, but also from the perspective of the Kingdom of God. It includes all people and trying to reach out to all people, listening to the needs of all people and bringing all people together to assist people in reaching the fullness of God. Thus, *koinonia* is important to different groups and in different settings. It means that people in different challenging situations will be able to reach out to one another in brotherly and sisterly love. They will be able to help one another and be able to proclaim this new life in Christ, living with one another and proclaiming that Christ is good and that God leads us in this fellowship with one another.

This also means that there should be witness, *marturia*. Mission always had a very important aspect of witness to it. Witness to the world was always essential, and the witness to the world that Christ is Lord and that Christ brings about redemption and that He brings a fullness of salvation, is still very important. However, *marturia* has a new implication, an implication of living a truly Christian life in this life and that through the life you live you proclaim the wonders of God and the fullness of His salvation. These aspects of salvation should be proclaimed to all people so that they can know and acknowledge the fullness of the life in Christ. *Marturia* thus includes not only word of mouth proclamation. It does not only mean that we witness by telling other people about Christ. It also means that a church should witness in following Christ, in the footsteps of Christ, bringing the word of God to people so that the fullness of the Gospel of Christ can come to people and they can experience the total fullness of this redemption in Christ. This means that we should proclaim the wonders of the glory of God in Christ, but in mission, service the church.

Serving the liturgy is also important. Glory and enjoying the fullness of God's grace in the church service means that we proclaim the fullness of God, that we believe in God, that we experience God and that we proclaim that in fullness of the congregation when they meet together, so that this proclamation can go out into the whole world and all people can hear this.

The holiness of the church directs this endeavour. Wright (2006:373) writes, "*Holiness, symbolic and ethical*. This practical task of holiness had two dimensions. It had a *symbolic* dimension, in which Israel gave expression to their distinctiveness from the nations through a complex system of clean and unclean regulations regarding animals, food and other daily eventualities. It is important to recognize this (national distinctiveness from the other nations) as the underlying rationale for the clean-unclean distinction. There are various ways in which the specific categories and what was included in them may be explained from an anthropological perspective. But the theological explanation given in the text for the system as a whole is that it represented distinction between Israel and the nations."

Thus, mission has different aspects to it that is very important. Presently, new views of the church in mission had come to the fore. We think of Van Engen's (1991) views of the church being very

important in the sense of the church being God's missionary people. That means that the unity of the church, the holiness of the church, the sanctity of the church, the apostolicity of the church, should always be in the centre of our proclamation. These aspects of the church should be radical and complete in the church so that it should be proclaimed in the world so that all should acknowledge that the church is One in Christ, that the church is Holy in Christ, that the church is Universal in Christ, and that the church is Apostolic in Christ. But also that it is not only a noun telling people about these different attributes of the church, but also an adverb, thus meaning that the church should more and more become what it is in this proclamation of being the church of God.

5. Christianity in Africa

We now turn to the type of Christianity brought to Africa by the missionaries and the type of mission that should be proclaimed. Van der Walt (1994:109) proclaims that a wrong kind of Christianity was introduced in Africa; a dualistic Christianity, where on the one hand Christ was viewed as only important for different parts of life and not for all the aspects of life and for all aspects of the life in which we deal. He warns against a dualistic Christian worldview and says dualistic worldview brings a separation between the Kingdom of this world and the Kingdom of God; there is a clear distinction being brought about between the secular and the religious autonomist man and sovereign God. He warns against this, not to deduce from different texts in the Bible that there is only a heavenly world and this world, and that there should be separation from this. Van der Walt (1994:110) writes, "Christ's kingdom is certainly not *from* (out of) this world, but it is very clearly intended *for* this world and directed *towards* this world. We have to find the 'treasures in heaven' *here on earth*, in our daily, often difficult labour (cf. Matthew 13:44). This treasure is the same as God's kingdom, where we obey God's commandments – *here and now*. Paul's expression 'the things that are in heaven' should also not be contrasted with 'the things of the earth', but with *sinful things* (cf. Colossians 3:5, 8, 9). The 'things of heaven' are gifts which the Holy Spirit gives to people *on earth* (Colossians 3:12-17). The expression 'kingdom of heaven' (used by Matthew because his Gospel was written for Jewish people who avoided using the name of God) does not indicate that his kingdom has nothing to do with this earth. It simply

