

And You Will Be My Witnesses (Acts 1:8)

# ***HOW DO WE DO MIGRANT YOUTH MINISTRY?***

## ***A Comparative Study of The Church of Bangladesh and Three Churches in Groningen***

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# Introduction

## Purpose of the Research

I attempt to write this research paper as a requirement of my Master's of Theology Course under the Protestant Theological University, Groningen, Netherlands. My main research question is: *How do we do migrant youth ministry as a congregation?* It echoes a burning question of the Church of Bangladesh in most of the recent Church Councils<sup>1</sup>. The aim is to reach and provide pastoral care to the young members of the church who migrate from rural areas to Dhaka for higher studies and employment. Often environmental and societal changes e.g. migration, urbanization, modernization, lack of resources, traffic congestion etc. are identified as the main obstacles. Some efforts had been taken by the denomination following the discussions in different church councils in the last decade. For example, letters were sent to all rural parish priests for the addresses of the migrant youth; a one-day seminar for migrant nurses was arranged; the Youth Fellowships of the parishes were encouraged to integrate the newcomers; a youth worker was appointed; more social development projects were opened in rural areas to provide employment etc. However, satisfactory results have not come out of these initiatives. There are still many youth without any connection with the church who are seen in the city for instance, in the street, tea-stalls, markets, work places etc. The church is often told that some youth are addicted to drugs; some young women are married to Muslim men and suffer from family problems; some work in risky conditions and are being exploited; some live in very poor conditions; some develop frustration and low self-esteem etc. The church continues to discuss these issues and makes new resolutions to reach them. Very recently "a special committee"<sup>2</sup> has been formed in Dhaka Deanery Council to work out what can be done. As a priest of the church in Dhaka city, I am also very much concerned about it. This paper finds out that the problem is not only with the changes of the environment, but also with the present practices of the church as it does not respond creatively and effectively to the environmental changes. Moreover, discussions take place at denominational level and all its efforts are centred on the leaders without involving the local congregations.

My special interest is to learn *what is happening in a different part of the world*, especially in Europe today. The Church of Bangladesh was founded by European missionaries a few decades ago and tries to remain faithful to the practices it inherited from them. I pre-suppose from my own experiences and observations that with the change of time, the European churches have changed in many areas whereas the Church of Bangladesh remains the same with its traditional practices. Ammerman states that "anthropologists and historians have chronicled the ways in which colonial peoples have appropriated the symbols and stories of

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<sup>1</sup> See *Reports of the Dean and Deanery Secretary in Dhaka Deanery Council* held on 22 July 2011, 08 June 2013 and 24 July 2015 (in Bengali).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

their colonizers as their own tools of transcendence and resistance.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, I want to explore, *how do the European churches do their migrant youth ministry today?*

The contexts are very different, yet as Christians we are called to participate in the common mission of the Holy Spirit in the world that unites us into one body of Christ<sup>4</sup>. So my intention is to find out *what insights I can get from the churches of Groningen* that can be applied in Dhaka. Swinton calls this process ‘theoretical generalizability’. He quotes Sim: “the data gained from a particular study provide theoretical insights which possess a sufficient degree of generality or universality to allow their projection to other contexts or situations...”<sup>5</sup> Osmer says that “observing good practice in other congregations is a powerful source of normative guidance.”<sup>6</sup> Tennent inspires us by saying that “there is much that we can offer the newer churches outside the West... Likewise, they can help to fill in the gaps in our own theological reflection.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, I attempt to compare the practices of the Church of Bangladesh and the three churches in Groningen so that *we can learn from each other*. The main focus is on the practices of the church but it also addresses the problems and needs of the migrant youth. At the end, this paper proposes the *family based migrant youth ministry model* as an additional model for the Church of Bangladesh in Dhaka.

### **Goal of the Research**

As the church is searching for new ways to provide pastoral care to its migrant youth, I hope that this paper will help the church to review its present practices and take necessary steps for the future. It will also help the migrant youth to experience the love of God through the love and care shown to them. That will inspire them to live in close connection with the church and play their role as youth in church activities, which is an important requirement to grow together in faith. I am ambitious that the churches in Groningen will benefit too from this research as it was expressed to me during my investigations. I hope that it will also be useful for any further scholarly research in this area. Thus, it can be used as an academic resource.

