

# **Inclusive or exclusive? An analysis of the missiological response of the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA) towards inhabitants of informal settlements**

## **ABSTRACT**

The RCA is the youngest and smallest church within the Dutch Reformed family of churches. Its mission focus was predominantly on “Indians” in South Africa. With the repeal of all segregated legislation based on race classification, South Africa witnessed a larger and legal migration of people from rural to urban areas. This resulted in many “informal settlements” being established. This new development offered new challenges to the RCA churches. Whereas in the past the RCA focussed its mission on its own racial group (Indians), it had to now contend with mission to the “informal settlements” around its neighbourhood. This article assesses the perception and response of members of the RCA congregations, within the RCA Presbytery of Gauteng, towards the inclusion of “informal settlements” as also part of their mission focus.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

After Nelson Mandela was unconditionally released from prison on the 11 February 1990 (Davenport 1998:9), the National Party government met with the African National Congress in August 1990 to discuss an interim government and a new constitution based on a single vote for every citizen.

In February 1991 President FW de Klerk announced major political reforms in South Africa. In June 1991 the Parliament repealed the Land, Group Areas and Population Registration Acts. In December 1991 the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) convened (Davenport 1998:10). In 1992 a referendum amongst the white population of South Africa gave President de Klerk the mandate to proceed with constitution negotiations. This eventually resulted in the first democratic elections being held in South Africa in April 1994 (De Klerk 1998:89). On the 10 May 1994 Nelson Mandela was inaugurated President of South Africa and Thabo Mbeki and FW de Klerk as executive deputy presidents (Davenport 1998: 22).

With the removal of Apartheid, the freedom to stay and work where you want to was being enjoyed. This led to a migration of people from the rural to the urban areas. This form of urbanisation, which was previously deemed illegal, was now legal and escalated.

Most of these people did not have the finances to buy land and build houses so they began to settle on available land surrounding a suburb. On these lands they began building “houses” made of wood and zinc which they called home. These settlements became known as informal settlements or more commonly known as “squatter camps”.

According to the [architectafrica.com](http://architectafrica.com) (2004) webpage about 5.2 million people in South Africa live in these squatter camps or informal dwellings.

## 2. CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCHES

These new developments posed a challenge, in particular to Christian churches. The challenge towards fulfilling its mission obligation to the dwellers in these informal settlements is further compounded with by a missiological shift amongst other religions, especially secularism, Hinduism and Islam. (Kritzinger 2000:95). These religions have suddenly awakened and began to enjoy a new lease on life in the sense of becoming mission orientated, seeking to convert people. More Hindu temples and Mosques are being built. They are becoming more and more involved in feeding schemes and relief programs.

Urbanisation, especially of the previously disadvantaged people, changed the demographics of "White areas". Even other "group areas" now face the prospects of "blacks" entering their areas.

## 3. FOCUS OF THE STUDY

This new development poses a unique challenge to the RCA. Presently these congregations have a predominantly "Indian" membership. This was due to the Group Areas Act which segregated people according to race. The result of this was that these congregations engaged in mission work amongst their own population group.

This empirical study is focussed on the congregations of the RCA Presbytery of Gauteng. An attempt is made to answer the question whether these congregations view the informal settlement as "inclusive" or "exclusive" of their mission work due to the increase of "squatter camps" in and around their neighbourhood.

## 4. SAMPLING METHODOLOGY

This study is structured, so that the sample of the universe being researched, would provide data that is representative of members of RCA congregations of the RCA Presbytery of Gauteng, who were sixteen years of age and older. This age group was deliberately chosen because they are either full communicant members or are preparing to become members of the RCA. There are only three congregations of the RCA within the Presbytery of Gauteng. The sampling methodology that had to be decided on, had to take into consideration the number of members in each congregation that were sixteen years of age and older. From the membership registers of these different congregations the following statistics were recorded: congregation 1 had thirteen (13) members, congregation 2 had forty-three (43) members and congregation 3 had eighty (80) members.

The questionnaire, as instrument of measurement, was adopted to gather information for this research. Respondents were selected by means of the probability, stratified simple random sampling method. From this universe of 136 members, 76 members responded. This translated into a sampling ratio of 55.9%. This ratio was deemed sufficient to proceed with the analysis.

Although cross tabulations in approximately 90% of cases did not fulfil the scientific demands set for cross tabulations, it is relevant because the universe is in reality small and the sampling ratio of 55.9% is statistically acceptable.