indicates that its *origin* is with the God in heaven.” Therefore, we should take cognisance of the fact that, in mission, we should bring about a clear view of the importance of this world and our task to be involved in this world. Therefore, a radical Christian worldview is necessary where all the different aspects of life come under the supervision of God’s word. Van der Walt continues (1994:116) “The only other options are the following: one either *withdraws* from the world (tries to live *above*, *next* to or *against* the world) or one is *drawn into* this world. In the first case one *isolates* oneself from the world and in the second one *identifies* with the (sinful) world. But, in both cases one becomes powerless to improve the world, because when one isolates oneself, one becomes irrelevant, and when one identifies with or accommodates the world, one loses one’s identity as a Christian. In the first case, the salt was kept in a salt shaker and in the second case the salt has lost its saltiness. It’s only when the salt is mixed with its environment that it can be effective!”

6. Qualitative empirical research

6.1 Mission concept and practice within the DRCA

This survey was done in 2012 at one of the official workshops for the DRCA leadership of the Free State Synod. In this context, leadership implies ministers, elders and deacons. From the 60 questionnaires distributed, only 32 questionnaires were returned. The leadership was allowed to complete the questionnaires at the workshop. All respondents gave permission for the research. The reason the questionnaires were distributed at the workshop and the insistence that they should be completed at the workshop was that many of the church leadership members was not familiar with this kind of study. Secondly, if there was any need for assistance, it could be provided on site. Thirdly, to facilitate the completion of the questionnaires and saving time as most respondents do not respond in time when asked to complete the questionnaires at home. Fourthly, the researcher realised that some of the members of the leadership, like the elders and deacons, are illiterate and therefore might need special assistance to complete the questionnaire.

6.2 Background to the study

This study was motivated by an analysis of the DRCA forms of mission activities from 2008 to 2010 submitted to the head office of

the DRCA, Free State, in Bloemfontein. These forms report on mission activities in the congregations and are completed by the congregations and submitted to the presbytery as reports to the Synodic Mission Commission of the DRCA, Free State Synod. These forms are submitted to the head office of the DRCA, Free State annually to be evaluated by the Mission Commission, which in turn drafts a report to the DRCA, Free State Synod. Usually the church council or the mission committee within the local congregation completes these forms. The form has seven major questions on mission within the DRCA but only four questions were analysed. The report from that analysis prompted further research on the mission concept within the DRCA in the Free State. The table below presents results of the analysis.

Does your congregation know about mission in Lesotho and in general?						
	2010		2009		2008	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Yes	17	81%	35	70%	25	76%
No	4	19%	15	30%	8	24%
Total	21	100%	50	100%	33	100%

The table above indicates that consciousness of mission within the DRCA has grown.

How much did your congregation contribute to mission in Lesotho?								
	2010		2009			2008		
	Freq	%		Freq	%		Freq	%
Nothing	11	52%	Nothing	32	64%	Nothing	25	76%
R60	3	14%	R250	13	26%	R550	7	21%
R100	2	10%	R1000	3	6%	R2700	1	3%
R300	5	24%	R2000	2	4%	-		
Total	21	100%		50	100		33	100%

The concern is that nothing or not much is contributed financially to the mission in Lesotho.

Besides mission in Lesotho, what other mission activities did your congregation do in its own area?						
	2010		2009		2008	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Nothing	14	67%	41	82%	25	76%
Charity to the needy (clothes, food parcel, fundraising, witnessing)	7	33%	9	18%	8	24%
Total	21	100%	50	100%	33	100%

Mission activities in local congregations consist of giving clothes, food, money and witnessing in the informal settlement areas near the congregations.

What is done to motivate congregation members to get involved in mission activities in Lesotho and mission in general?						
	2010		2009		2008	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Nothing	13	61%	23	46%	13	39%
Prayer, motivation to offer money, clothes, and food parcels	8	39%	27	54%	20	61%
Total	21	100%	50	100%	33	100%

At least attempts are made to motivate members to engage in mission but it is not enough, based on the increasing percentage of members not motivated to engage in mission.

