

## The Church in a Globalised Johannesburg Inner City of South Africa: Towards a Theological and Ministry Framework

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### Abstract

*In this article, the researcher argued for a thoughtful, reflexive and integrated theological praxis befitting the ever-changing globalised inner-city context of Johannesburg. In relation to mission, he highlighted an evolving threefold contextual issue, i.e. demographic explosion, religious plurality and expansion of poverty to contend with in Johannesburg inner city and also highlighted that these very contextual issues present us with both challenges and opportunities for urban mission and missiology. Hence, he proposed a paradigm for the city based on Jeremiah 29 and a framework made of six tenets for developing inner-city missional congregations. These tenets are ecumenical, contextual, based on interactive and shared process, integrated and holistic, engaging different sources which inspire praxis and transformation. These tenets put together in a paradigm and as a framework, will assist inner congregations towards developing a face of urban ministry and missiology, which could be relevant and appropriate in globalised inner cities such as Johannesburg.*

### 1. Introduction

The church in mission with God has no other option but to move with the people. In this day and age, this move is predominantly towards globalised cities, specifically inner cities, of the world including cities of South Africa. Nations have converged in inner cities of South Africa. As a result, it is almost impossible to see a congregation in the inner cities of South Africa, which is still mono-cultural, mono-ethnic, mono-national, mono-lingual, mono-racial or even mono-social class. A church that tends to take this phenomenon less seriously will fail in implementing the Great Commission<sup>i</sup> and the Great Commandment<sup>ii</sup> in the global cities we find ourselves. If a congregation opts for escapism, it will hurt itself. Separatist tendencies will make the church less genuine in its witness to Christ in these globalised cities. Opting for any of the usual mission praxis shortcuts such as “political activism”<sup>iii</sup>, “ivory tower”<sup>iv</sup>, “missionary activism”<sup>v</sup> and “conversionist option”<sup>vi</sup> alone will lend themselves to reductionism which is detrimental to the development of a meaningful praxis of mission in these globalised cities.

What is required of the church in these globalised cities is a thoughtful,

reflexive and integrated theological praxis befitting the ever-changing globalised inner-city context. The church is not expected only to think deeply about things happening in their context but also to learn to reflect on the actions she is involved in and more so in the process of interaction between their actions and reflection. Further, most importantly, on the change happening to the church in globalised cities of the world, including South Africa.

In this article, I sketch a practical theological framework for mission and ministry in the inner city of Johannesburg especially on how local churches should attempt to embrace and integrate the push emanating from the reality of globalisation including migration associated with various humanitarian crises in their doorstep. How could local inner-city congregations, for the sake of mission, embrace the globalised reality associated with migration crises in Johannesburg inner city is the question central to this research.

In response to this question, I propose a paradigm for the city based on Jeremiah 29 and a framework made of six tenets I deem important for developing inner-city missional congregations. These tenets are ecumenical, contextual, based on interactive and shared process, integrated and holistic, engaging different sources which inspire praxis and transformation. These tenets put together in a paradigm and as a framework, will assist inner congregations towards developing a face of urban ministry and missiology, which could be relevant and appropriate in globalised inner cities such as Johannesburg.

### 2. The Context: Keys to understanding Johannesburg inner city

I begin by painting a threefold contextual picture of Johannesburg inner city, i.e. demographic explosion, religious plurality and expansion of poverty. I believe these three contextual changes, taken together, give us hints about what has been happening in Johannesburg inner city.

#### 2.1 Ever changing demographics

One of the global trends to watch in mission is international migration. Mandryk (2010:14) quantifies it by stating that “there are now 200 – 250 million people living outside the land of their birth”<sup>vii</sup>. There are various reasons for this global migration. Mandryk (2010:14) name among others; “increasing gaps, internationally, in quality of life, population growth, climate change and ecological ruin, financial, educational and social opportunities, and upheaval, conflict and persecution”. In Africa, for

example, large scale migration to South Africa is evident, and it seems as if it will continue to increase regardless of the barriers raised or law passed.