## 5. FORMATION OF THE RCA

The RCA is the youngest member of the Dutch Reformed family of churches. It was established

by formal mission work of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) and informal mission work by members of the DRC amongst South African Indians. The DRC in the Cape Province was the first to initiate work of this kind by appointing Dr. GBA Gerdener in 1916 to minister to the Muslim community. (Pypers s.a.:1)<sup>1</sup>

Elsewhere in the country other missions were initiated among the Indian population in South Africa. The first congregation of the RCA was formed in 1958 in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. According to Cronje (1982:75), the first congregation in the Transvaal was established in Germiston in 1965.

Due to the establishment of more churches there was a need to convene a meeting to formerly establish a synod. The convening of the first synod took place on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August 1968 in Pietermaritzburg, with a delegation from four established Indian congregations (Pypers: s.a.: 2). This synod represented the fourteenth youngest and smallest church of the DRC family with only 360 communicant members. It was also at this meeting that a church order was adopted and the Indian Reformed Church was born.

It should also be noted that the RCA, being born during the apartheid era, soon became very vocal about injustices of the day. In its quest to address these issues, numerous letters were written to the then Minister of Community Development, in which various apartheid laws were brought into question. It also took upon itself to call the family of Dutch Reformed Churches to address the issues of apartheid.

It was also during these turbulent years in the sad history of apartheid South Africa that the RCA sought unity of the Family of Dutch Reformed Churches. The first reference to unity was made in 1970.

The name Indian Reformed Church was subsequently changed to the Reformed Church in Africa at the 1976 Synod held in the Transvaal, as the RCA did not see itself only as serving the Indian community.

## 6. INCLUSIVE OF MISSION INTENTION

The RCA, at its twenty-first Synodical Committee meeting held on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 1978, reconfirmed itself to be an open church, in that it "does not blind itself to its mission responsibility to all people", though its mission is directed to the Indian population of South Africa.

It is in light of the above statement that interrogative questions need to be asked as to whether the RCA has repositioned itself from missions predominantly to the Indian population, to missions which embraces a changing demographic environment. Does it see the need to go beyond its cultural, language and racial borders to present the Gospel to a people that have now settled in informal settlements that are within its community boundaries?

### 6.1 The great commission (Mt 28:19-20)

There are certainly tensions in mission. Several viewpoints exist about what missions are. Bosch (1980:31) says that according to evangelicals, the motive for mission is in the fact that God commanded it in Matthew 28:19-20 and that it is widely accepted as the key in understanding the Gospel of Matthew (1980:66). He does concede though that there are other interpretations, but that it remains an undeniable fact that it has to do with a mandate for a world-wide mission (1980:68).

<sup>1</sup> The date of the publication of the book "Guidelines on everyday Life" from which this extract is taken is either 1994 or 1995. The Synod of the RCA of 1994 agreed to have this book published in honour of DJ Pypers who was to retire in April 1995.

Anderson (1961:64) offers an explanation of the term “... all nations...” to be found in Matt. 28:19. The term, ‘all nations’, according to Anderson, means “people from Gentile lands”. This does not exclude Israel. This is the new eschatological community which is gathered from both the Jews and the Gentiles. As a matter of fact the Apostle Paul was a Jew (Barclay 1986:12), unto whom Christ revealed Himself on the road to Damascus (Dahl 1977:4).

Arias & Johnson (1992:30) suggests that this commission affirms the mission to the Gentiles. He asks the question whether this mandate excludes the Jews. His conclusion is that if the text is read in the context of Jesus’ own ministry and Matthew’s concerns, then the mandate is inclusive. Bowen (1996:43) also suggests that a reading of Lk 24:47 confirms that the ministry of the disciples was for all nations.

The “Great Commission” therefore was a commission to go to all nations which has become the new eschatological people of God. None were to be excluded from this “Commission”.

## 7. THE LAUDIUM DECLARATION

This mission intention is further entrenched in the Laudium Declaration, which explicitly declares the RCA to be an evangelical Reformed church. In article one of the declaration the RCA commits itself to the “primacy of evangelism, of the preaching of the Gospel to every creature” (Sukdaven 2006: 37).

Secondly, in article three, it calls on its members to make Christ known throughout the world” as well as the engagement in compassionate service by “... caring for those who are deprived of justice, dignity, food and shelter” (Sukdaven 2006: 39).