From the above analyses, it is evident that mission activities are declining within the congregations of the DRCA, Free State. This should be a matter of concern within the DRCA and for its leadership, because a church that does not engage in mission is either busy with its own agenda or transgresses its divine mandate of the Great Commission (Mt 28). Furthermore, the above-mentioned

results indicate that there is a narrow understanding of mission within the congregations of the DRCA, Free State, which is a matter that needs further research.

6.3 What is mission within the context of the DRCA, Free State congregations (report from survey)

6.3.1 Personal view of mission

What is your understanding on mission?	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Preaching/spreading the Word of God	20	62.5
Going out/being sent into the world and to different places	3	9.4
Other	9	28.1
Total	32	100.0

The above indicates a narrow personal view of mission.

From the understanding of the history of mission one realises that mission can be understood from a personal and a theological synopsis (Bosch, 2000:1). According to Bosch (2000:1) a nuanced definition of mission, to name but a few, is firstly, sending of missionaries to a designated territory. Secondly, proclaiming of the gospel to the non-believers in Christ. Lastly, the activities of the local congregation without a resident minister still depending on the older congregation for support. Bosch (2000:1) further argues that the theological synoptic view of mission is propagation of faith, expansion of the reign of God, conversion of the non-believers and the founding of new churches. From the above argument, one could ask Between the personal perspective and theological synopsis, which one is dominant within the DRCA?

From the survey done within the congregations of the DRCA, Free State, the respondents gave their personal opinion concerning mission as follows: 62.5% of the respondents understand mission as preaching and spreading the Word of God (kerugma). In the researcher's experience, in the congregations of the DRCA, Free State, the spreading of the Word of God could mean preaching from the pulpit, visiting the elderly and the sick to proclaim the gospel of hope, preaching in the streets during youth revival or Easter Sunday of resurrection or going to designated area like Lesotho to proclaim the gospel. The motivating factor is that 9.4% of respondents regard mission as going out into the world (diaconia) or being sent into the world to proclaim the gospel. It

is acknowledged that the congregations of the DRCA, Free State have missionaries in Lesotho. However, it should be understood that going out in the context of the congregations of the DRCA, Free State, means going around the vicinity of the congregation to proclaim the gospel. Initially, mission within the DRCA, Free State Synod was within the borders of the Republic of South Africa, but since 1975 the DRCA, Free State Synod expanded the horizon of its mission to Lesotho. In this endeavour, each presbytery was assigned a congregation in Lesotho as its field in mission. By assigning these congregations in Lesotho to the presbyteries of the DRCA, Free State Synod, the objective was to provide an opportunity for the congregations of the DRCA, Free State, to practise mission to other people in a different context. Unfortunately the analyses of the DRCA, Free State administration forms between 2008 and 2010 reveal that since 2008 more than 50% of the congregations had not done much for mission in Lesotho.

Furthermore, about 28.1% of the respondents understand mission as making disciples, doing outreach, and being sent by a congregation as missionary to a designated place. From the above argument, it seems very clear that the respondents have a narrow understanding of mission rather than a holistic view. The corollary of this may be multiple factors, discussed later.

6.3.2 Other perspective of mission from members of the DRCA, Free State

Views of mission in the DRCA	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Facilitate/strengthen an understanding of the Word of God	6	19.4
DRCA standpoint is vague/non-existent	3	9.7
An issue that needs serious attention	2	6.5
Spreading/teaching the Word of God	16	51.6
Responsibility of white church	2	6.5
Reaching out to others/ helping others in need	1	3.2
Other	1	3.2
Total	31	100.0
Missing	1	
Total	32	

The above still emphasises a narrow view of mission.

This question was included to test what respondents know about mission from the official documents, workshops and interaction with the church leadership and each other. From the responses above it is clear that the dominating view is still narrow, understanding mission as kerugma or diaconia. As verification, 51.6% of the respondents still understand mission as understanding and teaching the Word of God (kerugma) while 3.2% suggest reaching out to the needy (diaconia). However, the researchers think that this is part of the historical problem, namely the idea that mission is the responsibility of the white church (6.5% of the respondents). Some ministers the researchers interacted with hinted that they no longer do farm ministry because the white church is no longer prepared to fund that mission project. In fact, one of the ministers said that it is the responsibility of the white DRC to fund farm ministry. This highlighted one of the historical problems of participation of the DRCA in mission and the issue of financial dependence on the DRC for mission.