### **Content of the Research Paper**

The introductory chapter describes the main purpose and goal of the research. Chapter 1 offers a brief description of the problems of the migrant youth ministry. Chapter 2 provides the key terms and methodology used to carry out the research work. Chapter 3 presents a brief description of the context as a process of complexifying the situation. The four focus congregations with a brief theoretical and theological reflection are presented in chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7. The concluding chapter compares all four congregations in the light of the research questions and finally proposes a family based model of migrant youth ministry with a few recommendations exclusively for the Church of Bangladesh.

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<sup>3</sup> Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey and London, 2001, p.369.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:4-12,13 (NRSV).

<sup>5</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, SCM Press, 2006, p.48.

<sup>6</sup> R. R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2008, p.152.

<sup>7</sup> Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, Zondervan, Michigan 2007, p.13.

# Chapter 1: The Problems of the Migrant Youth Ministry

This chapter provides a general view of the problems of migrant youth ministry both in Dhaka and Groningen. The narrative that follows below is an outcome of participant observations and focus group interviews. Here, we see that not only the migrant youth go through various problems but there are also many problems within the model, policy and practices of the congregations that keep them far from effective migrant youth ministry.

## I. Dhaka City

### a. Problems with the Resources

Proper accommodation, access to right information and finances are the most common problems faced by the migrant youth in Dhaka<sup>8</sup>. Although the church accommodated some students and workers in its campuses in the last three decades, at present there is no facility except for 6 students in Cathedral parish. Nowadays, unlike in the past, the relatives rarely share their rooms with their migrant relatives due to an increased individualistic attitude of family well-being. “My uncle wants his son and daughter to have their individual rooms to live and study. He does not want to disturb them by letting space to any extra person in the house.”<sup>9</sup> However, until 1990, the common practice was that migrant youth used to stay in the house of their relatives. On the other hand, many house-owners are afraid to rent their houses to the unknown bachelor youth due to a fear of anti-social activities<sup>10</sup>. So the youth manage to live where they can and shift from one place to another quite often. It is difficult practically to locate their address as many of them do not want to share their address<sup>11</sup>. “I went house to house to collect addresses of the migrant youth in Barujani and Telikhali parish, but most of the parents said that they knew only the mobile phone number but not their full addresses. I doubt that they did not want a priest or church leaders to visit them or they might have some other problems.”<sup>12</sup> Some youth attend the church service on an irregular basis. A few are not allowed by their employers to attend as they have more clients to serve in the weekend. “I go to the Roman Catholic Church in Mirpur-2 as it conducts a service at night thinking about the workers like us.”<sup>13</sup> Another problem is unemployment. The youth suffer from serious financial crises as part-time or hourly-based jobs are not a common practice in Bangladesh. The youth provide private tuition to school-children and manage to live on what they earn. It is hard to find a job, if they do not have proper information, connections with the local people and recommendations of influential people.

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<sup>8</sup> See. The Constitution of Dhaka Deanery (passed in the First Council of Dhaka Deanery) Section 4: The Priorities of Dhaka Deanery. No 5. (i) To support the migrant workers in social, moral and spiritual life and to provide them practical help in different matters. (ii) to provide financial and humanitarian help to the migrant meritorious but poor students especially to solve their accommodation problems. (Translated from Bengali)

<sup>9</sup> Interviews: Migrant youth, Dhaka.

<sup>10</sup> Strict rules have been declared by the government to the house-owner after terrorist attacks in Gulshan, Dhaka on 01 July 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Minutes of ‘Dhaka Deanery Council’ of the Church of Bangladesh (24 July 2015, p.1).

<sup>12</sup> Interviews: A rural parish priest.

<sup>13</sup> Interviews: A Beauty Parlour worker.



