

SITUATIONAL HOLISTIC PASTORAL MINISTRY (SHPM) APPROACHES TO EMPOWERING CHURCH LEADERS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The empowerment of church leaders has drawn global attention in both ecclesiastical and secular institutions. Model leaders are formed by empowerment while idol leaders assert themselves through manipulating their membership. The paper discusses the complex socio-economic, political, and religious challenges faced by churches in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and the necessity of empowering church leaders who need to develop others for service. The primary objective of this paper is to examine how the Situational Holistic Pastoral Ministry (SHPM) paradigm may help empower African church leaders to change their churches and communities. This is done in a context where both church and political leadership enjoy being idolized instead of creating role models that inspire their followers to serve. The paper concludes that there is a need for empowering church leaders to be informed role models instead of self-serving idols. An empowered leadership will transform the Church and community in Africa. This is largely based on an analysis of the literature using books, journal articles, reports, and newspaper articles.

Keywords: empowerment, leadership, Idol, role model, transformation

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INTRODUCTION

Sub-Saharan Africa is predominantly a Christian region. Galal found that in 2020, while 30% of the population in the region were Muslims, about 60%, approximately 650 million people, were Christians.¹ It is projected that by 2050 the number of Christians in SSA will increase to over a billion people.² Consequently, the Church is one of the most revered institutions that influence the lives of many people in SSA. But it should be noted that many distinct branches and denominations of Christianity exist. Church leaders from different traditions have different leadership philosophies. The political climate, the emergence of modern African Christian movements, and African cultural origins all have an impact on church leaders and society. Leaders need to be empowered in order to be contextually relevant to addressing challenges and transform the church and society. Empowered church leadership is ready to serve and remain models of future generations of leaders. This paper seeks to demonstrate that the empowerment of leaders diffuses the spirit of idolization of political and church leadership. The goal of empowering church leaders is to help them transform into role models who will encourage and motivate people to support sound leadership practices for future church and community leaders. The difficulties facing Sub-Saharan Africa and the factors influencing church leadership are covered first, followed by a discussion of strategies for creating role models rather than idols using the SHPM approaches. This paper argues that empowering church leadership is essential to promote abundant life in the context of the poverty created by natural disasters, unemployment, corruption, and the rise of neo-Pentecostalism.

SITUATIONAL HOLISTIC PASTORAL MINISTRY (SHPM) THEORY

SSA's socioeconomic and political challenges and the change in religious terrain needs leaders who are equipped to address them in a more progressive manner. The key role of church leadership is to promote church life and ministry in society, hence the need to empower them to serve with relevance. The chapter utilizes Herbert Moyo's situational holistic pastoral ministry theory.³ The SHPM approach to church leadership and ministry enables church

¹ Saifaddin Galal: *Share of Christian population in Africa 2024, by country* (2024), n.p.n. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1239389/share-of-christian-population-in-africa-by-country/#:~:text=In%202020%2C%20Christians%20accounted%20for,over%20one%20billion%20by%202050> (accessed 20 August 2024).

² Ibid., n.p.n.

³ Herbert Moyo: The Lutheran Church and situational holistic pastoral ministry in Africa, in H. Taruona – S.R. Kumalo – H. Moyo (eds.): *Anthology of Pastoral Ministry and Leadership*. Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 2023, 15–33.

leadership to address the complex contextual issues faced by Sub-Saharan Africa. Church ministry should not only be attuned to spiritual and church-related matters. The issues of society should also be prioritized. The role of the church and its leaders includes human development and addressing societal situational needs.⁴ The nature of church ministry is determined by its mission and contextual issues. The SHPM approach means taking the situation of the people seriously.⁵ According to Buffel, “Pastoral care must cease to only concentrate on ‘the ambulance ministry’ with the sick and the troubled, while ignoring the social, economic and political causes of poverty and all that make them sick and troubled.”⁶ For this reason, churches’ pastoral care ministry ought to have a comprehensive approach to meeting human needs and addressing societal challenges. To be relevant, the church should be able to address situations from an informed position.⁷ Church leaders can only be knowledgeable and skilled to analyze and understand the African challenges through empowerment. This enables them to deliver the gospel that speaks to the socio-economic and political situations in Africa.⁸

The four tenets of SHPM are relevant Christian education, diaconal ministry, holistic pastoral care, and collaboration. The SHPM form of Christian education concentrates on political participation and elections, engaging with political parties’ manifestos and human rights issues.⁹ Church leaders need to be enlightened on political and election matters to help their congregants to be equipped to participate in elections in a progressive manner. Church leaders require the knowledge and skills of handling scripture and applying it to various contextual challenges without compromising the gospel of Christ. This goes hand in hand with holistic pastoral care and counselling seeking to accompany, comfort and heal the sick and suffering as well as broken relationships. According to Moyo, “SHPM proposes that the church make reconciliation within the socio-economic and political situation central to its pastoral ministry.”¹⁰ In addition, Situational Holistic Pastoral Ministry is directed at the whole church or congregation, with the clergy promoting cooperation among the members.¹¹ Diaconal ministry is another key area of SHPM with an emphasis on compassion and concern for the physical needs of the people. Therefore, the SHPM proposes that the church’s diaconal services concentrate on providing food, shelter, and clothing, depending on the contextual basic

⁴ Ibid., 21.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Andries O Buffel: *Pastoral care in a context of poverty: a search for a pastoral care model that is contextual and liberating*, Doctoral dissertation, Pretoria, University of Pretoria, 2007, 17.

