



# Social entrepreneurship in the selected neo-Pentecostal churches: A holistic salvation



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Pentecostalism is a Christian tradition known for personal salvation, baptism in the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, divine healing and personal encounter with God through the work of the Holy Spirit. However, Pentecostalism is not limited to these; the tradition also ministers the full gospel that affects a holistic person, meaning body, soul and spirit. This article demonstrated that the holistic salvation approach is a motivation for social entrepreneurial activities in the selected neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa. The article worked within the social entrepreneurial framework to argue that the neo-Pentecostal churches minister to their followers holistically. Pentecostalism transforms people's lives in daily living, particularly the poorest of the poor communities through entrepreneurial orientation. The researchers' methodology was a case study approach of four neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa that have shown social entrepreneurship factors. In addition, the participant observation method was used in highlighting entrepreneurial activities in these churches.

**Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications:** This article examined the role of neo-Pentecostal churches in social entrepreneurship through a holistic salvation approach to Pentecostal theology by using a case study method. This role is a juxtaposition between the study of Pentecostalism from a missiological discipline and the study of social entrepreneurship from the discipline of economics, particularly social economics.

**Keywords:** Pentecostalism; Pentecostal theology; neo-Pentecostal churches; social entrepreneurship; holistic salvation; social well-being; social empowerment.

## Introduction

Pentecostal theology is not only known for its emphasis on the direct relationship with God through the work of the Holy Spirit but is also known for its emphasis on the holistic salvation that ministers to the body, soul, and spirit. In Pentecostalism, salvation is not only the process of converting people to the Christian faith but also means that the disempowered become empowered through the same Holy Spirit. Holistic salvation is inclusive of the body, the soul, and the spirit. Pentecostals believe that it is not only the spirit that should prosper, but the body and the soul should also prosper when the believer receives Christ. This approach is applied in the selected neo-Pentecostal churches by evaluating their entrepreneurial activities. In this article, holistic salvation is discussed from a social entrepreneurship perspective to explore the role of neo-Pentecostal churches in solving the social ills in their communities. This will be achieved by looking at a sample of entrepreneurial neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa through a case study approach. The churches are Charity and Faith Mission Church in Mamelodi, Doxa Deo in Pretoria, Hope Restoration Ministries in Kempton Park and Hope for Africa Mission in Siyabuswa. These churches will be analysed by looking at the various activities of social entrepreneurship to explore the role of Pentecostalism in the empowerment of communities. However, before the discussion in the main section of the article, the background of social entrepreneurship is explained and applied to neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa. The main sections of the article shall be:

- holistic salvation approach to Pentecostal theology
- holistic salvation approach and social entrepreneurship
- case studies of four neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa
- discussions and recommendations.

## Background to the study of social entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship is about the activities in society that seek to deal with the social ills and different challenges faced by the people. The custodians of social entrepreneurship identify and

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utilise the opportunities that can bring value to the society that will ultimately add value to the economy of a specific community or to a certain extent, the country (Bacq & Jansen 2011:388). Social entrepreneurship is an activity that trades to generate positive social and environmental externalities rather than private gain (Santos 2012). Therefore, social entrepreneurship is not aimed at benefiting the individuals who initiate these opportunities but at benefiting the society through economic activities and wealth creation (Thomson 2008). These opportunities should translate to market-related activities and resources that can bring a meaningful contribution to the economy. A social entrepreneur does not only see problems but is also able to perceive an opportunity inside the problem and create a means by which the problem can be resolved in the community (Manyaka-Boshielo 2018:3). Thus, social entrepreneurship goes beyond general social activities to activities that are entrepreneurial and economical in nature. Furthermore, social entrepreneurship can deal with the challenges that are facing communities by becoming innovative and building capacities that can bring social development and social transformation (Rey-Marti & Palacios-Mangues 2016). It should be reiterated that these should not be general societal problems but challenges such as unemployment, poverty and so forth. Therefore, social entrepreneurship is one of the frameworks with the ability to bring solutions to the triple challenges facing South Africa, namely poverty, inequality and unemployment. In the quest to find solutions to the ongoing challenges of the high rate of unemployment and poverty levels in South Africa, leaders should consider social entrepreneurship as one of the solutions.