Johannesburg inner city is one such area in South Africa, which is affected by this large scale and uncontrollable migration, which started in the past three decades or so. This large migration has drastically reconfigured the demographics of Johannesburg inner city. Morris (1999:670 - 671) elaborates:

Hillbrow [for example] has historically been viewed as one of the most densely populated localities in South Africa. An inner-city neighbourhood of approximately one kilometre square in extent, it is constituted primarily by high-rise apartment blocks and is situated about a kilometre from Johannesburg's central business district. (...) Historically, a large proportion of Hillbrow's residents have been young and single, newly married couples or retired lower-middle to middle-class people. The high density and predominance of young people, many of them single, meant that it has always been a lively neighbourhood with a bustling night-life.

Bremner (2000:186) elucidates; "further demographic shifts have occurred during the second half of the 1990s as Africans from countries further north, mainly Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo, have arrived in the inner city [of Johannesburg]" (see also Kadima and Kalombo 1995 and Morris 1996). Rogerson and Rogerson (1997:86) correlate this to a process of "de-racialisation of space" in the City of Johannesburg which began in the mid-1980s. "The de-racialising of space in Johannesburg has occurred amidst an ailing inner-city economy" (Rogerson & Rogerson, 1997:86).

Other contributing factors that favoured the move of local black Africans to inner-city from the second half of 1980s include "the spiralling of political violence in the townships, the scrapping of influx control, the worsening housing shortage, the growing realization that Group Areas Act prosecutions were unlikely and the increasing willingness of landlords to allow African tenants to move into Hillbrow apartments which were left vacant by 'white flight'" (Morris 1999:671). These factors contributed to thousands of Africans making their homes in the inner city of Johannesburg and earn their living in whichever way possible.

As a result, today, the formal and informal economy of the inner

city is mostly run by Africans with foreigners in the majority. Yet, the African foreign population groups have been subjected to high levels of persecution from South Africans (Dhlomo 1997). They are blamed for the overcrowded informal trading sector, the growth of the narcotics trade and deterioration of the physical environment (Simone, 1998). Increasing xenophobia, assaults and conflicts over space and access "have been a common reaction" by citizens (Mandryk 2010:14).

The Church and ministries that have remained in the inner city are active in various ways ministering to some extent to the immigrants. However, I concur with Falk (1979:426) that "churches ... have failed to recognise fully the tremendous needs of the multitudes who left their homes and went to the cities". These multitudes represent a threat as well as a mission opportunity. Mandryk (2010:14) contends; "the "threat" of immigration could also be a great opportunity for Christian ministry – many migrants come less-evangelised lands, and many others come as vibrant, witnessing Christians". Some of these Christians have joined inner-city churches, especially of the same denomination to those of their countries of origin, and others have started their own churches and independent ministries of various persuasions and doctrines. Hence, the "mushrooming" of all sorts of churches in Johannesburg inner city and other major cities of South Africa started and led by foreign Africans. Religious plurality in Johannesburg inner city has, therefore, become an everyday contextual reality.

## **2.2 Religious plurality**

Given the diversity and the nature of cities, religious plurality in cities is not a new phenomenon. Athens, during the time of Apostle Paul, is one such example (Ac 17:16-34). Paul was distressed to see this great city full of idols because he knew that 'the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God' (1Cor 10:20). The religious plurality and expressions of various faiths thrived in Athens because it remained, even after the Romans 'conquest of Greece, a free city, democratic, multicultural, and open to different ideologies and religions (*cf.* v21). Religious plurality, in my view, thrives in this democratic, multicultural and multinational space. Hence I submit, there are some similarities between the old Athens and contemporary cities of South Africa such as Johannesburg under the new democratic dispensation. Elsewhere, I highlighted <sup>viii</sup> these similarities:

1. Our contemporary cities, like Athens, are progressively becoming democratic to extremes – free cities par excellence.

Freedom and rights of all sorts are tolerated and respected. This exerts pressure and strain in the functions of institutions such as the church, government and the family.

2. Our contemporary cities, like Athens, are multicultural and multinational. Diversity enriches but can spoil too. Cities; by the very nature and structure, have always been multicultural and multinational. There is really nothing new to what has happened to Johannesburg, Durban or Cape Town in South Africa.
3. Our contemporary cities, like Athens, have resources and means to help communities. This and other factors incite the 'pull' factors – poor and vulnerable trek to cities in the hope to satisfy their desires.