⁷ Moyo: *The Lutheran Church*, 22.

⁸ Ibid., 23.

⁹ Ibid., 27.

¹⁰ Ibid., 31.

¹¹ Ibid., 32.

needs.¹² Only empowered church leaders are aware of their role in attending to the needs of society. Finally, the empowerment of church leaders in Africa is important in working with the government and other stakeholders. Moyo argues that through SHPM, the church should apply the principle of critical solidarity as a form of church and government relationship.¹³ This helps the church to commend the government when it delivers services and promotes human dignity and to condemn it when it perpetuates injustices. Additionally, the church should be free to associate with and support those who are subjected to state brutality.¹⁴ This chapter discusses the empowerment of church leadership in SSA using the insights from SHPM approaches.

THE IMPACT OF AFRICAN HERITAGE

Africa has a broad and diverse culture that depends on context, so that even SSA has a variety of cultural dynamics. However, Africans have some similarities and differences “from time to time, from place to place, and from people to people.”¹⁵ At a general level, African culture has influenced behavior and leadership style among the church and political leadership ideologies in SSA. According to Agbiji & Swart, the origins of both secular and Christian religious leadership and leadership practices can be found in certain African inherited leadership traits.¹⁶ African kings and chiefs are believed to have drawn their authority from the ancestors whom they represented in front of the people. Igboin also states that:

Kings were regarded as the representatives or viceroy of God on earth. Since God could not be questioned, the people believed that his representatives could not be questioned either. In fact, a king's powers are unlimited.¹⁷

African leaders were highly respected as mediators between the spirit world (God and ancestors) and humanity. Kings, chiefs, and religious leaders, their family members and those close to them are highly honored in African society.¹⁸ African traditional leaders were human stewards and preserved culture

¹² Ibid., 29.

¹³ Ibid., 30.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Maake Masango: Leadership in the African context, *Verbum et ecclesia* 23 (3), 2002, 708.

¹⁶ Obaji M. Agbiji – Ignatius Swart: Historical sources of Christian religious leadership ideology: Implications and challenges for social transformation in post-military Nigeria. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 39(1), 2013, 224.

¹⁷ Benson O Igboin: Traditional leadership and corruption in pre-colonial Africa: how the past affects the present. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 42(3), 2013, 149.

¹⁸ Agbiji – Swart: Historical sources, 225.

and heritage.¹⁹ Leadership is attained neither by democratic election nor by merit and competence but by succession and inheritance. An “African king does not relinquish the throne: he dies there and never lives to be probed.”²⁰ Although leadership through succession may bring peace and tribal and national stability, difficulties occur when the leader becomes an incompetent, corrupt, immoral, and self-serving idol. Although African leaders enjoyed absolute authority, their position was intended to support all and feed all. It was meant to promote livelihood for the entire community and especially the poor. However, misinterpretation of African authority results in abuse of power and resources under the leaders’ stewardship. Due to traditional leadership influences, some SSA political and church leaders are so obsessed with power that it causes them to be immoral and corrupt idols rather than being role models.

FAILURE OF DEMOCRACY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

It can be argued that contemporary church leaders are influenced by the nature of authoritarian and idolized political leaders. The failure of democracy in SSA has perpetuated the ‘winner takes all’ ideology due to election rigging strategies. Apartheid and colonization gave birth to African dictators who perpetuated self-service at the expense of the suffering populace of their nations. After manipulating elections, they become dictators who kill everyone who opposes them. Africa has experienced dictators like Idi Amin of Uganda, Mobutu of Zaire (DR Congo), Mubarak of Egypt, Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso, and Jean-Bedel-Bokasa of The Central African Republic.²¹ The recently passed Mugabe of Zimbabwe also died a dictator. “Mugabeism” is an example of idol leadership. Duri asserts that “Mugabe’s self-immortalization, self-glorification, and self-perpetuation in power”²² was creating idolatry. According to Chart-eris-Black:

Heroic leadership plays a vital role in transitional and developing societies where even the more idolatrous form of heroic leadership may meet the special needs of both leaders and followers. The idols are usually motivated by powerful needs for affection, esteem, and self-actualization. They want and need an audience, and an

¹⁹ Masango: *Leadership*, 709.