The church is not able to connect to the migrant youth due to its limited number of workers and funds. The priest and the church leaders are most of the time occupied in doing “what they know how to do.”<sup>14</sup> Heavy traffic congestion and transport problems make their tasks even more difficult. The top leaders are greatly concerned to reach the migrant youth. So they direct the responsibility to the local Pastorate Committee whereas the local Pastorate Committee depends on the diocese to do the task or at best on their priest to do what he can. Above all, there is the problem of not having the necessary funds for this task either at the upper level or at the local level.

### **b. Problems with the Structures of Authority**

The constitution of the church states the rules and regulation for forming Youth Fellowships at different levels. It identifies as youth both students and workers, married and unmarried, “between the ages of 16 to 28.”<sup>15</sup> However, in reality, only the unmarried students between the ages of 16 to 22 are seen as active members in the Youth Fellowship. Two clergy are elected as the youth conveners and a youth secretary is appointed at denominational level. They are accountable directly to the bishop. The bishop takes the initiative based on available funds to organize conferences, lesson on hymns etc. and instructs one of them to arrange the conferences: detailed program, theme, sub-topics, budget etc. The choices of youth are not considered and there is often a tension between the local Youth Fellowship and the youth workers. The invitation of the program is sent to all the parish priests and secretaries to select their participants. Apart from the church conferences, the youth also attend conferences organized by Christian organizations. The conveners collect information about all these programs and prepare an annual report for the councils.

There is no special desk or room for the youth department in any office. The local Youth Fellowship is neither well organized nor regularly active. Their activities are mostly seen at Christmastide and Eastertide in local parishes and depend on the availability of church grants. The youth are obliged to pay a small amount of registration money. “Two youth, one male and one female, represent the Youth Fellowship in the parish committees”<sup>16</sup> but they depend on the decision of the leaders. They are encouraged to express their thoughts and to ask their questions. But most of the time they do not open their mouth as they know the possible answers. The leaders appreciate the so-called obedient and quiet youth. So in reality the youth take decisions outside these meetings, what they will do and what not. For instance, the two representatives were asked in what way the church could help their annual picnic. The youth presented their detailed program, venue, budget etc. to the committee but the committee members one by one disagreed to their proposal and offered them something else which they did not want. They were told, “We do not have so much money. Why do you need to go to

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<sup>14</sup> An expression used by Nancy T. Ammerman in her research in 23 congregations in the USA to refer to those congregations who are satisfied with their present practice and not willing to learn or try anything new or different. See Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey and London, 2001, pp.73, 345.

<sup>15</sup> Formation of the Youth Fellowship in *The Constitution of the Church of Bangladesh. Section: 6*, p.91. It allows married youth to be members of the Youth Fellowship but not of the Executive Committee or of other committees in order to encourage younger people in leadership, which creates lack of interest with the senior youth.

<sup>16</sup> Formation of the Pastorate Committee in *The Constitution of the Church of Bangladesh. Section: 5*, p.77(b).

the countryside? Do not go at this time of the year as there is political instability in the country etc or do it in the city.”<sup>17</sup> The youth listened to them, went back to their group, discussed among them, finally they cancelled the picnic altogether. Some youth attended picnics with other churches’ youth group. This has been happening in Mogbazar church in last 4/5 years.