Thus, in the midst of this religious plurality, God and His beauty seemed hidden in great cities of the world, such as Johannesburg. Religious plurality is one of the challenges the church faces in Johannesburg inner city. The church feels “overwhelmed and moves only slowly to face [such] urban challenges” (Conn and Ortiz 2001:79). I will come back to this point later. In Berea near Hillbrow, where I serve as the lead pastor of Berea Baptist Mission Church, we have six different religious groups in a 300-meter radius. These groups include Baptist, a Malawian Seventh Adventist, Ethiopian Orthodox, Jehovah witness and two independent Pentecostal congregations started by immigrants. If you add traditional religion practitioners and healers in this vicinity, the picture is as diverse and different as there are colours in nature. Ministry approaches and praxis of each one of these groups are different as each one aims to give a different spiritual experience to its members. Thus, inner cities such as Johannesburg have become religious ‘melting pots’ that attract members across society spectrums, including the poor.

### **2.3 Expansion of poverty**

The ‘de-racialisation’ of the space and the scrapping of influx control alluded to in section 2.1 also opened city borders for the poor to migrate to Johannesburg inner city. The poor have come for the prospect of maximising chances to access quality life and jobs since the city offers great services and infrastructure (i.e. housing, roads and transport, electricity, energy, water, sewerage, education, health, safety, communication, financial institutions, transport, governance).

Unfortunately, the majority of migrants and refugees find that they are excluded from the benefits of these services. This reality brings into focus the socio-economic gaps and class realities of cities where we found that the majority of the urban residents, specifically of Johannesburg inner city are poor. They migrated to cities to escape poverty and deprivation, yet in cities, they become poorer, even homeless. In relation to homelessness in the City of Tshwane, Mangayi (2014: 213) observes, the plight of these poor is compounded with exclusion and marginalisation. Most of them now live on the pavements of city streets while some manage to build makeshift structures known as Mikuku under bridges in municipal open spaces. Others live in backyards of some houses in the inner city. For economic survival, they resort to informal small businesses such as back yard mechanic, upholstery, sewing and selling on the pavements whatever they can find, and others sometimes resort to illicit businesses like prostitution, pushing drugs and stealing. The youth and the women are particularly affected by poverty in Johannesburg inner city. The predicament of these poor people are worsened by the fact that many of them do not benefit from government social welfare programmes for various reasons. As a result, many are forever begging at street corners with no prospects for a good future for themselves. For these poor people, cities evoke different feelings and sentiments: with joy, peace and security coupled with fear and insecurity.

The three contextual realities relative to Johannesburg inner city discussed above in section 2 present us with challenges and opportunities for urban mission and missiology.

### **3. Johannesburg inner city challenges and mission**

I reiterate that inner-city challenges are interrelated and complex. There is wisdom in recognising, as did the Church in Asia, that we need a comprehensive, clear and intelligent understanding of the complex nature of our economy, social and cultural including environment context in relation to city systems before the church in mission with God can get involved. Regardless, we need to appropriate the imperatives of the gospel of Jesus Christ which suggest that the poor, the destitute and the marginalised people, as well as the wealthy and powerful groups of people in the city, must be transformed (Conn & Ortiz 2001:23). This transformation will begin the moment the church begins to see the possibilities for ‘hopeful action’ in the face of these inner-city challenges and the reluctance to venture with God in the inner-city will also be overcome.

### **3.1 Church, demographic explosion and mission in Johannesburg inner city**

Conn and Ortiz (2001:288) contend, “The church faces a Missiological challenge regarding population growth and people movements throughout the world”. This challenge emanates from the confluence of the urbanisation of the planet and the globalisation of cities. Conn and Ortiz (2001:288) see it as “a theological announcement”. They explain:

The sovereign Lord is bringing people from various countries and ethnic backgrounds together in a way never before witnessed. In our Missiological context, we meet diverse peoples not necessarily by crossing the oceans but by crossing the streets of our urban centres. All of our ministries will have to contend with this demographic situation, a pluralism impossible to escape. Our ministries, seminaries and churches will encounter a multi-ethnic, multi-socioeconomic, multi-religious challenge that calls us to stand by the truth of the Word of God without wavering.

