

Windesheim University of Applied Sciences



*‘Things are constantly changing and we must change with them*

*When things are over for us it is not over with God’*

*A qualitative theological research about community and membership within the Ghanaian  
migrant Pentecostal Churches in Amsterdam*

*(2000 – 2012)*



*A Thesis Presented in partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for Bachelor of Arts in Theology*

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## **DEDICATION**

To Doris Appiah-Asante and her children Jeremiah, Elias Jnr. Jesse and Tryphena for always being supportive and understanding the benefits of higher education.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a background to the topic of the thesis, followed by the research problem, research questions, methods, case study will be presented and finally the outline of the thesis will be stated.

### 1.1 General Introduction

*“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:25)*

*Prov. 27:17 “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”*

*Prov. 13:20 He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm”  
Niv.*

This research describes and explores the Ghanaian community in Amsterdam South East, where the migrant churches experience the decline in membership. Special attention is given to the increase expenses in Ghanaian migrant Pentecostal churches in Amsterdam, and to get insight of the reasons of decline.

‘Why are so many people leaving church?’ is a common question being asked during times of membership decline due to secularization. Big churches like the catholic and protestant churches have been facing the problem of membership decline for decades. Small churches like the Pentecostal churches also experience a decline in membership. People need each other for support and comfort, but the need ‘to come together’ in a spiritual way is even felt more in migrant communities where social networks are build and help is available to those in need of building a life in a foreign country.

Humans need social contact to flourish and grow. Social contact leads to forming communities and community life would not be the same without people ‘shaping each other’, as proverb 27:17 states. People need to build even bigger communities, like churches. Hebrews 10:25 above states that Christian meetings are needed in our walk with God. The writer of

Hebrews encourages believers in this chapter with that advice. It also indicates that encouragement or love, as translated in other versions, is essential in the life of believers.

According to (MacArthur 1996), the believers having a hard time of forsaking the old rituals they cherished before giving their lives to Christ, the writer admonishes that they should hold on only to the new covenant they have in Jesus Christ. Moreover, believers are admonished to be in fellowship with other believers, the hallmark must be love and living peaceful with each other in the community is essential. This makes believers feel loved, served, caring for each other by visiting and guiding each other in solving problems. The day drawing near as found in the text can be referred to the coming of the Lord; therefore the need to come together and stay together is present among those people who believe that a community is the place to be waiting for the return of a / the savior. According to Bonhoeffer's words of "life together" it has a ring of truthfulness for us as Christians, because it was written on the brink and not at the center of comfort. He wrote, *The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer . . . It is true, of course, that what is an unspeakable gift for the lonely individual is easily disregarded and trodden underfoot by those who have the gift every day . . . Among earnest Christians in the Church today there is a growing desire to meet together with other Christians in the rest periods of their work for common life under the Word. Communal life is again being recognized by Christians today as the grace that it is, as the extraordinary, the "roses and lilies" of the Christian life. (Life Together, pp. 8–10)*

This advice serves as a background and guideline to this thesis about the decline in membership and increasing expenses in a Ghanaian Migrant Pentecostal Churches in Amsterdam, because the author believes deeply in the strength of community building and the way these communities can contribute to the social but also spiritual wellbeing of their members. Before this motivation is transformed into a research question, the background of the Ghanaian communities is described.

## 1.2 Background Ghanaian communities in Amsterdam

Ghanaian citizens and permanent residents consider themselves as adherents of Christianity. A census taken in 2000 shows that of the 24 million Ghanaian citizens, Christian's make-up of the largest 71.2% of the population (source: <http://www.indexmundi.com/ghana/religions.html>, 12-06-2012) culturally, Ghanaians are communal and enthusiastic in fellowshipping for many reasons which include finding social contacts in the local communities, networking, continuing tradition, self-renewal, being part of advocacy group outreach, the most important among all of these factors is fellowships. Furthermore, the Ghanaian culture is communal and welcomes both members and non-members into its fold. For that matter, all predominantly Ghanaian social or religious groups bear these communal characteristics, which bind them together for a long time irrespective of where the group will find itself. However, while this communal trait is still portrayed, the aspect of welcoming new members is not occurring. This has led to recording a static growth and even a decline over the years. Another problem is that there has not been much academic study on this phenomenon found among the Ghanaian migrant Christian community in Amsterdam. Therefore this study seeks to fill a gap by exploring the reasons and the issues responsible for this phenomenon. Ghanaians are enthusiastic in coming together for many reasons which include worshipping God, finding a local community networking, and continuing tradition self-renewal, be part of advocacy group outreach. The reasons are divers, but the desire to get together is essential for a community that benefits the members and the surrounding society. This study will demonstrate that. The next paragraph will introduce the societal appropriateness of the subject.

Statistics show that the overwhelming majority of Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands are believed to be the third largest minority group of Africans in the country (source: <http://www.Loa.platform.nl/cijfers.html> (visited 12-06-2012 02:00am). The early Ghanaian presence in the Netherlands can be dated back to some thirty years ago (Euser, Hans, et al., 2006). Since they came at a time when churches in the Western world was alleged to be experiencing a decline in church membership some of these migrants started to found churches related to Pentecostal Christianity in the Netherlands (Kessel, I.van 2002; Frimpong, 2007). The formation of these Ghanaian churches has been deemed positive in a number of studies as it provides an



avenue for the socialization and community building among the Ghanaians (Adusei-Asante, 2008). As various studies have shown, migrant churches are not only providing social cohesion amongst newcomers, but also contribute to their prosperity in the surrounding society, due to the many voluntary work (Guerra, Glashouwer and Kregting, 2008). The authorities of the Netherlands, the Police, Immigration offices and politicians frequently organize meetings with the representative of the churches PCC for dialogue, which shows the authorities are using the churches to form strong communities and a need for social cohesion. They wanted to find solutions to the problems confronting the community such as criminality, juvenile delinquency, human trafficking, homeless, violence, drug trafficking and break-ins. The Dutch society acknowledged the benefits by having a migrant church in their midst (Euser, Goossen, de Vris and Wartena, 2006).

An institution as the church binds people and provides services, such as shelter, soup kitchen, health care for undocumented, youth programs and advice, Dutch and English for beginners, House work help for the youth, these activities are important to members of the church and also to others who are in need. Therefore the social function of the church is pointed out, even if the spiritual side is not forgotten. Hence, this study focuses on the way members and leaders of the church are coping with the decline of membership, which would mean not only personal loss, but also the decline in social cohesion and concrete the (social, cultural, financial and spiritual) benefits for the surrounding society. Here Jan Eerbeek's, comments on the important contribution of the migrant churches to the Dutch economy should be mentioned, to explain that not only 'the social and spiritual' decline is at stake when members are leaving and churches are confronted with financial hardship.

On 28-08-2012 in a social forum at the Tweede Kamer J.D. Eerbeek former head of prisons ministry at the Ministry of Justice stated that migrant churches contribute immensely in projects and programs for communities in the Netherlands. He states,

“(...) at a population of 800,000, the migrant churches organize tens of thousands of social activities that support the disabled, prison ministry, community building, health care for undocumented, debt relieve and the economy of the Netherlands.”<sup>1</sup> He further states that “ (...)

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<sup>1</sup> *This meeting was conducted in Dutch so the quoted statement herein found is an English translation of the original text.*

their adherence to faith and respect for communalism creates a sense of belonging that helps in building communities, hence serving as examples for the Dutch autochthonous to imitate in community and society building.” In support of Dr. Jan Eerbeek’s statement that the migrant churches contribute immensely to the economy in the Netherlands, Ir Anmar S.N. Hayali co-ordinator of Samen Kerken in the Netherlands said on the same platform that migrant churches contribute about 17 million euros into the Dutch economy annually. This is the annual social contribution of migrant churches only in The Hague based on the research report (Gratis en Waardevol) 2006. These statements connote (source:<http://www.skinkerken.nl/fileadmin/nieusbrieven/skin> (visited 10-09-2013 01:00 am) that the migrant churches are deemed as positive contributors to the well-being of communities in the Netherlands, and a decline in their membership is worrisome to the economist, pastors as well as the members. This proves that next to the spiritual side of a religious community, there is societal need for a strong community. A church as a familiar institution could provide that frame to the Ghanaian newcomers in the Netherlands. However, there are problems within the church. External factors’ causing the decline of this societal base is a safe haven for many Ghanaians in the Netherlands.

### 1.3 Research Problem

Over the past six years, various local Ghanaian radio and television networks in Amsterdam, such as Radio Recogin, Akasanoma, Radio Razo and Migrant TV in Amsterdam South-East have expressed concerns of declination in membership among Ghanaian migrant Pentecostal churches and increase expenses. The concerns are that membership in these churches have ceased growing.

Thus, some of these churches are not experiencing emaciation in size but are virtually closing down. E.g. On the 28th of May 2012 an article appeared in the newspaper for Amsterdam Het Parool and also on AT5 News (source: <http://www.at5.nl/artikelen/80202/kerkcomplex-heeft-250,000-euro-schuld> (visited 29-05-2012. (01:20 am), churches meeting in Kandelaar building were unable to pay their rent, which had risen up to 259,000 euro’s. If they were unable to pay this amount in a couple of weeks they will be driven out from this building. The migrant Pentecostal churches

are nonprofit organizations and their source of income is solely from the donations from its members, almost every gathering members are always encourage to donate, donations are met at each gathering, however, the frequency of our meeting together is a major source of income. The accommodation and financial problems show the disastrous state of affairs of many new churches in Amsterdam. The income of the church is linked to membership by their free offering and individual donations. Followers are leaving, communities crumble and therefore a social stability within the migrant community could be in danger; at least the church loses ground and the question remains ‘Why, what are the reasons behind this decline?’

## 1.4 Research Question

### ***Main research question***

*What are the cause(s) of the decline in church attendance among the Ghanaian Migrant Pentecostal Churches with regard to the increase expenses in Amsterdam South East (Resurrection Power and Living Bread Evangelistic Ministry RPLBEM) and what are the implications of this membership declination situation within the Ghanaian migrant community?*

### ***Sub-research questions***

1. *What are the origins of the Pentecostal movement and the RPLBEM especially? What is the historical background of the church in general and specific to the Netherlands? What is the historical background of the Ghanaian community in Amsterdam- Netherland?*
2. *What does the literature say about the decline of membership in churches in general, especially among the Pentecostal Churches and in Amsterdam?*
3. *How to study the decline of the Pentecostal church in general and the decline of member within the RPLBEM?*
4. *What do the results of the empirical study say about decline and leadership in the RPLBEM?*
5. *What are the implications of the membership declination situation within the Ghanaian migrant community?*

## 1.5 Methodology

Creswell employs qualitative methods for his research and thinks, that in their natural settings people attempt to make sense of or interpret phenomenon in terms of the meaning. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003.p.3). Creswell (1998) makes clear, that one goal of qualitative research is to purposefully select informants who will best answer the research question. Therefore, from a population of church leaders in Amsterdam, this researcher of this study has chosen to explore the perceptions and life experiences of ten Pentecostal church leaders in Resurrection Power and Living Bread Evangelistic Ministry, Amsterdam South-East (RPLBEM). There were chosen, due to their experience about declining in membership from about 330 to about 240 and increasing expenses in their local church. This empirical research uses qualitative research methods, e.g. participant observation, literature study and additionally administering of questionnaire in interviews employed to gather more data by a qualitative method. The RPLBEM is used as a case study to enlighten the problem of membership decline, because the researcher got easily access to informants. The growth data will be collected and analyzed. The study looks in detail at relevant literature about the history of Ghanaian Pentecostal migrant churches in the Netherlands. Particular emphasis will be placed on the beginning of RPLBEM in Amsterdam. Interviews are conducted with the participants to gain deeper understanding about the possible decline of membership in the past; alongside the interviews with the pastors and the questionnaire, the research questions will be answered.

## 1.6 Restrictions

The research is limited to the case study of the RPLBEM. Moreover, the focus of the research data will be on the growth and decline trends, data is not used to provide solutions to the causes of the decline. Actually, remedies to the declination problem are above the scope and expertise of this research. The study is not an advisory rapport; it rather concentrates on the explorative character of social research and tries to understand more than judge or pinpoint. The study focuses on the leaders and the financial aspect. Especially the way these leaders deal with times changing is a focus. The researcher is a member of a Ghanaian church and therefore information given to him could be different than information given to someone else from outside

the church because they consider some facts which are sacred and is not for public or external consumption. If this is a limitation or not is something the reader has to decide, but it is a fact which ought to be revealed to judge the data.

## **1.7 Case Study**

In this study 22 departmental leaders participating in the RPLBEM. This church was chosen, because it is one of the early Ghanaian Pentecostal churches formed in Amsterdam that has survived the last decades. First, not all migrant churches will be contacted. The RPLBEM has also been chosen due to its location in Amsterdam South-East. This location has the largest Ghanaian population in the Netherlands; most of the Ghanaian migrant Pentecostal Churches are located in that area. Thirdly, RPLBEM was selected as a case study, because of its historical background, which offers some epochal incidents that affected the growth and decline of membership, hence adding fruitful insights to the research. Among such significant incidents are breakaways, disputes, changes in leadership, and membership migration. There is no attempt begin made to generalize this case study, rather the particular case should give rise to more questions and more research, which could eventually be generalized. To understand the decline a historical overview of the origin of the Pentecostal churches in Africa and especially in Amsterdam is needed.