### c. Problems with the Culture

All the church services are Holy Communion Services and follow the Book of Prayer<sup>18</sup> of the Anglican Church and an authorized lectionary.<sup>19</sup> Many youth find the same liturgy in every service boring. There are nearly 11 new churches within one kilometre area of Mirpur-2. Some youth attend different churches every week. “We do not like the same and monotonous liturgy of our church; therefore we go on experimenting services of new churches.”<sup>20</sup> Moreover, at present, the High Anglican tradition is considered normative in the Church of Bangladesh, which the migrant youth from different backgrounds find difficult. “When the Anglican Church united with the Methodist, United Church, Lutheran, and Presbyterian as the Church of Pakistan, it was agreed that no church would try to dominate others with its tradition, rather each church will continue with its own liturgy, tradition etc”<sup>21</sup>. However, this agreement is not followed now. Preaching on 3 yearly-cycles of themes is often superficial and does not address current issues and events. The preachers aim to teach the Bible as this 15 to 20 minutes sermon is the only opportunity. “Present generation know many things but not the Bible. It is important to teach them Bible in the church.”<sup>22</sup> It is hard to organize the congregation members on weekdays. Conversely, the preaching can be extremely social without enough biblical exegesis and theological reflection as the preachers do not have much time to prepare themselves. There are also other reasons, as Cameron describes the problems of talking about God in practice, e.g. actions without words, practice without any reference to theology, cultural forces that keep faith under cover etc<sup>23</sup>. Although the hymnal includes classic and contemporary hymns in different languages, the congregations like to sing classical and Bengali hymns. But singing only these hymns creates disinterest among the Garo and Santali youth, although they are bilingual. The youth participate more in leading, including preaching on Youth Sundays, once or twice a year. Otherwise, they are mostly encouraged to sing in a choir led by the elders.

The church has diverse youth in its congregations as they come from different corners of the country, different church traditions and different ethnical and linguistic backgrounds. They have their own culture and traditions which are very different and rich. Some migrant youth are highly gifted and have effective leadership qualities. The urban youth are well-educated and advanced with modern networking systems. However, the church is neither interested in

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<sup>17</sup> Interviews: One of the committee members of the Youth Fellowship of Mogbazar parish.

<sup>18</sup> *Prayer Book of the Church of Bangladesh*, Jerry Printing, Dhaka, 1997 (modified and Bengali version of the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England).

<sup>19</sup> *Almanac 2016. The Church of North India*, ISPC, New Delhi.

<sup>20</sup> Interviews: A few migrant Youth of Mirpur Parish.

<sup>21</sup> See. The Constitution of the Church of Bangladesh. pp 1,3.

<sup>22</sup> Interviews: A priest of the Church of Bangladesh, and also a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church.

<sup>23</sup> Helen Cameron, Deborah Bhatti, Catherine Duce, James Sweeney, Clare Watkins, *Talking about God in Practice*, SCM Press, 2010, pp.7-17.

nor knows how to integrate all these gifts and talents. Rather, their traditional ways of organizing services and activities discourage the youth from bringing in their gifts and participating actively.

Youth raised in Dhaka have developed a kind of urban culture. They are divided into groups based on their economic and social status, educational backgrounds and age differences. The elite and senior groups dominate the activities of the Youth Fellowship. They are few in number but have a strong bond between them. This discourages the migrant youth from approaching them. They would rather stick to their own friends from their own background outside the church.

Many conservative and possessive parents accompany their young daughters (and also sons). They do not allow their children to be active in the Youth Fellowship, fearing male-female close friendship in their teens or youth ages. Some other parents keep their children so busy in academic educational systems that the youth have no time at all to make social connections in the church. They connect with their friends through social media, e.g. Facebook.

Then there is a media culture that changes rapidly and is often contradicting to the local standard culture of the church. A young man can be teased for wearing an earring and a young woman for wearing jeans or for not covering her head while receiving the Holy Communion. When that happens, the youth stay far from the church or hide themselves in the back row.

## **II. Groningen City**

Groningen is a city in a well-developed and well-ordered country. It is well known for its larger students' community. It welcomes students from different countries and from the countryside and other cities of the Netherlands. It also welcomes immigrants, transient workers and refugees. Therefore, the context is multi-cultural. However, there are many assumptions and expectations that are not always followed in practice. For example, everyone or every organization seems free to make their own choices and decisions as long as they do not break the rules and order. Every person's rights are ensured and everyone is respected equally. People are secure and safe in their everyday lives. There are several organizations in Groningen to assist the migrant youth with their practical difficulties<sup>24</sup>. Congregations run their social work through their connections with different organizations. Both congregations and the youth seem economically independent and they share all the costs of the spiritual and social activities. Many church leaders assume that with government services and Internet access, migrant youth should not have any problems. "Those who are coming to study here, they must know how to get help from Internet."<sup>25</sup> However, the reality is different and only a few churches are aware of this. These will be discussed in detail in chapter 5, 6 and 7. In short, they are as follows:

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<sup>24</sup> See HOST-IFES Students (<http://www.hostgroningen.com/>); the website of University of Groningen (<http://www.rug.nl>), ([https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLdsMpUardfwrv0IEofhmbxuHDIxDVE\\_nt](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLdsMpUardfwrv0IEofhmbxuHDIxDVE_nt)); INLIA(<http://www.inlia.nl/>) etc.