In the same vein, Ray Bakke (1996) <sup>ix</sup> claimed that there is the divine hand behind migration and subsequent demographic explosion in cities of the world. He (1996) said God is helping the Church to fulfil the Great Commission by bringing nations closer in big cities of the world. It seems as if God has shaken the world and prompted nations to migrate to big cities. Moreover, in the Great Commission, God instructs, ‘Therefore go and teach all nations...’ (Mt 28:19). We now know that these nations have gathered in big cities of the world, such as Johannesburg. God has brought all these nations here in the big cities so that the Great Commission could be fulfilled (*cf.* Bakke 1987:28). Thus, the Church’s participation in the movement of God’s love toward the world cities and populations includes an evangelistic as well as a socio-economic responsibility (Stott 1975:23; Bosch 1991:405). Such an understanding of mission demands of the Church to embody in word and deed that Christ died and rose from the dead that he lives to transform human lives and to overcome death (*cf.* Mangayi 2016:24). However, I add, before we can embark on a transformative Missiological endeavour we need to acquaint ourselves with the use of demographic sciences in mission while unwaveringly holding on to the Great Commission and the Great Commandment as our mandate. I concur therefore with Conn and Ortiz (2001:289) that demographics will certainly assist the Church in her urban mission endeavour in three ways at least: 1) discover the shalom of God in community or the lack of it, 2) discover systemic as well as individual needs and 3) discover the reasons a church

is facing growth or decline.

In reference to Johannesburg inner-city churches such as Berea Baptist Mission Church (BBMC), demographic insights will assist towards developing mission strategies that are appropriate, transformative and biblical so that different nations and ethnic groups of this neighbourhood come to experience the Shalom of God. Since Johannesburg inner-city neighbourhoods are constantly changing, churches in them such as BBMC must remain alert in order to maintain a viable, relevant and visible presence. “Churches must avail themselves of all the tools God has made available, including demographics” (Conn and Ortiz, 2001: 307).

### **3.2 Church, Socioeconomic inequality and mission in Johannesburg inner city**

As stated in section 2, people who have moved to world inner cities such as Johannesburg have multidimensional socioeconomic needs and experience deprivation in various ways. There are for example people who have migrated to inner cities of South Africa as a result of interest and personal needs, decisions made by government powers, abrupt changes due to famine and natural disaster, the lack of municipal services, civil war and political unrest, etc. All these factors have a bearing on the direction and ministry of the church in the inner city of Johannesburg, for instance.

The church must come to understand that there is more than what meets the eye behind communities and groups plagued by poverty and injustice in the inner city. The church is therefore required to have ability and knowledge to do social analysis in order to avoid becoming insensitive to the needs of urban communities and neighbourhoods. Social sciences’ insights would be of great assistance to the church in this context as she engages in mission, and these should be taken into consideration so that thought-through and profound hermeneutics could be applied. The point is that the church should adequately understand the needs of contemporary urban society in order to communicate the gospel effectively (Engel and Norton, 1975:41). Further, Conn and Ortiz (2001:261-262) contend, “Guessing games will not do, and spiritualising the circumstances will not provide meaningful answers. Social-scientific assistance is needed when we want to plan for the future and recognise ongoing trends in immigration and urbanisation”.

Thus, the church in Johannesburg inner city on mission with God needs to use social sciences tools to pose a diagnostic, do exploration and come up

with the prescriptive process. Conn and Ortiz (2001:271) put it this way: “...we need to use the skills and sciences available to us with a certain amount of precision. Moreover, again and again, we turn to the Word of God, the eternal absolutes, to learn how we should live and serve in this needy and demanding world”.

