
An analysis of the spirituality of ministers in the congregations of the DRCA FS (NGKA VS)

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Abstract

There is a growing interest in the study of spirituality in leadership. The reason for the upsurge of interest in spirituality is due to an overwhelming increase in immorality and corruption in various sectors of society, and to environmental crises. Humanity is to be blamed for this because of a loss of spiritual values like love, respect and righteousness. Some of the potential benefits of spirituality for leadership are related to personal and societal transformation. However, when leadership undermines the power of influence of spirituality in congregations, it will experience serious challenges. Since 1994, the DRCA FS is experiencing a decline in mission and diaconal ministry and a gradual increase in conflicts. It is faced with potential schism due to seriousness of these conflicts amongst those in leadership especially ministers. For more than two decades, these conflicts have culminated in the loss of integrity, moral values and a decline in internal and external ministry. The individual behaviour of some ministers characterised by sexual immorality, financial mismanagement and violence call into question the internal, external and corporate spiritual disciplines of the ministers in the congregations

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of the DRCA FS. This article aims to analyse the spirituality of ministers in the congregations of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA), Free State (FS). The research question is: What are the dynamics of spirituality that dominate among the ministers of the DRCA FS? This empirical study will use secondary empirical data from a joint PhD of Pali (2016).

Keywords:

Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, spirituality, African spirituality, leadership, role of spirituality.

1. Introduction

Spirituality is one of the fastest growing and varied disciplines in the academic field. Increasingly more academic and popular literature on spirituality is being published (Kourie & Kretzschmar, 2000:1; Fernando, 2011:483). For example, the majority of the higher academic institutions have established specific modules, units and centres for learning about spirituality (Kourie, 2000:9). Furthermore, spirituality has various identities like Christian, African, Islamic or Hindu identity (Jacobs, 2013:143, 145). Spirituality is no longer restricted to religious institutions; it also encompasses the workplace and the business sector (Kourie, 2000:11; Waaijman, 2013:14). Therefore, spirituality is currently defined within the religious framework and beyond religious framework (Fernando, 2011:484). Consequently, the majority of academic studies on spirituality adopt an interdisciplinary approach (Sheldrake, 2010:12).

In this article, spirituality is mainly engaged from a Christian religion perspective, with the acknowledgement and engagement of studies on spirituality from both an African perspective and the social sciences. This article aims to analyse the spirituality of ministers in the congregations of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA), Free State (FS). The research question is: What are the dynamics of spirituality that dominates among the ministers of the DRCA FS?

The following discussion will begin with theoretical dynamics related to spirituality by engaging discourses on definition, role, perspective and why this study engages spirituality. Next the discussion will focus on the situation

of ministers in the DRCA FS² and analyses of spiritual disciplines of ministers using some of the empirical data from Pali (2016). Then the article will conclude with a summary of the findings and conclusion.

2. Clarifying spirituality

Since spirituality is complex with its varied identities and is currently gaining popularity beyond religious institutions, it must be acknowledged that it will not be easy to give a precise definition of spirituality. However, it is necessary to clarify some issues on the essence of spirituality within the Christian context.

2.1 *Definition and why engaging spirituality*

From a Christian perspective, spirituality is an awareness of God who dwells within us, who through the Holy Spirit transforms us to model Christ in our various relationships (Shawchuck & Heuser, 1993:39; Perrin, 2007:32). God in us is the Holy Spirit who makes us conscious of our identity (1 Peter 2:9, 10), loves us (Roman 5:5), guides us in the truth (John 16:13), and reveals Christ and mysteries about God to us (John 16:14; 1 Corinthians 2:11-16) for the sake of transforming us, in order to live a life that reflects the glory of God.

But why spirituality? An overwhelming increase in immorality and corruption within various sectors of society and organisations, including those in leadership, has become cause for great concern. For example, in most of the sectors of society, the current leadership is unable to engage the contemporary increasing human tragedies such as environmental crises, crime, and service delivery protests (Burke, 2006:14). As to the source of these heinous challenges, the majority of the human beings are the culprits and are blamed to have lost their spiritual values like love, respect and righteousness towards the creation of God. As a result, spirituality has the potential to help transform humanity, organisations and society; hence, its revival and implementation in human interactions is essential.

Leadership studies found that spirituality has the potential to facilitate a shift, among those in leadership, from destructive values such as egoism and materialism to sharing for the purpose of the common good (Sheldrake, 1991:3, 4; Yasuno, 2008:5). Spirituality has the potential to turn social institutions, organisations, including churches, to be agents of change that

2 In 2015 the DRCA Orange Free State (OFS) name was changed to DRCA Free State (FS).

confront the injustices in society. It was found that spirituality has the potential to help members of society realise the inner meaning of life and individual existence so that they can learn to appreciate life and serve others in need (Perrin, 2007:18). If spirituality has so much potential to contribute to the world beyond congregations, how much more can it contribute to leadership in congregations. This will be discussed later in this article.

2.2 Perspectives on spirituality

The following perspectives are essential to understand how spirituality is understood and approached in this article. Christian spirituality must impact on the totality of life (Kourie, 2000:13). This implies life on a personal level and in public space, and life in the church and in the world. On a personal level, the influence of Christian spirituality needs to transform our inner aspects such as human spirit, mind, will, and emotions. Christian spirituality does not end with the transformation of the inner person, but it also extends to our outer being, namely our physical³ body (Matthew 17:2; 1 Corinthians 6:15, 19) and our external behaviour (Isaiah 1:17; Matthew 5:16).