## **1.8 Outline of the thesis**

The second chapter shows a historical overview about the Pentecostalism movement in the Netherlands. An interview is used to show the rich history through the eyes of one participant. Literature has been used to underline the historical outset and frames the theoretical background of this thesis. The third chapter introduces the methodology and the fourth brings the empirical data to the front. The conclusion is written in the sixth chapter. In the appendix one can find the interviews in detail transcriptions.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW – HISTORICAL ORIGIN

### 2.1 The origin of Pentecostalism

Tracing the origin of Pentecostalism, Allan Anderson (2004), identified the Holiness movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as its roots. He states that the Holiness movement, which came out of Methodism (an offshoot of Anglicanism), was a reaction to liberalism and formalism in established protestant churches. According to Anderson, a reaction portrayed the need for personal experience of conversion and holiness of the Christian individual. Moreover, there are other factors, events and key personalities, which made the birth of classical Pentecostalism possible such as the US American revivalism, the divine healing movement (for example John Alexander Dowie, 1874-1907), the role of Charles Fox Parham (1873-1929), the international revivals in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century (such as Welsh Revival, Korea, India and many more).

Anderson (2004) narrates that other personalities played major roles in the birth of global Pentecostalism. Notably we can mention the Azusa Street Revival, which occurred at 312 Azusa Street, Los Angeles, California, USA. It began in April 14, 1906 and continued until roughly 1915. William J Seymour (1870-1922) an African- American with a vision led a multiracial worship. “Even though soft spoken, Seymour was said to be assertive and simple in his expression of the scriptures, this helped him to win the heart of his staff who offered support to his ministry.”<sup>2</sup>

According to Jones D. Amanor (2005), Pentecostalism and its various forms are one of the major expressions of Christianity although it started differently in different continents. It is believed that long before the arrival of the Assemblies of God in Ghana, the indigenous character of early Pentecostalism had already been established by some leaders such as Prophet Wade Harris (Amanor 2005). He led a Pentecostal revival, which resulted in a large following.

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<sup>2</sup> A, Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism, Global Charismatic Christianity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 27. See also H.I. Lederle, Treasures Old and New: Interpretation of ‘Spirit-baptism’ in the Charismatic renewal Movement (Peabody: MA, Hendrickson, 1988) 15, J.R. Goff, Jr. Fields white unto harvest: Charles F. Parham and the missionary origins of Pentecostalism (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1988) 1-168.*

However, lack of proper biblical instruction caused many of these off-shoots to become syncretistic and cultic.

## 2.2 Pentecostalism in Ghana

Amanor recounts that the Assemblies of God from USA arrived in Ghana, the then Gold Coast, in 1931 ahead of the UK Apostolic. The Assemblies of God is believed to be the first mission to have sponsored the Classical Pentecostal Church in Ghana. It is believed that the Assemblies of God entered the country through the northern frontier from French-speaking Upper Volta, currently Burkina Faso (Amanor 2005). Her mission work thus began in the northern part of Ghana from where it expanded to the south. The Assemblies of God until today has the largest following in the northern part of Ghana and people from northern descent in the south. As the founding member of the Ghana Pentecostal Council, the Assemblies of God in Ghana is considered as one of the most prominent classical Pentecostal churches in the country.

Just as it was in North America, South America, Europe and Asia, the renewal, which was causing the spread of the Pentecostal movement to other places, also influenced Ghanaian migrants with Pentecostal backgrounds to propagate the gospel in the Netherlands (Van Kessel 2002). *“The role of the charismatic movement as a new and rapidly growing form of Christianity in the world, particularly, in the developing world is increasingly being acknowledged In Africa, this movement, which emerged only in the 1970s, is fast becoming the most significant expression of Christianity in the continent, especially, in the cities. According to Allan Anderson, we cannot understand African Christianity today without also understanding this latest movement of revival and renewal. The 2000 population census indicated that Christians were 69% of total population and formed the majority in Ghana. (Source: Ghana, 2000: ([http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/gh\\_general.html](http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/gh_general.html), (visited 30-05-2012 02:10 am).*

Van Dijk records that in the 1975-80's Ghanaians who came to the Netherlands with this Pentecostal fervor, first went to the Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman catholic etc, Dutch churches or multi-cultural churches, which were using Dutch and English as means of communication. Soon they began to feel uncomfortable with the worship, which led to most of the Ghanaians starting fellowships with English and the Ghanaian language (Twi) as means of communication.

## 2.3 Pentecostalism in the Nederland/Amsterdam

Van Dijk narrates that Daniel Himmans took advantage of this situation and started a prayer group (The African Home Mission). This led to the first Ghanaian migrant church established in the Netherlands. It was the only Ghanaian migrant church that used the English language in worship services. Soon most members of the fellowship began to express misgivings about Himman's doctrine and his way of conducting church services, such as sprinkling of water, burning of incense, wearing of a long robe and making people walk barefooted (Van Dijk 2002). Later, True Teachings of Christ Temple (TTCT) was founded by Pastor Daniel Himmans- Ardy, born in Ghana in 1943, at that time residing in the UK (Van Dijk 2002). He moved to the Netherlands and established a prayer group in Amsterdam in 1975.

Van Dijk accounts that the New Bethel Revival Ministry (NBRM) with its founder Pastor Alice Newman from the United Kingdom was also started around the same time. She started well and enjoyed a patronage but some spiritual issues became a problem and most of the people find it difficult to accept a woman as a pastor and this caused the ordination of her husband in order to achieve balance (Van Dijk 2002). Both TTCT and NBRM were believed to have experienced tremendous growth numerically, but with time, most of their members began gradually to leave resulting in the formation of other Pentecostal churches. At the demise of these churches, Pastor Samuel Hanson Ofori - Amanfo saw the need to have a Pentecostal church (the Rock Chapel) in Amsterdam in 1987 (ibid.: 2002).

Moses Alagbe (1998) dates the emergence of the Amsterdam branch of Resurrection Power and Living Bread Evangelistic Ministries (RPLBEM) in 1989. Located at Egeldonk 100E, southeast Amsterdam, the RPLBEM is considered as one of the largest Ghanaian migrant churches in Amsterdam. According to Alagbe, the RPLBEM started with two Ghanaian migrant women, Leticia and Florence, who worked in the same company in the Netherlands. In the course of their work, they came to know each other as Christian sisters in the Lord, and eventually became prayer partners.



Alagbe stated that by April 1989-1991 there were 118 members<sup>3</sup>, although initially it was the two women Litecia and Florence who began (allegedly responding to a vision from God), when two other people had joined them they started a house fellowship. They approached a Christian brother, Mr. Kyei Baffour to become their leader and Bible study teacher.<sup>4</sup> A month after Mr. Kyei Baffour had joined, as Alagbe narrates, three other people joined them among whom was Emmanuel Baaidoo who eventually became a pastor. The group organized weekly all-night services during which miraculous healing were taking place. Being encouraged by a miraculous doubling of membership over a three-week consecutive period which saw them grow from eight to sixteen, sixteen to thirty two, and thirty to sixty four on the third week's meeting, they grew in faith and committed themselves to outreach and evangelism and located their meeting place in Groebhoven.<sup>5</sup>

Alagbe records that as attendance increased constantly, the frequent meeting affected their monetary strength, enriched activities, this resulted in the need to find a bigger auditorium, the group eventually moved from Groebhoven in July 1990 to Hoofgeest. However, being ejected from this new place because of the increase in membership they moved to Hakfort in 1991 and as a result of the lack of space in this Hakfort, they moved again in 1991 to community hall in Krainness called Boutikrain. To avoid this accommodation difficulty, members were divided into small groups to meet at different homes. Pastor Kyei met a politician, Mr. Jan de Jong, who was a Christian. He helped the group to secure a larger building in Ghanzenhoef. The number kept increasing and he finally led the leadership to the Amsterdam Parking Authority (Pakeer Beheer) with a proposal to convert one of the parking garages at Egeldonk, Bijlmer area, into a church auditorium. This proposal was approved in 1994 and the church has been meeting in this place and carries all community activities until today.<sup>6</sup>

Alagbe highlights the period between 1992 to 1995, as the crisis period where the churches encountered accommodation problems, financial difficulties, decline in their meetings, and to carry out community work because of series of leadership conflicts and splits. He records that the church by the end of 1995, had lost about forty members as a result of the crisis. He

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 109

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, 106.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 107

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 108.

gives an instance of this ripple effect by referring to Mr. Billy Nyarko 1995 split, which reduced the membership by forty people. However, Alagbe records a turning point in 1996, where Mr. Kyei, and the newly appointed pastor gathered the remaining hundred and eighty members from 1995 and encouraged them to embark on an effective evangelism which saw them growing to about two hundred and eighty adult<sup>7</sup> by 2000 and 2001. This short overview of the historical roots of the Pentecostal church from 1992 in the Netherlands brings us to the problems they are facing.

Addressing the courses of decline among Pentecostal churches, Van Dijk argues that although Pentecostals in the past 50 years have had the quest for ecumenism, there has been a long-standing reluctance among them to be associated with structural efforts as church unity. He states when the experience of the spirit ceases to bring unifying force for Christians, and the power of the Spirit to bring people together from diverse branches of Christendom is resisted by various human made boundaries that characterize Pentecostal churches, the usual resultant phenomenon is break up into new groups.<sup>8</sup>

Frimpong also states that the failure to develop a systematic doctrine, theological and constitutional frame work is another cause of crisis that brings about decline in the Pentecostal churches. He argues that Pentecostals are Spirit driven so some do not develop any formal drafted document because the Spirit does it all. They believe that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit's power connects them together in the sense that it is not the effort of individuals but the unity of all Christians for the accomplishment of the mission of Christ.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Alagbe, 108.

<sup>8</sup> Van Dijk

<sup>9</sup> Frimpong

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

This methodology chapter presents how the author collected data in order to find answers to the research questions. This chapter starts with the purpose of the research, research approach, research method data collection and then data analysis.

#### **3.1 Purpose of research**

There are many different ways of finding solutions to a problem, and there are several research methods. According to (Saunders et. al, 2007), research can be in threefold, exploratory, descriptive and explanatory.

Exploratory study is a valuable means of finding out “what is happening” to look for new insights, to ask questions and to measure phenomena in a new light (Saunders et. al, 2007). According to the authors it is useful if you want to clarify your understanding of a problem. An exploratory research is appropriate when an important features and relations are difficult to determine (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2001). However, (Saunders et. al, 2007) points out that the flexibility inherent in exploratory research does not rule the fact of absence of direction to the enquiry, but it means that the focus is initially broad but becomes very narrow as the research progresses. The goal of descriptive research is to accurately portray a profile of a person, situations or events (Saunders et. al, 2007). Other researchers state that descriptive research is to observe and register what happens. It is important to have a clear picture of what you want to collect before collecting the data. Therefore descriptive research is a means to an end and not the end in itself. Explanatory research deals with relationships between variables.

The research purpose and questions of the author shows that in the beginning the thesis was exploratory. Its goal of choosing this method of investigation was to formulate and define problems to be investigated. After the collection of the data and analyses it has become descriptive as the author has document, register and has identify the findings of the research. The purpose of this thesis is to explore and to understand these problems.

### **3.2 Research approach**

Research studies can be divided into quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative research focuses on numeric (numbers) or non-numeric (words) data. Quantitative is also used for data collection technique for example, questionnaire, and data analysis procedure such as statistics or graphs that uses numbers. While qualitative research deals with interview or data analysis procedure that involves categorizing and uses non-numeric data (Saunders et. al, 2007). Based on the research questions and the purpose of this thesis, the approach was to use qualitative research since this helps the author to explore a subject in a more detailed manner as possible. Since the authors purpose was to investigate how leaders of RPLBEM in the Amsterdam South East that experienced reduction in membership and confronted by accommodation as well as increasing expenses continued to provide services to the local community using several variables and not to make a generalization on the topic.

### **3.3 Research Methods**

There are seven different ways of research methods; they are documents, experiment, participant's observation, qualitative interviews, secondary analysis, surveys and unobtrusive measures. The differences between the various methods are the type of research questions being asked. Therefore for this research paper the author chose the case study method because it has the ability to generate answers to “why?” “what?” “how?” -question. This will help the author to gain a rich understanding of the context of this research and the procedures being used (Morris and Wood, 1991). Although “what?” and “how?” question can also be suitable for survey method.

For the purpose of this thesis as mentioned early, the case study method is best since the author have to investigate many variables on fewer entities in order to get the holistic view of what is being described. The author used questionnaires, interviews and observation in order to triangulate multiple sources of data. This qualitative, empirical study used to incorporating semi-structured, transcribed, and taped interviews.

This qualitative empirical study explored how the participants Communication style did or did not affect congregants' morale in change initiatives. Undertaken by the leadership of the RPLBEM in addressing issues of decreasing Membership, increasing expenses, worship and community outreach programs, accommodation difficulty and volunteerism that most churches rely on to provide community service. The intent of the research design was to seek congruity with respect to critical attributes needed for a church leader to successfully effectuate change and growth related to church and financial performance.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

According to Yin (2003), there are six different ways of collecting case studies data; these are archival records, document, interviews, participants-observation, direct observations and physical artifacts. Among these sources, none of them has advantage over the other, but a good case study uses many sources as possible. This is called triangulation because its uses different data collection techniques within one case study, the reason is to ensure that the data are telling you what you think they are telling you (Saunders et. al, 2007). The data collection for this thesis is interviews, documentation and participant's observation. The interviews are the primary data and the documentation are the secondary data. The interview conducted in this study was open-ended, in-depth, guided, structured and semi-structured, formal and informal. This helped the author in describing and understanding the phenomena from the participants' perspective. This allowed the author to ask for respondent's opinion and the facts regarding the topic. The data for this qualitative empirical study were collected from 22 Local members of RPLBEM leaders' through structured interviews to gain understanding of their experiences of serving a local church with declining membership and increasing expenses.