However, it should be stated that, unlike other forms of businesses, social entrepreneurship is not more of profit generation but more of people, their problems and their solutions (Austin, Stevenson & Wei-Skillern 2003). Social entrepreneurship is achieved through volunteerism because at times those involved in the activities do not receive anything in return but they feel fulfilled when others are helped from their predicaments. In addition, social entrepreneurship differs from commercial entrepreneurship in this way: social entrepreneurship is focusing on the social mission to bring a solution to the social problem facing a particular community, rather than on profit making. Whatever has been made from the entrepreneurial activities, will assist in sustaining social enterprise (Manyaka 2015). This is pivotal considering the different challenges faced by the disadvantaged community in South Africa. Social entrepreneurship is the answer to the pressing needs of the poor in communities. The poor cannot be able to change their problems by themselves but can do so through the help of those involved in social entrepreneurship. Through social entrepreneurship, there is great potential for the poor to move out of the dark place of their lives. They can do this through the drivers of the process of social entrepreneurship, that is, the social entrepreneurs who in this article happen to be pastors and their congregations. Bornstein (1998:1) says

that social entrepreneurs have a clear vision and problem-solving skills that they use together with their ethical approach to bring change to their communities. Therefore, a social entrepreneur should have the qualities such as innovation, vision, risk-taking and independence. In the next section, the article explores holistic salvation approach in Pentecostalism.

### Holistic salvation approach to Pentecostal theology

Pentecostal theology is known for the emphasis on the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the direct relationship with God (Kgatle 2022; Kgatle & Lephoto 2023; Togarasei 2018:55). Chan (2019) explains that in:

[W]hatever way the person of the Spirit is understood, Pentecostals are clear that what distinguishes their experience from non-Pentecostals is to be found in the way the presence of the Holy Spirit is operative in their lives. Pentecostals, by contrast, often use language that suggests a more direct working of the Spirit that impinges upon their senses. The Spirit is referred to not only in terms of powerful and supernatural activities, he is often spoken as the subject of those activities. (p. 98)

It is the same theology that places the Holy Spirit at the centre of the pneumatic expressions such as speaking in tongues, divine healing and performance of other miracles. Anderson (2018:220) explains further that:

The Spirit of God is given credit for almost everything that takes place in church activities. The Spirit caused people to 'receive' the Spirit, to prophecy, speaking in tongues, heal, exorcise demons, have visions and dreams, and live 'holy' lives, generally the Spirit directs the life and worship of the church. (p. 220)

While the above can be considered the core of a Pentecostal theology, it is not the only focus because but is also Pentecostals are also known for holistic salvation that ministers to the body, soul and spirit (Anderson 2003; Anderson & Ford 2005; cf Owusu-Ansah & Adjei-Acquah 2020; Wariboko 2017). Hwa (1997:206) points out that in Pentecostalism, 'Salvation is holistic: it includes the salvation of the soul, the healing of the body and material blessings from God'. Firstly, holistic salvation brings social empowerment. In Pentecostalism, salvation is not only the process of converting people to the Christian faith (Banda 2020a) but also means that the disempowered become empowered through the same Holy Spirit. In the implementation of holistic salvation, Pentecostals encourage their followers to engage in development and education (Owusu-Ansah & Adjei-Acquah 2020). Secondly, holistic salvation is instrumental in dealing with societal problems and providing solutions to them in different communities (Dilger 2007; Omenyo 2002). Lastly, holistic salvation advocates for the social well-being of believers in various strands of Pentecostalism (Anderson 2011; Adeboye 2020; Miller & Yamamori 2007).

Therefore, the aspects of a holistic salvation approach in Pentecostal theology can be summarised as follows:

- Holistic salvation through the work of the Holy Spirit brings social empowerment.
- Holistic salvation approach deals with societal problems and explores possible solutions in communities.
- Holistic salvation is concerned with the social well-being of believers.