Article one and two above is summarised by Van Engen (1996:18) in that “mission is the common witness of the whole church, bringing the whole gospel to the whole world.”

## 8. ESSENTIAL NATURE OF THE CHURCH

Kraemer (1947: 1-2), in answering the question as to the nature of the Church and its obligation to the world, regards the essential nature of the Church to be the fact that it is an apostolic body. The church is therefore called upon to reflect on its position and situation as well as to become conscious in a “new way” of its mission, because it is founded on a divine commission.

In light of the above, Lindsell (Anderson 1961: 239) says that the church exists for two purposes: the first purpose of the church is the “Will of God for His people to be of one mind, united in faith and using the means of grace for growth as well as for fellowship”. The second purpose of the church is a “witnessing fellowship living in the world for the sake of the world”. He goes on to say that the church is witness and when this is not true, the church is not the church. In the words of Brunner (1931:108): “The church exists by missions as fire exists by burning”.

According to Saayman (Kritzinger and Saayman 1994:36) the context in which mission is done, is the whole of God’s creation. He uses the terms *kerygma* (preaching), *koinonia* (fellowship) and *diakonia* (service) in combination to describe the main aspects of the *maturia* (witness) of the Kingdom of God.

Tension arises when the church is conceived almost exclusively as a body to conserve and maintain itself (Kraemer 1947:34). Can a church therefore, who believes that its purpose is to maintain its members for the purpose of fellowship alone, give expression to the “divine commission” as stated by Kraemer (1947:1) or to what Lindsell (Anderson 1961:239) says that “the church is witness and when this is not true, the church is not the church”.

In considering therefore the nature of the church as well as recognizing the sincere

intention of the Laudium Declaration, the following analysis should provide a good indication of whether the RCA in the Gauteng region has repositioned its mission focus in a changing South Africa.

## 9. ANALYSIS OF DATA

The questionnaire compiled was so designed that the data gathered would probably assist in testing the explicit declarations of the RCA, as to its inclusive mission statement, through a quantitative process. The result of the analysis could indicate if there has been a shift in mission focus, which was initially missions to predominately Hindus and Muslims.

### 9.1 Interpretation of data

#### 9.1.1 Presence of an informal settlement

Reference question: Q. 1.6. Is there an informal settlement in your area?

Purpose of question: To establish if the respondents are aware of an informal settlement in their area.

**TABLE 1: Respondents' awareness of an informal settlement in their area.**

Q.1.6. THE PRESENCE OF AN INFOR- MAL SETTLE- MENT	WHOLE GROUP		CONGREGATION 1		CONGREGATION 2		CONGREGATION 3	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
YES	68	89.5	8	100.0	25	100.0	35	81.4
NO	8	10.5	-	-	-	-	8	18.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100.0</b>

According to the data in Table 1, 76 respondents answered this question of which 89.5% confirmed that there is an informal settlement in their area and 10.5% said that there are no informal settlements.

#### 9.1.2 Congregational involvement in mission work

Reference question: Q.3.4.2. Is your congregation involved in mission work to them?

Purpose of question: To establish whether the congregation is involved in mission work to the dwellers in these informal settlements.

**TABLE 2: Involvement in mission work to people in informal settlements**

Q.3.4.2. CONGRE- GATIONAL INVOLVE- MENT IN MISSION WORK	WHOLE GROUP		CONGREGATION 1		CONGREGATION 2		CONGREGATION 3	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
YES	61	83.6	-	-	24	100.0	37	90.2
NO	12	16.4	8	100.0	-	-	4	9.8
TOTAL	73	100.00	8	100.0	24	100.0	41	100.0

The data in Table 2 suggests that there were 73 respondents in total of which 83.6% confirmed that their congregation is involved in mission work to dwellers in the informal settlements while 16.4% answered that their congregation is not involved in mission work to inhabitants of the informal settlements.

Although all of the members (100%) of Congregation 1 confirmed that there is an informal settlement in their area and that this informal settlement is a growing one, it is significant to note that these members are (according to Table 2) not involved in mission work to people in informal settlements.

Although Congregations 2 (100%) and 3 (90.2%) have significantly indicated their congregations' involvement in mission work, this on its own does not give an indication of how actively involved these congregations are in mission work. Therefore responses on the following question, (Q.4.1.), will show, on a sliding scale, how actively involved members of these congregations see themselves in mission work.

#### *9.1.3 Indication of how active the congregation is in mission work*

Reference question: Q.4.1. Is your congregation truly actively involved in missions?