²⁰ Igboin: *Traditional Leadership*, 150.

²¹ Bungishabaku Katho: *Idolatry and the Peril of the Nation: Reading Jeremiah 2 in an African Context. Anglican Theological Review*, 99(4), 2017, 721.

²² Fidelis Peter T. Duri: *Mugabeism after Mugabe: Idolatry, Blasphemy and the Persistence of the Leadership Personality Cult in the ZANU-PF Party Since Independence*, in M. Mawere – N. Marongwe – F. Peter Thomas Duri (eds.): *The end of an era? Robert Mugabe and a conflicting legacy*. Bamenda, Langaa Research and Publishing CIG, 2018, 173.

audience needs them. Followers flock to see such heroes, crowd in to touch their hands or the hems of their garments.²³

Leaders who want to be idolized hold on to the reins of power at all costs. Their leadership is characterised by “social injustice, corruption, poverty, suffering, division, fear, and uncertainty.”²⁴ Furthermore, citizens suffered because of repressive laws and unprecedented levels of corruption coupled with “inefficient public spending and chronic poor or under-administration due to low revenue collection prevents improvements in quality service delivery.”²⁵ For example, the veneration of Mugabe as a prophet similar to Moses and Jesus was intended for political grandstanding and elevation to demonstrate that he was an indispensable leader who would bring salvation to the citizens of Zimbabwe from all forms of oppression.²⁶ Like other dictators, Mugabe wanted “to perpetuate his stay in power at whatever cost.”²⁷ Dictators’ powers are self-serving instead of meeting the interests of the people or nation. But their end is miserable as they suffer house arrest, imprisonment, exile, and marginalization.²⁸ The idolization of dictators as messiahs of their nations in SSA has caused political instability in the region. Thus, the region has experienced military insurgency and coups in countries like Burkina Faso, Sudan, Guinea, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Gabon.²⁹ Recent protests and visible ire among young people in Kenya, Mozambique, and Nigeria have been sparked by the high cost of living, corruption, poor governance, and rigged elections. Such discontent has the potential to expand throughout the region if countries do not institute reforms. Idolizing leaders becomes blasphemous, affecting democracy and causing many to blindly submit to the whims of power which perpetuate misgovernance and the suffering of civilians.

MISSIONARY LEGACY

Before colonization and the arrival of Christianity, Africans were led by chiefs, queens, and kings. The leadership structure was powerful and conducted religious ceremonies for the benefit of the community. Traditional leadership was highly regarded as it was believed to be connected to God and the

²³ Jonathan Charteris-Black: The magic of leadership. In: *The Communication of Leadership. The design of leadership style*, London, Routledge, 2007, 15.

²⁴ Katho: *Idolatry*, 721.

²⁵ Deborah, Isser – Gael Raballand – Michael Watts – Diane Zovighian: *Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa in the 21st Century: Four Trends and an Uncertain Outlook*, Washington DC, World Bank Group, 2024, 4.

²⁶ Duri: *Mugabeism after Mugabe*, 177.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 175.

²⁸ Katho: *Idolatry*, 721.

²⁹ Isser et al.: *Governance*, 5.

ancestors to promote the community's spiritual, economic, and political welfare. The arrival of Christian missionaries had an "impact on the concept, ideology, and practice of leadership in Africa, leadership was shaped by missionary education, colonialist style leadership and professionalism."³⁰ Church and community leaders both shifted from traditional styles of leadership and adopted Western and missionary standards. "With the advent of the Christian missionaries and the colonial masters, much of the leadership role shifted from the traditional leaders, such as kings, queens, priests and chiefs, to the missionaries and teachers."³¹ One of the most powerful missionary leaders was the mission superintendent or principal who managed permanent assets and funds, developed policies, oversaw the efficacy of the administration, and fostered Christian spiritual growth.³² Despite the loss and weakening of authority due to missionary Christianity, African leaders adopted the Christian values of respecting people created in the image of God over and above their understanding of the sacred value of human life.³³ This led them to give their subjects more respect and to promote unity among the members of the community. Therefore, the missionary legacy is both negative and positive in terms of leadership development in Africa. Some contemporary church leaders, especially the bishops, pastors and prophets, want to operate like the missionary principals who held all the power in the mission station.

THE RISE OF NEO-PENTECOSTALISM

Since 2000, Africa has experienced the outstanding growth and evolution of the Pentecostal movement. This has resulted in the 'new wave' of Christianity in the form of independent, charismatic mega-church prophetic movements.³⁴ These movements are led by self-proclaimed charismatic prophets, apostles, and founders. These include Alice Lenshina, Bishop David Oyedepo, Chris Oyakhilome, Emmanuel Makandiwa, Jeremiah Fufeyin, Paseka Mboro Mnguni, Shepherd Bushiri, T.D. Jakes, T.B Joshua, Uebert Angel, and Walter Magaya. In the case of Zimbabwe, figures such as Makandiwa, Magaya and Angel rose in the age of economic decline, claiming to have spiritual miraculous solutions to the socio-economic challenges faced by the citizens. They became the fastest growing movements, due to their manipulation of the desperate citizenry.