Christian spirituality does not only end on a personal level; it should also influence the public space, which includes our relationship with fellow believers in the church and with non-believers in the world. Christian spirituality mobilises us towards being involved in the world, with the intention to influence the various political, economic, social, and environmental spheres in society so that they transform towards the will of the Triune God. However, some requisites need to be noted for leadership to be effectively involved in society. A deep change in the spiritual and moral spheres is required of leadership before it leads to a social change (Yasuno, 2008:2, 5). This is in line with 2 Peter 2:12 which emphasizes deep morality for the sake of winning non-believers to God. In 2 Kings 23, 24, we learn about King Josiah who was first transformed by the word of God, and then engaged in deep social change within his own society. Furthermore, for leadership to be more prosocial, it needs to be aware of the sanctity of the web of life (Yasuno, 2008:2, 5), which entails relations with God, oneself, the community, and nature (Thiessen, 2005:58-60; Krause, 2009:52).

3 Van den Bosch-Heij (2013:85) made an informative statement on this when she says Reformed pneumatological discourse on spiritual transformation must include the physical dimension as well.

2.2.1 Towards spirituality that is grounded in the theology of the Triune God

In Christian spirituality, God is understood to have revealed Himself in three persons that is, God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Since we are living in an era of the Spirit and the Spirit is God, there is a tendency to undermine the persons of the Father and the Son in the Triune God. This kind of practice makes theology of leadership incomplete and exposes the church to the danger of losing its identity (Migliore, 2004:74). To counteract this, Van den Bosch-Heij (2013:77), argues that the use of Trinitarian language to describe God as revealed in the Bible witnesses to the fact that it is in the person of the Holy Spirit that the Trinitarian God is involved in creation. This means the active participation of the Father and the Son does not cease to exist in the era of the Spirit, but is now manifested in the person of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit becomes the bond of love between the Father and the Son (John 17:24). Hence, the person of the Holy Spirit is now associated with the Spirit of the Father who is intimately related with the Creator and sustains creation. Also the Spirit of Christ who supports redemption and renewal of creation. And how knowledge about the Trinitarian God helps with leadership?

Venter (2005:340) argues that knowledge about the Spirit of the Father, as the Creator, makes leadership develop an ecological sensitivity that encourages good relations with other creations such as humanity, plants, animals, and land. The Spirit of the Son, who bestows authority on spiritual leadership (Matthew 28:18) to use it to serve the Kingdom of God, influences spiritual leadership to embrace self-gifting and self-donation. The Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; 2:4) endows Christian leadership with charismata, known as the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:8-10), which make leadership in Christian ministry more spiritual and missional. According to Zscheile (2007:53-62), a theology of the Triune God on leadership promotes diversity in unity, whereby otherness is not to be erased, but treasured and enhanced within the pattern of a larger unity. A theology of the Triune God cultivates a sense of community, whereby leadership demonstrates collaboration, sharing, and a team spirit. Lastly, a theology of the Triune God leads towards iconic leadership whereby Christian leadership is not ultimately for its own sake, but points to God in Christ through its character, words and examples.

2.2.2 Towards spirituality within the African Christian context

Spirituality within the African Christian context is interwoven with African customs, thoughts and existential needs (Du Toit, 2009:98, 106). Therefore, Christian spirituality within the African context is used as a life-giving force to inspire us to live a life worthy of spiritually and physically healthy believers (Shorter, 1978:4, 5). According to Magesa (1978:7), in general, spirituality in Africa should respond to the existential needs of Africans, and not simply be concerned with eternity at the expense of life on earth. Consequently, Magesa argues that Christian spirituality in Africa is an incarnated one that acts in the world for divine ends, thus leading to tangible results such as peace, justice and revolution. According to Shorter (1978:7), Christian spirituality within the African context should promote human dignity where respect of the other is valued. African spirituality is revolutionary; hence, it revolts against materialism, shallow religiosity, human indignity, and cultural passivity, while calling for a new creativity rooted in Africa. In light of the above understanding, Pato (2000:92) mentions that spirituality within the African context is moralistic, upholds dignity and relationship of humanity, the sharing of resources, and a harmonious lifestyle.

3. The role of spirituality in leadership

The role of spirituality in leadership has long been discussed in Christianity and beyond its boundaries. In light of the above and in discussing some of the benefits of spirituality for leadership, Reave (2005:655-669) who studies the role of spirituality in secular spheres like workplaces, businesses and organisations mentions that spiritual values such as integrity, humility and honesty can contribute to effective and successful leadership. She says effective leadership that embodies spiritual values demonstrates a spiritual care and concern for the other. In addition, if leadership demonstrates a higher spiritual awareness, it is also expected to show a greater interest in the practice of moral values such as love and self-sacrifice. Hence, leadership exercised in love and self-sacrifice will not easily abandon its followers because they refuse to follow, as that would be tantamount to forsaking one's leadership calling (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011:36).

The moral values promoted by spirituality are not for personal gratification, but for confronting the systemic evil (Nullens, 2013:98). Hence, it is crucial that the revolutionary character of African spirituality should help African

Christians confront systemic evils such as materialism, shallow religiosity, injustices, cultural passivity, and inward-looking religiosity. The ultimate results of confronting the systemic evil should give tangible results such as peace, justice, and reconciliation to an African situation.

Spirituality can help motivate the lay people towards ministry. Most of the spiritual leaders are reluctant to share leadership with their followers because they underrate and assume them to be ignorant members, passive spectators and consumers of the ministerial services offered by the minister (Willimon, 2000:281; Kritzinger, 2007:13). To help, spirituality is a source of motivation, inspiration and insight that engender us to view our responsibility as a higher calling, to develop hope with a vision of service, and to value altruistic love (Reave, 2005:665; Fernando, 2011:487). In other words, if we have developed a sense of higher calling towards a service we should provide, we become intrinsically motivated to perform towards the common goal of an organisation (Nullens, 2013:98). Our spiritual identity as individuals and leaders causes our service to become a response to a higher calling from the Higher Being (Hoppe, 2005:85; Nullens, 2013:98). Hence, there is no need in the ministry to become a passive and ignorant member, as every believer needs to respond to his/her specific calling.