6.3.3 Significance of mission

Is mission important?		Frequency	Valid Percentage
Valid	Yes	30	96.8
	No	1	3.2
	Total	31	100.0
	Missing	1	
Total	32		

Mission is still viewed pivotal within the DRCA, Free State.

6.3.4 Reasons for the significance of mission

Is mission important? Reason	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Purpose/task/duty of all believers	8	26.7
Helps church to grow/expand	4	13.3
First make sure that all is in order in our own back yard	1	3.3
Promotes spiritual growth/revival/understanding	14	46.7
A way to reach out and help others in need	3	10.0
Total	30	100.0
Missing	2	
Total	32	

The above indicates the positive contribution of mission.

The theological synopsis of mission in the DRCA from its church order 1991, Article 46, states that mission is the proclamation of the good news of Christ in word and deed to the non-believers. This proclamation is the responsibility of every individual, including the members and church council. Article 46 of the DRCA further adds that, if necessary, mission can be done by the whole church on the level of the synod or in partnership with other Dutch Reformed families of churches.

The mere fact of including the mission policy within the church order of the DRCA, Free State Synod, is an indication that the DRCA, Free State Synod is concerned about mission. However, the evolving question would be To what extent? The survey indicated that about 96.8% of the respondents suggest that mission is still very significant within the church because it promotes growth in church membership, it is the task of every believer (26.7%), and it is an outreach to the needy (10%). The point worth noting is the 46.7% that highlights that mission promotes spiritual growth. The researchers think that this latter response suggests a solution to one of the historical challenges of the DRCA, namely to establish more spiritual enrichment of its members.

From the Church Order of the DRCA, Free State Synod 1991, Article 46, the following question arises. To what extent are the individual members involved in mission? This question is asked because the DRCA administration forms sent to the head office between 2008 and 2010 indicate that more than 50% of the congregations of the DRCA, Free State Synod mention that nothing or not much was contributed to mission in Lesotho. Furthermore, more than 67% report that nothing or not many mission activities was undertaken in their congregations between 2008 and 2010. The DRCA administration forms between 2008 and 2010 reveal that the leadership and the congregations within the DRCA need serious revival with regard to mission in Lesotho. Secondly, what is the implication of mission in partnership with the Dutch Reformed (DR) family of churches? This question is asked in relation to Pauw's (2007:90) remark that the DRC's relationship with its sister churches was paternalistic. This issue of paternalistic relationship by the DRC has a long history with the DR family of churches. According to Pauw (2007:77-92) the paternalistic attitude was manifested in a form of veto rights and control of the immovable

property of the sister churches. This had dire consequences of jeopardising the independence of sister churches and increasing distrust. In the context of the DRCA it led to too much dependence on the DRC for finance and mission. This is the reason that even at this time in history we still have some members of the DRCA thinking that mission is the responsibility of the white DRC. However, the present status of mission between the DRCA, Free State and the DRC Free State is that of partnership though DRC Free State is still contributing the larger share to fund mission in Lesotho.

6.4.1. *Involvement of the congregation in mission*

How is your congregation involved in mission?	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Giving out Bibles/clothes/food/money to the needy	4	12.5
Reaching out/visiting others in our own community and neighbouring communities	6	18.8
Supporting ministries in neighbouring/other countries	4	12.5
Have a committee/group dedicated to mission work	3	9.4
Congregation is not much involved in mission work	7	21.9
Through projects that focus on youth	3	9.4
Through prayer/evangelisation	5	15.6
Total	32	100.0

The congregations are still not contributing much to mission.

As mentioned above mission is not only about the salvation of the soul and the proclamation of the good news to the individual; mission entails much more. Mission entails the whole life of a person; hence mission must transform the whole life of the person to enable him/her to experience total redemption of Christ. Mission must be understood as an holistic calling for the purpose of being in the world to do active service of love through the united witness of faith in Christ (Van der Watt, 2010:7). This indicates that mission has now shifted from a narrow focus to a wider and multifaceted focus. In the DRCA, Free State, the activities of mission are as follows: 12.5% respondents practice mission as diaconia in the form of giving food, clothes and money to the needy,

while another 12.5% of the respondents do their mission in distant places and in this context, it can be in Lesotho. Furthermore, about 18.8% of the respondents practice mission as koinonia within their own vicinity, which might imply among their own members or in the surrounding community. Again, 15.6% of the respondents practice mission as preaching and proclamation of the gospel (kerugma).