### Holistic salvation approach and social entrepreneurship

There is a relationship between the holistic salvation approach and social entrepreneurship because Pentecostals do not only concentrate on the spiritual empowerment but also on social empowerment (Adeboye 2020). Pentecostals believe that God placed them on the earth to work on it and sustain the earth through social empowerment activities. They believe that the same Holy Spirit they have received gives them the power to be socially empowered through development and education. They believe in being "Spirit-filled" resulting in receiving power to be involved in God's mission for the world. It is this theology of being active on earth that makes them want to take part in social empowerment activities as they perceive themselves as responsible ambassadors here on earth. In doing this, Pentecostals do not dream of going to heaven but speak of heaven on earth, hence their active participation in social entrepreneurship. It is for this reason that Pentecostals speak of a realised eschatology than a future eschatology. Therefore, even the empowerment of the Holy Spirit is received so that they can be able to take part in social activities. The empowerment of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was for the primary purpose of assigning the believers to be active in the development of communities through social activities. The empowerment of the Holy Spirit is not only for preaching and teaching but also for involvement on earth through social programs and activities.

There is a relationship between the holistic salvation approach and social entrepreneurship because Pentecostals do not only concentrate on the spiritual empowerment but also on social empowerment (Adeboye 2020). Pentecostals through their theology want people's lives transformed so that they can change their communities. Pentecostalism as a movement is not only transforming believers in churches but through their message, they can change any context they find themselves in whether political, social or otherwise (Robbins 2010). Pentecostal preachers teach a prosperity message to change the economic lives of their followers but in the end, the whole society becomes transformed because of these messages (Akanbi & Beyers 2017). Therefore, according to Anderson (2020:121), 'Pentecostal empowerment has the potential to equip people towards liberation, whether personal or collective'. This empowerment includes bringing solutions to the world's problems, whether these solutions are 'spiritual solutions or social justice, or both' (Anderson 2020:121). However, it should be taken into consideration that every social transformation starts in the mind; hence Pentecostals are strong on the transformation of the mind through their

teachings and sermons. It is for this reason that the teachings on social entrepreneurship have become common among Pentecostals in Africa. Therefore, Pentecostal pastors through their preaching under the anointing of the Holy Spirit transform minds and hearts. Holy Spirit empowers the minds of people through the gospel, and this, therefore, gives room for personal development, which in turn leads to community and national development (White 2020). The preaching and teaching among Pentecostals are done to bring life-change experiences not just as part of the liturgy on a Sunday service (Nel 2021).

Thirdly, Pentecostals believe that God wants all humans to have social well-being (Anderson 2020). Hence, Pentecostals raise money through tithing and special offering not to enrich pastors but to empower others (Asuquo 2020). The unfortunate thing is that most of the time these activities are misused by those who want to enrich themselves instead of empowering the people in communities. Many who have succeeded in manipulating the social well-being of others should not be used to do away with the good prospects of other gospel ministers and pastors. In many Pentecostal churches, there is deliberation to teach social well-being through empowerment and business initiatives to empower the communities (Freeman 2012). When perceived positively, according to Ogundu (2021), church-based enterprises help rebuild a community's social infrastructure and provide much-needed value-based services such as childcare, youth development, care for the elderly and counselling for substance abuse. Furthermore, Pentecostal churches initiate organisations within their communities to train and empower members to tackle poverty, human immunodeficiency virus and/or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV and/or AIDS), unemployment and violence, thus improving the quality of life in their communities (Anderson 2020). Therefore, the Pentecostal church as a social enterprise is to preach the gospel that sets people free in a holistic manner that includes spiritual, physical, mental, social, environmental and economical aspects. However, if the Pentecostal church wants to be an agent of social transformation, it should also guard against those who attempt to manipulate and take advantage of the true gospel that addresses all spheres of human needs. In the next section, the article explores the methodology used for collecting data among the selected neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa.