Leadership burn-out is a sign of spiritual illness often triggered by the temptation to be a know-it-all master and do-it-all servant. We assume that leaders know everything and want to do everything that comes their way in the ministry. Eventually, they become busy spiritual leaders who cannot function effectively because they confuse their priorities in the ministry. Therefore, spirituality help spiritual leaders in the ministry to set their priorities right. Some of these priorities are devotional time with God, balancing their leadership responsibility with their commitment to their family and to ministerial duties, and knowing when to quit (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011:335-346). To help with the above, we should use spiritual practices⁴ to empower ourselves towards leader effectiveness, and planning of activities that support ministry.

According to Prozesky (2006:133), spirituality in leadership is concerned not only with the well-being of people, but also with the well-being of their environment. Habel, Rhoads and Santmire (2011:3) argue that the majority of Christians confine their spiritual relations to God and human beings and ignore the well-being of the environment. Bouma-Prediger (2010:57) blames this ignorance of the environment on the skewed interpretation of 'dominion'

4 Foster (1982:21), calls these spiritual practices spiritual disciplines. Further discussion on the spiritual disciplines is done later on in this article.

in Genesis 1:26-28, which some interpret as implying the exploitation of the environment. In fact, human dominion is all about loving care, development, and protection of God's creation (Conradie, 1996:36).

Lastly, we learn from Nullens (2013:98) that spirituality helps make sense of the reality of Christ in the world and of our place in it. Christ suffered, triumphed over suffering and modelled the way of life through all the suffering and triumph he gained. In Matthew 24:10-14 and 2 Peter 2:21, 23, Christians are warned to expect suffering that should not deter them from persevering for the sake of Christ. Ultimately, they will be rewarded for their faith and perseverance. Authentic spiritual leadership will often encounter suffering in the form of rejection by its own society and domestication by their congregations, because they want leadership to conform to conventional practices and not follow divine ordinances. When leadership is conscious of the above challenges, the emotional, psychological and physical suffering experienced as a result of a commitment to their calling will not be too overwhelming.

4. The DRCA FS and leadership realities

The DRCA⁵ is a mission product of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in South Africa. It was first formally established in the Free State province over a century ago and was solely meant for Black Africans. In its early days, the white missionaries in the DRC raised the following concerns: the DRCA FS will not be able to overcome the challenge of spiritual maturity, mission, independence, and financial independence (Crafford, 1982:120). However, in an attempt to overcome these potential challenges, some members of the DRCA FS, many of the white missionaries and the DRC contributed a considerable sum of money and human resources to help this church in its leadership training, administration, mission and diaconal ministry. Spiritual disciplines like prayer, Bible study, meditations, and outreaches were strongly practised. This resulted in a numerical growth of the church, with a vibrant mission and diaconal ministry. Regrettably, towards the beginning of the new democratic South Africa in 1994 and beyond, the ministry in the DRCA FS experienced a gradual decline. This raised the following question: Was the concern of the early white missionaries genuine about the challenge of spiritual maturity in the DRCA FS? My response is 'yes', because when the majority of the white missionaries left prior to 1994, the DRCA FS experienced a gradual decline in mission and diaconal ministry and a gradual increase in conflicts.

5 DRCA in Afrikaans is known as the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika (NGKA).

Concerning its independence, the DRCA FS tends to behave like a daughter to her mother in the presence of the DRC. The majority of the ministers and their congregations depended on the financial subsidy from the DRC in the FS concerning salary, mission and diaconal ministry. In short, this financial dependence adversely impacts on the practice of discernment of the Holy Spirit and creativity in the development of the present and future ministry of the DRCA FS (Kritzinger, 2011:2).⁶

What could be the possible reason for the above response? The first one could be the legacy of white missionary dominance and the dependency of the Black African ministers on the help from white missionaries. For example, looking at the history of the DRCA FS presbyteries and synodical leadership one realises that in the commissions of mission, diaconia, training for ministry or in-service training, and positions of Actuaris and financial administrator were for many years dominated by the white missionaries. On one hand, during the white missionary dominance in the mentioned commissions and positions the majority of the white missionaries were too ready to help without passing the required expertise to the Black African ministers. Again, the DRC in the Free State had enough resources and was too willing to help due to the influence of the white missionaries. On the other hand, the majority of the Black African ministers were too ready to receive and dependent on the help from the white missionaries. Hence, when the white missionaries left there was not enough expertise and resources to do essential ministry and occupy the strategic positions of leadership within the presbyteries and synodical levels. The DRC in the Free State was no longer willing to help because of reduction in its human and financial resources.

The other reason could be schism in 1994 which really paralysed ministry and leadership in the DRCA FS. Post-1994 when the DRCA⁷ suffered a schism,⁸ it lost the majority of its regional synods to the URCSA and was left with two regional synods, namely DRCA FS and DRCA Phororo.⁹ This schism caused the DRCA, in particular in the FS, to incur a huge financial loss and a loss of focus on ministry, in general. Those in leadership and members of both URCSA in the FS and DRCA FS experienced personal conflicts. The conflict and the tension that existed between the DRCA FS and the URCSA¹⁰ in the

6 For the sources of this financial dependence, read Pali (2017:3).

7 To understand more about history of the DRCA FS, read Pali (2016:21).

8 To understand more about this schism, read Pali (2016:73; 2017:5).

9 The DRCA Phororo is one of the DRCA regional synods in the Northern Cape and North West, and it was mainly established for the South African tribe of Batswana.

10 More research is needed to understand the tension and conflicts that prevailed between the DRCA and URCSA in 1994 and the ensuing years.

Free State are regrettable and indicative of the loss of spiritual values like love and unity among those involved. From my observation on the relations between URCSA in the FS and the DRCA FS, there was tension, physical fight and litigations among some ministers, congregation members, and family members from both churches. However, settlement was reached in 2011 between the two churches, URCSA and the DRCA (FS), which resulted in reconciliation and financial reimbursement of those congregations that lost buildings in a schism (DRCA FS 2015:25). Unfortunately the seriousness of conflicts and declining relationship did not abate in the DRCA FS and the contemporary situation may lead to another schism if the present leadership cannot swiftly find a solution to existing challenges.

