Pastoring churches in the informal settlement of Khayelitsha in Mangaung, Free State Province, South Africa

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Abstract

Informal settlements around the world have to deal with massive challenges regarding poverty. Serious challenges abound, such as the lack of sufficient housing and infrastructure, high levels of unemployment that result in poverty, illnesses, exacerbated by a lack of medical facilities, crime, power struggles, and lack of education facilities. This is especially the case in Mangaung, South Africa. These conditions especially affect children. Many Christian churches operate in these settlements. They have many different confessions and liturgies. Pastors in these churches play important roles in the congregation and in the lives of the people in these communities. These churches' involvement in these situations must be critically evaluated. Qualitative research on the role of some pastors in the informal settlement in Khayelitsha, Mangaung, established that pastors are positively involved in the community. Pastors giving

hope in desperate situations should be commended. However, pastors propagating prosperity by requesting the poor to give up all they have for a promise of unrealistic wealth should be engaged critically. The church should be followers of Christ, who set the example by being poor Himself.

1. Introduction

New challenges in informal settlements should be addressed if communities globally want to engage poverty. To understand how to empower different groups of people, issues, such as migrants, the dispossessed, the oppressed, and the marginalised are important. In this regard the role and duties of pastors of the church are essential (Ngesi, 2017). Some prosperity churches try to engage the community by promising a better life only if the community pays massive amounts to the church. True prosperity is, however, something totally different and should be accepted in Christ's empowerment of the poor and the needy.

2. Informal settlements

Globally, informal settlements face enormous challenges. Lagos in Nigeria, Mexico City, and cities in other parts of the world have no answer to the massive influx of people. Challenges in South Africa are also numerous. People without permanency usually express their struggle to keep body and soul together in informal settlements with slogans such as No land! No house! No vote! (Symphony Way, 2011). Huchzermeyer and Karam (2006/2010:1ff) discuss the challenges of living in informal settlements and note that interventions in these areas remain vast. They also explain how policies and programmes to intervene in these circumstances require serious intervention from governments. Brazil, Kenya, and South Africa, have all engaged in interventions. Huchzermeyer and Karam (2006/2010:4) further note that deep marginalisation and exclusion from vested influences in many instances lead to people flocking to cities and living in informal settlements. The authors (2006/2010:6) challenge the elementary and quick solutions of simply changing informal structures into formal ones. Wider forms of consultation are essential to improve the living conditions of inhabitants in informal settlements (Haferburg & Huchzermeyer, 2015:4). The importance of physical infrastructure and hard service delivery is extremely relevant

(Smit, 2016:28). Upgrading these areas are also essential and, according to Smit, contains the following components: physical upgrades, increasing security on many levels, and social and economic interventions (2016:30). The shortage of housing for low income households and high urban migration lead to the mushrooming of informal settlements. Gottdiener and Budd (2005/2006:137) note that informal settlements globally e.g. *favelas* in Brazil and *bustees* in India have much in common, such as frequent public heath crises, crime, absolute poverty, and inadequate education facilities which means that the community, especially the youth, has no prospects for the future. Ziblim (2013:43) refers to challenges in South Africa, such as inequality, which enhance the struggle to empower the poor in informal settlements, as well as the issue regarding land, which includes being able to supply enough land in cities to develop sites for the poor.

Turok (2015:6) explains how difficult it sometimes is to generate new solutions in cities:

> It appears that the urban consolidation agenda could be jeopardised by a somewhat desperate attempt to launch housing megaprojects. The spatial imperative of such projects – urban expansion – conflicts with the need to densify cities in order to reduce commuting costs and other distance-related inefficiencies. It is vital to reconcile the urban expansion and densification approaches in order to avoid the duplication of effort and the dissipation of scarce resources. If both continue, it is likely that both will fail.

Many of these problems are also present in Mangaung (Bloemfontein, Free State Province, South Africa), "one of eight metropolitan municipalities in South Africa. In terms of population size, it is the seventh biggest metropolitan area in the country and contributes about 1.5% of GVA in South Africa" (Ntema, Massey, Marais, Cloete, & Lenka 2018: note 1:16). Previous research by Verster (2012) in this regard highlighted the following: lack of sufficient housing and infrastructure, high levels of unemployment and the resulting poverty, as well as aspects such as illnesses (coupled with a lack of medical facilities), crime, power struggles, and lack of educational facilities. Children are often affected the most. Interventions are necessary to improve the situation in informal settlements e.g. establishing better living conditions and empowering the poor. Upgrading and formalisation of the living conditions are essential. In this regard Ntema *et al.* (2018:10) researched the upgrading of Freedom Square, an informal settlement in Mangaung, and found that:

> Having a house and a stand of one's own was the most cited positive aspect of the upgrading of Freedom Square across the first three surveys, but in 2014 social networks and a good community life took precedence. The emphasis on owning a house in the city should be seen against the historical exclusion

of the black population. Obtaining a house or a stand is often associated with freedom, as indicated by responses like "Here in Freedom Square we are free to do as we wish" and "This site meant freedom".