### 3.3 Church, public sphere and mission in Johannesburg inner city

The church in Johannesburg inner-city as it is with globalised cities of the world cannot dismiss the spiritual battles that occur within these cities. The church must bear in mind that “cities are centres of power and culture and are strategic for world impact” (Conn and Ortiz 2001:359, see also Keller 1999:2). Evil exists publicly in Johannesburg inner city, and it is manifested through violence, abuse, prostitution, sex slavery and human trafficking, drug and substance abuse and the like. These evil manifestations are associated with occultism practices and Satanism, which are accommodated as religious and spiritual expressions in the free and democratic South Africa.

The church in mission in the globalised inner city of Johannesburg cannot avoid engaging in spiritual warfare against powers and systems in the city (Eph 6:11-18). In her mission endeavour in Johannesburg inner city, I concur with Conn and Ortiz (2001:367) that “The church needs to combat the deterioration of our communities by coming back to our basic commitment to the sufficiency of the gospel for life and ministry”. While proper and profound social analysis should lead the church not to “assume that every problem [in the city] has been caused by demons” (Kraft 1992:41). Discernment is thus crucial for the church on mission with God in Johannesburg inner city.

Discerning societal and systemic injustices against the weak and poor communities of the city should also preoccupy the church in her endeavour to do mission in the city. This discernment will hopefully lead to advocacy ministry and a demonstration of God’s love to those on the margins in practical ways.

In the preceding paragraph, I have discussed and highlighted the contextual challenges and hints on possible mission opportunities in the inner city. I articulated that the church has to learn how to read the city as well as its contemporary challenges using tools from demographic and socioeconomic sciences so she can come up with appropriate Bible-based remedies befitting the mission mandate in the city. Now, I will turn my

attention towards presenting a sketch of some sort of theology of mission relative to Johannesburg inner city and the elements to be considered in the articulation of such a theology.

## 4. Shape and face of urban ministry/missiology in Johannesburg inner city

### 4.1 A 3P theological paradigm for the city

One of the cherished Biblical text concerning urban mission is Jr 29: 7 which Villafane x (1995:1) calls “The Jeremiah paradigm for the city”. Villafane (1995:2) contends:

Jeremiah’s words are instructive. They present a new challenge to God’s people in a new reality. They address the question: What is the role of the people of God in the city? Or what is the role of the church in the city today? Jeremiah’s answer is an overarching, holistic vision for the city, one that can inspire our work in urban ministry. Jeremiah paradigm stems from a theology of context (presence), a theology of mission (peace) and a theology of spirituality (prayer).

This Jeremiah paradigm for the city is a three-pillar theology for the city, that is, presence, peace and prayer as I have summarised in the table below. It is apparent that this paradigm opposes escapism. Hence, it encourages the people of God in captivity to 1) maximise their presence in the city of ancient Babylon for the sake of the kingdom of God, 2) work for peace and 3) intercede for the city.

Table 1: Jeremiah Paradigm of the city – Jeremiah 29:5 – 7

Presence (Jr 29:5-6)	Peace (Jr 29:7a)	Prayer (Jr 29:7b)
Jeremiah calls for ‘critical engagement’ – <u>for presence</u>	The prophet instructed them to use their influence and endeavours to promote the public <u>peace</u> ; and to pray for the welfare of the city, as the way to obtain peace to themselves.	A true urban spirituality knows the critical importance of <u>prayer</u> ; it knows that the struggle requires the nurturing and “caring of the soul”. Spiritual power encounters are indeed present in the <i>polis</i> .

Presence (Jr 29:5-6)	Peace (Jr 29:7a)	Prayer (Jr 29:7b)
The church gathers to worship and to equip itself to impact the <i>polis</i> . It does not live for itself, but for the kingdom of God. The church cannot be indifferent to the human needs in the city – be they physical, political, economic, or spiritual. It does not hide; neither does it integrate falsely in society.	The church is an instrument, a servant, of peace in the city. It preaches and lives out the shalom of God. <u>See Ac 10:36.</u>	Equipped with the whole armour of God, we go out to confront the principalities and powers.