³⁰ Agbiji – Swart: Historical sources, 228.

³¹ Ibid., 228.

³² Shupikai P. Chimhungwe: *A Descriptive Chronicle of Transition from Mission to Indigenous Leadership in Two Church of Christ Institutions (Zimbabwe 1976–1986)*, Master's Dissertation, Hamilton: McMaster Divinity College, 2012, 47.

³³ Agbiji – Swart: Historical sources, 225.

³⁴ Kimion Tagwirei: *Missionizing Church Governance: Transfiguring Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe*, *Religions* 14.10 (2023), 1.

Their adherents idolized them as ‘prophet’ and ‘Papa’. But these mega-church prophets and movements are usually not recognized by mainstream Christianity, such as the chief denominations, evangelicals, and traditional Pentecostals. It is interesting to note that neo-Pentecostal leaders and founders have made frequent claims that they are freeing themselves from stifling authority and dwindling spiritualities.³⁵ These prophetic movements are so independent and sectarian that they do not join national and global ecumenical bodies.

The mega-church prophetic movements are characterized by clergy-centered services. The leaders or prophets are the ones who take center stage, preaching, healing, and prophesying. They are highly regarded and idolized in such a way that they manipulate and patronize their members to always believe and follow their words blindly and without question. According to Agbiji and Swart, Nigerian prophets have religious and political authority due to their riches, prestige, and titles.³⁶ Similarly, in Zambia and Zimbabwe, mega-church prophets are amongst the richest and most politically connected people in their countries. Prophet Uebert Angel, the founder of Spirit Embassy Church, was appointed one of President Emmerson Mnangagwa’s advisors and the ambassador at large appointed to America and Europe, exploring business opportunities for the country.³⁷ Prophet Angel and Makandiwa have been implicated in the ‘gold mafia’ scandal, where gold was smuggled out of poverty-stricken Zimbabwe.³⁸ Because they are connected to the upper echelons of political power, they are the untouchables who perpetuate corruption and self-enrichment in the name of serving God through the title ‘man of God’. Instead of defending the poor, on the one hand they deprive them of their meagre incomes through the gimmick of seeding to enrich themselves, while on the other hand they support the corrupt regime that causes people’s suffering. The mega-church prophets work hand in glove with the political elite in such a way that people cannot condemn the evil injustices done by the government. The clergy’s desire for wealth and self-enrichment is slowly spilling over to other denominations, including the mainstream churches and apostolic movements which have existed for over a century in Africa. Due to the rise of mega-church prophets, the priesthood of all believers is undermined, clericalism is promoted, and the church becomes pastor-centric.³⁹ The clergy becomes more powerful, indispensable and liable to abuse their authority through taking advantage of their idolization.

³⁵ Tagwirei: Missionizing Church Governance, 1.

³⁶ Agbiji – Swart: Historical sources, 232.

³⁷ Zvamaida Murwira: President appoints Angel ambassador, *The Herald*, March 17, 2021, <https://www.heraldonline.co.zw/president-appoints-angel-ambassador/> (accessed 15 August 2024).

³⁸ Bekithemba Dube: Man of God/Gold and Zanu-PFism in Zimbabwe: The case of Makandiwa and Angel, in B. Dube (ed.): *Regime, Religion and the Consolidation of Zanu-PFism in Zimbabwe: When Religion Becomes a Threat to Democracy*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2023, 142.

³⁹ Chimhungwe: A Descriptive Chronicle, 111.

POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT

In Africa, poverty and unemployment are intricately related because one causes the other in a cyclical manner. Poverty may be viewed as a result of unemployment, while unemployment may be caused by poverty that limits people's access to education and employment opportunities. In fact, the benchmark of poverty is unemployment. In addition, low wages and unemployment are some of the main drivers of poverty in Africa.⁴⁰ But the two crises are exacerbated by bad governance, corruption and mismanagement of national resources, leaving the citizens sinking in poverty. Moreover, poverty is aggravated by declining national economies, leading to unemployment, which makes it difficult to make ends meet. "According to the Global MPI 2023 report, about 534 million (47.8% of the total) of the 1.1 billion people experiencing poverty across 110 countries live in SSA."⁴¹ With the world's highest average rate of 35.73%, the SSA is labelled "the poverty headquarters of the world."⁴² Episodes of violent conflicts affect economic growth, thereby leading to poverty, hence the need for the prevention of political instability and for the promotion of peace and reconciliation in and among African countries.