The technique used was the probing one; this allowed the author to check on the accuracy and correctness of the answers being asked.

### 3.5 Data analysis

There are three different strategies use in collection of data, they are thinking about rival explanations, developing a case description and relying on theoretical propositions. In this research thesis, the author will rely on developing a case description since there has been some previous studies regarding the topic in question. The qualitative analysis of data consist of three concurrently flows of activities.

- *Data reduction*: This helps to make the data scaled, sorted, sharp edited and a better summary in order to help the researcher to draw a valid conclusions. The interviews of the church leaders will be analyze and compare to the actual situation.
- *Data display*: This is a phase where the researcher use the reduce data and displays it in an orderly and organized way to aid the researcher to draw valid conclusions.
- *Conclusion drawing and verification*: At this point the researcher will decide by noting patterns, explanations, regularities and possible configuration. Then conclusions will be made based on the stages described above.

### 3.6 Data Interpretation

The survey is voluntarily made and the researcher aims for complete anonymity, but due to the small scale of communities, this anonymity would be a problem, not yet solved. The interviews lasted approximately thirty minutes to one hour, in which participants were asked to respond to the questions (see appendix).

Sampling in qualitative research conventionally relies on small numbers with the aim of studying in depth and detail once the sample was purposively derived; data collection began with the process of obtaining permission and establishing an interview.

Protocol participants were asked to voluntarily participate in the study in mutual agreement and assured of confidentiality. The names of participants do not appear in the discussion of the research. Participants' names were removed from the collected data upon transcription for analysis to ensure the confidentiality of personal information and data. Minimal personal information was collected from participants and was used exclusively for the purposes of noting

and comparing responses, viewpoints, perceptions or empirical knowledge of participants. For this qualitative research, data were collected through the administration of questionnaires.

With the conclusion of the 22 questioners in interview, no new data were forthcoming. To minimize errors of concluding the research too early, an additional seven were done and no new information was revealed. Responses from the 29 purposively selected.

Participants provided understanding of how RPLBEM continue to provide community services in an environment of decreasing membership, increasing expenses, and changing demographics. Participants were identified through their membership in the Resurrection Power and Living Bread Evangelistic Ministry. Names and addresses were not collected from the church membership list; rather individuals were contacted for participation in the study by direct approach, calling. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes to one hour and were conducted at locations convenient for the interviewees. 22 of the interviews some were done in the Church Premise which allowed for active participation and note-taking. The fact, that the researcher is an insider, served during the interviews as both a valued source of data and a potential source of bias.

There were high levels of trust and openness in the face-to-face interviews conducted. The openness and trust exhibited by each participant can be attributed to them receiving the questionnaire before the interviews. The study was guided by qualitative research strategies. In this type of approach, a researcher begins to analyze the data during the data collection process; many separate pieces of information must all converge.

## **4.0 INTERVIEWS AND ANALYSIS**

In this chapter the empirical data is shown in examples and categorizations. The interviews are partly present; others are in the appendix and will be described by the researcher. Interviews were aimed at the 22 leaders of the church to explore the perceptions and life experiences RPLBEM Amsterdam South East. Who have encountered decline membership attendance, accommodation and increasing expenses in their local congregations, the researcher scheduled a semi-structured interview with the head pastor, Rev. Livingston Kofi Tsagli. Another interview was conducted on the phone with a pioneer member, Fred Nyarko currently resident pastor of Redemption Faith ministry, who gave a detailed history of the church. The researcher also used data from a recorded interview of Kwame Agyemang conducted by Asare Baidoo. This 60 minutes interview conducted in Akan language was focused on the factors that had affected the growth of the church.

### **4.1 Interview with Rev. Livingston Kofi Tsagli**

The interview with Rev. Livingston Kofi Tsagli was aimed at ascertaining data that will inform us on the growth and decline situation of the church since 2006, when Rev. Kofi Tsagli was appointed the head pastor. He states that although his appointment took effect on 2006, he first visited the Amsterdam church in 2002 but had to go back to Ghana because of immigration impediments. In the interview, Rev. Tsagli states that he is the regional overseer whose jurisdiction covers all the branches in Netherlands, Belgium, and France. Rev. Tsagli mentions that the hierarchy of RPLBEM starts from the Bishop comes to his assistant followed by regional overseers who have oversight on branches headed by senior pastors. Moreover, in each of these branches the senior pastors have associate pastors and deacons. Rev Tsagli recalls how he encountered a dwindling membership when he came in 2006. He states, Migration of peoples is an unavoidable reality of our world and society today. The fact is that migration has always been a part of humanity from olden times. In recent times, however, it has seen an explosive growth due to the turmoil's, wars and economic hardships around the world. That said, when people migrate it brings changes to the 'giving' as well as the 'receiving' communities. There is supposed to be net benefit or gain to both sides of the equation. That is the ideal expectation we all have



but that is not always the case. The resulting imbalance sometimes gives rise to racial and social tensions. Narrowing down his premise, he further states,

At this juncture, we would like to understand the dynamics of what is happening in our present, multi-culturally diverse society. People moved to Spain, UK and Belgium, and this brought decline on our membership of about 400 to 180 members.

Apart from migration, he also mentioned other factors that contributed to decline in membership but dismissed absenteeism as a factor. Rev. Tsagli reveals that 2009 was a period of crisis for his ministry, he said this came as a result of the changes he made in the leadership, actually this was an existing leadership I came to meet they were not supportive and for that reason I saw the need to enact some changes so to solve the problem I organized an 8 weeks leadership teachings about my vision, and the purpose of the church. The good thing is that all the leadership stayed in the church so there was no serious declination or break away.

Although no one seems to leave due to the crisis, the Reverend seemed to be present a nice story that defeats any suspension or any situation of decline in membership of his church. He probably wants to create a reputation of an achiever by projecting the idea that he has been effective and successful leader than his predecessors and he has been effectively manage both external and internal crises that his term of office has seen improvement rather than failure. Rev Tsagli was twisting the reality in a way that, it would fit his purpose. That's what people do: they frame their reality to fit in a narrative that is useful for them. This research does not go deeper into this question of how people's perspectives are different from the reality, but it is important to recognize this fact to get more understanding about the facts.

According to Rev. Tsagli, the growth of membership in the church has been internal. He states, "The younger ones are growing to join the youths and the youth are growing into adulthood to join the adult membership. We have not recorded external growth where converts join the youth or the ministry at large. Our membership is stable." When ask about the membership attendance in Sunday services, Rev. Tsagli indicated, "On every Sunday, I record an attendance between 300 and 350. I do not have issues of absenteeism. Only those who work in the airport, hotels, and shops that operate on Sundays skip church service to go to work." In the case of possible breakaway, Rev. Tsagli optimistically maintains that there is no such threat.

However, since some of the members are coming from far distances such as Almere, Utrecht, and Alkmaar, they organize home cell fellowships in various vicinities to keep the members. The full transcription of the interview is found in the appendix of this paper. So, is there no problem about decline of membership after all?

## **4.2 Interview with Kwame Agyemang**

According to Kwame Agyemang, RPLBEM has encountered various situations that has caused decline in its membership. For him, the factors can be categorized under breakaways, migration, church planting, and relocation. In the case of breakaways, he states the RPLBEM has, since 1996, encountered three major breakaways. The first breakaway occurred when Mr. Billy Nyarko the men's fellowship leader incited, a number of members in breaking away to form the Holy Ghost Revival ministry. The second breakaway occurred when Pastor Kyei Baffour, in the company of four others, came under accusation of embezzlement. According to Kwame Agyemang, Pastor Kyei Baffour was accused of using church funds for his personal business trips and sponsoring the businesses of his immediate subordinates in the church. He told the church members their place of meeting has been bought which was not true.

When the situation was discovered and Pastor Kyei Baffour was found guilty by the church board presided, over by the Bishop Elvis Akwasi Asare Bediako of RPLBEM in Ghana, Pastor Kyei Baffour broke away with his accomplices to form the Redemption Faith Revival Ministry in Amsterdam that was a major setback. The third breakaway occurred with Pastor Emmanuel Baidoo who was appointed pastor after Pastor Kyei Baffour left. According to Kwame Agyemang, Pastor Emmanuel Baidoo was served with a transfer letter from the headquarters in Ghana in 2002, Considering the inconveniences of such a move will cause him, he declined to move. Since the headquarters was not ready to compromise with his plea to stay in Amsterdam, Pastor Emmanuel Baidoo, with the support of the majority number of the women in the church, broke away. Kwame Agyemang accounts that these breakaways, especially the third one, brought a huge decline in the membership.

Kwame Agyemang also attributes the decline in membership to migration. He reflects on the migration of members to Spain, France, Belgium, Italy, and the UK, how this drastically reduced the membership. He narrates:

One of the most outstanding events is the political and economic condition in Europe. For example, when Ruud Lubbers' political party (CDA) came to power in the early 90s, he decided to introduce compulsory identification. At any time or place where one was confronted by Police or any state institution he or she was expected to give appropriate proper documents for identification. This caused fear and panic among Ghanaian migrants who were undocumented and decided to flee to the neighboring countries where there were fewer restrictions for migrants.

He states further that the economic recessions (a global pandemic) also forced mass migration; countries whose social systems are friendly and welcoming enticed most of these African migrants. Kwame Agyemang argues that although both documented and undocumented migrants move into Europe with different aspirations, the common goal is to seek greener pastures. He estimates, though, without any reference, that the official documented figures from the city hall are said to be ten to twelve thousand migrants who have moved to other European countries. Kwame Agyemang narrates that the membership of RPLBEM which rose to around 400 in 2004 after the 2002 breakaway, declined to less than 280 people by 2006 because of migration. Kwame Agyemang further states that due to the distance and the current rise in price of public transportation some of the members spend before they come to church, some of them are found to be inconsistent with their attendance. According to Kwame Agyemang, these members who stay in places such as Almere, Alkmaar, Zaandam, Abcoude and Utrecht, complain of expensive transportation fare and the time they use in traveling back and forth. To solve this distance situation, the church therefore tries to organize church planting teams who go to these areas. As they send this church planting team into these locations to start home cell and outreach programs, the membership in the church fluctuates. Eventually, some of these leaders, who are sent to lead home cell, end up breaking away with the members they have mobilized.

### 4.3 Participant Observation

This is a church of true diversity, with friendship, respect and affection for fellow members. Some members give remarkable energy and time to church maintenance and outreach. One member is a leader in the annual Crop Walk. A strong program is limited by factors mentioned above, certainly in terms of community service. We no longer conduct the community food closet, once a part of church activity. Resources of all kinds are lacking for planned program within and without in the community. Given the current situation, it is rather difficult to measure the current success of the church. (Participant 4).

The researcher as a member of a church in south-east is constantly participating in activities and is even responsible for the member wellbeing. Therefore the participant observation hasn't been as if an outsider penetrates in an unknown community, but more of an 'anthropologist at home', who knows the ins and outs but is open to new insights by actively looking for reasons why the members of the churches in south - east are leaving the church. Participating in groups and conversation, observing the members coming and going, the researcher was inspired by the members and their leaders and could gain insight in the very facets of managing a church in turbulent times. For the answering of the main research question, the participant observation could not provide sufficient results, therefore another method was employed and interviews were conducted with the leaders of the church who has been in leadership for many years who has experiencing good time and difficult times, to provide insight into the financial status and the way a church is ruled. Notwithstanding, the participant observation provided the researcher a certain amount of information about the causes of growth and decline within the church:

In June 2012, I went to all resurrection Power and Living Bread Sunday services and programs to record the attendance and observe other occurrences and situations that will inform the study on the causes of growth and decline in the church. On June 3, the attendance was 329 people. On June 10, the attendance was 311. On June 17, the attendance was 333. On June 24, the attendance was 279. The numbers were verified by my counting and serve as a non-proofed statistic. I noticed some tension between one of the elders and the pastor. According to informants, the elder wants to be given pastoral duties but the pastor had been reluctant earlier

on. However, in recent times and from the pastor's interview, I found out that the elder has been given pastoral duties at one of the branches. The sermon was a timely message because it fits in at a time the church is experiencing some challenges, members were reminded of their commitment to love and services to God and man. The message was about "the king is coming" from Rev. 19:11-21. The speaker's Point of emphasis was from Mathew 22:37. "You shall love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with your mind". He elaborated how to love God with your heart, soul and Mind. He gave definitions of the heart, mind and soul, and their importance when it comes to loving God and man in our services.

The insight as a participant observer brought me to the conclusion and some answers to the main research question.

Another method proved equally not to be as fruitful as one had hoped: here under a summary of the attempt to work with the questionnaire.

#### 4.4 Questionnaire

The administering of the questionnaires encountered some difficulties. The people were not cooperative at the beginning and many of them, due to their lack of schooling, could not answer the questions. They needed guidance. But since, I as the interviewer was the only one to guide them through it, I could get twenty two people who were patient enough to go through with the exercise. Many of the members were in a hurry to leave the church premise after service so it was difficult getting people to wait and go through with the process. Some also declined participation outright. The questionnaire was in three sections: personal information, involvement with church, and their live experience and perceptions about the causes of membership decline in attendance and increasing expenses of RPLBEM. Out of the 29 people, there were eighteen women and eleven men. Twenty people were between the ages of 40 and 60, and nine were between the ages of 20 and 30. Fourteen people had been members since 2002, ten had been members since 2006, and five were pioneers. As a member of the church the researcher was able to participate and observe closely, but to give interpretation to the findings, one has to move away from the research subject, which was not always easy.