On a scale of 1-5, please indicate by circling the appropriate number how active your congregation is involved in mission work.

Purpose of question: The emphasis is on the word, "truly actively involved". Many could say that they are involved but this involvement could be minimal with very little impact in that community of informal dwellers. Thus respondents could indicate their degree of involvement ranging from 1 = not truly involved to 5 = truly involved.

**TABLE 3: Respondents' degree of involvement in mission work.**

Q.4.1. Congre- gation active- ly involv- ed in mission	WHOLE GROUP		CONGREGATION 1		CONGREGATION 2		CONGREGATION 3	
* Scale 1 - 5	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	12	16.0	7	87.5	-	-	5	11.9
2	6	8.0	-	-	-	-	6	14.3
3	16	21.3	1	12.5	2	8.0	13	31.0
4	11	14.7	-	-	3	12.0	8	19.0
5	30	40.0	-	-	20	80.0	10	23.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* 1 = not truly involved      5 = truly involved

Bearing in mind that this is the **perception** of respondents of how actively involved their congregation is in mission work, Table 3 indicates that there were 75 respondents in total of which 16% believes that their congregation is not truly involved in missions while 40% believes that their congregation is truly involved in mission work. Furthermore 21.3% can be construed as marginally involved in mission work.

If categories 4 and 5 on the scale can be expressed as being truly involved, then:

- ◆ Congregation 1: Respondents' reaction falls mainly in category one and therefore confirm that their congregation is not truly involved in mission work.
- ◆ Congregation 2: In contrast with the above, 92.0% confirm that their congregation is truly involved in mission work.
- ◆ Congregations 3: While 42.9% confirm that their congregation is truly involved in mission work, almost a third (31.0%) is marginally involved in mission work and 26.2% of the congregation members feel that their congregation is not truly involved in mission work.

If category 4 and 5 on the scale can be expressed as being truly involved, then 54.7% of total respondents believe that their congregation is truly involved in mission work. It is interesting to note that from Table 2, 83.6% of the respondents who confirmed that their congregation is involved in mission work, only 54.7% believe that their congregation is truly involved in mission work and 21.3% believe that their congregation is marginally involved in mission work. Therefore 76.0% (Table 3: category 3-5) of all the congregations are marginally to truly involved in mission work.

#### 9.1.4 Mission work to others other than Hindus and Muslims

Reference question: Q.3.3. For many years the RCA has been involved in mission work to Indians that are predominantly Muslims and Hindus. Is your congregation presently involved in missions to include groups other than Muslims and Hindus?

Purpose of question: This question was included as part of the split-half approach (Goddard and Melville 1987:46) to test the validity of question 3.4.2. It served to qualify that there is definitely mission work being done among people other than Hindus and Muslims.

The data in Table 4 indicates that there were 72 respondents in total that answered this question of which 79.2% confirmed that their congregation is involved in mission to others other than Hindus and Muslims. About 21.0% said that their congregation is not involved in mission to others other than Hindus and Muslims.

**TABLE 4: Involvement in missions to others other than Muslims and Hindus**

Q.3.3. MISSION TO OTHERS THAN HINDUS & MUSLIMS	WHOLE GROUP		CONGREGATION 1		CONGREGATION 2		CONGREGATION 3	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
YES	57	79.2	2	25.0	24	100.0	31	77.5
NO	15	20.8	6	75.0	-	-	9	22.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

It is once again interesting to note that on the question whether the congregation is involved in mission work to people in informal settlements, 83.6% of the research group confirmed that their congregations are involved in mission work to the dwellers in the informal settlements, yet in Table 4, 79.2% confirms that their congregations are involved in mission work to others other than Hindus and Muslims. This difference is further compounded by Congregation 1 confirmation in Table 2 that their congregation is not involved in missions to dwellers in informal settlements, yet 25.0% are confirming that they are involved in mission to others other than Hindus and Muslims. The same is true for Congregation 3 where 90.2% confirms that their congregation is involved in missions to informal dwellers in informal settlements, yet 77.5% confirms that their congregation is involved in missions to others other than Hindus and Muslims.

The answer to this percentage difference in responses could probably be found in the fact that some of the respondents are still very sensitive to missions to Hindus and Muslims. These differences should not distract attention from the fact that 79.2% of the research group believes that their congregation is involved in missions to others other than Hindus and Muslims.

#### 9.1.5 The importance of mission work

Reference question: Q.3.1. Is mission work important to you?