And (2018:15)

Fourth, social cohesion seems to be pushing access to an own stand and house out of first place as the most positive aspect of living in Freedom Square, this despite the fact that the ratings related to social cohesion had apparently declined since residents first settled in Freedom Square. … Fifth, complaints about the existing physical infrastructure make it evident that continued urban management is important. Upgrading should mean continued investment in the physical infrastructure and the living environment.

Initiatives, even across borders, to help the communities of displaced people to receive full attention for their plight are necessary (United Nations Habitat, 2008:161).

Concerning the African city, Simone (2005:2) writes:

It is true that African cities have been an ambivalent refuge when economic survival was no longer possible in rural areas. It is true that these cities most visibly serviced the agendas of external interests, and that those interests shaped the physical and social terrain in ways that constrained a broad range of uses and developmental possibilities. It is true that these cities reflect a certain marginalization from the prevailing trajectories of urbanization that emphasize capital intensity and technological innovation. The cost of this history has been high.

Many have to fend for themselves in the informal housing areas and participate in the informal economic sector. This must be enhanced as it empowers even those without other skills. In this way powerful engagement is possible which may lead to the alleviation of poverty (Kelley & Williamson, 1984:184-185).

3. Churches and pastors in informal areas

The concept of the missional church is currently relevant in informal settlements. Taking the cue from the concept of the missio Dei (which was initiated by Barth), Bosch (1991:389 ff.) explains that the church should also be sent by God to be the *missio ecclesiae*. Therefore, as God the Father sent the Son, so the Son sends the church into the world to bring about salvation and human flourishing. The church should become a church of service – not only for the church herself – but for the whole community. Believers should integrate their whole life with service to the kingdom of God.

Church members should use their power, wealth, and influence to the benefit of the whole community, especially for those in need (Keller, 2013:106-107). Küng (1979:20) observes that the church should be a place where not only the right words are produced but "wherever *discipleship is fully realized in practice:* wherever, that is, Jesus is not only proclaimed and believed but imitated and given living expression in a spirit of faith" (Küng).

Allen (2013:15ff.) explains that the mission of a missional church should include the following: it will be essentially the work of Christ; it involves witness to Christ; it requires a warrant from Christ and it embraces the world for Christ. However, a warning should be sounded. Jonker (2008:64) explains that much of the missional church is understood from Barth's universalism tendencies. A sound biblical approach would warn against such a view, as the church should always be the people of God IN Christ and the community of the elected IN Christ. The danger is always that the church could become a general community of well-being, losing the essential relation to the salvation in Christ alone.

Pastoring churches and the society in these communities should always take cognisance of the fact that Christ is the only Saviour and that the missional church should be the church of Christ. Christ's example for ministry is therefore essential.

Luke 4:16 ff has special meaning for the church in informal areas as it explains Christ's compassion for people:

[16] He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, [17] and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:
[18] "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
    because he has anointed me
    to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
    and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
[19] to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."[f]
[20] Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. [21] He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." (NIV)

In the light of Van Wolde's (1989:80 ff.) approach, the text can be explained by looking at the different actors in the passage. Jesus is the main actor. He receives the scroll, reads from it, and applies it to himself. This means that it has definite implications for understanding Jesus and also for the pastor following Jesus. The spirit of the Lord is also a main actor as it is He who empowers and anoints the main actor. Then follows the poor, prisoners, the blind, and the oppressed. It is clear that they are then brought into relation with the main actor. It is emphasised that they will benefit hugely from the main actor's deeds. In the end the main actor is again emphasised as the One in whom the message is fulfilled. Bovon (2006:203 and 212 ff.) explains how Jesus is then received as the Prophet and Messiah. All pastors should take note of how Jesus is the One from God. Grundmann (1981:119) explains that this passage has implications for the whole ministry of Jesus. He fulfils Scripture. Bock (1994:410) writes: "Jesus will do what Israel was rebuked in Isaiah 58 for not doing: Jesus will meet in love the needs of those who need God", and Morris (1983:106) notes: "Jesus saw Himself as coming with good news for the world's troubled people."