Globally, and Africa in particular, employment is the basic means of eradicating poverty, hence unemployment leads to deprivation that leads to poverty.⁴³ Woode posits that "Unemployment, underemployment, and poor labour returns may all be considered immediate causes of poverty in Africa."⁴⁴ Generally, SSA is struggling with high rates of unemployment. Recent statistics from Botswana (which has a 36% unemployment rate), Eswatini (56%), Namibia (46%), and South Africa (54%) in Southern Africa reflect the general trend of youth unemployment in Sub-Saharan Africa.⁴⁵ The African Union argues that "the growing problem of youth unemployment is one of the main socio-economic development concerns of most African governments."⁴⁶ In addition to the crisis of food security, conflict, wars, and political violence also affect economies, resulting in a rising unemployment rate in African countries.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Andries O Buffel: *Pastoral care in a context of poverty*, 209.

⁴¹ Kilishi A Abdulhakeem: Revisiting the nexus between governance and poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Poverty & Public Policy* 16(3) (2024), 274.

⁴² Abdulhakeem: Revisiting the nexus, 279.

⁴³ Gerald Woode: *Distributional Impact of Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on Poverty Reduction & Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 2024, 4, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4830742 (accessed 25 August 2024).

⁴⁴ Woode: *Distributional Impact of Africa*, 4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁶ African Union. *Continental Education for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to foster youth employment. Continental strategy for technical and vocational education and training*, Addis Ababa, African Union, 2018, 8.

⁴⁷ World Bank: *Poverty, Prosperity, and Planet Report, Pathways out of the Polycrisis*, Washington, DC, The World Bank Group, 2024, 3.

Corruption is cited as the main cause of SSA's high unemployment rate. In fact, corruption in Africa results in a high inflation rate, deteriorating terms of trade, increasingly unpredictable prices, and high levels of unemployment.⁴⁸ These challenges fuel socio-economic and political insecurity. The lack of economic growth in Africa is mostly due to uncurbed corruption. Poverty and unemployment know no boundaries as they affect people across the religious spectrum, including Christians. The Church and its leadership are not spared from the impact of these crises. In fact, the Church's economy and mission are directly and indirectly affected because churchgoers are also members of society who face these challenges in their daily lives. They cannot be ignored, but should instead be regarded as key areas of focus for church ministry.

The adverse effects of climate change

Climate change is one of the global challenges and poor SSA countries are the most hard hit. "The region remains vulnerable to climate change and ecological crises, exacerbated by extensive open-cast mining activities conducted mostly by Chinese mining companies."⁴⁹ This is driven by a desire for wealth, causing climate change. The Sub-Saharan region continuously suffers due to droughts and tropical cyclones which result in floods that destroy people's lives, homes, and livelihoods. In SSA, 71.2 % of people are exposed to severe cyclones, floods, droughts, and heatwaves that badly affect people.⁵⁰ The worst floods in decades in Central and Western Africa, multi-year droughts and floods in Eastern Africa, and the rising impact of cyclones in Southern Africa continue to weigh on economic activities. In the first half of 2024, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe declared national disasters due to severe droughts. These hot and dry conditions leading to droughts have left Africa more vulnerable than other global regions. Due to droughts, SSA has suffered a significant decrease in the production of maize (5.8%) and sugarcane (3.9%), with a low increase in the production of drought resistant crops such as sorghum (0.7%) and cassava (1.7%).⁵¹ According to Hove, "The continent's dependence on agriculture for economic growth exacerbates the climate challenge."⁵² Tropical cyclones are experienced almost annually, hitting parts of Southern

⁴⁸ World Bank: *Doing business 2020: Comparing business regulations in 190 economies*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2020.

⁴⁹ Rabson Hove: Eco-theology: Reimagining the Image of God in the Context of Creation and Care in Africa, *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama dan Sosial Budaya* 9(1) (2024), 38.

⁵⁰ World Bank: *Poverty, Prosperity, and Planet Report, Pathways out of the Polycrisis*, Washington, DC, The World Bank 2024, 22.

⁵¹ Deepak K. Ray et al.: "Climate change has likely already affected global food production." *PloS one* 14, no. 5 (2019), 5.

⁵² Hove. *Eco-theology*, 39.

Africa such as Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe leading to loss of life, crops, livestock, and homes and causing people to be displaced.⁵³ In March 2019, an estimated 4.5 million people were displaced and between 700–1000 lost their lives.⁵⁴ Adverse weather conditions affect food production, leading to food insecurity in Africa. Overall, “climate change amplifies the impacts of conflict and global shocks on agricultural yields, food production, and trade, thus raising food security problems.”⁵⁵ Additional issues include the loss of homes, property and livestock and damage to public infrastructure such as schools, roads, and bridges. These challenges require church leaders to be empowered in order to be able to play a role in responding to people’s needs during times of natural disaster.