A logical deduction from this paradigm for the city suggests, in my view, at least three-pointers in terms of what the urban church, specifically the inner city churches, should do today. Firstly, the church should ‘bloom where they are planted’. These churches find themselves in a totally unfamiliar and sinful context with so many challenges. They should settle down, apply their mind and energy in developing ministries, which will continue to impact their city. They must continue to witness to the richness of faith, hope, and love (according to 1Cor 13:13). Secondly, they should be actively involved in social and justice services, knowing that “*The church’s mission includes engaging in power encounters with sinful and evil structures*” (Villafane 1995:34). Lastly, accepting and exercising the call to redefine and re-appropriate from Scripture and from the rich heritage of the church a social spirituality that is consistent with the “following of Jesus”.

These pointers are inescapably embedded in the double focus and goal of Christian spirituality which has (1) a vertical focus – the continual transformation into the likeness of Jesus, the resurrected Lord; and (2) a horizontal focus – the following of Jesus, in similar obedience of the Father’s missional calling (Lk 4:18-19).

It is apparent from the preceding that for a local urban church to start operating within the Jeremiah paradigm with the vision of redeeming the

city must go through profound change within herself.

#### 4.2. Tenets of an urban theology for Johannesburg inner city: A practical theological framework

The primary purpose of my article is not to identify the urgent issues in Johannesburg we need to analyse at this juncture in history, but to argue for a practical theological framework in which context analysis becomes an integral dimension of mission praxis. I concur with Kritzinger (2002:149) that our premise should be to integrate the “Great Commission” into a holistic biblical vision that includes the “Great Commandment” of Mt 22:34-40 and the “Great Question” of Mt 16:15. Who are we? We are pilgrims moving onwards together to learn and embrace the fullness of our own faith in this case in globalised cities of the world such as Johannesburg.

In tandem with the Jeremiah paradigm for the city, there are in my view, six theological tenets to be considered which could not only support and inform the praxis for urban theology but could also give us the face of this theology. These six tenets are ecumenical, contextual, interactive and shared process, integrated and holistic, engagement of different sources that inform the praxis and transformation.

##### 4.2.1 Ecumenical

Ecumenical is about cooperating with others of different denominations and theological persuasions within the Christian faith. It is a collective trajectory with people seeking to understand what the nature of the city is and the way God asks us to demonstrate his love and justice in the city. The ecumenical theology of the city will emerge naturally as a result of collective reflection. Co-operation also means learning to live with our differences in the hope that a theology will emerge that takes the city seriously but also reflects cultural as well as theological tones.

Inner-city challenges are too big for one church to tackle alone. In relation to the United States of America, Thomas and Blake cited in Ramsay (1998:606) found that “growing inequalities, middle-class flight, and social and cultural fragmentation...increasingly characterise metropolitan areas generally. This has again and again driven congregations into ecumenical coalitions and para-congregational groupings ... so that the assets and resources of the church might be made accessible to those most in need”. Greater, city-wide and thought-through ecumenical cooperation is what the church in Johannesburg needs in her endeavour to do church

and mission in the city.

#### **4.2.2 Contextual analysis**

Kritzinger (2002:193) posits:

...If a theology wishes to make a difference in a particular context, it has to understand that context thoroughly. And in order to understand a context, you need to analyse it consciously and intentionally. It is dangerous to assume that you know what is going on around you, because cultures and situations are constantly changing, and new developments often take place under our noses without us being fully aware of the implications.

This is true particularly of urban contexts such as Johannesburg inner city, where there is a great deal of diversity and mutual influencing between different groups of people, as well as rapid social change. Thus, emphasis on the contextual approach is about wondering how God expects the church to relate to this inner-city context and on how the church could develop appropriate ministries in the inner city. Ministries that seek to address contextual issues relative to the inner city in concrete ways must develop a contextual approach to theology and ministry in the inner city. Kritzinger (2017:24) explains “It is a theology that deliberately and systematically analyses its life-world, in order to understand what is going among the people and in the community at large”.

#### **4.2.3 Interactive and shared process**

The theological framework we propose here should bear in mind the notion that theology/mission is not static but rather a continuous and dynamic process of collective and mutual learning. This process requires that we engage the scriptures, the context and the others creatively. It is an ongoing dialogue with oneself, the scriptures, the world and the other ones. This process believes in the priesthood of all believers and invites and welcome contributions from groups in the church. It must make use of the untapped potential of lay people for ministry in the inner city. The nature of your mission project will certainly determine the composition of the group. The church should choose people who will be most helpful as advisers, supporters and critical discussion partners.