## 4.5 Interviews with leaders

The interviews conducted with the leaders of RPLBEM (see appendix for further information) proved to be successful in a sense that the research question was answered in a surprisingly open way. The leaders talked about their investments and their way of dealing with the changing times. The particular interviews are transcribed in the appendix; by categorizing and labeling certain topics during the transcription priorities were visible. This means, the voluntary work - in the past a domain of women – is less frequently possible. Another topic was the leadership itself: a lot of times the interviewees mention ‘the ego’ of certain members, providing more successful management.

The most striking point during the interviews was the financial situation; it proved not to be as dire as the interviewer has thought in the beginning of his study. Most churches found their way by financing in a clever way, or having a sponsor, cutting activities. Nevertheless, the point of not having had the financial capital to provide community services the last years was visible in the interviews.

There is no church without means and financial support by the members; even if some participants state that the numbers were not important. The decline of membership often means a decline in finance and this means a decline in activities attracting new members; lesser meeting times affect the giving because in any meeting members give, this proved to be a vicious circle. During the interviews the leaders talked about the way they managed through fusion to stay alive as a community, but merges not always mean survival. Families were lost, other gained. What stays above all during these interviews are the daring times and the changing patterns. A church and her leaders have to adjust and change with the circumstances, without leaving the ultimate goal behind: to build and serve the community, in this case for Ghanaian migrants who are coming to the Netherlands to flourish and grow.

## 5.0 ANALYSIS

### 5.1 Interpretation of data

*“We do not have the human resources to create a benevolent fund and address major holidays where toys can be given out to needy children” (Participant)*

These concerns were the motivation of writing this thesis. Although this research limits itself to studying the decline phenomenon of RPLBEM churches in Amsterdam as well as the factors that cause this decline, I find it necessary to present some suggestions based on the findings. However, I must establish that not all the factors identified as the causes of the decline in membership are solvable. Firstly, the issue of migration is beyond the control of the church. It is a social political problem hence beyond the expertise and objective of this study. Secondly the issue of location, be it the constant movement of church location or the far distance residential members, is a situation beyond the expertise of this research as well as the capabilities of the church to solve. Thirdly, not all causes of splits are avoidable or resolvable. I believe that cases such as doctrinal differences or visionary disputes must be resolved only by separation (or splits for that matter). However, such a process must be done amicably with a mediatory support from an external pastoral council or a Christian organization.

With respect to the leadership crisis such as insensitive leadership, Ego, selfish ambition, insubordination, and misappropriation of funds, I believe that the churches must join the Pentecostal council where leaders of these churches are accountable to in terms of doctrinal positions, finance, and conduct. I also believe that proper theological training for pastors and leaders in these churches will enhance their leadership skills, communication skills, ministry perception, doctrinal orientation, and human relations.

## 5.2 Analysis and explanation of data

This questionnaire has been made for a Bachelor of Arts in Theology project concerning the research on the factors affecting the decline in church attendance among the Ghanaian migrant Pentecostal churches with regards to increases in expenses in Amsterdam south east, especially RPLBEM. And what are the implications of the membership declination situation with the Ghanaian community. The researcher in question is Elias Kwabena Agyemang, student of Windesheim University. First the questions are shown and then an explanation follows, to indicate the goals and objectives of the questions asked. Then a short analysis of the data gathered, showing some interview fragments underlining the data. In this paragraph the question is being introduced, an explanation and analysis is taken place to sum up the results.

Creswell (2002) after data collection, the qualitative components of the research were analyzed by scrutinizing the information for meaningful characteristics or themes. Qualitative data analysis refers to a wide range of methods for handling rich data without purely reducing it numbers. Berg (2004) qualitative data involve examining, reporting and interpreting the data to address the research questions and support the findings of the study.

### *Explanation*

*Interview Question 1: How long have you been the leader of this local congregation?*

The intended response to this interview question is to reflect similarities in lived experiences of the participants' number of years in leading the current RPLBEM religious institution as well as reveal possible differences as they relate to the growth of the congregation. The response to this question also allowed for a comparison and contrast of budgetary changes and services provide to the community. By sharing the number of years as the leader of an organization, participants provided different perspectives, perceptions, and knowledge of possible commonalities that affect declining church membership and increased expenses.

### *Explanation*

*Interview Question 2: In your position as leader of RPLBEM, what membership and budget change have you experienced with this congregation?*



The intention of question 2 is to hear from participants what membership and budgetary changes mean for them and how they feel about the respective congregations. Furthermore, how the changes have influence on services provided to the community and the continued existence of the RPLBEM within the community. Participants were asked to reflect on their understanding and lived experiences of operating an organization that depended on membership to fund the budget and sustain the religious institution's survival in the community.

Data gathered from Question 2 allowed for the determination of whether the number of members in a particular congregation was a determinant for funding. This question allowed for further exploration, by examining specific aspects of how congregations could face decline in membership, budget decreases, and increased expenses at the same time, still remain open to the community. The participants were knowledgeable about the demographic changes and the yearly changes to the budget.

### *Analysis*

Participants described their lived experiences of declining membership and increasing costs differently. Of the 22 participants, 11 indicated they faced declining membership and increased expenses and budget. Among the 22 participants, 8 sees fluctuating membership and classified it as flat changes to membership. Two of the participants did not consider the size of membership in their service to God, their spiritual growth, or the services they provide to the community. The remaining participant, who represents approximately 5% of the population did not classify a change from losing 10 members and gain 3 members as growth. One participant indicated: "When I came to this congregation, there were only 240 members. Membership has been declining for many years now from a high of 400. True growth is when I get beyond the original 400 members".

From the gathered data we can conclude, that whether participants indicated decline, flat, no growth or not interested in numbers, they all indicated increased budgets and higher operating expenses in the community.

### *Explanation*

*Interview Question 3: If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing expenses, how do you communicate to the remaining congregants that expenditures must still be met?*

The objective of question 3 is to elicit from the participants their style of communicating to congregants the financial needs of the Church. Data collected from Question 3 responses allowed for the determination of whether participants were effectively communicating throughout to the member. This question also allowed for further exploration of specific aspects of communication that are tailored to the needs of each religious institution. Responses from the participants provided data for comparison of attitudes and beliefs expressed regarding the significance of communication from leaders to congregants. Therefore, each of the participants in this study was asked to tell how they communicated the financial needs of the church to congregants.

#### Analysis

Of the 22 participants, 20 actively communicated to members through stewardship campaigns such as one-on-one meetings and mailings the importance of giving back to God in many different ways and to remind members of their promised gifts to the church. Most communication was done from the pulpit in sermons designed around stewardship and tithing. Other means of communication were done through workshops and education sessions on being good stewards and caring for the facilities that God has placed in the charge of members. Most of the 22 participants felt that communication must be tailored to the needs of the congregation and strategically done. According to participant number 21 communications must be strategically done to avoid negative connotations:

“The goal is not to communicate to members that we are going broke,  
That is too negative and will lead members to think they are giving out  
of their pocket to pay someone else’s expenses. The way to go about it is to point  
out the importance of being good stewards and the importance of tithing and  
giving back to God a portion of all that He has giving us.”

Another two participants did not feel required to communicate the financial needs of the church to members due to their status in their family. They know the needs of the church and thought, that God will provide all their necessities. These two participants relied on faith in God in achieving the goals and the missions of their respective Churches.

### *Explanation*

Interview Question 4: If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing spending, how do you keep the church open?

The purpose of Question 4 has been to identify the resources that allowed RPLBEM in the Netherlands, Amsterdam south east to remain open while confronting declining membership and increasing expenses.

### *Analysis*

The participants reflected on specific resources that were an integral part of the churches' ability to continue to exist and the means of meeting increased expenses. Participants discussed the importance of numerical strength of membership in terms of funding the budget and volunteering giving and their time in providing services to the community. The major themes that emerged from the data revealed the attitudes of church leaders toward their congregations' ability to remain open and the factors that allowed for the churches' continued existence in the RPLBEM. A total of 16 participants described the church ability to remain open while confronting declining membership and increasing expenses through varied sources of funds. Over the years, this church was able to reserve, common funds, building funds, missions funds, welfare funds, which were meant to acquire a building. This reserve funds came from the members as a special offering, and donors. Six participants thought having this vision is not worth to have any reserved funds for buildings; their reliance was to have faith in God in supplying all their needs; from their lived experiences this has always worked. Participant number 6 explained, "We do not worry about how to keep the church open. We have faith and we are confident that God will always richly bless us and keep us going, if not in this place then another."

### *Explanation*

*Interview Question 5: What services do you and your local congregation provides to the community?*

Question 5 is intended to elicit from RPLBEM church leaders what role their local church plays in the life of the community. Participants were asked to reflect on what community service and how they saw their church impact the community. This question allows for further exploration by examining specific services provides to the community by each local church congregation. The response to this interview question was to reflect similarities in the participants' leadership traits as well as reveal possible differences as they relate to the growth of the congregation, budget changes, and the services provided to the community. Responses from the participants provided data for comparison of attitudes and beliefs expressed as to the significance of community and services that the RPLBEM church provides to the Community.

#### Analysis

Most participants provided services to the community that ranged from soup kitchens, Dutch and English for beginners PCC partnering with Rochdale offering advice in about building low-income housing as well as dialogue with Police. Of the 22 participants, 21 agrees of their building should be made available for groups to hold community meetings dialogue with police, outdoorings, and engagements. All 21 Participants have no objection of the church building been used for outdoorings and police dialogue religious institutions. One participant thinks church building is meant only for spiritual gathering. (4.6%) did not see church building could not be made available to the community as a meeting place; the church should not be a rented place.

Sixteen of the participants viewed community service on three levels: internal, external, and global. Internal service meant the focus was on nurturing their congregants spiritually, emotionally, physically, and through adult education classes. External community service was focused on the needs of the people of the community, of Amsterdam south east and other parts of the Amsterdam. The RPLBEM global service to the community was based on mission giving and providing missionaries to other parts of Europe.

#### Explanation

*Interview Question 6: What are your perceptions of your local church's ability to adequately provide resources and services to the community?*

The intent of question 6 was to elicit the perceptions and beliefs of participants about their congregations' ability to adequately provide resources and services to the community. The purpose of this question was to explore the participants' perceptions of the importance of the RPLBEM being able to adequately provide resources through volunteers and the use of buildings.

### Analysis

All 22 participants provided services to the community but to different degree. 17 participants believed that they had the ability to provide necessary resources and services to the community. While the other 5 participants did provide some services to the community, they did not think they had the ability to adequately provide resources and services to the community. They cited increased expenses as the primary reason for cutting back or eliminating some programs, and lack of volunteers as another reason for not being able to adequately provide for the community. The inadequacy of providing services was summed up by the lived Experiences of participant 11:

“Considering our reductions in membership and the demographics of the congregation, I do not think we are equipped in providing resources and services to the community. There was a time when churches had to provide for the community, but with so many changes in the home and technological advancements, churches have to focus on providing more spiritual services than physical ones. There are many governmental agencies that can see to the physical needs of people; ours should be a spiritual one.

### Explanation

*Interview Question 7: Considering that members of the community and members of your congregation might be employees of the many organizations undergoing mergers and acquisitions in corporate Netherlands What impact do you think some of these mergers and acquisitions have on your church membership?*

Question 7 explores each participant's perceptions regarding the importance of adapting to change in times of uncertainty and the impact mergers and acquisitions might have on congregations.

## Analysis

All 22 participants believed that change was needed in most areas if they were to grow their congregations and meet the needs of the community. All the 22 participants were aware of mergers and acquisitions but the impact was experienced differently. Eleven of the participants were not sure of the exact impact mergers and acquisitions had on their congregations. Seven participants cited mergers and acquisitions as factors that brought changes to their congregations and the decline to the voluntary workforce. The other 4 participants felt mergers and acquisitions did not cause the change to their membership decline. Participants agreed that mergers and acquisitions will continue and leaders should be aware of them, as they can impact any congregation one day. Participant 8 offered the following:

“Mergers are inevitable as corporate Netherlands seeks to cut costs and build financial strength. As leaders of the church, we must be aware of how mergers and acquisitions can impact our congregations. But mergers and acquisitions are not all bad. While we have lost some families, we have gained new ones because of these changes brought about by mergers. Families that have been forced to relocate from here have the opportunity to spread our mission seeking to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ led by the Holy Spirit. We also get the opportunity to lead new families down this path” (Participant 8).

## Explanation

*Interview Question 8: There are 150 churches in your community serving a population of 8,000 people. How do these 150 churches meet the needs of the community?*

The intention of question 8 is to gain an understanding of participants' views on providing services to the community at an association level. The 22 participants are members of RPLBEM and part of (PCC), which addresses community issues on a united front. This question allows for further exploration of the resources and services that are provided to the community.

## Analysis

22 participants provided similar responses from their lived experiences of belonging to the association (PCC). All participants felt the association did not meet the needs of the community. Participants felt the association could address two important issues that would be of

great benefit to the community: homelessness and low-income housing. Some of the factors cited for the associations' ineffectiveness were: ego, division among the clergy, racial issues, and

“ (...) the fact that every religious leader seems to have an agenda for his or her local religious institution that takes precedence over any issues that the association brings up for discussion” (Participant 21).