SHPM APPROACHES TO EMPOWERMENT

Given the many challenges discussed above, church leaders need to be empowered to respond to natural and human-made crises. This requires the Church to equip the clergy and lay leaders through theological reflections that speak to social, economic, and political issues at the local congregational, national, and ecumenical level. The Church should seek “to empower individuals to fight against injustice through academic preparation, a strong confidence and belief, and a hope for the future.”⁵⁶ The main purpose is to prepare leaders who are servants of God and his people. Empowered church leaders are equipped with the relevant knowledge and skills for the service of the church and community. In turn the clergy’s role “must be to equip and empower all who participate in the mission of the kingdom of God, to follow the example and witness of Jesus Christ.”⁵⁷ Servant leaders become not self-seeking idols who seek to be honored and served, but rather role models. They submit to Christ to be “mere servants” who regard their service as their responsibility before their master (Lk, 17:10). Jesus was never obsessed with power but came to serve and die for the people (Mk, 10:44). Therefore, church leaders need to learn to be compassionate to serve the church and community. Empowered church leaders should consider insights from situational holistic pastoral ministry approaches.

⁵³ Ibid., 37.

⁵⁴ Darius Phiri – Matamyo Simwanda – Vincent Nyirenda: Mapping the impacts of cyclone Idai in Mozambique using Sentinel-2 and OBIA approach, *South African Geographical Journal* 103(2) (2021), 251.

⁵⁵ World Bank: Poverty, Prosperity, 3.

⁵⁶ Hopgood LeQuita C. Porter: *Empowerment: Equipping in Empowering Leadership Practices for Transformation in the East Preston United Baptist Church of Nova Scotia*. Doctoral dissertation, Wolfville, Acadia University, 2017, 135.

⁵⁷ Porter: *Empowerment*, 112.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

SHPM Christian education advocates for empowerment of the Church towards grounded pastoral care and preaching that brings about a transformation of societal realities. “This education can be geared towards combating ignorance and providing people and especially leaders with the needed knowledge and skills.”⁵⁸ Well-informed church leaders preach sermons that condemn all forms of violence and human rights abuses and that make people aware of their socio-economic and political situation.⁵⁹ If the Church remains silent about unjust economic and political situations, it implies “the absence of God in those spheres.”⁶⁰ Taruona, Kumalo & Moyo succinctly allude that

Christian education in the form of theological training to enhance the capacity of a minister is an added advantage for pastoral ministers to increase impact and minimize errors in ministry. In fact, the pastoral ministry of the church is a vocation with specific functions that require specific skills for optimum functionality.⁶¹

SHPM proposes Christian education as one of the important tools to be used to transform people’s socio-economic and political situations.⁶² Therefore, empowerment begins with the education and training of the clergy who will in turn pass their theological knowledge on to the lay leaders and communities where they serve. Pali bemoans the lack of content and human resources that contributes to the building of relevant theological knowledge for Africa and beyond.⁶³ Consequently, African theological institutions should seek to remain relevant in the training of the clergy. Buffel argues that the clergy need to be empowered with contextual theology.⁶⁴ He further asserts that since Western theology was contextually relevant to the West, theological education and pastoral care in Africa should be contextualized as well.⁶⁵ Contextualization means that theological education and training should be tailor-made to address contextual issues such as poverty, unemployment, and political problems. In addition, it needs to engage with the problem of new forms of Christianity in SSA.

⁵⁸ Kalembe Mwambazambi – Albert K. Banza: Developing transformational leadership for sub-Saharan Africa: Essential missiological considerations for church workers. *Verbum et Ecclesia* 35(1) (2014), 5.

⁵⁹ Moyo: *The Lutheran Church*, 27.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁶¹ Honoured Taruona – Simangaliso R. Kumalo – Herbert Moyo: Introduction, in H. Taruona – S.R. Kumalo – H. Moyo (eds.): *Anthology of Pastoral Ministry and Leadership*, Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 2023, xii.

⁶² Moyo: *The Lutheran Church*, 26.

⁶³ Joseph K. Pali: *Markers and tools to facilitate decolonisation of theological education in Africa*. *Religions* 15(7) (2024), 7.

⁶⁴ Buffel: *Pastoral care in a context of poverty*, 57.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

The other important aspect in empowering church leaders to address contextual challenges is exposing church leaders to progressive methodologies. One of these approaches involves using Liberation theology and its methodology of preferential treatment of the poor.⁶⁶ Church leaders need to be equipped so that they practice their pastoral care through solidarity and empowerment of the poor.⁶⁷ Therefore, African theological education should be relevant and address contemporary realities. “Equally our discipline of pastoral care, as developed and practiced in the context of poverty, must be contextual.”⁶⁸ The Church and theological institutions must be equipped to reject any form of dehumanizing practices reinforced by colonial symbols of governance causing political and economic challenges in Africa (Pali 2024).⁶⁹ Church leaders need training in understanding issues of democracy, justice, human rights, rule of law, economic dynamics, and poverty.⁷⁰ According to Moyo, “The situational holistic educational ministry will have content that is based on the needs of conscientized participants and if well-coordinated this kind of education can lead to social transformation and freedom.”⁷¹ Besides theological education, church leaders need continuous training through denominational and ecumenical organized workshops, theological symposiums and webinars to share their experiences and sharpen their knowledge and understanding of the contextual realities and resources available to handle such challenges.