<sup>25</sup> Interviews: A leader of Grace Church.

### **a. Problems with the Resources**

Proper accommodation, access to right information and finances are also common problems among the migrant youth in Groningen. Often the migrant youth are not comfortable living in the houses arranged by different organizations. Sometimes the room provided by the university is only for one year. “I hear the cases that university provides room only for the first year, then from the second year they have to look for something on their own.”<sup>26</sup> Sometimes the refugees do not like to stay in the house provided by government organizations. They get a weekly allowance and find it difficult to live on that. “Do you call this life? I am told to live here and given a very small amount of money every week. I am not allowed to work. People do not look at us with respect”<sup>27</sup> “The difficult part was only that I still did not have my freedom. I had to tell everything to the security guards, when I was going out or coming in, like a jail. Then I was invited by a church youth to live in her house with her. So it was like I got freedom.”<sup>28</sup> The migrant youth are lost if they cannot connect socially with their neighbours. “The international students of the PThU were getting lost, so the university has arranged community living in Casa Mundo so that the students can live together in one house and also with Dutch youth. Since the house is in our neighbourhood, we invite the students in our church programmes.”<sup>29</sup> There are websites and organizations to provide the migrant youth with the required information, but this often need clarification. “The same train ticket costs different price in the station and in Hema or Albert Heinz.”<sup>30</sup> They also need help from the Dutch people. “I do not know what to buy from the supermarkets because the labels and cooking instructions on products are written in Dutch which I cannot read. Then, I do not know how to follow Google maps and I am always lost in the street. And nobody had told me that I was not allowed to cycle in Herestraat.”<sup>31</sup> As unemployment is high, the Dutch youth also go through financial problems<sup>32</sup>.

Not all the churches have all the resources they need. On the one hand many church buildings are being sold for not having enough members and on the other hand many congregations, especially the international and migrant ones, do not have a building. The government does not help religious institutions. Most of the churches have a part-time priest/pastor, whose job description is defined and hours counted. They are not always available. Moreover, they are occupied with the many different tasks of the congregations.

### **b. Problems with the Structures of Authority**

It is challenging for the churches to adapt in order to be more welcoming to the migrant youth. Either the structures of the churches or the long-term habits of local members resist changes. Changes involve conflicts which many congregations try to avoid. Ammerman explains that free churches that can adapt to changes are likely to grow whereas many mainline traditional churches that care less about social changes and resist adapting to

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<sup>26</sup> Interviews: A migrant youth of Grace Church.

<sup>27</sup> Interviews: A Bangladeshi migrant youth in the neighbourhood of Immanuel Church.

<sup>28</sup> Interviews: A migrant youth of Grace Church.

<sup>29</sup> Interviews: A leader of the Immanuel Church.

<sup>30</sup> Interviews: A migrant youth of Grace Church.

<sup>31</sup> Interviews: A Bangladeshi migrant youth in the neighbourhood of Immanuel Church.

<sup>32</sup> Interviews: A leader of Grace Church.

changes are likely to decline in the near future<sup>33</sup>. Another problem is that most of the churches do not have a structured youth group or specific youth activities.

### **c. Problems with the Culture**

Many congregations are not aware of the cultural differences among the people, for instance the cultural shock experienced by the migrant youth. They were born in a religious society and raised in faith. They find it difficult to adjust to the unbelief in a secularized country. They need spiritual care and to be integrated into the community of the believers. But many churches do not have youth anymore and this causes a lack of interest in migrant youth. Individualism in a modern society is another problem which is also reflected in the lives of the congregation. Many people seem more interested in their personal well-being and spirituality, and not in communal life with the people they meet in the services. The relationship is limited to a hi-hello type of encounter. Thus, the migrant youth need special attention and welcome. Above all, there is a bad effect of liberalism. The Netherlands is very liberal in its policies, for instance regarding the use of drugs. Some migrant youth get addicted to drugs easily and some struggle with the question of morality. Thus, many migrant youth go through serious spiritual, moral and psychological problems which they cannot share with anybody and they need regular pastoral care.