Furthermore, in 2019 the DRCAFS had approximately one hundred and twenty one congregations, with thirty four ministers and seventeen presbyteries in the Free State Synod (DRCA FS, 2019:46). From 2011, the number of DRCA FS ministers has declined from sixty-five to thirty four, with a potential further decline in the number of ministers in the ensuing years (DRCA FS, 2019:46). This caused that over half of the congregations in the DRCA FS had no full-time ministers to serve them, except the interim ministers. In reaction to this shortage of ministers the DRCA FS synod (2015:52) took a resolution that congregations could call a minister using one of the following conditions: calling a minister on a full-time basis, calling a minister as tentmaker, or more than one congregation¹¹ could together decide to call a minister. However, the last two approaches do not work well as most congregations prefer to call a minister full time due to poor administrative arrangements to prepare legal and appropriate contracts and unwillingness of a congregation to have their minister part-time or shared with other congregation(s). At the moment, this shortage of ministers in the DRCA FS and an increase in the number of congregations challenged leadership to either review the ministerial approach or face potential conflicts.

In 2015, the moderamen of the DRCA FS (2015:20-23) mentioned an increase in conflicts within the DRCA FS. According to Pali (2018:1, 3, 6), these conflicts mainly involved the ministers themselves, the ministers and their church council or congregation members. These conflicts ranged from disagreements, verbal insults, and physical violence to litigation. According to Pali, most of the conflicts are blamed on the leadership which is unable to resolve conflicts and use them as an opportunity to transform the situation of the DRCA FS. Some of the sources of these conflicts are fear of change, failure to interpret the church order appropriately, and favouritism when

11 Most often it is not more than three congregations

disciplining some leadership and members. These conflicts resulted in a loss of integrity, authenticity and relevance of the DRCA FS (DRCA FS, 2015:32, 33). Under these circumstances, the Moderamen of the DRCA FS (2015:32-33) raised the following concern: How will the DRCA FS proclaim good news and contribute to social renewal of the world? In line with the above, for more than two decades and with a climax from 2015, the increase in conflicts deviated the attention of the ministers from ministry to managing conflicts, hence financial income, diaconia and mission of DRCA FS incurred serious decline. Again, the personal spirituality of the majority of those in leadership¹² in the DRCA FS declined to a low ebb, due to declining morals and poor relationships among those in leadership.

The following discussion will use empirical data available from Pali (2016) to help analyse dimensions of spirituality and spiritual disciplines of the ministers in the DRCA FS.

5. Dimensions of the spirituality of ministers in the DRCA FS

This will involve issues on calling, relation with the other, and impact of religion on society. The empirical data¹³ discussed is a reflection on the study made by Pali (2016) within the congregations and ministers of the DRCA FS.

5.1 Calling in the ministry

Our understanding of ministry as a calling has the potential to enhance performance and positively influence our character. Concerning spiritual calling, over 80% of the participant ministers positively reported that it is important to have a clear calling from God; 72% mentioned that they do not doubt their calling into the DRCA FS ministry. Consequently, ministers in the DRCA FS had no serious thoughts of leaving the congregational ministry for other spiritual ministry (63%) or secular ministry (72%), and over 90% positively indicated their satisfaction with their spiritual life. To summarise, the majority of the participant ministers were clear of their calling and satisfied with their spiritual life.

12 Read Pali's 2018 article on "An analysis of conflict situations within the leadership and various structures of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, Orange Free State."

13 Pali's (2016, Chapter 2 & 3) empirical study consists of quantitative data (Congregational Survey, Ministerial Survey) and qualitative data (Individual interview of Ministers and Focus Group Interviews of Congregations all from eight congregations in the DRCA FS)

More in-depth research on this is needed in order to assess to what extent ministers in the DRCA FS understand their calling and what is expected of them in their spiritual life, because the contemporary study on the increasing conflicts, poor mission and declining diaconal ministry in the DRCA FS do not tally with the positive view reflected on the calling and spiritual lives of the ministers (Pali, 2016; 2017; 2018).

5.1.1 Relationship and trust

Approximately 55% of the participant ministers viewed trust as important; to them, cordial relationships with congregation members was deemed important (86%), and participant ministers were satisfied in their relationship with their own congregational leaders (79%) and other ministers in the DRCA (83%). Therefore, one can deduce that the majority of the participant ministers value trust and relationship as important. If this is the case, what happened beyond 2015 until the present when there is an upsurge in conflicts and decline in relationships?¹⁴ In my observation, the fear of losing the friendship and trust of those in the ministers' immediate circle compelled some ministers to compromise on fairness and justice to those who were aggrieved. The other reason is the loss of trust in the higher structure leadership of the DRCA FS that refuses to practise listening skills concerning grievances addressed to them.

5.1.2 Leadership and responsibilities

Good spirituality influences leadership to prioritise and be effective. Approximately 77% of the participant ministers reported that they are positively satisfied with both their effectiveness as spiritual leaders in their congregations and their present ministerial responsibilities (79%). But due to a shortage of ministers approximately 59% of the participant ministers now started to feel alone and isolated in their ministry, whilst 50% agreed that their ministerial responsibilities do not allow them sufficient time to spend with their families. Further research is needed to find out what implies effectiveness to the ministers in the congregations of the DRCA FS. This is because loss of integrity, increasing conflicts and poor societal involvement, as discussed earlier, indicate the lack of effective leadership in the ministry of the DRCA FS.