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Purpose of question: To determine the respondents reaction to how important mission work is to them and to determine by a follow-up question whether they are personally involved in missions. In response to Q.3.1., 75 respondents (100%) confirmed that mission work is important to them.

#### 9.1.6 Personal involvement in mission

Reference question: Q.3.4.3. Are you personally involved in mission work to informal dwellers in informal settlements?

Purpose of question: To determine whether respondents that have acknowledged that missions are important to them are also personally involved in mission work.

**TABLE 5: Personal involvement in mission work**

Q.3.4.3. PERSONAL INVOLVE- MENT	WHOLE GROUP		CONGREGATION 1		CONGREGATION 2		CONGREGATION 3	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
YES	29	38.7	1	12.5	19	79.2	9	20.9
NO	46	61.3	7	87.5	5	20.8	34	79.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From Table 5, 38.7% of respondents confirmed that they are personally involved in missions while 61.3% said that they are not personally involved in missions.

It seems that as the questions become more personal, there is a huge shift between the importance of mission work in general and the personal involvement in mission work. Theoretically, it seems that mission is important, but that practically it is not engaged in by the respondents. What seems more surprising is the response to the following question.

#### 9.1.7. The informal settlement as a mission field for the congregation.

Reference question: Q.3.4.1. Do you see it (informal settlement) as a mission field for your congregation?

Purpose of question: To test the respondents' views on mission work to people residing in informal settlements.

The difference between the views of members belonging to Congregation 1 and those from Congregation 3 are striking. Although all the respondents confirmed in Q.3.1., that mission work is important to them, 25.0% of the members of Congregation 1 do not see the informal settlement as a mission field for their congregation.

TABLE 6: The informal settlement as a mission field

Q.3.4.1. INFORMAL SETTLE- MENT AS A MISSION FIELD FOR Y O U R CONGRE- GATION	WHOLE GROUP		CONGREGATION 1		CONGREGATION 2		CONGREGATION 3	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
YES	71	94.7	6	75.0	24	100.0	41	95.3
NO	4	5.3	2	25.0	-	-	2	4.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In Table 6, 94.7% confirmed that they see the informal settlement as a mission field for their congregation while 5.3% does not share this vision.

When it relates to their personal involvement in mission work, the figures for Congregation 1 (12.5%) and Congregation 3 (20.9%), is substantially small (Table 5). In all incidences Congregation 1 and 2 have shown that though they agree that mission work is important, to include the informal settlement as an important mission field is reduced to 25.0% in Congregation 1 and by 4.7% in Congregation 3 (Table 6).

#### 9.1.8. *Encouraging church members to be involved in missions.*

Reference question: If your congregation is not involved in missions to them (people in informal settlements), would you encourage them to become involved in missions to them?

Purpose of question: To see how strongly mission-orientated the respondents are.

All the respondents to Q.3.4.4. indicated that they would encourage their congregations to become involved in mission work to people residing in informal settlements.

An interesting observation is that all the respondents in Q.3.1. indicated that mission work is important to them and all the respondents in Q3.4.4. indicated that they would encourage their congregations to be involved in mission work, yet in Table 5 only 38.7% of the respondents have indicated that they are personally involved in mission work.

#### 9.1.9. *Knowledge of informal settlements in relation to church membership resembling the demographics of the community.*

Reference Question: Q.1.6. Is there an informal settlement in your area?

Q.4.2.3. (On the views of the future of the congregation). The racial composition of its membership? Do you think it will become more representative of the demographics of the community?

Purpose of question: To gauge the openness to an inclusive understanding of the respondents towards incorporation of informal dwellers into membership of their congregation.

**TABLE 7: Relationship between knowledge of an informal settlement and the racial composition of church membership becoming more representative of the demographics of the community.**

Q.1.6. Is there an informal settlement in your area?	Q.4.2.3. Will racial composition of membership of congregation be more representative of the community?			
		YES	NO	ROW TOTAL
YES	57 95.0%	3 5.0%		60 100.0%
NO	4 50.0%	4 50.0%		8 100.0%

$X=15.479$   $df=1$        $\alpha=0.000$       uncertainty coefficient=0.226  
(25.0% cells have expected count of less than 5)

With reference to Table 7, 95.0% of the respondents who confirmed that there is an informal settlement in their area are also of the understanding that the racial composition of the congregation will become more representative of the community.