### *Explanation*

*Interview Question 9: Mergers and acquisitions in corporate Netherland continue to grow annually, and some non-profit organizations have started to do the same. What factors might cause some of the local churches of the same denomination in your community to merge?*

The intent of question 9 is to gain an understanding of the participants' perceptions of their churches' ability to merge with other Pentecostal churches of the same denomination. The purpose of this question is to explore the participants' perceptions of the importance of merging two or more congregations to increase size, decrease expenses, and provide greater services to the community. This question allowed for further exploration by examining specific factors that would determine if the merger of two congregations would address the issues of declining membership, budget problems, and increased expenses.

### *Analysis*

Participants felt that mergers and acquisitions in corporate Netherlands were taken for financial reasons. Participant 22 offered that:

“(...) churches cannot merge to address financial problems or membership levels; they are about nurturing and spiritual growth where numbers are not important. What is important is the spiritual growth of every individual.”

Of the 22 participants, 16 thought mergers would be beneficial in some instances, but it would not happen as the ego, pride and the division making would not allow it. As long as each church continues to have a fulltime paid pastor, provides services to the community, meets the needs of the respective congregations, these necessary mergers will not happen, as one

participant said (P22). On the difficulties of merging two congregations of the same denomination one participant offered:

“I suspect a merger will happen if a congregation cannot afford a full-time or part-time pastor and cannot pay its monthly bills, only then will the leadership and congregants decide to sell the real assets of that church and join the members with another congregation. (P22)

All 22 participants cited egos, cultural differences, demographics, doctrinal issues, and support for different missions, geographical location, and lack of the same voice as some of the factors that impede the merging of two congregations of the same denomination. Churches that are part of PCC have great difficulty in coming together or merging even when expenses are not greater than monetary gifts provided by congregants; one way to get some funds is to organize a general conference, in order to be able to find the means for people to donate by providing funding to local churches to meet their operating expenses until they once again become financially viable.

### *Explanation*

*Interview Question 10: How do you measure the success of your church?*

The purpose of this question is to explore participants' perceptions of the importance of measuring growth and change of the congregation over a period of time.

### *Analysis*

Twenty of the participants provided variables for measuring the success of their local congregations. Leaders of RPLBEM measured success in terms of spiritual growth, number of leaders created, missions, worshiping, witnessing, outreach programs, how well members were committed to God, and increased membership. Five participants cited increased membership as one of the most important barometers in measuring growth. According to participant 21:



“(…) if I am truly spreading the message of Jesus Christ, which is to make disciples of everyone, then my success must be measured in increasing membership. The perception of some members of this denomination says numbers are not important, what is important is the spiritual development of each individual. That to me is a short coming, as this does not challenge or hold the pastor or priest accountable; all he or she needs to do is say; I have seen spiritual growth in my congregation.” Spiritual growth should translate to numbers. As one grows spiritually, he or she will want to spread the word to others and bring them into the congregation as members. (P21)

Of the 22 participants, only one did not believe any measures of success could be used in the work for God. The remaining participant would not commit to any measure, as: “Resources of all kinds are lacking for planned programs within and without in the community. Given the current situation, it is rather difficult to measure the current success of the church” (P1). The themes and patterns were extracted by analyzing the transcripts to determine. Through the interviews, participants contributed their personal beliefs and perspectives regarding the important attributes that contribute to (a) how change about church related programs is communicated to congregants, (b) how RPLBEM continue to provide services to the community while confronting diminishing membership and increasing expenses, and (c) how members of RPLBEM as opposed to being independent influenced local church leaders decisions. The core themes and patterns that emerged from the interview data through the utilization of are composite descriptions of the meanings and essence of the phenomenon as summarized below,

### *Summary of Core Themes*

Throughout the analysis of the gathered data a history of declining membership and increasing budgets problems emerged. The problem regarding the communication membership growth, worship and meeting expenditures came to light. There are capital donations of single contributors who make huge donations, but the financial growth and investment in capital markets ought to be on the agenda if. Topics were:, capital gains and endowment funds community participation missions, outreach, access to buildings, worshipping, food programs,

homelessness and low-income housing. These issues should be more addressed according to the participants.

Furthermore, adult education classes could bring success spiritual development and growth, increase in membership, next to stewardship. All suggestions were made in a spirit of awareness of the problem: the churches are losing members and merging came along as a solution. Alongside the awareness of the problem, another problem emerged unexpected: the ego of the pastors and the authoritarian style of leadership; both were criticized by the participants. The last should be taking into account for further research, due to the importance of merging and the obstacles authoritarian leaderships seem to create to merge and to grow.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of a purposive sample of 22 leaders of (RPLBEM), Pentecostal migrant church located in the South East of Amsterdam the Netherlands. Through personal semi-structured interviews, the participants' perspectives on how their church were able to provide continued services to the local community while experiencing membership reduction and increased expenses were explored. Therefore this study was able to shine a light upon a moment in time, when churches filled with migrants are looking for leadership (good leadership) and guidance. For the purpose of this study, leaders of RPLBEM were defined as pastor (PAS), priest (PRI), or evangelist (EVA). This research study was guided by the following research question: When Communicating and implementing changes about worship, membership, finances, and spiritual growth to the congregation, what factors do church leaders believe contribute to (a) decreasing church membership attendance and (b) increasing expenses on church activities, and how does members of RPLBEM opposed to being independent influence decisions made? The study was centered on the exploration of lived experiences and perceptions of church leaders' summary and serves as a case study to provide more information about the internal struggle of new churches in the Netherlands.

### 5.3 Questionnaire

The questionnaire as a research tool is a list of questions which can be closed or open. The first option includes questions to be answered with a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ answer, the latter has been used for this research and is open and unrestricted. That means, the answers given went into the depths of the topic. Open questionnaires are more difficult to interpret and to summarize and surely are more difficult to put into statistical schedule. In the following paragraph a reflection upon the this methodological problems is also demonstrated, for now it must be clear, that participants just did their maximum best to cooperate to the successful outcome to achieved desirable results but the validity was difficult to guarantee due to the open character of the questionnaires the participants went all over the place, so to speak and improved to be difficult to control the direction of their thinking: therefore it was not always possible to install the need guidance to come to the conclusion that the intention to get to know more about the way members are lost and how they deal with this fact was answered. The questionnaire was therefore a start to get to know the participants and their problems, but for answering the research questions and to meet the standards of being valid and reliable other methods were needed.

Robson (2002) affirms that there may be four threats to reliability of using questionnaire. The first could be **participant error**. Because the questionnaire was administered at different times of the day and week, it’s generated different results because the degree of enthusiasm was different. To be able to have a reliable data a more “neutral” time should have been chosen, for example, when all the participants are on “high” at church.

The second reason is that it may be subject to **participant bias**. This is because the interviewees may have been saying what they thought their Pastors wanted to hear. This is a problem where church members see their Pastors as “God” on earth.

Thirdly, there may have been **observer error**. Because the same questions were being asked to different people at different times there is the possibility that, interviewees will provide different answers.

Lastly, there may have been **observer bias**. This is where one reply could have been interpreted in three different ways. These threats to questionnaire reliability may be reduced if different data collection techniques and analysis procedures were used. Besides the questionnaires the researcher used his longstanding relationships and network to perform participant observation.

## 5.4 Participant Observation

Through his network and social ties the researcher was able to move around freely and talk to any member of the community. Miles and Huberman (1994) observed that allowing participants to share their perceptions about subjects produces rich, holistic research data. Before and after church service, I observed members going and coming in groups and I engagement in conversations with as many as possible. While there were no documented records on the attendance of members, I gathered from conversations I had with members that their previous recorded attendance as from January 2012 to May 2012 was around 270 for the lowest and 290 for the highest. However, from the recordings I made on every service and program I attended from on June 2012, I got 279 and 333 as the lowest and the highest attendance respectively. Moreover, the church was having a month long program in June so there were invited guests from other churches throughout the period with the exception of June 24, 2012 during which I recorded no visitors or invited guests. On this day, I recorded an attendance of 279. This confirms that the membership number I had gathered from members in conversations. Comparatively, the results from my data and the information I acquired from members on attendance does not agree with the claims of Rev. Tsagli. I presume that he embellished reality and that he was trying to cover up the numbers, or maybe he did not want to face reality as it was presented to him. However, through my observation I was able to rectify his responses and could count members as they were coming in. Observation proved to be a useful research tool on many levels, the 'verification' of numbers was only one, the way the members got comfortable with me and therefore the research was another outcome of 'being there'.

Although there were some unique challenges, it was rewarding that the members of the church opened up to the researcher during this period of participant observation. This openness allowed the researcher to obtain distinctive insights into their membership structures and communal life.

The results of the participant observation proved to be (even more and unexpected) successful than the questionnaire. Here the qualitative methods prevailed above the quantitative methods. The members of the churches opened up to the researcher and therefore a prominent member gave an insight in the history of Pentecostalism which produced rich empirical data.

## **5.5 Departmental Leaders**

The contact and interviews with the leaders proved to be very fruitful. The leaders opened up their books and let the researcher see a different side: the churches weren't as bad off as the researcher has thought, but notwithstanding, the problems the leaders were facing were often related to 'ego' problems and the way merges and fusion were made. The financial aspect was prominent present and leaders looked for creative ways to deal with this.

## 6.0 REFLECTION

‘Although, one likes to measure the success of a church by looking at the way it is effective, by for example carrying out worshipping, welcoming, nurturing, equipping and witnessing, but unfortunately the conference measures it on changes in membership, contribution per worship attendant and the number of members enrolled in Bible College’ as one participant (Participant 10) recalled.

From the very beginning it has been very tempting to gather and analyze the data in the light of a better future, i.e. to find the causes of decline of membership and therefore a remedy. In the scope of research solutions to the problem were not possible and were neither the purpose of this study, however one wishes to provide a remedy of the decline. The last quote sums up what this research had found out to be the conclusion to the question: what kind of causes lay behind the diminishing membership numbers of the Ghanaian Church in Amsterdam South East? As a member of the church and as a servant of God, the researcher found many leaders who were concerned about the decline in membership, not only due to financial problems. One wish to be judged by the ‘worshipping, welcoming, nurturing, equipping and witnessing’, but membership and the contribution of the members is vital for evaluation and in the end for the survival of these small churches. This conclusion can only be a retrospective reflection about the data gathering and a summary of the results and will end with some suggestions for further research.

### 6.1 The main research question

What are the cause(s) of the decline in church attendance among the Ghanaian Migrant Pentecostal Churches in Amsterdam South East with regard to the increasing expenses and what

are the implications of the membership declination situation within the Ghanaian migrant community?

The question has been answered in different ways. One of the most significant findings were, that generational conflicts were less prominent than expected and that women, who are leaving church due to economic dire situations came into the foreground as well as the creative way church leaders deal with church management to maneuver through difficult times.

## 6.2 Results

According to the findings recorded during the research through analyzing interviews and participate in church activities, the highest growth of membership in RPLBEM, since it was founded in 1992, is 400 members. From Fred Nyarko, we realize that the population of the members was 400 before its first breakaway. According to Kwame Agyemang the membership rose to 400 members in 1994 and declined in the subsequent years until 2005 when the decline recovered to a growth of 400 members. Moreover, according to both Kwame Agyemang and Rev Kofi Tsagli, the membership declined to 240 members in 2006 as a result of the migration crisis. However the current population of about 300 to 350, as stated by Rev Tsagli, indicates a rise, the church has still not recovered from its decline since 2006. In summary, we can conclude that the RPLBEM in its almost twenty two years of existence has undergone decline in its membership. Although our interviewees do not give vivid data of the numbers lost and regained after every breakaway, they all admit the three breakaways in 1996, 1998, and 2002 left in their wake recognizable decline in numbers of the membership. It took the church ten years to regain its initial 400-membership mark of 1994, which encountered the biggest decline in 2006—recording 240 members.

According to the interviewees, the fluctuations of the numerical growth of the membership of RPLBEM since 1996 is however attributed to factors such as splits, migration, church planting programs, and relocation of members. Moses Alagbe iterates this in his 1998 research, which studied the impact and methods of evangelism among churches in Amsterdam. He identified leadership disputes, splits, constant change of location, and the deployment of

church planting team from the mother church as the main factors that caused decline in the membership of churches in Amsterdam.<sup>10</sup> In a recorded interview with Rev Ofori Amanfo, the founder of Rock Chapel international, he narrates how splits had been rampant and detrimental to the growth of churches within Amsterdam. He maintains that issues such as insubordination, selfish ambitions, ego, misappropriation of funds, insensitive leadership, doctrinal differences, and conflicting aims and objectives as some of the causes of these breakaways.

Although Alagbe identified migration as one of the causes of decline in churches, he did not consider it as a major threat. However, eight years after Alagbe's findings, migration caused the biggest decline of membership ever to have occurred in the history of RPLBEM. While RPLBEM may not consider the constant relocation of church auditorium since they have been permanently situating at their current location since 1994, Alagbe's finding and the recent situation of churches in Verrijn Stuartweg<sup>11</sup> confirms relocation as a factor. According to PCC report, when the (Gemeente) City Council ordered the churches in the Verrijn Stuartweg area to relocate in 2011, most of the churches encountered membership decline and God Ambassador Ministry is recorded to have folded completely.<sup>12</sup>

In the case of RPLBEM, it is not the location of the church but the location (where they live) of members that cause decline. With members, staying as far as Utrecht, Almere, and Alkmaar the traveling inconveniences and high transportation cost discourages members from attending church regularly hence eventually staying away, joining a church close by, or starting another branch. Actually, the third option is one of the measures adopted by the RPLBEM to preserve and keep contact with members staying in far distances from the church. However, the starting of satellite churches comes with another situation that adds to the decline of members in the main church. The situation is that the main church is always faced with the responsibility of sending outreach teams to these areas to support in the planting of these branches hence causing decline of membership in the main church.