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<sup>33</sup> Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*, Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, New Jersey and London, 2001, pp.329-335.

# Chapter 2: Methodology

## I. Key Terms

*a. Model of Practice:* Every congregation is different from others, functions in a different situation of a particular context and develops its own practice. Practice is not simply an action of an individual or a community as we may assume. Swinton says that practices “contain values, beliefs, theologies and other assumptions which for the most part go unnoticed until they are complexified and brought to our notice through the process of theological reflection.”<sup>34</sup> He further adds that “All Christian practices emerge from reflection on and interpretations of the nature and purposes of the practices of God in history”<sup>35</sup> Basically he says that all congregations participate in the divine mission of the Triune God in this world. The question is how far they are faithful in doing so. Therefore, it is important to discern what God’s mission is. Archbishop Rowan Williams defines mission as “finding out where the Holy Spirit is at work and joining in.”<sup>36</sup> Karl Hartenstein uses the term *Missio Dei* and says that “to fulfil that mission He (God) engages in a series of sending acts. The Father sent the Son, into the world at the Incarnation. The Father guides His Son during His ministry. The Son sends the church into the world after His resurrection. The Son sent the Spirit into the world at Pentecost.”<sup>37</sup> Therefore, *to be sent or reaching the people in the world* becomes a norm to enquire how far the present practices of congregations are faithful in witnessing and performing the Gospel. For this, all our practices need to be theologically questioned and challenged. Likewise, the situation and context in which the practices are carried out may look normal and uncomplicated. However, they are not. We discover that there is a gap between ‘what is going on’ and ‘what is actually going on’ when we apply theories of social sciences to complexify the situations in our theological reflection. This research paper therefore critically looks at the situations and practices of the congregations and reflects theoretically and theologically to learn how far congregations faithfully participate in the mission of the Triune God and perform the Gospel.

*b. Migrant Youth:* Migration is a common phenomenon all over the world due to various reasons: urbanization, education, employment, war, climate, family union, religion etc. However, this research paper focuses on the migrant youth in Dhaka. Here, the term *youth* refers to the young people of 16 to 28 years old according to the constitution of the Church of Bangladesh. Normally at this age, youth migrate to Dhaka for further studies, employment or other purposes. Paul B. Steffen writes that “especially the young people are commissioned by

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<sup>34</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, SCM Press, 2006, p.20.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23.

<sup>36</sup> C. J. P. Niemandt, Trends in Missional Ecclesiology in *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 68 (1), Art. 1198, 2012 (<http://www.hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/view/1198/2403>).

<sup>37</sup> W. Rodman MacIlvaine III, *What is the Missional Church Movement?*, p.96

(<http://www.dts.edu/download/publications/bibliotheca/DTS-What%20Is%20the%20Missional%20Church%20Movement.pdf>) accessed on 11 August 2016 at 23:46h.

their families to find new sources of income to assist their relatives in their struggle to earn their livelihood for survival.”<sup>38</sup> However, although the youth migrate to Dhaka for a better future, they are challenged with economic, psychological and social problems. Shahadat Hossain says that “the experience of poverty in the city of Dhaka follows the pattern of urbanization without development, the opposite of the expectations and aspirations of the poor there.”<sup>39</sup> His research shows us how difficult life is in Dhaka for the newcomers at present and at the end of the research he says that it is the social capital that helps the migrant people to gradually establish themselves in the city.