14 For more about the situation of conflict in the DRCA FS, read Pali (2018).

5.1.3 The role of the ministers

Approximately 55% of the participant ministers reported that they do not have a problem with their role as ministers. Approximately 59% of the participant ministers mentioned that they have time for recreation, personal reflection, and reaching out to people with the gospel (62%). In addition, the participant ministers from the interviews mentioned the role of the minister as proclaiming the gospel and empowering others with the word of God. This teaching includes helping members know their responsibility in the mission of God which is caring for each other and being involved in a contextual issue. In light of the above, ministers generally have a clear understanding of their role. The question remains: What really prevents them from doing ministry effectively? Many reasons could be mentioned but at the moment the obvious ones could be too many ministerial duties due to shortage of ministers and lack of appropriate strategies to deal with present ministerial challenges.

5.1.4 Do ministers have the time to perform their tasks?

Half of the participant ministers from interviews reported positively that they do have time to do their ministry in their own congregations. The reasons given are good time management and sharing responsibilities. However, some of the participant ministers raised their concern that lack of transport, and unavailability of members; interference in their duties, especially by members of the church council; interim ministry, and the growth of the congregation prevent them from doing their duties in congregations. The above discussion provides some reasons as to why ministers are not able to fulfil their ministerial responsibilities.

5.1.5 Lay empowerment

In the DRCA FS, lay empowerment prioritises the church council members first, then the congregation members in their varied capacities. On the issue of lay empowerment, the majority of the participant ministers mentioned that they do workshops, namely and in order of priority: internal ministry, reformed identity, and social involvement. By contrast, one third of the participant ministers reported that they do nothing for lay empowerment, giving some of the reasons for this as lack of time due to many ministerial responsibilities, ignorance, and lack of co-operation from members. From the above data, it is clear that lay empowerment prioritises internal ministerial issues, whereas ministers in the congregations of the DRCA FS should pay attention to the reasons given for not doing lay empowerment.

5.2 Evaluation of spiritual disciplines of the DRCA FS ministers

According to Reave (2005:660, 673-678), spiritual disciplines such as prayer, meditation and retreats do contribute to leader effectiveness with regard to respecting and care for others. Reave (2005:657) also argues that the ultimate goal of these spiritual disciplines is to help an individual develop a relationship with God, the self, and the other. Spiritual disciplines in congregations are not supposed to maintain the status quo of the ministry, rather they must empower believers to be agents of change in their own context (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011:34). Hence, spiritual disciplines like prayer, meditation, and Bible study have the potential to contribute to a spiritually healthy congregation.

5.2.1 Inward spiritual disciplines

Foster (1982:36, 64, 91) categorises these spiritual disciplines into three that is inward, outward and corporate disciplines. The first category of spiritual discipline, Foster (1982:37-60) identifies as inward spiritual disciplines which consists of meditation, prayer, fasting and study of the word. Meditation involves listening and reflecting on the word of God and opening up ourselves to the Holy Spirit and the cross of Christ to work within us in order to cleanse, teach, rebuke and transform us. The purpose is to hear God more clearly so that we may receive joy, bear fruits of the spirit and attain prosperity in life (Psalm 1:1-3). Prayer is about supplications, intercession, and communication with God by building a growing communion with God. Its primary goal is to be heard by God to influence others for the sake of building His Kingdom. Prayer, is an expression of faith (Hebrew 11:6), apostolic command to ministers (1 Timothy 2:1-3), it is the greater part of ministry (Romans 8:34) and gives new dimensions in ministry (Galatians 4:19). Hence it is necessary for the ministers to pray regularly and even outpace their congregations in prayer (Sanders, 2007:83). Fasting involves voluntary denial of our normal functions (Matthew 4:2; 1 Corinthians 7:5) for the sake of the intense spiritual activity. This denial may involve denial of food, sexual pleasure and avoidance of all¹⁵ that may distract one from focus on intense spiritual activity. Lastly, under inward disciplines is studying spiritual books for the sake of listening and discerning the direction the Holy Spirit wants us to take. By spiritual books I refer to the Bible, and books written by reputable Christian authors. Most important studying is essential for

15 Foster (1982:51-53) made a list of things to be avoided during fasting which are people, media, telephone, billboards, and gluttonous consumer culture.

developing one's intellectual and spiritual maturity (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) so that we may be able to encourage and teach others (1 Timothy 4:13), learn and transform our lives for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

How do the DRCA FS ministers engage the above inward spiritual disciplines? In the DRCA FS the practice of meditation does occur in small groups or guilds of some congregations. In my teenage years¹⁶ and my early years¹⁷ as minister in the DRCA FS meditation on the word was very common practice in small group meetings on Bible study and retreats. Meditation in small group meetings and retreats was used for listening in stillness the will of God to us and the direction He intends the church should take. But, with the contemporary situation in the DRCA FS, I doubt if meditation occurs to such an extent to bring about joy in the Lord, spiritual fruits and prosperity in life. This is because shortage of ministers has kept the majority of ministers too busy. Conflict situations hindered normal functioning of the presbyteries and synodical structures of the DRCA FS that are tasked to arrange and plan activities that enable ministers to have opportunities for practicing meditation. The above mentioned factors have made ministers, including congregation members, to experience no joy in their ministry, no prosperity in the ministry and gave rise to lack of bearing of spiritual fruits in the ministry within congregations of the DRCA FS.

Fasting in the DRCA including the DRCA FS is uncommon and not yet officially practiced within its congregations, but some ministers are doing it privately for their own spiritual enrichment. Prayer in the congregations of the DRCA FS is done as part of worship service, small group activity and private spiritual discipline. In a worship service and small group meetings of the DRCA FS prayer is done mainly by the minister or an individual appointed by the minister or anyone leading a worship service or a small group meeting. Mass prayer within a worship service even in small groups meetings is not a tradition or approved in the church order even though in some congregations it is becoming an emerging new practice (DRCA FS 2015:21). In the DRCA FS, prayer is used both by the ministers and congregation members to build communion with God and as a response to most of the social challenges. According to Pali (2016:93) ministers respond

16 In the early 1990's.

17 I started my ministry in 2007.

more often with prayer to social challenges than with concrete action as compared to their congregation members.