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<sup>10</sup> *Moses Alagbe, 1998*

<sup>11</sup> *PCC minutes, 2012*

<sup>12</sup> *PCC annual report read at the beginning of year meeting 2012.*



### 6.3 Further Research

This research can only ask more questions after trying to understand the decline and the giving some answers. Further research needs to be done to look into the role of the ‘ego’ amongst leaders and followers. What does that mean when leaders talk repeatedly about ‘ego problems’? Further research could give an answer. The financial aspect played a dominant role in the beginning of this research and gives away a huge area of further research in the resources of migrant churches. The role of women is vital to any church and their effort to enter the job market and the influence of this to the decline of the membership should be a research topic for the future to understand more about the decline in detail.

To conclude one can only answer the question of decline by an in depth historical overview, which indicates that the recent history makes for a ‘shaky’ start and not much structure to rely on. Therefore external (political) and internal (leadership struggle) can easily destroy a church in making. The community in the Netherlands loses some societal cohesion among the migrant communities, but further research has to be conducted about the whereabouts of the migrants who left the church. The future of the Pentecostal churches itself lies in the hand of God.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Definition of terms

**Church leader:** a church leader is a spiritual overseer who has been ordained by laying on of hands and who has ministerial or priestly authority over a congregation.

**Congregation:** A congregation is a social institution in which individuals who are not all religious specialists gather in a physical proximity to one another, frequently and regular – scheduled intervals for activities and events with explicitly religious content and purpose.

### Appendix 2: Letter of Introduction

As discussed on telephone on the Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2012, I'm a student in Windesheim University of Zwolle working on Bachelor of Theology as Pastoral Leadership. I am requesting permission to interview about 20 to 30 departmental leaders in RPLBEM in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

The purpose of the research study is to interpret and compare the perceptions of church leaders with respect to communication factors believed to be essential to successful achieve increasing budgets with diminishing church members and increasing expenses. The survey is voluntarily and complete anonymity will be maintained.

The interview process will be scheduled to last approximately 30 minutes to one hour, in which participants will be asked to respond to open-ended questions. The results of the research study may be published but will not contain any names and results will be maintained in confidence.

The names of participants will be confidential and known only to the researcher.

There is no direct benefit to individual leaders. However, this research is expected to provide valuable data and information to the fields of church leadership, church management, and to those that lead non-profit organization. I would be happy to send you a completed copy of the research study when complete. Should any question regarding this research arise, please address them to [eliasagyeman@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:eliasagyeman@yahoo.co.uk).

### Appendix 3: Interviews (sample participant 1-10)

Participant One (1)

Q: How long have you been leader of this local congregation?

A: I have been an elected leader for 9 years.

Q: In your position as leader of this institution, what membership and budget change have you experienced with this congregation?

A: As a body of Jesus Christ we are really not concerned about numbers. We are concern about spreading the good news, sharing and caring for each other, and giving each individual the opportunity to join us as a body. We generally do not solicit membership; people must join freely because of who we are. We are cognizant of the increasing expenses that it takes to run this institution, and that makes us ever more responsible on how we manage our finances. Because of the generosity of members we are never in need.

Q: If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing expenses; how do you communicate to the remaining congregants that expenditures must still be met?

A: This is a congregational family, so everyone knows the needs of the church and it is not necessary to communicate to them that expenses must still be met in the face of declining membership. Remember, we do not count our growth in terms of numbers but in terms of spiritual growth.

Q: If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing spending, how do you keep the church open?

A: One of our main sources of sustenance is bequests. Because of their love for the church many families have bequeathed real property and money to this congregation. So our needs are always met. The board that oversees the church does a great job in ensuring that wastes are cut, and we do generate significant revenue from our publishing business.

Q: What services do you and your local congregation provide to the community?

A: We provide a reading room – a library to the public. We do not seek to force anyone to become a part of us, so the materials provided are meant to give the individual another alternative in having a relationship with Jesus Christ, and from there he or she can make a decision. We open our doors to the public every Sunday morning and do hold bible study every Wednesday. We offer public lectures and distribute literature on matters concerning spiritual and physical health.

Q: What are your perceptions of your local church's ability in adequately providing resources and services to the community?

A: Given our resources and our discipline on cutting unnecessary expenses, we choose activities that we have the resources for and can benefit the community. For example, the Dutch for beginners that we provide to the community are well staffed and we do provide all the resources needed.

Q: Considering that members of the community and members of your congregation might be employees of the many organizations undergoing mergers or acquisitions incorporate Netherlands, what impact do you think some of these mergers and acquisitions have on your church membership?

A: It is possible that members of this congregation might become unemployed because of these activities, but one is never unemployed as long as he or she is employed in the service of Jesus Christ. If you are employed in the service of Jesus Christ you will always find employment.

Q: There are 150 churches in your community serving a population of 8,000 people<sup>13</sup>; how do these 150 churches meet the needs of the community?

A: As individual places of worship I do believe we meet the needs of the community, as an association we do not meet the needs of the community. There is too much polarization in the association, everyone has his or her own agenda and cannot agree on resolving issues of homelessness and accommodation challenges facing us.

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<sup>13</sup> *Pcc intern memo( list of churches)*

Q: Mergers and acquisitions in corporate Netherlands continue to grow annually, and some non-profit organizations have started to do the same, what factors might cause some of the local churches of the same denomination in your community to merge?

A: Yes some congregations should merge if it is logical. We have done it before resurrection and Living bread ministries. We are not tied to buildings or the rich history that they provide; we are interested in growing the body of Christ. As local congregations we do not have our own agenda, every Sunday morning across the globe we are reading the same bible passages from the King James Version of the bible, and we all do this at the same time.

Q: How do you measure the success of your church?

A: We never measure the success of this church. We are a body of Jesus Christ that is open to everyone.

Participant Two (2)

Q: How long have you been leader of this local congregation?

A: I have been a leader for 8 years.

Q: In your position as leader of this institution, what membership and budget change have you experienced with this congregation?

A: There has been a steady decline and current membership stands at 250. While Membership has declined; the budget has not changed over the past 5 years.

Q: If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing spending; how do you communicate to the remaining congregants that expenditures must still be met?

A: With a consistent membership base and the ability to hold expenses flat, with faith we have been able to meet all our yearly needs.

Q: If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing spending, how do you keep the church open?

A: We must trust God to guide us through any experience. We put our faith and trust in God, so we cannot doubt that this place of worship will always be open to do His will.

Q: What services do you and your local congregation provide to the community?

A: We have food ministry called angel food which provides food to the needy and homeless. We host youth meeting, all believers' night vigil and community events for spiritual development, door to door evangelism, and hold Men and women fellowship crusade.

Q: What are your perceptions of your local church's ability in adequately providing resources and services to the community?

A: Even though we are a small congregation of 250 members, I think we have the ability to adequately provide resources and services to the community. We can do this because we have volunteers who are willing to give of their time.

Q: Considering that members of the community and members of your congregation might be employees of the many organizations undergoing mergers or acquisitions in corporate Netherlands, what impact do you think some of these mergers and acquisitions have on your church membership?

A: We have lost members because of mergers and acquisitions that have taken place in corporate Netherlands. Some members have relocated and we have lost entire families.

Q: There are 150 churches in your community serving a population of 8,000 people; how do these 150 churches meet the needs of the community?

A: No, the RPLBEM as well as PCC do not meet the needs of the community.

Each church has its own inside mission, hence it is unable or unwilling to lend support to an outside mission.

Q: Mergers and acquisitions in corporate Netherland continue to grow annually, and some non-profit organizations have started to do the same, what factors might cause some of the local churches of the same denomination in your community to merge?



A: While it makes perfect sense to merge Christian churches that follow the teachings of Jesus Christ, it does not happen because egos get into the way. There are also doctrinal, cultural and parish issues and every church leader propagate what he or she believes.

Q: How do you measure the success of your church?

A: I measure the success of this church through the adherence to God's teachings, expository teaching, and the maturity of spiritual growth of each congregant.

### ***Participant Three (3)***

Q: How long have you been leader of this local congregation?

A: I have been the associate pastor of this congregation for the past five (5) years.

Q: In your position as leader of this institution, what membership and budget change have you experienced with this congregation?

A: When I came to this congregation there were only 240 members. Membership has been declining for many years now from a high of 400. Within the past three years we have been averaging about 240-280 members per service. Still it is not where I would like to see it. True growth is when I get beyond the original 400 members. We have had a steady increase in our budget each year – this year it stands over 50,000 Euros.

Q: If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing expenses; how do you communicate to the remaining congregants that expenditures must still be met?

A: Stewardship campaigns. Education on what it expenses to run the building and the services we provide to the community. We must bring the spiritual component – prayer, in all that we do in educating the congregation. God loves a cheerful giver.

Q: If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing spending, how do you keep the church open?

A: “Any way you can.” We need to communicate it over to give members an idea of what the expenses and because the congregation and most of the member wishes the church to remain open they we give to meet the cost.

Q: What services do you and your local congregation provide to the community?

A: We are part of the PCC which is in partnership with Rochdale where we offer advice for people of low income housing. We provide a soup kitchen for those who are in need.

Q: What are your perceptions of your local church’s ability in adequately providing resources and services to the community?

A: We have incredible space that we allow groups in the community to use, for example, outdoor ceremonies, Birthday Parties, community meetings. We provide Dutch language for beginners. Because of time and lack of volunteers, we do have limitations in the amount and variety of services we can offer to the community. It is not that churches are not providing needed services to the community, but some of them have been taken over by Government agencies, and we might just be duplicating some of them and doing more harm than good. The churches in Amsterdam south-east must understand that giving to the needy does not stop hunger or homelessness. Giving this way is merely addressing the symptoms. We need a greater community effort to fix the problem.

Q: Considering that members of the community and members of your congregation might be employees of the many organizations undergoing mergers or acquisitions in corporate Netherland, what impact do you think some of these mergers and acquisitions have on your church membership?

A: Mergers are inevitable and we just have to work with it whether from a member or pastoral viewpoint. We need to have is a strategic game plan because Things are constantly Changing and we must change with them. When things are over for us, it is not over with God.

Q: There are 150 churches in your community serving a population of 8,000 people; how do these 150 churches meet the needs of the community?

A: Not very well. We seek to look after ourselves first. Egos get in the way. Each leader is focusing on the survival of his or her congregation and any proposed services to the community must work into our individual schedules. The association is ineffective because there is really no entity above the local congregation.

Q: Mergers and acquisitions in corporate Netherland continue to grow annually, and some non-profit organizations have started to do the same, what factors might cause some of the local churches of the same denomination in your community to merge?

A: Ego. Personal differences in how each church conducts worship. Cultural issues and what Works for us might not work for you as our missions and programs might be different.

Q: How do you measure the success of your church?

A: It is tough to measure on one spectrum. You can measure by each individual's response as to their spiritual growth, the number of missions involved in and the services provided to the community. You can measure by the differences the church is making in people's lives. I do not think a quantitative measure works well for churches, it is not about numbers, and it is about spiritual growth.

#### ***Participant Four (4)***

Q: How long have you been leader of this local congregation?

A: I have been a sectional leader of this congregation for the past 2 years.

Q: In your position as a sectional leader of this institution, what membership and budget change have you experienced with this congregation?

A: The membership fluctuates depending on the time of the year. Because there has been a membership changes, I would have to say it is flat. The budget has increased but we have been able to meet our yearly expenses.

Q: If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing expenses;

how do you communicate to the remaining congregants that expenditures must still be met?

A: From the pulpit in sermons that deals with spiritual gifts and stewardship.

Meeting with the congregation as a whole, and meeting with individuals as we all have special needs.

Q: If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing spending, how do you keep the church open?

A: We are blessed because the mortgage on the building is fully paid and any expenses incurred are for the daily functioning of the church. We do not look at the building as the church, the members are the church.

Q: What services do you and your local congregation provide to the community?

A: We have summer school that is open to the community, discipleship classes, and an open prayer forum on Wednesdays. We also provide a soup kitchen and periodic community health fairs.

Q: What are your perceptions of your local church's ability in adequately providing resources and services to the community?

A: We do not do anything out of obligation; whatever we do we are passionate about it. Not everyone in the congregation is on board in the services that we provide to the community, and this puts too much stress on the few that volunteers.

Q: Considering that members of the community and members of your congregation might be employees of the many organizations undergoing mergers or acquisitions in corporate

Netherlands, what impact do you think some of these mergers and acquisitions have on your church membership?

A: Mergers have impacted this congregation tremendously. It has impacted our resources and some of the tools for making programs more effective. As a congregation we stay current with what is happening in corporate Netherlands with mergers and acquisitions, it does affect individual lives in the church as well it impacts the giving of individual to the church.

Q: There are 150 churches in your community serving a population of 8,000

People; how do these 150 churches meet the needs of the community?

A: Not very well. There are too many struggles in the meetings preventing any cohesiveness among churches and its members. Egos get into the way.