*c. Migrant Youth Ministry:* The vision of the youth ministry of the Church of Bangladesh is: “And you will be my witnesses.”<sup>40</sup> The main objectives<sup>41</sup> are to create unity and cooperation, to participate in all the activities of the church, to be connected with other Christian Youth Associations, to create awareness among the youth, to involve them in cultural activities, to arrange trainings, seminars, conferences for them, to commit themselves to the service of the poor and suffering humanity etc. How far these aims are reflected in the present youth ministry is a question. Paul B. Steffen says that “Youth ministry can be characterized as the multiform activity whereby the Christian community, in the light of its self-understanding as a community animated by the Holy Spirit empowers the young to become agent-subjects-in-relationship and to advance towards fullness-of-life-for-all through concrete life-situations, and thus contribute to building up in the world God’s Reign, proclaimed and manifested in and by Jesus Christ.”<sup>42</sup> Now the question is: does this definition fulfil the need of the migrant youth? Do we need a specific youth ministry for the migrant youth? It seems that a double strategy is needed as the migrant youth do need special encouragement and motivation, and also to be accepted and integrated socially and culturally, so that they can use their talents in their own way with the local youth. John B. Zhang gives us some examples of migrant youth ministry in China<sup>43</sup>: (i) material help, e.g. financial, care, assistance; (ii) table fellowship, e.g. inviting them to the feasts, family occasions, outings etc. for spiritual support and sense of belonging; (iii) support groups, e.g. creating jobs and business opportunities; sharing employment information and recruiting them in their own working areas; and (iv) social groups, e.g. arranging training and leisure activities, providing mutual support, sharing faith life, helping each other. There the members of the church do all these works.

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<sup>38</sup> Paul B. Steffen SVD, *Migrant Youth and the Mission of the Church: A Pastoral Theological Reflection*, 2011/76 ([http://www.sedosmission.org/web/en/mission-articles-2/doc\\_view/1830-migrant-youth-and-the-mission-of-the-church-a-pastoral-theological-reflection](http://www.sedosmission.org/web/en/mission-articles-2/doc_view/1830-migrant-youth-and-the-mission-of-the-church-a-pastoral-theological-reflection)) accessed on 08 August 2016 at 19:25h.

<sup>39</sup> Shahadat Hossain, Rapid Urban Growth and Poverty in Dhaka City in *Bangladesh in e-Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 5 Number 1, January 2008, p.1 (<http://www.bangladeshsociology.org/BEJS%205.1%20Rapid%20Urban%20Growth%20and%20Poverty%20final.pdf?q=dhaka>) accessed on 08 August 2016 at 19:32h.

<sup>40</sup> Acts 1:8 (NRSV) / Formation of the Youth Fellowship in *The Constitutions of the Church of Bangladesh*, p.81.

<sup>41</sup> Formation of the Youth Fellowship in *The Constitutions of the Church of Bangladesh*, pp.81-82 and *Church Profile* in English.

<sup>42</sup> Paul B. Steffen SVD, *Migrant Youth and the Mission of the Church: A Pastoral Theological Reflection*, 2011/80.

<sup>43</sup> John B. Zhang, *The Chinese Church’s Response to Migration within Mainland China (Part I)* pp. 35-37 ([http://www.china-zentrum.de/fileadmin/redaktion/RCTC\\_2012-1.23-](http://www.china-zentrum.de/fileadmin/redaktion/RCTC_2012-1.23-46_Zhang_The_Chinese_Church%E2%80%99s_Response_to_Migration_within_Mainland_China_-_Part_I.pdf)

[46 Zhang The Chinese Church’s Response to Migration within Mainland China - Part I.pdf](http://www.china-zentrum.de/fileadmin/redaktion/RCTC_2012-1.23-46_Zhang_The_Chinese_Church%E2%80%99s_Response_to_Migration_within_Mainland_China_-_Part_I.pdf)) accessed on 08 August 2016 at 22:35h.