In respect of the uncertainty coefficient value, 22.6% of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable which means that a strong relationship exists. Although 25.0% of the cells have an expected cell count of less than 5 the data is nevertheless interpreted in an attempt to understand the issue of inclusiveness and exclusiveness.

## 9.2. Testing the claims of the RCA

### 9.2.1 The case for mission work as inclusive in the RCA of Gauteng

Alluding to the purpose of this research and the results of the analysis of the data from this research, there are possible conclusions that can be drawn which may indicate that the congregations that make up the RCA Presbytery of Gauteng have inclusive views of their understanding of mission work.

### 9.2.2 Statistics that possibly support the inclusive view of mission work

From analysis the following tables allude to a probable conclusion that the congregations in the

RCA Presbytery of Gauteng are inclusive in their understanding of mission work.

- ◆ All three congregations in Table 1 (89.5%) strongly agree that there is an informal settlement in their area.
- ◆ From Table 2, Congregation 2 (100.0%) and Congregation 3 (90.2%) overwhelmingly agree that they are involved in mission work to the dwellers in the informal settlements. Congregation 1 (0.0%) is not involved in mission work to dwellers in the informal settlement.
- ◆ The majority of respondents (Table 6 (94.7%)) see the informal settlement in their area as a mission field for their congregation.
- ◆ An observation from Table 7 is that 95.0% of the respondents that have said there is an informal settlement in their area have also indicated that the membership of their congregation will eventually reflect the demographics of the community.

Considering the above statistics, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that these RCA congregations in the Presbytery of Gauteng see mission as being inclusive rather than exclusive and are also engaged in mission work to the dwellers in the informal settlements in their area. An exception is Congregation 1 who claimed to be inclusive in their mission understanding but is not involved in mission work to the informal settlement in their area. There is therefore a case to strongly suggest that the RCA Presbytery of Gauteng is inclusive in their mission praxis.

#### *9.2.3 The case for mission work as exclusive in the RCA Gauteng*

Does the data indicate the possibility that there could also be an exclusive view of missions within the congregations?

The data in Table 6 shows that 94.7% of the respondents indicated that they see the informal settlement in their area as a mission field for their congregation, but in Table 4 there are 20.8% of respondents who still view missions as directed to Hindus and Muslims. This view confirms the statement of the RCA Synodical Committee Meeting in 1978 where it was stated that the RCA is not an exclusive church, though in its mission it is directed to the Indian people. However by virtue of this commitment, it is not blinding itself to its mission responsibility to all people.

One may add that in all probability it is not the intention of these respondents to be seen as promoting an exclusive mission orientation, but that they are sensitive to their mission understanding in the context they find themselves in, which is living predominantly among Hindus and Muslims. This was not by choice that they find themselves in this context, but was forced to live in these areas because of the Group Areas Act promulgated by the former Apartheid Government.

Of encouragement though, and which is reiterated, is the affirmation by the majority of respondents that the eventual membership of their congregation will reflect the demographics of their community which will be inclusive of the informal settlement in their area.

#### *9.2.4 The case for the separation of church and mission of the RCA in Gauteng.*

In this article and in the introduction to this chapter it was stated how important it is to understand the relationship between church and mission. The question that needs to be answered is whether there is a case to suggest that there is an indication of the separation of the church and mission as two separate identities in the data analysed.

Vicedom (1965:83) said that “the mission of the church is not independent, arbitrary,

optional work of the church ... ” In these two quotations above a strong relationship between church and mission exists. Stephen Neill (1959:8) sounds a word of caution at the same time by saying that “if everything is mission then nothing is mission”. Kritzinger (1998:41) explains that “the belief that mission is comprehensive must not be taken that it is all-inclusive. He uses two terms that was construed by Newbigin and expounded on by Gensichen: dimension and intention.

In explaining dimension and intention, Kritzinger (1998:41) says that not everything the church does have a missionary intention but everything the church does, does have (or should have) a missionary dimension.

The analysis of the data has brought to the fore a probable understanding of church and mission as being two different identities. It is appropriate at this point to highlight a quotation by Newbigin that Van Engen (1991:28) draws attention to.

“In the thinking of the vast majority of Christians the words “church” and “mission” connote two different kinds of society. The one is conceived to be a society devoted to worship and the spiritual care and nurture of its members.... The other is conceived to be a society devoted to the propagation of the gospel, passing on its converts to the safe keeping of “the church.” ...It is taken for granted that the missionary obligation is one that has to be met AFTER the needs of the home have been fully met; that existing gains have to be thoroughly consolidated before we go further afield; that the world-wide church has to be built up with the same sort of prudent business enterprise.”