Van Engen (1996:233 ff.) explains that the missionary pastor needs to take certain essential aspects into account. He or she should be an example by following Christ in everything he or she does, have wisdom by listening to the Word of God, be a seer by looking to the future in expectation of what God does, be students of the Word of God to hear more clearly what God says, and be prepared to sacrifice in following Christ even amidst persecution. He refers to Don Daniel, a highly respected pastor and missionary, who had everything a good pastor could have wished for, but in the end being unable to link all aspects to keep the church intact. What is important, not only for a missionary, but also for the pastor in informal areas, is being able to commit to Jesus Christ in every aspect of life.

In this light, an African theological engagement by pastors faced with the challenges of churches in informal settlements, could include the following:
- Total respect for the poorest of the poor
- Interventions to empower the poor
- Service to the poor and the sick
- Programmes for uplifting the youth
- Deep commitment to Christ
- Seeking human flourishing in even the most desperate situations people have to face
- Looking towards the future for a better life by advocating better living conditions through the intervention of the church.

In this regard Resane (2017:212) writes: "*Ecclesia*, as the image bearer of Christ in the world, faces the enormous task of pastoral care to the hurting and the disabled. Ministries or services must be expedited and accelerated, not under impulsive obligation but as sense of divine calling and purpose here on earth."

4. Churches in Mangaung

Many churches are involved in the community in the informal settlements in Mangaung. They have different approaches to the challenges in the community.

The African Initiated (or Indigenous) Churches (AIC) are independent and fund themselves. Although very challenging, they continue to exist in the direst circumstances. Pentecostal churches are funded from external sources, but they also strongly emphasise independence–usually by the pastor him- or herself. Mainline churches often enter into the community by being funded from external sources. Landman (2009:16 ff) gives a comprehensive overview of churches present in townships. She explains that there are first of all classical mainline churches, such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Dutch Reformed Churches, and others. There are also mission churches that are not regarded as the same as the other classical churches, such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church and others. Secondly, there are the classical African churches, who broke away from mainline churches to be under own African leadership. Then there are classical Pentecostal churches such as the Apostolic Faith Mission. The Zionist/Apostolic churches are also present. Finally, there are the Born Again churches. Most of these different groups of churches are also present in Mangaung.

Krige (2008:155 ff.) explains that transforming Christian churches can empower people in informal settlements. Churches must change their structured immovable relations into resource structures. Various channels can be used to empower people, such as International Christian NGOs, Church cooperation partnerships, church denominations with international links, local congregations with operations in communities, and those in partnerships with local church NGOs (2008:166), and rich churches should develop a sensitive approach to engagement by listening and then acting. Poor churches must determine what they have to offer towards their own development (2008:176). Those with charismatic leadership should share a

vision of empowerment and combined church activities should be enhanced (2008:177).

5. The community of Khayelitsha

Moletsane (2014:116) refers to the influx of people to the community of Khayelitsha hoping to find better lives. He explains that community members display a sense of hopelessness, because of the lack of governmental engagement after many promises. The struggle for a better life is enormous and crime, poverty, and the lack of social services abound. Gangsterism is also increasing continually. Many people live in fear, especially at night, because of these gangs and the lack of street lighting. Crime cannot be totally eliminated, but the origins should be determined and if possible addressed. People are scared to walk around at night for fear of being attacked (Mphambukeli, 2015:172).

In the case of Khayelitsha, the root problem for the underdevelopment is citizenship.

A contextual interpretive method was used to examine what it means to be a church and also how pastors should be leading the church. Contextual hermeneutics endeavours to address the idea that theology should not only lead to philosophic abstractions, but to praxis as well. There are many limitations to contextual hermeneutics, in that it is often hijacked to propagate ideological theories such as Marxism. However, this paper acknowledges the epistemological break between fundamentalist approaches towards tradition, and seeks to embrace an understanding that shows God's compassion towards all of his creation.

6. Responses from pastors in the communities

The church has to be a church in the space of Khayelitsha. The church can be the living church even under the above-mentioned circumstances in Khayelithsa, if Jesus is glorified as Lord of all.