Q: Mergers and acquisitions in corporate Netherlands continue to grow annually, and some non-profit organizations have started to do the same, what factors might cause some of the local churches of the same denomination in your community to merge?

A: Too many egos. Every congregation has its own mission which might not coincide with another. Demographics of the congregation might be a hindrance. Some people will resist change. There are issues of tradition and cultural differences.

Q: How do you measure the success of your church?

A: Through an assessment of goals and mission – what we actually achieved over the course of the year. Membership and money are not good measures as we are called to

Making each person a disciple of Christ and not how much you have increased numerically.

### ***Participant Five (5)***

Q: How long have you been leader of this local congregation?

A: I have been the leader of Sunday school in this congregation for the past 17 years.

Q: In your position as leader of this institution, what membership and budget change have you experienced with this congregation?

A: The demographics of church changes with the community, we lose old members and families and gain new ones. In order to grow and keep up with changes it is unavoidable that the budget must increase.

Q: If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing expenses; how do you communicate to the remaining congregants that expenditures must still be met?

A: We run a good educational program about spiritual gifts and stewardship, and people have been giving willingly. The budget of the church is made available to every member at the beginning of the church year, and periodically updates are given about well on target or not.

Q: If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing spending, how do you keep the church open?

A: We have been in the community for over 22 years and the members are the givers to keep the church going so we need to inform them about the current situation because they also see the numerical strength and they want the church to remain open they will give to meet expenses to keep our missions and programs going.

Q: What services do you and your local congregation provide to the community?

A: As a church founded on the vision of missions, a major portion of the church budget goes toward those needs both here and abroad that best represent our calling to the great commission of the people of Christ. Some of our local missions and service commitments include: Orphans ministry – where we temporarily host orphans in some periods of the year as part of the Interfaith Hospitality Network. We also conduct food and used clothing collections and distribute these items periodically to the centers.

Q: What are your perceptions of your local church's ability in adequately providing resources and services to the community?

A: I think this local church does an exceptional job in providing resources and services to the community. We are clear about our mission and goals for Christ's ministry and work 100% toward achieving them.

Q: Considering that members of the community and members of your congregation might be employees of the many organizations undergoing mergers or acquisitions in corporate Netherlands, what impact do you think some of these mergers and acquisitions have on your church membership?

A: Mergers are inevitable as corporate Netherlands seeks to cut expenses and build financial strength. As leaders of the church, we must be aware of how mergers and acquisitions can impact our congregations. But mergers and acquisitions are not all bad.

While we have lost some families, we have gained new ones because of these changes brought about by mergers. Families that have been forced to relocate from here have the opportunity to spread our mission "seeking to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ led by the Holy Spirit." We also get the opportunity to lead new families down this path.

Q: There are 150 churches in your community serving a population of 8,000 people; how do these congregations meet the needs of the community?

A: As individual churches we do a wonderful job of meeting the needs of the community. As an association, I am afraid we do not meet the needs of the community. Perhaps we are too consumed with our own activities to take on one that requires a united front from us all. Too much ego is involved here to act as a united body.

Q: Mergers and acquisitions in corporate Netherlands continue to grow annually, and some non-profit organizations have started to do the same, what factors might cause some of the local churches of the same denomination in your community to merge?

A: In the past mergers were done to bring us where we are today resurrection Power and Living bread ministries, but I do not see any mergers occurring in the near foreseeable future. There are

too many divisions, cultural differences and egos at play. In addition, we do not speak with one voice.

**Q:** How do you measure the success of your church?

**A:** The success of the church is measured on worshiping, welcoming, nurturing, equipping and witnessing. We measure our success in our commitment to missions and the number of leaders that we have turned out in the past years. From this congregation we have produced missionaries, and ordained 8 ministers in the past ten (10) years.

### ***Participant Three (6)***

**Q:** How long have you been leader of this local congregation?

**A:** I have been the leader of this congregation for the past 8 years.

**Q:** In your position as leader of this institution, what membership and budget change have you experienced with this congregation?

**A:** Over the past 2 years membership has been flat. We are not burdened by a budget and rising cost as we use the neighborhood centers at a minimal charge to host our worship services.

**Q:** If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing expenses; how do you communicate to the remaining congregants that expenditures must still be met?

**A:** As stated above, we do not have the burden of fixed expenses as we do not own the building that we conduct worship services in. That is not to say we are lax about our financial responsibilities to the body of Christ. Members are reminded to be good stewards and are encouraged to tithe. We have many mediums where members can contribute – they can do this in the Sunday worship or in a secured environment online.

**Q:** If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing expenses, how do you keep the church open?



**A:** Our church is not a building, but the body of Christ. We meet increasing expenses through the tithing of members, sale of printed and recorded media.

**Q:** What services do you and your local congregation provide to the community?

**A:** We provide free sermons on CD and are mailed weekly to those who request them. We provide free tracts to the public. The public can also purchase select books, CD's and cassettes in our books store.

**Q:** What are your perceptions of your local church's ability in adequately providing resources and services to the community?

**A:** Even though we do not own our own building, our relationship with the municipality administrators of south east has allowed us to adequately provide services to the community. We provide Sunday morning worship services, Wednesday evening bible study and we even provide a radio broadcast (RAZO) whereby the community can listen to our service and inspirational music.

**Q:** Considering that members of the community and members of your congregation might be employees of the many organizations undergoing mergers or acquisitions in corporate Netherlands, what impact do you think some of these mergers and acquisitions have on your church membership?

**A:** Mergers and acquisitions have its ups and downs. Even though we are witnessing the ongoing mergers here and there, we have not been impacted by the many mergers that have recently occurred.

**Q:** There are 150 churches in your community serving a population of 8,000 people; how do these congregations meet the needs of the community?

**A:** No, as a body we do not meet the needs of the community. There are too many churches fighting for their own survival, to really commit themselves beyond their local congregations. Congregations are not happening. And there is too much ego in leadership of congregations that are big and growing.

**Q:** Mergers and acquisitions in corporate Netherlands continue to grow annually, and some non-profit organizations have started to do the same, what factors might cause some of the local churches of the same denomination in your community to merge?

**A:** We are the only one of our kind in south East, so we do not have to consider that issue for now.

**Q:** How do you measure the success of your church?

**A:** Our mission is to focus on discussion and enlightening exploration of the Scriptures and the true Christian beliefs outlined in them. We'd like to present to you a deeper, yet practical understanding of the faith, not resting in opinion, tradition and church dogma. The teaching is always directly from the scriptures and is performed in an easy to understand "verse by verse expository" way. If we can do this, then we are successful.

***Participant Seven (7)***

**Q:** How long have you been leader of this local congregation?

**A:** I have been the leader of this congregation for the past 7 years.

**Q:** In your position as leader of this institution, what membership and budget change have you experienced with this congregation?

**A:** There has been a steady decline in membership over the past 4 years. There has been a steady increase in the expenses over the years.

**Q:** If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing expenses; how do you communicate to the remaining congregants that expenditures must still be met?

**A:** You have to be open with members. People are not stupid, they see the reduction in membership, they see increases in the church's service to the community and they see an increase in the missions that are being contributed to. Members will naturally give more where they can afford to, to ensure they have a place to worship. That is not to say we take stewardship lightly. If you make stewardship a way of life in your congregation, then, giving comes easily for them.

**Q:** If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing expenses, how do you keep the church open?

**A:** People have always given generously to this church. In the face of declining membership there are always growth of contributions, donations and other special offerings still exceeds meets our expenses. We have been blessed with many generous givers.

**Q:** What services do you and your local congregation provide to the community?

**A:** we preach the gospel to the needy, youth activities; visit the sick in the hospital and all believers' night vigil. Our building is open for community activities such as police dialog, christening and funeral services etc.

**Q:** What are your perceptions of your local church's ability in adequately providing? resources and services to the community?

**A:** Our mission is to promote Christian faith and spiritual growth in ourselves and our community in a setting which is diverse, multi-generational, and welcoming. We make our building open for various groups on different days of the week, for example, Alcoholics, Alpha Curses, etc.

**Q:** Considering that members of the community and members of your congregation might be employees of the many organizations undergoing mergers or acquisitions in corporate Netherlands, what impact do you think some of these mergers and acquisitions have on your church membership?

**A:** Mergers and acquisitions do impact this congregation. For example, in 2006 this congregation lost about 10 members and gained 3 new ones. This resulted in a decline in membership of 7 people. Mergers and acquisitions are not the only reason for loss of membership; we lose members through death, relocation etc.

**Q:** There are 150 churches in your community serving a population of 8,000 people; how do these congregations meet the needs of the community?

**A:** Unfortunately the clergy association does not meet the needs of the community. Local congregations have their own missions and goals which takes precedence over those of the association. It is really hard to get anything done at that level.

**Q:** Mergers and acquisitions in corporate Netherlands continue to grow annually, and some non-profit organizations have started to do the same, what factors might cause some of the local churches of the same denomination in your community to merge?

**A:** I do not see the conference merging any of us in this community any time soon. We serve three distinct areas of the community and even with declining membership and increasing expenses; we are still able to meet our conference obligation and its mission. A merger of the congregations would actually cause more harm, by losing more members because of cultural differences and personal egos.

**Q:** How do you measure the success of your church?

A: I would like to measure the success of the church on how effective it is in carrying out worshiping, welcoming, nurturing, equipping and witnessing. Unfortunately most often than not we use conferences in measures our success.

***Participant Eight (8)***

**Q:** How long have you been leader of this local congregation?

A: I have been a leader for 10 years.

**Q:** In your position as leader of this church, what membership decline and increases expense? Have you experienced with this congregation?

A: There has been some splits and resulted numerical declining of membership and loss of big Givers that affected our finances we constantly communicate the need to give to support the programs and services.

**Q:** If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing spending; how do you communicate to the remaining congregants that expenditures must still be met?

A: It seems to me that this reality is communicated. The problem is that there are not too many members to increase giving significantly. The critical need is the development of programs that will bring new membership, particularly young families with children.

**Q:** If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing spending, how do you keep the church open?

A: Because of the conviction that this church has a continuing mission and ministry in Amsterdam, as indicated above, we have been able to “live off our legacy” to this point.

**Q:** What services do you and your local congregation provide to the community?

**A:** Although our church offers inspirational and spiritual renewal, alpha course, house work help, Dutch and English for beginners, dialog with community and national leaders we reach out to the homeless and the sick., a tutoring service and youth's music programs.

**Q:** What are your perceptions of your local church's ability in adequately providing resources and services to the community?

**A:** The church building is a strategically located for inner city outreach, along with some talented and committed members. Strong community service, however, is limited by the lack of "finance," sufficient free time away from the demands of heavy work schedules and budgetary limitations.

**Q:** Considering that members of the community and members of your congregation might be employees of the many organizations undergoing mergers or acquisitions in corporate Netherlands, what impact do you think some of these mergers and acquisitions have on your church membership?

**A:** It is theoretically possible that this trend could impact the lives of some of the gifted younger members, indeed most members has been relocated but I lack the detailed membership information to evaluate this Migrant Pentecostal churches, with many of its members migrating to other nearby cities or countries because of these course.

**Q:** There are 150 churches in your community serving a population of 8,000 people; how do these 150 churches meet the needs of the community?

**A:** The churches vary in their special character. Roman Catholic churches serve Catholic interest. I'm afraid because of internal conflicts and personal agendas there is no way we can meet up to the services to the community.

**Q:** Mergers and acquisitions in corporate Netherlands continue to grow annually, and some non-profit organizations have started to do the same, what factors might cause some of the local churches of the same denomination in your community to merge?

**A:** Dire necessity could produce some mergers, but I am not aware of creative, proactive Planning, nor do RPLBEM leadership planning and initiative seem evident.

**Q:** How do you measure the success of your church?

**A:** This is a church of true diversity, with friendship, respect and affection for fellow Members. Some members give remarkable energy and time to church activities and Outreach. A strong program is limited by factors mentioned above, certainly in terms of community service. We no longer serving the community effectively, resources of all kinds are lacking for planned program within and without in the community. Considering the current situation, it is rather difficult to measure the current success of the church.

### ***Participant Nine (9)***

**Q:** How long have you been leader of this local congregation?

**A:** I have been a leader for six (6) years.

**Q:** In your position as leader of this institution, what membership and budget change have you experienced with this congregation?

**A:** There has been a steady decline in membership. While membership has declined, the budget has not changed much. Within the 6 years that I have been here, there has been an increase in expenses.

**Q:** If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing spending; how do you communicate to the remaining congregants that expenditures must still be met?

**A:** The members that we have are aware of the financial situation of the church we communicate the financial needs of the church; I periodically design sermons that are related to cheerful giving, tithing and stewardship.

**Q:** If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing spending, how do you keep the church open?

**A:** By faith we pray and go ahead carrying out all programs and believe God to send donors because God cannot be in debt.

**Q:** What services do you and your local congregation provide to the community?

**A:** We have a program called Jamming for Jesus that is geared toward youth for getting them off the streets and away from drugs and prison. There is also a feeding program that is provided by the church. We give to the needy in the community on a need basis.

**Q:** What are your perceptions of your local church's ability in adequately providing resources and services to the community?

**A:** As a local congregation I do not think we have the necessary human resources in place to provide services to the community. The demographic of this congregation is changing drastically and people are not been sensitive to community emergencies and lack of funds makes it worse to carry on necessary activities.

**Q:** Considering that members of the community and members of your congregation might be employees of the many organizations undergoing mergers or acquisitions in corporate Nederland what impact do you think some of these mergers and acquisitions have on your church membership?