It is a concern to find that 21.9% of the respondents still think that their congregations are not much involved in mission. The DRCA, Free State Synod should take note of this and address this challenge. Secondly, 18.8% regard their involvement as visiting others in the communities. The researcher understands this as maybe meaning regular house visits to the members of the congregation in times of need or during a normal visit. Of the respondents 15.6% regard participation as praying, which is necessary, but not enough.

6.4.2. *To what extent does preaching contribute to mission?*

Do you preach concerning missions?	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Yes	29	93.5
No	2	6.5
Total	31	100.0
Missing	1	
Total	32	

Preaching is the main motivating factor in mission.

6.4.3. *Factors contributing to motivation in mission*

Do you preach concerning missions and how? Reason	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Through spiritual guidance/motivation/ revival	3	10.0
Through preaching the Word of God	14	46.7
Matthew 28: 19-20	6	20.0
Valid Through prayer	1	3.3
By reaching out/helping others in need	2	6.7
Through Bible study	2	6.7
Other	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0
Missing	2	
Total	32	

The main text used to motivate mission is Matthew 28:19-20.

It is positive to realise that 93.5% of the respondents preach about mission. However, what remains to be determined is the manner in which those sermons persuade a congregation to mission. From the survey it seems that the practical activity to motivate for the practice of mission is preaching (46.7%), the mission text most often used being Matt 28:19-20. Others are spiritual guidance (10%), Bible study (6.7%), reaching out and prayer (6.7%).

6.5.1. Mission and involvement in outreach.

Are you involved in outreach		Frequency	Valid Percentage
Valid	Yes	21	65.6
	No	11	34.4
	Total	32	100.0

DRCA regard outreach as important for mission.

6.5.2. Description of involvement in outreach

Involvement in outreach: Description	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Reaching out/visiting others in need	5	20.0
Cooperation with other/neighbouring churches	2	8.0
Preaching the Word of God	2	8.0
Supporting ministries in neighbouring/ other countries	6	24.0
Not involved in outreach	6	24.0
Other	1	4.0
Through women and/or youth projects	3	12.0
Total	25	100.0
Missing	7	
Total	32	

The concept outreach needs to be unpacked.

The concept of outreach needs to be unpacked to be understood. In the DRCA outreach may mean that the minister or elder goes to the farm for ministry, or that the members of the congregation visit other members of the congregation for spiritual revival. Furthermore, to a limited extent, yet still a growing tendency, outreach within the DRCA can mean visiting the community centres of the orphans, the sick or the elderly. From the survey, it seems

that only 65.6% of the respondents' congregations engage in outreach activities and sadly, 34.4% do nothing in terms of outreach. In the DRCA the type of outreach includes visiting other congregations for spiritual revival (24%), reaching to the needy in orphanages (20%) and doing projects (12%).

6.6.1. *Missionary mindedness*

Is the congregation missionary minded?	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Yes	15	50.0
No	15	50.0
Total	30	100.0
Missing System	2	
Total	32	

It is disturbing to see 50% of congregations not missionary minded.

6.6.2. *Reasons for congregation being missionary minded*

Is the congregation missionary minded? Reason	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Congregation members uninformed/ need deeper understanding of mission	10	35.7
Responsibility of church leaders/white church	1	3.6
Members become discouraged	4	14.3
By visiting/attending other churches	2	7.1
Church is misguided	2	7.1
Congregation provide financial support to mission	1	3.6
Attending church services/gatherings	3	10.7
By sending out missionaries	3	10.7
Youth is involved	1	3.6
Preaching the Word of God	1	3.6
Total	28	100.0
Missing	4	
Total	32	

The above reasons indicate that leadership needs to review their role in mission.

In this instance, the question was about whether the congregations, not the respondents, are missionary minded. In response, 50% of the respondents agreed and the other 50% denied that congregations are missionary minded. The researcher thinks that this is a matter of concern and can attest that from the administration forms on mission submitted to the DRCA head office in the Free State between 2008 and 2010, more than 19% of the congregations reported that they do not know anything about mission in Lesotho. The reasons given for not being missionary minded are that members are not well informed about mission (35.7%), members are not motivated (14.3%), poor leadership in mission (7.1%) while about 3.6% of the respondents responded that it is because mission is still regarded as the responsibility of the leadership and the white church (3.6%).