DIAKONIA

The church that engages in holistic pastoral ministry presupposes seriousness in contextual realities and diaconal work. It assumes the *missio Dei* and the mission of Christ. The mission of God in Christ is rooted in (Jn, 10:10) where he says, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.” Abundant life means life in wholeness. Therefore, church leaders should be enlightened to serve humanity holistically and not create a duality in people’s lives as holy in the Church and profane outside the Church. SHPM diakonia should seek to be all-inclusive, helping all people and engaging all challenges in context. Since Christ came to give people abundant life, the church’s diaconal ministry should be actively involved in the daily struggle faced by people in Africa. This is only possible if church leaders are empowered in terms of diaconal ministry beyond

⁶⁶ Ibid., 205.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 204.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 57.

⁶⁹ Pali: *Markers and Tools*, 4.

⁷⁰ Moyo: *The Lutheran Church*, 27.

⁷¹ Ibid., 27.

supplying food and blankets during times of unplanned displacement due to political violence or natural disasters. Church leaders should be empowered to deal with complex economic and political situations. This is prophetic diakonia. Buffel (2023) emphasizes that

Any theology or ministry that ignores the problem of poverty, injustices, or oppression, is not helpful and in fact it is engaged in discrediting itself. Equally pastoral care would be discredited if it was to ignore the reality of poverty, as well as the socio-economic-political and cultural causes of poverty, injustices, and oppression.⁷²

While it is the Church's duty to help the poor and displaced with supplies for survival in the context of suffering, it should remain prophetic. In times of crises such as natural disasters or political displacements, it is the role of the Church to be compassionate and mobilize resources to support the needy. Prophetic diakonia calls for the Church and its leaders to respond to injustices, climate change, poverty, and unemployment in Africa. "The church should also be the church that is politically committed to the poor and is in solidarity with them."⁷³ Church leaders must take courage and confront issues of bad governance, corruption, and economic injustices. They will be able to "empower the poor in terms of analytical skills that offer them capacity to understand the socio-economic and political structures that continue to keep them poor despite their best efforts at escaping poverty."⁷⁴ Church leaders should speak out prophetically to protect the poor, the oppressed and the voiceless citizens.

COLLABORATIVE PASTORAL MINISTRY

Given the magnitude of the church's prophetic pastoral ministry, collaboration and collegiality become central regarding the empowerment of its leaders. SHPM emphasizes the need for collaboration as well as solidarity in ministry as a way of killing the spirit of the idol and promoting that of the role model. A divided and fractured Church cannot respond to Africa's social, economic, and political realities. It may find itself conflicted with some of its members on the side of the poor and others on the side of the rich and powerful. Consequently, justice becomes difficult to restore in African society. There is great

⁷² Andries O Buffel: Pastoral care in the socio-economic and political context of poverty: Towards a contextual, holistic and liberating model of pastoral care in the South African context, in H. Taruona – S.R. Kumalo – H. Moyo (eds.): *Anthology of Pastoral Ministry and Leadership*, Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 2023, 130.

⁷³ Buffel: *Pastoral care in a context of poverty*, 211.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 212.

need for collaboration in situational holistic pastoral ministry. The Church should always work as a united front in order to be able to effectively address the needs of society. Leaders need to be empowered in terms of understanding the dynamics of collaboration and its implications in situational holistic pastoral ministry, especially in SSA. According to Moyo, "Situational Holistic Pastoral Ministry is ministry for the whole Church rather than the clergy alone."⁷⁵ Since it is for all members of the Church, it means the clergy and the laity should work together in advancing the mission of God. There are two forms of collaborative ministry to be discussed in this section. The church needs to be involved in internal collaboration and external collaboration.

Internal collaboration involves the clergy and the laity from the same denomination working closely together both for the spiritual growth of the church members and for the sake of addressing the people's socio-economic needs. In the context of the SHPM, Moyo argues that the role of the clergy is to foster the spirit of collaboration in ministry.⁷⁶ Promoting collaboration calls for the empowerment of the clergy so that they also empower the laity in terms of the dynamics involved in collaboration in church ministry. The clergy cannot be everywhere and do everything in every place all alone. The ministry then becomes the clergy or pastor's sole burden and he/she becomes more special than others. If the clergy works alone, then the body of Christ is dismembered, broken, and divided. The clergy should never work as a lone ranger. Buffel argues that

There is no longer any room for the pastor-centered church or ministry. The people must take ownership and have total participation in the ministry of pastoral care. All that professional pastors must do is to equip the believers and to empower them in this ministry, which should be in line with the "priesthood of all believers".⁷⁷

Empowering the laity for ministry entrenches the theology of the Church as the body of Christ, with every member fully participating in ministry. Lone rangers are easily idolized. Hence, empowering the laity for ministry allows the clergy to be role models as they seek to equip one another for SHPM.