### Methodology

This article uses the case study approach to look at various churches that have social entrepreneurship activities that play a meaningful role in their communities. The case study method is important in exploring the processes and activities or even some programs of organisations to scholarly engagement with their contributions on a specific subject (Creswell 2009). In this article, the case study method is useful in the engagement of the selected neo-Pentecostal churches about social entrepreneurship. In the words of Mohajan (2018:23), case study is important when the researcher is analysing and describing a 'person individually

for his/her activity, special needs, life situation, life history, or a group of people'. Therefore, in this article, there is a recognition that the contribution of the selected neo-Pentecostal churches might vary from one church to the other. The responsibility of the researcher is to ensure that each case is treated independently of other cases so that the results are fair and reliable in the study (Mohajan 2018). In this study, the four different neo-Pentecostal churches will be evaluated independently to assess their ministry of social entrepreneurship and ultimately their contribution to their respective communities in South Africa. These churches are Charity and Faith Mission Church, Doxa Deo, Hope Restoration Ministries and Hope for Africa Mission. The official websites of these churches shall be helpful in this article because there is little scientifically written on the churches. In addition, the article uses the participant observation method as some social activities in these churches were observed by the authors. In the next section, the article looks at the four case studies of the selected neo-Pentecostal churches involved in social entrepreneurship in South Africa and how they fulfil the qualities of social entrepreneurship.

### Case studies of four neo-Pentecostal Churches in South Africa

Neo-Pentecostal churches are built on the fundamental teachings of the Pentecostalism movement, which involves baptism in the Holy Spirit and the phenomenon of speaking in tongues (Banda 2020b). In addition, these churches believe in a direct relationship with God through the work of the Holy Spirit. What is important for this article is that these churches believe in holistic salvation that ministers to the body, soul and spirit of the individual believer. Thus, the researchers picked the churches that have the above-mentioned characteristics. In addition, the researchers ensured that the composition of these churches in terms of location and their pastors are representative of the demographics in South Africa. Therefore, three of the four churches are led by black pastors, where one is operating in the city, the second one is in the township (Gauteng province) and the third one is in a semi-rural area in Siyabuswa, Mpumalanga province. One of the four churches is led by a white pastor and is mostly operating in different cities and different provinces in South Africa. These will be discussed in relationship with total issues and/or problems facing their communities. In addition, it can be realised that through their teachings the churches are involved in transforming the world holistically. Each church will be discussed in terms of its brief history, its leadership and most importantly its social entrepreneurial activities.

#### Charity and Faith Mission Church

The first church in discussion is the Charity and Faith Mission Church, which was founded by Bishop Titus Sithole in Mamelodi and has other branches in places such as Nelmaphius, Eastlynn and Stoffel Park (Charity & Faith

Mission Church 2022). This church has social entrepreneurship activities and programs that they have started and calls them the arm of the church. One such activity that helps alleviate poverty in Mamelodi is known as Bophelong Community Centre. According to the official website of Bophelong Centre (2022), there are several programs and activities that the centre is involved in with the aim of social entrepreneurship:

- Assisting families to access government social grants.
- Conducting HIV and/or AIDS awareness in the community.
- Provision of agricultural starter packs to vulnerable households.
- Provision of care and support for the implementation of income for vulnerable families through self-help projects.
- Networking with other stakeholders, who can give alternative care for the orphaned and vulnerable children such as foster care, adoption and community development projects.

Furthermore, the authors observed that these activities, particularly the agricultural projects are instrumental in assisting the people of Mamelodi to come out of poverty. Therefore, the social entrepreneurship programs in the Charity and Faith Mission Church are important in meeting the social needs of the people of Mamelodi. In addition, it was also observed that the Charity and Faith Mission Church is the only first Pentecostal church in Mamelodi that managed to do many such projects that were community focused. Thus, from Charity and Faith Mission Church, it can be deduced that Pentecostal churches are not only known for being spirit-filled but also for engaging in social entrepreneurship.