Patton (2002:237) explains that there are key informants in the process of generating outcomes from interviews. Purposeful sampling is used to obtain as much information as possible in the interviews with specific persons. These are people who are knowledgeable about the field in question. The methodology used in this paper makes use of qualitative research as Patton

extensively describes it. The strength of this kind of research is to look at the situation holistically (2002:228). As there are no rules for the sample size in this kind of research only a few pastors were interviewed, but the interviews were conducted with the aim of obtaining as much information as possible (2002:244). The analysis will in the end establish possible interventions from the interviews that were conducted.

For this specific paper information regarding the area was acquired from Mphambukeli's (2015) thesis as one key informant on the Khayelitsha informal settlement. Secondly, pastors who operate in the area were interviewed, and their opinions and perspectives are observed with respect to answering the question on how a missional church should operate in the area.

The authors embarked on a journey looking for pastors in the entire region of Khayelitsha. After surveying the area at least four times on different occasions, the active churches were identified. The authors then approached the pastors and requested interviews.

The authors discovered that there are two distinct ways in which churches operate. The first group include the churches based within the community, namely the Good News Bible Church, the Mighty Warriors Christian Church, and the Church of Jesus Christ. In the first church we managed to speak to the Senior Pastor and at the second church we spoke to one of the many pastors. At the third church we managed to interview the female pastor.

The second group consisted of a church that operates on the fringes of the community, namely the Apostolic Faith Mission. The church is a branch of Apostolic Faith Mission and serves the community from its outskirts.

Semi-structured interviewing was used to collect the perceptions, views, opinions, facts, and solutions of the participants. Sometimes this method is referred to as in-depth interviews (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2005:292-293).

Snowballing was used as specific method of sampling. This method is used to collect information about other people from specific individuals. We elected to interview the pastors because they would be key informants, since they know what happens in their communities (Patton, 2002:237).

The interviews were recorded. The information about the interviews are available in printed format on request. On occasion it was difficult to decipher certain parts of the interviews because of the weather, but the majority of the information is clear and was used as data for this study.

The data was collected in two sets. The first two interviews were done in English and then transcribed from the recording. The other three interviews were conducted in Sesotho. These three were also transcribed and translated into English.

Atlas Ti 7.0 was used for coding and naming the data. Codes were established and themes were developed by studying the data repeatedly.

From the interviews certain main aspects were established. The respondents replied as follows:

R1: Let me say that first thing is this. Let me say what the pastor's role in the congregation is. The role of the pastor as a matter of fact he is representative of Jesus … The first thing he must remember is that he represent Jesus and not himself. Everything that he does, he is not doing it for himself but he does it for work of Father God.

This respondent understands the value of commitment to Jesus as essential to the role of the pastor. The representation of Jesus remains the main aspect of his/her task.

What must the pastor do?

R1 replied: The big thing is to empower the community, especially what is needed is to start with to structures. It is like the we can work together hand in hand with the government, with local municipality.

The respondent has a rather general view of the task of the pastor. It must be stated that the view of the pastor's specific role needs more attention. If it becomes too general, the link to the gospel and the church becomes ambiguous.

R2: But here in the Church of Jesus Pastors teach people to trust in the Lord. Bishop, made it possible that people are taught the depths of the bible even when the Pastors die or leave the church, they will know why they are there for. (P1:L18)

The respondent realises that the specific role of the pastor/bishop must not be to enhance his/her own agenda. Church members should be able to continue on their own.

R3: He must teach in such a way that people can know the word of God. And for people to come to church, and know the importance of God. God is merciful and even when they are in trouble they should pray and know that God is their solution to their lives. When he brings the letter he teaches the people who God really is. (P7:L18)

The emphasis on the word of God must be commended. The reference to people in trouble is especially relevant in informal housing areas. The church has a huge role to play in explaining that God is merciful even in those circumstances.

R4: From showing them love, whether we wish to, you know, to see how we empower them, emotionally, physically and otherwise, it will be flowing from showing them love and now some are opening up their hearts to us.

The pastor as the vehicle of God's love is explained here and this should be commended. Under those circumstances it is difficult to realise the concerns of the church if it is not to show love to people on the fringes of society if the pastors do not communicate it.

R5: Some of the things we doing at an Assembly we can not influence even 0.0% but as collective we are able to be seen as the church. The whole concept of a ecumenisms is we do not want to be seen as a denomination, but as the church with other brethren from different denominations for the sake of the community and for the glory of God's kingdom. (P8:L24)

This respondent realises the full scope of the challenges for the church in the societies they minister to. The pastors need to work together to address the challenges in these communities.