Further, through this process the church groups are going to explore what it means to think critically, to be creative, and to integrate insights from different disciplines in addressing the issues they are faced within the inner city. The creativity required here means not to keep on repeating

what others have said, or not to repeat it in exactly the same way they have been saying it. It is to see new things, or to see old things in new ways; to connect issues that were not connected before; to approach old problems from new angles or with new “tools”.

#### **4.2.4 Integrated and holistic**

To integrate is to connect, combine, include and unify, thus producing a situation that is integer, a Latin word that means “whole” or “together”. The church in mission with God in the inner city needs to demonstrate that it can combine (integrate) insights from theology, the Bible and doctrine into a unified vision that can lead to transformative action in the inner city.

We often tend to do ministry in the city in a fragmented way, dealing with an aspect of isolation from others. In order to redress this fragmentation, it is desirable to adopt a total and integrated approach to urban ministry. It is required of the urban theologian/missionary/ missiologist to integrate theory together with practical experience as well as personal spirituality. The total and integrated approach also assumes the integration of knowledge from different theological disciplines in the process of dispensing ministry in the inner city. Servants of God are expected to exhibit wisdom and maturity, as they integrate their theological insights and bring them to bear on a pressing community problem in the inner city.

#### **4.2.5 Engaging different sources which inspire praxis**

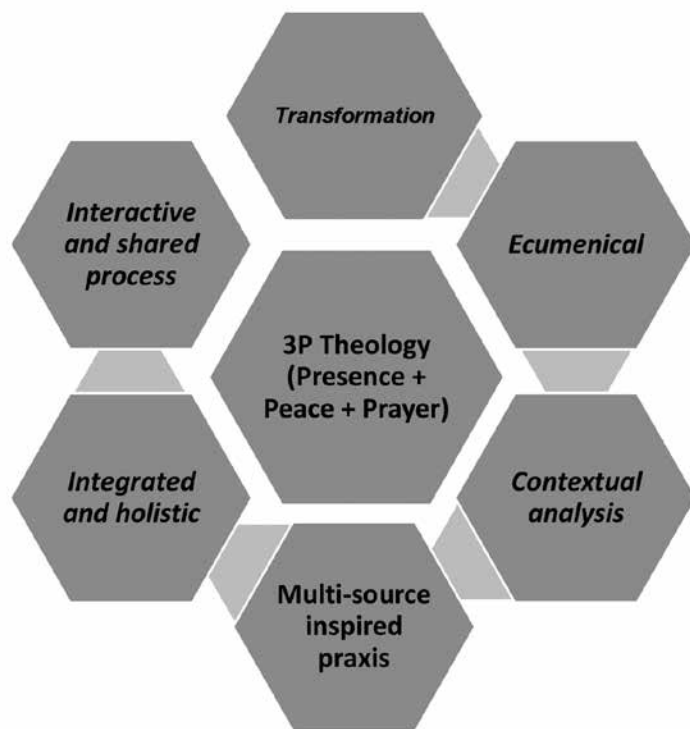
Theology is not a simple process, it is not enough, for example, to refer to biblical verses and hope that all is well. Theology must engage the different sources that inspire praxis. We must indeed be aware of different sources that influence our praxis, clarifying at the same time our intentions in the theological process. In my case, as an evangelical urban missiologist and practitioner, the process centres on the interpretation of the Bible and the evangelical tradition in which I stand. This interpretation of the Bible is concrete and contextual, in which the “signs of the times” that were identified during contextual analysis (and the understanding of the lives of the people around me) are consciously “brought to” the Bible, to see what happens when text and context meet at a deep level. I aim to find images, impulses, ideas, stories, patterns of action in the Bible that could give light, guidance and direction to me and ministry team in a local situation, particularly as it relates to the community problem that I have identified in the inner city where I minister.