6.7.1. Increasing missionary involvement

How would you increase missionary involvement in your church?	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Through preaching the Word of God	7	23.3
By giving members the opportunity to become involved	8	26.7
Through prayer	2	6.7
By creating awareness/educating people/workshops	9	30.0
Through special committees	1	3.3
By supporting the church in neighbouring/other countries	2	6.7
Not much have been done	1	3.3
Total	30	100.0
Missing	2	
Total	32	

Training and creating an opportunity for mission could improve mission in the church.

On the issue of how the respondents could increase their missionary involvement, about 26.7% responded that it could be by encouraging members to participate in mission projects, 23.3% reported by preaching, and 30% by training in workshops

6.7.2. *Synod involvement*

How should the synod be involved?	Frequency	Valid Percentage
By motivating/creating a missionary vision	7	22.6
By providing ministers	2	6.5
By workshops/ conferences/education/ creating awareness	6	19.4
By providing financial help	4	12.9
By enforcing missionary work among ministers	1	3.2
By coordinating/ managing/planning/ researching missionary projects	11	35.5
Total	31	100.0
Missing	1	
Total	32	

Again, the DRCA, Free State leadership needs to review their role in mission.

About the role of the synod in mission, the respondents mention that the synod could be involved through research projects (35.5%), mission vision (22.65%), or workshops on mission (19.4%). At the moment the synod engages in workshops on mission but it seems as if most of these workshops are on the presbytery level as attested in several administration forms of the DRCA, Free State Synod between 2008 and 2010.

6.7.2. *Inspiration to mission*

How to inspire people concerning missionary work?	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Through preaching the Word of God	5	17.2
By giving members the opportunity to become involved	3	10.3
Through prayer	2	6.9
By creating awareness/educating people/workshops	12	41.4
Through special committees	3	10.3
Through Bible study	3	10.3
By giving more money to the church	1	3.4
Total	29	100.0
Missing	3	
Total	32	

Creating opportunities and workshops are essential tools to improve mission.

6.8.1. Future of mission

Future of mission generally?	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Positive	13	44.8
Unclear	4	13.8
Negative	4	13.8
Depends... there needs to be change within the church	8	27.6
Total	29	100.0
Missing	3	
Total	32	

It is motivating to see positivity about the future of mission in the DRCA, Free State.

It is motivating to realise that more than 40% of the respondents view the future of mission as positive in general and within the DRCA specifically. Mission within the DRCA was an instrument that historically developed the DRCA to be one of the growing and more effective churches. However, when the vigour for mission diminished, the DRCA started to decline in its ministry, membership numbers and the spirituality of its members. For the DRCA to be a church for the future and an active participant in social development in Africa, it needs to revive its mission endeavours vigorously and powerfully.

7. Factors hindering mission

The above empirical report on mission within the DRCA, Free State, indicates that Christian mission within the DRCA, Free State, is in a crisis and needs urgent and serious attention. The above empirical report on mission could be a common situation within other DRCA synods or the other synods may be worse off than in the Free State. Odendaal (1970:485), as one of the longest serving missionaries within the DRCA, mentions the following factors as those hindering mission within the DRCA. Firstly, the methods of mission (Baur, 1998:93; Christensen & Hutchinson, 1982:17) and indoctrination (Dah, 1982:216) motivated by saving the souls failed to transform the worldview of the Africans (the inner core of the African belief and

culture), hence the Christianity received affected mainly the peripheral factors of African culture. This adversely contributed to recurring concern about the spiritual maturity of most of the DRCA members and increasing tension between Gospel and African culture. Furthermore, a paternalistic attitude of some white missionaries who looked down on African culture (Baur, 2000:96) denied Africans the opportunity to ruminate and meditate on the challenges faced from African culture. Some of these challenges from African culture could be ancestral sacrifices, polygamy and rite of passage rituals. It is possible and appropriate that Africans themselves, through dialogue and interaction with the Holy Spirit, could solve the tension and challenges between African culture and gospel. It is clear that the question on how the Christian church should regard African traditional culture remains essential. In many instances this is still an issue hindering full participation in mission as it is unclear how to deal with it. African ministers and evangelists still struggle with the best way of dealing with traditional culture. In the DRCA this is still a hindrance in the full appreciation of mission.