**A:** We have members that have been affected by mergers and acquisitions. Some have lost their jobs and relocated while others have stayed with the church. The ones that have stayed suffer more from the lack of medical coverage more so than the ability to meet their daily living needs. Health care issues is one of the major issues that must be addressed the cost of providing health care cost on your own is unbearable.

**Q:** There are 150 churches in your community serving a population of 8,000 people; how do these churches meet the needs of the community?

**A:** No, we do not meet the needs of the community. We are a diverse group of churches and there is division, ego, jealousy, hatred among the clergy.

**Q:** Mergers and acquisitions in corporate Nederland continue to grow annually, and some non-profit organizations have started to do the same, what factors might cause some of the local churches of the same denomination in your community to merge?

**A:** There are too many pastoral egos, cultural and demographic differences to have Some of these churches of the same denomination merge. You must remember that the Protestant churches were born out of splits, and even though some of us belong to the Same conference, we do not speak with the same voice. I don't see this happening no matter what.

**Q:** How do you measure the success of your church?

**A:** Open confession of spiritual awakening and growth, open communication about God, and of course numerical growth.

### ***Participant Ten (10)***

**Q:** How long have you been leader of this local congregation?

**A:** I have been the leader for this congregation for 13 years.

**Q:** In your position as leader of this institution, what membership and budget change have you experienced with this congregation?

**A:** Looking over the membership records for the past 10 years, there seems to be a steady decline in membership. While membership has declined, the budget has progressively increased my immediate job is to see what expenses can be eliminated or reduced.

**Q:** If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing spending; how do you communicate to the remaining congregants that expenditures must still be met?

**A:** There seems to be a big issue on communication in this church as I do not believe members are being told what the true financial situation is. I believe open, face-to-face Communication needs to be done to let the people become aware of the situation.

This communication must not be done from the pulpit through sermons as this can negatively impact visitors and prospective new members effective communication must be done through forums and workshops.

**Q:** If your local church is faced with declining membership and increasing spending, how do you keep the church open?

**A:** By appealing to members to increase their giving and seeking help from the General Conference. The records show that what this church has been doing for the past 10 years is to take donations for other purpose to meet yearly budget shortfalls.

Not only have they spent the donations, they have begun to erode all funds which has been accumulated from the beginning of the ministry this cannot continue we need to find some meaningful way to fix this problem.

**Q:** What services do you and your local congregation provide to the community?

**A:** Little if any. Making the building available to groups for meetings is not the same as providing a service. A service to the community would be food pantry or soup kitchen where members of the church actively participate in caring for those in the community.

The true service that I see being provided by this congregation is where they go to visit the sick both home and hospitals caring for single needy parents and bring the good news of Jesus Christ to those who are unable to come to church and non-members alike.

**Q:** What are your perceptions of your local church's ability in adequately providing resources and services to the community?

**A:** Poorly. We are not adequately prepared at this time to provide any services we are not a financially viable church and we should be reaching out to members who have not been to church in a long time.

**Q:** Considering that members of the community and members of your congregation might be employees of the many organizations undergoing mergers and acquisitions in the corporate Netherlands, what impact do you think some of these mergers and acquisitions have on your church membership?

**A:** Members have relocated because of loss of jobs. We have members in our Congregation who are unemployed and this impacts their ability to give which in turn affects the finances of the church.

**Q:** There are 150 churches in your community serving a population of 8,000 people; how do these 150 churches meet the needs of the community?

**A:** No, the clergy association (PCC) does not meet the needs of the community. They all have their individual interest and selfish agendas. Instead of being a voice of the community so that the Government can respond to our accommodation needs, they are divided and peruses own agendas.

**Q:** Mergers and acquisitions corporate Netherlands continue to grow annually, and some non-profit organizations have started to do the same, what factors might cause some of the local churches of the same denomination in your community to merge?

**A:** Even with declining membership and increasing expenses, as long as the church Remains viable the programmers or conference will not merge two congregations. The conference organizers do so as a church's ability to pay a full-time or part-time pastor, meeting the spiritual needs of congregants. A church is deemed viable even if it is doing deficit spending. When a church becomes non-viable, all its assets are sold and debts paid and the net remaining balance is placed in the church coffers. Only after this action perhaps congregations will be allowed to merge.

**Q:** How do you measure the success of your church?

**A:** There are many ways to measure the growth of the church. For example, one could look at numerical growth in the church over a given period or how well the church is doing at organizing series of conferences to meet monetary obligation. You could also look at how certain departments are growing, for example, the youth ministry, Men fellowship ministry, women fellowship ministry of the church. Everything is relative, but at the end numerical growth must be one of your most important measuring tools for success.

## Appendix 4: Questionnaire

This is a questionnaire for a Bachelor of Arts in Theology project, which is researching the factors affecting the numerical growth and decline situation in the Pentecostal churches of Amsterdam. The researcher in question is Elias Kwabena Agyemang, student of Windesheim University.

Contact:

### Section A

1. Name
2. Sex
3. Age
4. Where do you stay?

### Section B

5. What do you do in this church?
6. When did you join the church?
7. Do you enjoy being in this church? Yes/No
8. How do you consider your commitment to this RPLEM?

Very                moderate                Less                Not

9. How regular do you attend church?

Always                often                sometimes                rarely

10. Does your job affect your church attendance?
11. Does your residential location affect your church attendance?

### Section C

12. Are you satisfied with the number of members in RPLBEM?
13. Do you think the RPLBEM has the potential of growing numerically?
14. Would you attribute breakaways to the recorded decline of membership in the history of RPLBEM?
15. Would you attribute migration to the recorded decline of membership in the history of RPLBEM?

16. Would you attribute church planting to the recorded decline of membership in the history of RPLBEM?
17. Apart from the above-mentioned factors, do you know of any other factor/factors that have caused decline of membership in RPLBEM? Yes/No
18. If yes, can you name this/these fact?

#### Appendix 4:

Transcription of the interview with the Head pastor of Resurrection Power and Living Bread Evangelistic Ministry (RPLBEM), Amsterdam conducted on 21/06/2012 in at the Church office.

**Interviewer:** Thank you pastor, for granting me this interview. I am Elias Kwabena Agyemang, a student of Azusa Windesheim Hogeschool and this is a project for my Bachelor of Arts in Theology. I am looking at the causes of growth and decline in the Pentecostal Migrant churches in the Amsterdam Zuid East and I have selected your church for the study. Is there anything you would want to say before we proceed?

**Rev Tsagli:** Well, I have stopped granting interviews because of some problems that previous researchers caused but I will still trust you and grant you the interview.

**Interviewer:** Thank you sir. To start with, can you please give your full name?

**Rev. Tsagli:** I am Livingston Kofi Tsagli

**Interviewer:** Were you here in Amsterdam before this branch was formed?

**Rev. Tsagli:** Tsagli: I came around 2002 and went back to Ghana in December of the same year as a result of documentation. I returned in 2006 and have been here since.

**Interviewer:** How many branches do you have in Amsterdam?

**Rev. Tsagli:** We have only one branch

**Interviewer:** So does it mean the branches are not autonomous?

**Rev. Tsagli:** Yes, but they answer to the Bishop in Ghana

**Interviewer:** What is the church hierarchy?

**Rev. Tsagli:** We have a Bishop and his assistant, then the regional overseers, and we have the senior pastors under the regional overseers. Under the senior pastors are the Deacons. I am a regional overseer.

**Interviewer:** Since you are a regional overseer, and the duty of the regional overseer is to oversee branches within a certain jurisdiction, are you overseeing some branches apart from Amsterdam?

**Rev. Tsagli:** Yes, as a regional overseer, I am overseeing branches in France and Belgium, as well as branches in Holland, which are Rotterdam and Den Hague.

**Interviewer:** So it means that your branch is the first to have come to Europe. Hence, the other branches are daughters of the Amsterdam branch.

**Rev. Tsagli:** Yes, the Amsterdam branch is older than all these other branches.

**Interviewer:** Do you have pastors under you in this branch, and how do you find the whole leadership? Are they supportive?

**Rev. Tsagli:** Yes, I have pastors under me in this branch. The leadership was not supportive initially when I came. They did not understand my vision so they were not supportive at first, but after teaching them and reshuffling them, I gained their support eventually. The changes have enhanced the ministry, they are efficient, and I am much satisfied. But of course there is no perfect church so there are still a few problems, which are manageable.

**Interviewer:** I assume as a servant of God you have read this scriptures: in Numbers 11:15 Moses in his distress moment asked God to take his life, Jonah 4:3, Jonah, 1kings 19:4 Elijah, Paul in Acts 27:23 even Jesus at a point became distressed and prayed if the cup could be taken from him. There are challenging moments in ministry almost every Pastor goes through, sometimes people or leaders knowing very well that you have made good decisions will resist and oppose vehemently, Pastor, have you had such moments of in ministry?

**Rev. Tsagli:** Yes, at times you are overwhelmed. People are not flowing along with you and it brings some loneliness and you feel opposed and resisted by the people. But in times like this my approach is to go back to the Bible and let the people understand that Christians are called for missions. So you need to explain things from the Biblical point of view and then they will start to flow along with you.

**Interviewer:** Since 2006 have you experienced any decline or growth in the numerical strength of the membership?

**Rev. Tsagli:** Yes from 2006 people moved to Spain, UK and Belgium, and this brought decline to our membership of about 400 to 230 members. But at the moment, things have picked up in our meetings

**Interviewer:** Were people absenting themselves apart from the migration issues?

**Rev. Tsagli:** No, people were not absenting themselves. There was no issue of absenteeism.

**Interviewer:** Did you have problems with the membership when you came? Were they supportive?

**Rev. Tsagli:** Yes, I had no problems with them. But it was only in 2009 that I encountered some problems. This came as a result of the changes I made in the leadership. Actually, this was an

existing leadership I came to meet so they were not supportive and for that matter, I saw the need to enact some changes. So to solve the problem, I organized an 8 weeks leadership teaching about my vision, and the purpose of the church. The good thing is that all the leadership stayed in the church so there was no serious declination or breakaway. Actually, there some minor cases of absenteeism during this crisis but they all came back to church. They've all stayed.

**Interviewer:** Apart from the 2009 crisis, have you had any other crisis? What about the youth, do they bring problems?

**Rev. Tsagli:** Yes because they are torn between two cultures, and they always want to do things their own way. However, using wisdom and guidance, I am able to keep them in the church. We have a strong youth ministry.

**Interviewer:** Are you finding growth?

**Rev. Tsagli:** Yes but it is internal. The younger ones are growing to join the youth. We have not recorded external growth where converts join the youth or the ministry at large. Our membership is stable.

**Interviewer:** What is the orientation of the church on homosexuality? Do you have homosexuals?

**Rev. Tsagli:** No, I have no such problems. Actually, the problem I encountered some time back was co-habitation. Using the bible to teach them that although co-habitation is accepted in the society, it is not allowed in the church. It is against the biblical teachings.

**Interviewer:** How about convenient marriage, do you have problems with that?

**Rev. Tsagli:** No, I have no problems with that. I have not come across any such situation among my membership.

**Interviewer:** is there any other European cultural influence. How do you handle the youth, especially in the African culture, the elderly rebuke the youth and give them no chance to protest. How do you handle that?

**Rev. Tsagli:** I use the bible as the base to let them know the consequences and all the negative implications of their actions. I encourage them not to forget their African cultural background. Over here, the youth have what I call extreme freedom. They are encouraged to speak their mind and challenge decisions and instructions. But I try to appropriate western values in counseling them through the Bible and also letting them be aware of their African background.

**Interviewer:** Since your church maintains a non-drinking orientation, do you face alcoholism and debauchery problems?

**Rev. Tsagli:** Well it's not a serious issue but well you cannot control their movements, especially going to parties. However, they try to maintain some limitations.

**Interviewer:** So how has attendance been in recent times, I mean currently.



**Rev. Tsagli:** Well on every Sunday, I record an attendance between 300-350. I do not have issues of absenteeism. Only those who work in the airport, hotels, and shops like Albert Hein that operate on Sundays skip church service to go to work.

**Interviewer:** Apart from workers, do you have people skipping churches because of documentation issues? For instance, people nomadically moving around to avoid being tracked by immigration due to their undocumented status?

**Rev. Tsagli:** No, I have not such issues.

**Interviewer:** How about breakaways? Don't you encounter situations where those under you feel like you are not allowing them to operate, as they should, hence break away?

**Rev. Tsagli:** Well I believe in variation in ministry. We all have different callings, and I know who I am so I do not restrain anyone from his call to ministry. Actually, there is one brother who shows signs of calling so after deliberations we have decided to send him to another city to head a branch. There is another gifted brother I have discovered as potential ministry material but he is reluctant about following such a path now. I hope he will respond to the call someday, because I strongly believe he has a calling to ministry.

**Interviewer:** Apart from these issues, do you have any other issues that affect church attendance?

**Rev. Tsagli:** well I have people coming from far distances like Almere, Utrecht, and Alkmaar. Though they complain of the high transportation cost, they still come to church on Sundays, and even the weekend services.

**Interviewer:** About the weekend services, how is the patronage?

**Rev. Tsagli:** It's encouraging. We have a Friday prayer meeting, which the attendance is very encouraging. We have also started home cells.

**Interviewer:** Well pastor, I am grateful for your time, cooperation, and hospitality. I will not take any more of your time at this moment, being aware of your busy schedule for today.

**Rev. Tsagli:** You are welcome.