It can thus be concluded from the interviews from some of the pastors within Khayelitsha that they have a strong sense of missionality in the manner they connect their people to the message of Christ. Sometimes the full scope of the interactions is not addressed, but here is the realisation that much need to be done to enhance the lives of people in the informal housing areas. The great zeal they have to reach out to their community needs to be linked to a positive understanding of the gospel in such situations.

Much positive can be retrieved from the interviews. It is clear that the pastors have a definite view of the importance of serving Christ in the community. To follow Christ means to commit oneself to Him in all aspects of life. The pastors understand their role, not only to look after spiritual aspects, but also the physical well-being of the community. In this sense the pastors interviewed agrees with Van Engen. Hendriks (1992:206-211) refers to the fact that certain metaphors are used to explain the ministry of the church. From these metaphors different models of church ministry ensue. He is of the opinion that churches must be very wary of using only one or only certain models for their ministry. The full scope of the Bible should be taken into account, especially in the ministry of the church in challenging societies. One should agree with him in this regard. The challenges in these societies are

huge and ecumenical cooperation is essential as it is in the understanding of the concept of the role of the pastor and the church. Kritzinger (1979:198-199) called for a new approach to the ministry in "indigenous" churches and mentions that the members should be empowered to take responsibility for much of the church's endeavours. Only by empowering the members can the church be relevant in the communities. Another aspect is that new ways of ministry of the pastors should be developed such as tentmaking ministries. This aspect is very relevant in the informal housing areas. Special attention should also be given to challenges in the community by specialized ministries.

Van Niekerk (2002:123) mentions another important aspect. Households in Africa are the key to poverty alleviation. In agreement, it is important that pastors should take note of this. In informal settlement areas the value of the church in enhancing the life of households is essential. Love and community are mentioned by the respondents and should receive much attention in the households. Pastors play important roles in this regard. Households and the family must be re-established according to Van Niekerk (2002:123). Greenway (1990:104) emphasises that hope and love should be communicated in the poverty stricken areas. By doing this, the community can be empowered to look beyond their circumstances. Greenway (1990:104) writes: "When hope is preached and demonstrated, the poor see and hear the message of Christ and a sign of God's transforming love is established among them."

Leadership is therefore also important. Gunning's (1995:185) view is relevant in this regard:

> **Thirdly, one needs the ability to lead and facilitate people effectively through transitions in order to enhance their commitment.** Such effective leadership is energizing, motivating and empowering for those in situations of change and transition. There is a need in a situation of transition to respond positively, not allowing negative situations to fester.

This is highly applicable with regard to informal housing areas, and pastors should take note of these suggestions.

It is also important to be relevant to the context. Kritzinger, Meiring and Saayman (1984:158) explain that the mode of existence within the context is important. It should, however, be clear that the church serves another Master, Jesus Christ. This was also mentioned by the respondents, namely that the pastor should be the representative of Jesus Christ.

There are, however, also many challenges. The pastors could not explain how they would deal with the growing discontentment with the churches in their community. Ecumenism has many challenges and the pastors could not really explain how they would serve the larger church community together. Serious questions must also be asked on exactly how that pastors would engage the challenges of the communities. Although they explained that they would be involved in the spiritual as well as physical well-being of the community it is not clear how they would get involved in the whole community and not only in their own church.

Reference to problematic engagements must be made. Prosperity churches sometimes take money from the poor with promises that cannot be kept, such as that they will be healed from illnesses if they pay large sums of money. Syncretistic churches try to mix all kinds of spiritual experiences without taking the essence of the Gospel of Christ into consideration.

7. Following Christ in the informal settlements

In an environment such as informal settlements with their accompanying challenges, it is important to remain a church that is radically linked to the Trinitarian God and to refrain from being distracted by anything in following Christ amidst the needy. The humanity of the poor should always be at the centre of the outreach. The church should be a church of love and compassion honouring Christ.

The empirical research indicated the tension in missions and confirmed that the churches, through their pastors in Khayelitsha, tend to focus on spiritual input, but they are primarily there for each other in bringing hope in the utmost of poverty stricken situations.

The missional church and the pastors should therefore ask how they can serve the poor and add value to their lives.

It is therefore recommended that the pastors should have clarity regarding evangelism and the possibility of churches working together to reach the community of Khayelitsha.

8. Conclusion

Challenges in informal areas abound and pastors need to commit themselves to following Christ in the community by being living examples of Him. Pastors need to empower the community to become a new community in Christ by way of living according to the Word of God. This is the only way in which hope can be brought about in the challenging environment of the informal settlements.

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