#### Doxa Deo

The second neo-Pentecostal church under discussion is Doxa Deo, which was founded by Alan Plat in 1996. Doxa Deo is a well-established church with many campuses in different cities in South Africa such as Pretoria, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Port Elizabeth. Doxa Deo also has branches outside South Africa in Auckland, New Zealand; Charlotte, United States of America and London, United Kingdom (Doxa Deo 2022). In addition, the authors observed that Doxa Deo like some neo-Pentecostal churches is preaching the full gospel that affects the whole person. However, ministering to the material needs of human beings does not deter them from giving their focus on leading humanity to salvation. Even though they are having many social enterprises, they are still standing firm in their spiritual mandate. They have the following programs and activities that meet the social needs of the people in different cities in South Africa:

- Popup: These are social upliftment programs that are aimed at giving skills to unskilled people in different cities. The skills include, among others, life skills, soft skills and technical skills.
- Independent Schools: As part of the training and development of the community, the church has two

schools named Xanadu private school and Doxa Deo Akademie.

- Children's home: This is aimed at taking care of children who have been abandoned in communities such as orphans, the abandoned and the abused.
- Tree (Transformation, educational, environment): This program targets headmasters, teachers and learners to help their schools to obtain a healthy environment for the next generation of leaders.
- Metamorpho: This is a program that helps the city youth between the age of 18 years and 23 years by training and developing them as the future generation of leaders.

Therefore, Doxa Deo is not only a church of the Spirit and speaking in tongues but a church where both the youth and the adults are trained and empowered to make changes in their communities.

### Hope Restoration Ministries

The third neo-Pentecostal church is Hope Restoration Ministries, which was founded by Rev. Sphiwe and Pastor Phindile Mathebula in 1996, in Chloorkop, Kempton park. Hope Restoration Ministries has campuses in different parts of the Gauteng province in places such as Midrand, Ebony, Tembisa, Springs and Pretoria (HRM 2022). This church is very strong on evangelism as evidenced by its different campuses and its growth in the east of Johannesburg. However, the church does not only concentrate on evangelising people but has programs to empower the community and the people of God in the East Rand. Of all these programs, the most important one for this article is the 'hands of restoration', which is aimed at alleviating poverty in communities through skills and development. According to their official website, Hope Restoration Ministries (HRM, 2002) the formation of the program:

was inspired by the prevalent social ills, high rate of illiteracy, lack of skills, high rate of unemployment, street kids, orphans, and abject poverty savaging our indigent communities. This Organization was thus established with the sole intention of contributing positively towards finding ways and means of addressing development. (p. 1)

Other than the hands of restoration, the church has schools such as the little hope Nursery, Hope restoration College-independent school and the bible school (HRM 2022). This too bears witness that Hope Restoration Ministries is not only converting people to Christianity but also takes efforts to train, empower and lead them to make difference in their communities. The authors have observed that this is important in the East Rand where so many young people are unemployed and have different challenges such as poverty and other social ills. It is important in South Africa where the majority still do not have basic needs even in a democratic era. Hands of hope was also an important ministry during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic where many people needed to be comforted in facing many different challenges in their lives including the need for food and other basic needs.

### Hope for Africa Mission

The last church under discussion is the Hope for Africa Mission, which was founded by Bishop Hendrik Mahlangu at Siyabuswa, Mpumalanga Province. This church is grounded in a holistic gospel of ministering to the needs of the people in Siyabuswa (Hope for Africa Mission 2022). They are not only involved in the establishment of churches and the training of missionaries in Africa but also engage in programs that uplift the people in communities. Regarding social entrepreneurship projects, the Hope for Africa Mission is involved with the following:

- Farming projects: Through the cultivation of vegetables and fruits in Siyabuswa, families can obtain food and some are able to make a living through the projects.
- Orphanages: Through this program, the church can take care of orphans and other children who are not in the care of responsible parents.
- Involvement in disaster relief programs: The disaster management program focuses on disaster mitigation activities in the community of Siyabuswa and the surrounding areas.
- Independent schools: The church is involved with the training and empowerment of young people through their private school, which was established not for profits but to give alternative education to communities.
- Health clinics: In addition to the above-mentioned programs, the church is also involved in health issues, which also contributes to the economy because the clinics employ people in the same community (Hope for Africa Mission 2022).