In relation to study of the Word, the DRCA FS requires its ministers to have minimum six years of training in the ministry. The qualification of the ministers in the DRCA FS ranges from advance diploma to a Master's degree in theology with less than three ministers who articulated to a doctoral degree in theology. According to Pali (2016:137) before 2015 more than once a year ministers attended continuous in-service training in ministry, retreats, induction programmes, or ministers' conferences where Bible study and other activities for spiritual empowerment are done. To train its ministers the DRCA FS used its own theological seminary which was closed in 1998. After the closure of its theological seminary, the DRCA encountered challenges of identifying an institution that may be appropriate to train its ministers, and the University of the Free State, Hugenote Theological College, and Mukhanyo Theological College were used as official training of its ministers until in 2019 the DRCA decided to use the UFS as its only institution to train its ministers (DRCA FS, 2019:99, 103). In the DRCA FS ministers are encouraged to practice Bible study and read Christian literature in a form of pamphlets and books. According to (Pali, 2016:144) congregations in the DRCA FS have a tendency to read the Bible for preaching not for the purpose of interrogating the scripture for an in-depth understanding. Some ministers in the congregations of the DRCA FS do complain that congregation members do not attend the Bible groups. In contrast some congregation members also complained that there are no Bible study groups arranged in their congregations and even made a plea to be helped to establish Bible study groups in their congregations.

5.2.2 Outward spiritual disciplines

Foster (1982:65-87) mentions outward disciplines as simplicity, solitude, submission and service. Foster says simplicity is about living life in openness and its naturalness. It is being transparent and clear in our communication and lifestyle. Most important, it is being content with what God provides to us (Matthew 6:25-34). Concerning solitude Foster says it is about isolating ourselves as an individual (Matthew 6:6, Luke 5:16) or a small group (Matthew 26:36-46) from busyness and struggles of life in order to focus on God and compassion of the other. It is creating space outside and within us so that God can reach us and work within us. Submission involves recognizing the

authority of others over us and it is also about acknowledging mutual subordination of each other (Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:17). The object of submission varies and it can be to God (Acts 5:28, 29; Acts 4:19), Christian fellowship (Matthew 18:17), Christian household (Ephesians 5:21-24) and state (Romans 13:1-10). Lastly, under outward discipline is service which implies our presence and personal involvement to serve those in need. Service is the essence of leadership hence most of Biblical models of leadership like servant (John 13:1-17), shepherd (John 10:1-16) or stewardship (Matthew 25:14-30; 1 Corinthians 9:17) reflects service they provide to others.

For a long time majority of the DRCAFS ministers lived a life of modesty, sacrifice and simplicity. Often a lot of them were paid a salary below the prescribed scale by the synod and some may even go for months without getting their salary or full salary from the congregations they serve (DRCA FS, 2015:19). According to Pali (2017:2, 3) the DRCA FS salary of the majority of the ministers was often subsidized by the nearby white DRC. However, the contemporary situation in the DRCA FS is that now the subsidy from the white DRC is reduced if not stopped in other DRCA FS congregations. Furthermore, there is a shortage of ministers in the DRCA FS and more than half of the congregations do not have ministers. In light of this, ministers have to do full time ministry in their congregations whilst also acting as interim ministers for the congregations with no ministers. Pali (2016:120, 124) says the contemporary situation is that a number of interim congregations served by interim ministers range between one to seven. This interim ministry has been used by other ministers as extra income for them because their congregations are not able to pay them the required salary.

Practice of solitude by the ministers in the DRCA FS is complicated by various factors. First in the DRCA FS ministers are allowed official leave of at least six weeks per year which may be used for solitude, and vacations. Again, according to an empirical study made by Pali (2016:137) the majority of the ministers in the DRCA FS agreed that in the previous years for more than once they did have time for a solitude in a form of retreat and camping for ministerial empowerment. However, the contemporary serious conflict situation in the DRCA FS and the burden of interim ministry has kept ministers so busy that the majority of them no longer have time to practice solitude for their own spiritual empowerment.

Submission to authority in the DRCA FS is now becoming a growing concern especially in relation to ministers. According to Pali (2018:5, 6, 8) DRCA FS is experiencing conflicts and ministers are mostly to be blamed for most of these conflicts. One of the causes of these conflicts is resistance to submit to authority of higher structures of the church through open defiance, secular courts and violence. This happens to such an extent that some ministers even protect their colleagues against attempt to be disciplined or are reluctant to enforce discipline to their own colleagues for fear of loosing their friendship or support of their colleagues in the future. Concerning service, Pali (2016:93) says that in the DRCA FS ministers prefer prayer to active involvement in social challenges. This implies that ministers are not physically available to engage or demonstrates how to engage in majority of these social challenges. Further study within the DRCA indicate that service to the world in the DRCA FS is in a form of mission and diaconia and both are declining. Mission is narrow minded and understood as a project rather than identity of the congregation. Diaconial projects are done to address immediate needs like food, clothing and shelter rather than been used to empower members of the congregations against social injustices like corruption and inequality.

5.2.3 Corporate spiritual disciplines

The last and third category of these spiritual disciplines is corporate disciplines, which involve confession, worship service, guidance and celebration (Foster, 1987:92-115). Confession can be of faith or sins. Confession of faith is essential for salvation (Romans 10:9). But confession of sins is necessary because sins offends God and wound the Christian fellowship and hinder the process of forgiveness and reconciliation (1 John 1:9-10). Confession of sins can be made privately or publicly depending on the context that prompts confession. Concerning worship service, Foster understands it as an experience of reality of being ushered into the divine presence. In a worship service, whatever forms of worship service and liturgical acts that enhance reality of worship, experience must be welcomed and whatever hinders true worship should be shunned. In relation to guidance, Foster says it is about listening to the voice of God and applying it in our decisions and actions to please God. Resane (2014:4) argues that guidance is one of the main functions of the minister as shepherd of his flock. It has the implication that a minister has to give direction, provide suggestions and show a congregation a path of righteousness and right decisions that should be made. Lastly under corporate disciplines is celebration,

which implies having joy and power of abundant life received from God. It is about celebrating the victory of God (Exodus 20:1-2, 20-21); dancing for the Lord (2 Samuel 6:12-19; Acts 3:8), and glorifying God (John 12:12-19) against evil forces of the Devil.