Secondly, external collaboration entails churches or different denominations working together as well as networking with other stakeholders when addressing economic and political challenges in society. Responding to national issues of politics, human rights, justice, and peace requires the church in its multiple formations to work together as an ecumenical movement, hence the need to learn to participate in local congregational, national, and global ecumenism.

⁷⁵ Moyo: *The Lutheran Church*, 32.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 32.

⁷⁷ Buffel: Pastoral care in the socio-economic and political context of poverty, 137.

“This kind of collaboration preaches visible church unity which is the center and vision of ecumenism.”⁷⁸ Despite denominational differences, churches need to work together. Denominational cooperation promotes the sharing of skills and resources and the cross-pollination of faith.⁷⁹ Cooperation among denominations promotes learning from one another to grow together as members of the body of Christ. The role of the clergy is equipping the laity with the skills needed to collaborate with different denominations involving both the clergy and the laity. Kouzes & Posner claim that “Empowering Leaders inspire and pass on their power to others, with a goal of equipping those they lead, and growing new leaders in the process.”⁸⁰ Empowering lay leaders and other members of the church enables others to be role models of the next generations in ministry. Collaboration reduces competition that impedes unity by leading to the rise of idols rather than models.

In addition to collaboration among churches, the Church should cooperate with other stakeholders like government departments, non-governmental organizations, and other civic organizations that work towards addressing contemporary economic and political challenges. This enables African church leaders to work as a community. This helps to avoid the “Western paradigm” of pastoral care with its emphasis on individualism, psychotherapy, spiritualization, and professionalism (clericalism), as opposed to the relational African worldview of communalism based on ubuntu.⁸¹ Collaboration helps people to realize each other’s gifts, potential and abilities. It allows for the sharing of human, material, and financial resources.⁸² There is also a sharing of ideas, knowledge, and experiences that helps in addressing the socio-political and economic situation in Africa. Division, disunity, and marginalization only lead to dismembering the body of Christ and the destruction of the spirit of unity and collegiality. Ecumenicity allows the body of Christ to unite and speak with one voice especially on the political and economic issues that require the prophetic voice of the Church. In SHPM, Moyo proposes the formation of committees which will work with the community and other stakeholders in every area of need like the health sector, education, and farming.⁸³ Regarding cooperation with the government, Moyo argues for ‘critical solidarity’ in community development and the promotion of societal wellbeing. He holds that “The church should also be free to associate with people who are brutalized by the

⁷⁸ Rabson Hove: *A critique of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe’s (ELCZ) engagement in local ecumenism among the Karanga of Mberengwa in Zimbabwe*, Doctoral dissertation, Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2020, 185.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 186.

⁸⁰ James M. Kouzes – Barry Z. Posner (eds.): *Christian Reflections on the Leadership Challenge*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006, 32.

⁸¹ Buffel: *Pastoral care in a context of poverty*, 210.

⁸² Hove: *A Critique*, 180.

⁸³ Moyo: *The Lutheran Church*, 32.

State.”⁸⁴ In this model, the Church relates to the state in ways that benefit all the people of God without being controlled by the state. The church should not be on the side of the government while the citizens are suffering. That would mean muffling its prophetic voice in pastoral ministry. Transformation occurs through unity of purpose among the people of God and especially among church leaders. In order to remain prophetic, church leaders should have compassion and speak “truth to power” on issues of justice, human rights, equality, and peace. This also helps empower the laity for prophetic ministry through giving them an understanding of the importance of cooperation and collegiality. They become role models for future pastoral ministry.

CONCLUSION

This paper argues that the myriad challenges facing SSA need the Church to take an active role in its pastoral ministry. But to achieve its mandate, it needs church leaders who are fully empowered for their role of carrying out their duties and equipping others for ministry. In fact, the paper argues that a well-equipped clergy’s critical role is empowering the laity for ministry. This is servanthood and transformative leadership that breeds role models rather than idols. If the clergy fails to empower others and promote collaboration in ministry, they are likely to become idols seeking to be honored and hailed above others. This is opposed to the understanding of the Church as the body of Christ and the priesthood of the baptized where the clergy and the laity participate in ministry equally, promoting the spiritual growth of the church and community development through Christian education, diakonia, collaboration, pastoral care and counselling. This paper proposes the use of insights from SHPM that seek to help the Church to be holistic and contextually relevant in its ministry to transform the Church and society. Church leaders should not remain within the four walls of the church but should rather seek to fulfil the mission of God through Christ: to give abundant life to all.

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⁸⁴ Ibid., 30.

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