Like other churches, it can be seen here that the Hope for Africa Mission has a comprehensive mission plan to be actively involved in the programs that alleviate poverty. Therefore, it can be reiterated that the selected neo-Pentecostal churches are active in the social development of their communities not only through preaching and teachings but also through social entrepreneurship.

## Discussions and recommendations

This study involved the four neo-Pentecostal churches used as case studies, namely Charity and Faith Mission Church, Doxa Deo, Hope Restoration Ministries and Hope for Africa Mission. All these churches have various activities that speak to social entrepreneurship and the empowerment of the believers as evidenced by their official websites and observations by the authors. Almost all these activities go beyond the believers of these churches to address the challenges faced by all the members of society. Through observation, it was discovered that these programs and activities are not only handouts to the needy but built something sustainable for those who participate in the programs. In addition, the authors observed that the programs are aimed at training and raising the next generation of leaders who in a way will be able to empower others and raise the next generation in terms of poverty alleviation and the empowerment of communities.

Given the results of this study, it can be concluded that Pentecostalism is involved in social entrepreneurship. It can be deduced that the selected neo-Pentecostal churches studied have social entrepreneurial qualities and the capacity to innovate and see the problem differently. They also have an ability not to dwell on the problem but to find ways in which these problems can be resolved promptly through social activities. They use the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to address the challenges of the communities where their churches are, in cities and townships in South Africa.

This means that, unlike the popular discourse that Pentecostal preachers exploit the believers, these churches have been involved in the empowerment of the believers. There is a need to bring a balance between many neo-Pentecostal churches that exploit believers through the message of giving and receiving and those that use the same message to empower their followers through social entrepreneurship in different communities. Therefore, Pentecostal scholars should not generalise but should be able to point out the exploitative but still be able to acknowledge other neo-Pentecostal churches involved in the empowerment of the believers. The churches that have exploitative ways of abusing their congregants by demanding money and other material things should not be allowed to tarnish the whole image of the Pentecostal movement.

Lastly, the results of this study show that the Pentecostal movement should not only be perceived as a movement that only knows the Holy Spirit and speaks in tongues. It is a movement that translates the empowerment of the Spirit into action through social entrepreneurship projects in communities. Pentecostalism is not only confined to the four corners of the church, but through these case studies, these churches go out and empower the community. The Holy Spirit becomes the source in which believers receive the power to be actively involved in the activities that bring change in other people's lives. The Holy Spirit becomes the inspiration to start projects that alleviate poverty in townships and cities in South Africa. Therefore, the power of the Holy Spirit is not used in teaching and preaching alone, but this power is used to take part in what is going on in communities. When this is taken into consideration, social entrepreneurship becomes a tool in the hand of communities to fight poverty, joblessness and other challenges.

## Conclusion

Pentecostal theology is not only known for the emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit and its contribution to the direct relationship with God. It is also known for the holistic salvation that ministers to the person in body and soul. This is what encourages some neo-Pentecostal churches to become involved in social entrepreneurship activities. Hence, the study of the role of holistic salvation in social entrepreneurship

through the selected neo-Pentecostal churches. Through an entrepreneurial spirit, Pentecostal pastors can contribute to the fight against different social ills in their communities. They have different activities and programs as highlighted in the article that makes a meaningful contribution to communities. They empower their members with a message of hope that inspires confidence that they too can make it in life. Through observation, these churches have established social enterprises that have trained members in developing different skills and knowledge systems, particularly the knowledge of social entrepreneurship. In addition, it was observed that they have enterprises, which can create jobs for their members and communities at large. This became possible because of this church's ability to embrace social entrepreneurship through holistic salvation of social empowerment and social wellbeing. Therefore, a holistic salvation approach to Pentecostal theology is important in the implementation of social entrepreneurship in neo-Pentecostal churches. Future studies should explore the possibility of how other exploitative neo-Pentecostal churches can embrace social entrepreneurship through a holistic salvation approach in Pentecostal theology.

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The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

## Authors' contributions

M.S.K. contributed to the conceptualisation, formal analysis and writing of the article, and M.-B. contributed to data curation.

## Ethical considerations

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