The DRCA (FS) aligns with reformed confession of faith and theology. But the contemporary situation in the DRCA FS which reflects growing conflicts, and lack of discipline amongst some of the ministers indicate that there is no space for confession of sins committed by the ministers. According to Pali (2018:5, 8) there is growing lack of discipline amongst some of the ministers who commit sexual immorality, financial mismanagement, and violent disruption of assemblies of the DRCA FS. Relationship amongst ministers is declining due to favouritism, and misuse of the church order to disadvantage some and favour some. The contemporary situation is such that the DRCA FS may experience another schism after the one in 1994 (DRCA FS, Scribe 2020).

Concerning worship service one can say that the DRCA¹⁸ inherited most of its worship service forms from the white DRC and a lot has not changed or rather change has been resisted. This implies that the DRCA FS has not yet revised its liturgy since it was received from the white DRC, instead it opposed all the attempts made to suggest improvement of the liturgy in a worship service. The study made by Pali (2016:147) indicates that in the congregations of the DRCA FS (depending on the programme of the day) worship service and preaching may be led by the minister, interim minister, church elder or congregation member. Singing is mostly from Hosanna hymn book and singing of choruses or use of music instruments like drums or liturgical dance are not a tradition or allowed in the DRCA even though they are growing practices in congregations of the DRCA FS. In short, concerning the worship service in the congregations of the DRCA FS ministers had been ambiguous and not honest in relation to synodical decisions made concerning worship service in the DRCA. In my observation for many years the DRCA, including the DRCA FS, has opposed suggestions by congregation members to approve the use of music instruments, liturgical dance, healing and mass prayer in their worship service and labelled them as foreign, not

18 Read DRCA FS 2015, addendum on the decisions of the DRCA General Synod whereby the DRCA General synod advised that church councils and ministers sign a pledge to resist temptation to change the tradition and practices of the church as influenced by modernism, postmodernism and charismatic spiritual practices.

tradition in reformed ministry and transgression of the church order. This was even confirmed in the DRCA FS synod¹⁹ 2015 whereby church councils were tasked to observe strict liturgical order in the worship service. This is despite the growing and continuing practice in the congregations to sing choruses, use music instruments and some pastors practicing mass prayer and healing ministries. In the light of the above, the DRCA FS ministers have failed to acknowledge new emerging forms of worship service that enhance worship experience. But instead rejected them on the church documents whilst on practice they use them to attract and enhance their worship service. As a result this reflect the ambiguity and dishonesty in the practice of ministry in the congregations of the DRCA FS.

Concerning guidance, the scripture, creeds, church order, church councils and higher structures of the DRCA FS are responsible to offer guidance appropriate for the effective leadership of a congregation. As discussed under submission, the contemporary situation in the DRCA FS indicates that a majority of ministers are defiant and suspicious of authoritative guidance from higher structures of the church and even disregard the guidance from the church order (Pali, 2018:5, 7). Hence, with the contemporary situation in the DRCA FS characterized by conflict, immorality and looming schism ministers are failing to show proper guidance in making appropriate decisions and towards righteous paths. Lastly, lack of submission to authority, ignorance of guidance and growing conflicts have made the majority of the ministers to have limited things to celebrate within the DRCA FS. DRCA FS moderature (2015:32-35, 49-55; 2019:21-27) raised a concern about the situation in the DRCA FS that relationship amongst ministers is one characterized by suspicion, lack of trust and hatred. It is no wonder that some ministers mentioned that they experience no joy in their ministry because of the negative experience in their ministry and their family members are adversely affected to such that they have nothing to do with the DRCA as a church (Pali, 2016:126). Furthermore, some of the ministers, due to lack of improvement of the declining ministry in the DRCA FS suffer from physical and psychological exhaustion, hence the tendency of sickness.

19 Read DRCA FS 2015, addendum on the decisions of the DRCA General Synod.

6. Summary of findings

If one engages the history of the DRCA FS, one could realise that over the years the situation in the DRCA FS indicates a shift from a spirituality that reflects integrity, active social ministry, and discipline towards a spirituality characterised by destructive values such as lack of integrity, declining social ministry and immorality. How is this possible? My observation is that ministers in the DRCA FS failed to heed the concern of the early white missionaries, when they said the DRCA (FS) will struggle with spiritual maturity, mission and financial independence. The situation was exacerbated when the white missionaries dominated in the leadership of the DRCA FS and did everything for the DRCA FS and its ministers whilst DRCA FS ministers became too dependent on the assistance of the white missionaries from the DRC in the FS. Now the missionaries have left and the financial subsidies are cut, the church is now left with no financial resources and inexperienced leadership that fight over power and positions.

The DRCA in the FS at the moment has lost its integrity due to its majority of ministers involved in immoral acts like sexual immorality, financial mismanagement, violent disruption of DRCA FS assemblies (Pali, 2018:5, 8). The relationship amongst most of its ministers is characterised by hatred, suspicion, and mistrust (DRCA FS, 2019:13-14, 21-22). Now, it is on the brink of suffering another schism since 1994. A church like this, cannot be a role model for transforming the society and reflecting the image of Christ. It cannot confront systemic evil in the society because it fails to protect the weak within its own congregations, due to misuse of the church order to serve some and favour others. Lack of integrity of ministers and the DRCA FS implies there is no way that its ministry will be effective within and beyond borders of the congregations. It is no wonder that the contemporary situation in the DRCA FS reflects no joy for some ministers affected by conflicts.