#### 4.2.6 Transformation

Kritzinger (2002:148) contends, “One of the key features of the Christian tradition – in its better moments – is its world-formative and world-transformative power”. The church needs to understand that involvement in *missio Dei* in the inner city includes the fact that mission as an “activist streak” in the life of the church and this is embedded in – and is an expression of – the mission of the triune God in history.

Urban theology/mission has to aim for the transformation of urban communities. It is not enough to understand and analyse the city and its dynamics. After analysis and reflection come transformative actions. Transformation of the urban missionary/theologian should happen before we can hope for transformation to happen in urban communities.

A graphical summary of the framework for the church in Johannesburg inner city includes as epicentre the 3P theology and the six tenets in an ongoing cycle involving action and reflection.



The 3P theology for the city proposed in this contribution integrates the six tenets of urban missiology that I highlighted previously. I submit that

this 3P theology has to form part of the ecclesial vision for the inner city. For the realisation of the 3P vision, these six tenets are pursued together and are perceived all the time as a unit.

#### 5. Conclusion

This article attempted to provide answers as to how could local congregations, for the sake of mission, embrace the globalised reality associated with migration crises in Johannesburg inner city. Challenges and mission opportunities relative to Johannesburg inner city were highlighted and discussed as well as biblical imperatives for mission in the inner city. A paradigm for the city based on Jeremiah 29 and a practical theological / Missiological framework which integrate six tenets, i.e. ecumenical, contextual, interactive and shared process, integrated and holistic, engaging different sources which influence Christian praxis and transformation, are presented for thinking about and doing mission in globalised inner city such as Johannesburg.

Thus, this research contributes to the discourse and the need for the search of authentic and appropriate urban mission praxis in cities such as Johannesburg.

#### 6. Notes

- i. Mt 28: 19-20
- ii. Mt 22: 34-40
- iii. “Political activist” short cut occurs when a group of Christians, working from within their faith, become so aware of the brokenness of society as they analyse the challenges facing them, that – in their attempt to change the world – they gradually neglect the dimensions of theological reflection and spirituality in their activism, thus producing a “secularised” three-point cycle consisting only of involvement, analysis and Planning.
- iv. “Ivory Tower” - There are too many theologians at universities (and seminaries?) who limit their theological work to an interplay between social analysis and theological reflection, while ignoring personal involvement, spirituality (church involvement) and planning (working with others in concrete projects). Such a “short cut” is woefully inadequate to address the challenges of our time and to answer the question of Jesus in Mk 8:29.
- v. “Missionary activist” option limits itself to involvement, spirituality and



planning. Many Christians, with very good intentions and a huge amount of spiritual energy, ignore social analysis and theological reflection in their Christian activism, thus reducing their praxis to a spiritualising short cut. By doing so they often repeat the mistakes of earlier generations of missionaries, because they do not take the time to learn lessons from history or to think through the ideological implications of the choices they make or the methods they employ.

vi. “Conversionist” option combines involvement, theological reflection (concentrated on Mt 28:16-20, Jn 14:6 and Acts 4:12), a narrow spirituality, and the planning of activities aimed exclusively at conversion. This approach has developed a confident theological apologetic and has strong financial backing, but the fact that it ignores (or seriously undervalues) the dimension of social analysis, makes it a short cut that lends itself more easily to an ethnocentric praxis, thus undermining holistic contextual praxis.

vii. These statistics are 7 years old, by now these numbers have most likely doubled.

viii. In **July 2006** – “Hidden God, hidden people and hidden beauty”. Paper read at the Urban Consultation. Theme: Celebrating God in the city. The Urban Consultation is an event, which engages church leaders, practitioners, academics and corporate leaders involved in urban ministry.

ix. This is verbatim quote of Ray Bakke as a plenary speaker at the 1996 biennial National Consultation on Urban Ministry held at Methodist City Mission, Pretoria in July 1996.

x. Consult Villafane Edwin 1995 (Seek the peace of the city. Reflections on urban ministry. Grand Rapids / Michigan: William B. Eerdmans) for an extensive discourse on the Jeremiah paradigm for the city and its implications for urban mission in the contemporary world.

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#### **Author's Declaration**

The author declares that there is no financial gain or personal relationship(s) that inappropriately influenced them in the writing of this article.

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