Van Engen (1991:38) says that “the fact remains that in the mind of many church members *church and mission* are seen as distinct and sometimes conflicting ideas”.

From the analysis of the data it was found that:

- ◆ In Table 2 a high percentage (83.6%) of respondents confirmed that their congregation was involved in mission work to the dwellers in the informal settlements.
- ◆ In Q.3.1. all the respondents (100.0%) said that mission work is important to them
- ◆ In Table 6 almost all (94.7%) said that the informal settlement is a mission field for their congregation, yet
- ◆ In Table 5 almost two thirds (61.3%) of the respondents confessed that they are not personally involved in mission to dwellers in the informal settlement in their area.

With almost two thirds (61.3%) from Table 5 saying that they are not involved in mission to the informal settlement, it could be probably be construed that the RCA Presbytery of Gauteng views the relationship between church and mission as two separate identities. This perception also confirms the experience of the author who served as minister in this Presbytery.

Subsequently, if this is the understanding of mission then the figure of the inclusiveness of the RCA Presbytery of Gauteng becomes only theory to many in the congregation. Mission work is then in the hand of only a few and it is this core that gives status to a congregation as being involved in mission work. This view is also to be noted from Q.3.4.4. where 100.0% of respondents said that they will encourage members of the congregation to become involved in missions, while 61.3% of respondents from Table 5 are not involved in mission work to the informal settlements.

This view is further supported by Table 3 where the degree of involvement in mission work is measured. It was found that if category 4 and 5 (1 = not truly involved and 5 = truly

involved) are combined then 54.7% of the respondents believe that their congregations are truly involved in mission work.

## 10. CRITICAL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

From the discussions above it is now known that all the congregations in the RCA Presbytery of Gauteng firmly believes in the inclusiveness of mission work as well as the importance of mission work. A small minority still view mission work to Hindus and Muslims as more important than mission work to the dwellers in the informal settlements.

Cognizance need to be taken of the fact that there is every indication, from the analysis, that the RCA Presbytery of Gauteng have evolved from being a church that was predominantly involved in mission work to Hindus and Muslims to become a church that has a universal and inclusive view of mission work. This is also noted in the fact that the majority of respondents who have said that the membership of the congregation will eventually reflect the demographics of the community, is significant

### 10.1 Suggestions for a better understanding of church and missions in the RCA

In understanding and accepting the Laudium Declaration, especially its stance on the mission character of the church, and the call for all the members of the RCA to be involved in evangelistic witness and compassionate service, a process needs to be developed where the Laudium Declaration is taught and expounded on giving theological arguments for, in the light of this article, mission work and its relationship to the church. This could even be incorporated as part of the catechetical teaching for members and people being catechised for the purpose of membership in the congregation.

Although congregations have an inclusive view of mission work but just having a view does not make one a “fisher of men” as the analysis indicated. Many have views about mission and how it should be done, but nothing will be done if mission is only limited to a view. There is a need for a greater awareness of the *missio Dei* and how the *missio ecclesiae* functions as an obedient body of Christ. These are not issues that the normal congregant grasps upon conversion. When God called men to be His disciples, He discipled them and made them “fishers of men”. Similarly new converts need to be discipled and taught about the *missio Dei* and the inseparable relationship with the *missio ecclesia*. They should also be instructed that this relationship needs to become visible through praxis.

## 11. CONCLUSION

Since the inauguration of the Reformed Church in Africa in 1968, it has been very passionate about reaching the Muslim and Hindu community with the Gospel message. This mission to Hindus and Muslims still receives priority attention, because of the community that the church is found in and expected to serve. With the new political dispensation of South Africa and the removal of all apartheid laws of segregation, especially the Group Areas Act, some of these areas can no longer claim to be inhabited by Indians only. More Blacks are buying properties in these areas thus changing the demographic profile of the communities that the RCA is expected to serve effectively and efficiently.

Due to these unavoidable changes, new challenges await the RCA in its mission focus. It is therefore encouraging to note from this analysis that the majority of congregations in the RCA of Gauteng, have an inclusive view of missions. This augurs well for the future of the RCA

if these congregations can also understand the importance of every member becoming actively involved in the *missio ecclesia*.

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## KEY WORDS

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## TREFWORDE

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