The analysis of the spiritual disciplines of the ministers in the DRCA FS indicate that the gradual decline of the inward disciplines adversely affected the practice of outward and corporate spiritual disciplines. In other words, the decline of personal spiritual devotions affected the public ministry and behaviour of the ministers in the DRCA FS. Rejection of mass prayer, lack of fasting, meditation and making intentional effort to encourage Bible study gave opportunity to ministers in the DRCA FS to lack spirit of submission and service. Lack of submission is realised mostly when ministers refused to be disciplined for disrupting synodical assemblies of the DRCA FS and obey the instructions from the Moderature of the DRCA FS (2019:13, 14, 22). A church like the DRCA FS with ministers who refuse to submit to authority and

are involved in conflicts cannot adequately model service to God and those vulnerable. Hence, it is no wonder that relationships amongst ministers and other creation of God are declining and ministers are mostly blamed for most of the conflicts in the DRCA FS.

In light with the above discussion, how do we evaluate the spirituality of the ministers of the DRCA FS in relation to the presence of the Holy Spirit, Trinitarian God and African Spirituality? The contemporary situation of the DRCA FS as characterised by conflicts and potential schism, makes one to wonder if the majority of the ministers in the DRCA FS are still influenced by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is because in my observation of the progress and the reports in the DRCA FS 2015 and 2019 synods ministers lack the love, mind and spirit of Christ. I wonder if the ministers in the DRCA FS still confess the theology of the Triune God, because the contemporary situation amongst ministers reflect lack of unity, team work and respect of the other. Majority of ministers in the DRCA FS are Black Africans, but they failed to model the character of African Christian spirituality that is moralistic, revolutionary, upholds dignity and strives for relationship of humanity. South Africa, Africa and the world at large are abound with immorality, human indignity, racism and inequality. But ministers in the DRCA FS instead of setting an example and empowering others to confront these social injustices are the ones involved by ignoring the vulnerable and protecting their own within their congregations.

More than half of the congregations in the DRCA FS do not have ministers. This contributes to the over-functioning by ministers who serve as interim ministers for other congregations. This results in too many ministerial duties to be done, lack of time for recreation and family, burn-out, and negligence of the ministerial responsibilities of the residence congregation of the minister; this also leads to potential conflict with the church council and ill health. This is confirmed by the Moderamen of the DRCA FS (2015:49) who mentioned that some ministers suffer from exhaustion, due to too many ministerial duties, and that some of the conflicts are due to some ministers neglecting their responsibility in their residence congregations. The above practice reflects spirituality that lack intuition of setting priorities right and balancing responsibilities.

Unmotivated laity in the DRCA FS has a long historical problem. This is due to clergy centred ministry where the minister is expected to offer most of the spiritual services to passive laity. The situation in the DRCA FS is made worse by the ministers who are too busy and do not know how to prioritise duties and lay people who are comfortable with the status quo and reluctant

to be active participants in the ministry. This frustrate both the minister and the laity who blame one another.

Lastly, hardly anything has been mentioned about contemporary challenges concerning the environment within the assemblies of the DRCA in general and regional synods. To enhance the present spirituality among those in the leadership and in congregations, the DRCA FS needs to revive the practice of spiritual disciplines and intentionally use them for transformation purpose not sustaining the status quo. The DRCA FS and its ministers need to review their theology in relation to internal and external ministry, its understanding of Triune God theology, and the African perspective on ministry. Most of the DRCA FS challenges are due to a reluctance to confront the status quo, thus contributing to a gradual increase in conflict which consequently led to loss of morals, integrity and quality relationships. It is not surprising that, in its state of gradual increase in conflicts that affected morals, relations and theology of social involvement, the DRCA FS has not been able to participate effectively in social ministry.

7. Conclusion and suggestions

This article aims to analyse the spirituality of the ministers in the congregations of the DRCA FS. To achieve that, various benefits of spirituality for leadership and the dynamics of spirituality were discussed. It was argued that Christian spirituality impacts on the totality of life, that is on personal, public, in the church and beyond the church walls. The following were the characteristics of the dominant spirituality of the ministers of the DRCA FS. It was found that the historical and contemporary challenges experienced by the ministers in the DRCA FS influenced their dominant spirituality to shift towards a destructive spirituality that lacks integrity, and irrelevant with declining social ministry and immoral. In the long run, the decline in the practice of inward spiritual disciplines affected public ministry and relationships amongst ministers. Hence ministers in the DRCA FS reflect spirituality that is not active in social involvement and poorly contributing to ministry characterised by too many conflicts.

It must be noted with sadness that beyond 2015 to the present the quality of spirituality in the congregations of the DRCA FS especially amongst ministers has declined enormously. Even though there were attempts in 2018, by the moderamen of both the DRC in the FS and the DRCA (general synod and regional synod in FS) to promote reconciliation, forgiveness and co-operation with each other, it was with little effect. The situation in some

congregations in the DRCA FS is not yet resolved as there are still conflicts in the form of disturbance of worship service, litigations and ignorance of the church order to discipline other ministers. Very soon there might be another schism, if the present leadership does not act responsibly.

For future purposes, the DRCA FS needs to reflect on the following in order to develop a more relevant and quality spirituality. First, how can ministers use spiritual disciplines to enhance and transform personal and congregational ministry in the congregations of the DRCA FS? Secondly, to what extent do historical challenges impact on its present ministry and spirituality? Thirdly, to what extent does the legacy of white involvement, in the form of apartheid and dominance of white missionaries, influence the spirituality of the DRCA FS? Fourth and lastly, the DRCA FS needs to review its theology of practicing ministry and deliberately address how it impacts on both the personal and societal contexts.

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