Secondly, Odendaal (1970:492-525) mentioned that the issue of distrust and recrimination between white and black people due to the Anglo-Boer War and assimilation of missionaries with colonial politics of racism and inequality affected mission considerably (Sundkler & Steed, 2000:329; Kane, 1978:246). Thirdly, the assimilation of Western culture and civilisation with Christianity (Kane, 1978:280). Often many Africans, including members of the DRCA as new converts, were subjected to the Western culture of dressing, singing and even worshipping. Some of the missionaries would often separate the new converts from their tribe (Kane, 1978:259,278; De Jong, 2001:51-58). The challenge of living in a total new hugely secular world is also of much importance and the lack of clear guidelines for the church in dealing with this challenge is also hindering mission. Fourthly, the Ethiopian movement (511) was one of the national movements initiated by black Africans to stand against white imperialism. It was fuelled by black nationalism and called for freeing the Africans from the religious and political tutelage of the Europeans. One of the strongest factors that really hindered mission was that the white missionaries often censored those who associated with the Ethiopian movement. Lastly, the division within the congregations associated with the Ethiopian

movement, frustrations of the members due to white missionaries' leadership practices, lack of a standpoint and faith maturity due to poor training of members and illiteracy. The DRCA also has to deal with the issue of nationalism and black consciences. Political challenges are also hindering a clear missiological perspective.

8. Suggested solution for growth of mission

It is motivating to realise that about 50% of the respondents are positive about the future of mission within the DRCA. For a church to grow spiritually and in membership it needs to engage vigorously in mission. Mission is from anywhere to anywhere and by anyone. Every church, tribe or nation may receive or send missionaries. Firstly, for the DRCA to grow in mission, the attitude of the members of the church will have to change from one of dependence to active engagement. The church should become a positive missionary church. Each member should become a missionary. It is no longer possible to leave the missionary task of the church to white missionaries. The church should be self-reliant. White missionaries from the DRC should also continue to adopt a position of being humble, self-effacing servants and play a supporting role as many did in the past (Kane, 1978:264, Kritzinger, Meiring & Saayman, 1984:21). Secondly, missionaries should work in partnership with the host church to develop churches where culture is held in high regard without becoming racist churches (Carter, 1963:36-38). The church should give clear guidelines on the way in which culture should be appreciated but also be renewed in the light of the Gospel. Thirdly, white missionaries need to have a positive approach to African culture and train and allow more Africans to be missionaries (Baur, 2000:106). If more Africans become missionaries, it would facilitate the issue of indigenisation of the Christian church and enhance spiritual maturity of many Africans. The church should also empower more young people for the ministry. Fourthly, due to its financial crises, the DRCA needs to engage many part-time ministers and emphasise the role of ministers in teaching and training the congregation to be empowered for the ministry of mission (Carter, 1963:49). Congregations have to be equipped to do mission in a modern context, to understand that mission should be holistic and is mandated by the Lord to every believer. Again, the DRCA has to revive its congregations to be

vigorously active in mission as stated by its policy on mission. Lastly, the DRCA has to review its mission strategy, that is, is it wise to separate mission from diaconal services?

A clear view on the essential aspects of mission as a holistic endeavour should be established so as to empower congregations to be involved in all aspects of mission. Obedient to the Holy Spirit foreign as well as internal mission with an emphasis on *kerugma*, *koinonia*, *diaconia* *marturia* and *leiturgia* should be pursued.

9. Conclusion

Mission remains the heart of the church's work. It is clear that the DRCA needs to view the task of involvement in individuals' lives and society as paramount to be the true church. It is not enough for DRCA members to support Christian mission with prayers and gifts, but more effort is needed. Furthermore, it is high time that DRCA congregations notice that if they cease to be missionary minded or become sluggish in mission endeavour, they deny their faith in *Missio Dei* and betray their trust in the Lord Jesus (Kane, 1978:9,15). To become a church for the future the DRCA must take this role very seriously.

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