d. *Congregation*: The reason for focusing on congregations is that unlike well-developed countries, the government of Bangladesh is not capable of meeting the basic needs and rights of the people. It does need the support of the private and religious organizations. However, the government organizations in the developed countries cannot ensure spiritual, psychological, social and moral support for the migrant youth. Therefore, congregations as participants of God's mission in this world cannot stay far from following the commands of Jesus Christ to love others and leave the migrant youth to their own fate or to the government organizations. They do have the responsibility to provide pastoral care to the migrant youth as every human being is created in the image of God. At the same time the congregation as a generator of social, moral and spiritual capital, sociability and connected communities<sup>44</sup> has the capacity to provide support to the migrant youth. Niemandt quotes Hooker: "The church is not a building or an institution but a community of witnesses, called into being and equipped by God, and sent into the world to testify and participate in God's work."<sup>45</sup> However, it is sad that "very little investigation has been pursued with regard to the policies and practices of church agencies extending pastoral care and support to migrants and refugees."<sup>46</sup>

## II. Choosing Locations

Keeping the main research question in my mind I have visited several congregations in Groningen to select three congregations for this research as there is no space and time for more. They are different from each other and established in the heart of the city. They are: Grace Church<sup>47</sup> (international church), Immanuel Church<sup>48</sup> (Dutch church) and the Russian Orthodox Church<sup>49</sup> (migrant church). For the Bangladesh part, I chose St Thomas' Church New Centre, Mogbazar.

## III. Formulating Questions

Based on my main research question, *How do we do migrant youth ministry as a congregation?*, I formulated a set of questions which can be classified under three sections: (1) what are the needs of the migrant youth, (2) what are the present practices of a congregation and (3) what are the changes that need to be made based on the needs of the migrant youth? To study a particular congregation and its practice, I have concentrated on

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<sup>44</sup> Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey and London, 2001, pp.349-370.

<sup>45</sup> C. J. P. Niemandt, Trends in Missional Ecclesiology in *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 68 (1), Art. 1198, 2012 (<http://www.hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/view/1198/2403>).

<sup>46</sup> J. M. Woodward, (2009), *Welcoming the Stranger: A dialogue between Scriptural understandings of and Catholic Church policies towards migrants and refugees and pastoral praxis in the migrant and refugee pastoral care bodies within the Archdiocese of Perth* (Doctor of Pastoral Theology (PThD), University of Notre Dame Australia (<http://researchonline.nd.edu.au/theses/44/>)).

<sup>47</sup> See the website of Grace Church. (<http://gracechurchgroningen.com/about-us/>).

<sup>48</sup> See the website of Immanuel Church.

(<https://translate.google.nl/translate?hl=en&sl=nl&u=http://www.immanuelkerk-groningen.nl/&prev=search>).

<sup>49</sup> See the website of the Russian Orthodox Church.

(<https://translate.google.nl/translate?hl=en&sl=nl&u=http://www.orthodoxekerkgroningen.nl/&prev=search>).



three broad dimensions of congregational life, *Resources, Structures of Authority and Culture of a Congregation*<sup>50</sup> with a set of questions.

#### IV. Methodologies

I have chosen the methodology of Practical Theology to carry out my research because it aims to relate *practice to theology*. Cameron says that “Practical Theology’s task is to make practice more theological and in that way it makes theology more practical.”<sup>51</sup> To do so, it uses diverse approaches and theories of social sciences and interprets theologically the practice of the churches and of the world. Swinton defines Practical Theology as “critical, theological reflection on the practices of the church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring faithful participation in the continuing mission of the triune God”<sup>52</sup> Thus, human experience and practice in a particular situation are considered authoritative sources of knowledge. The process begins with a hermeneutic of suspicion. The researcher or interpreter is aware of the reality of human fallen-ness and the experience of being brought up short and starts his or her investigations from suspicion. As the process of interpretation continues, there is always a back and forth movement between practice-theory-practice. Gadamer explains that “the process of text understanding is fuelled by the reader’s pre-understandings and by his interest in participating in the meaning of the text.”<sup>53</sup> However, human experiences and practices are not the true beginning point or the goal. According to Swinton, the true beginning point is God’s revelation in and through Christ and the goal or end point is the church’s faithful participation in God’s mission in the world. And in this way, the discipline of Practical Theology becomes a missiological discipline.

Different scholars of Practical Theology provide us with different methods of Practical Theological reflection. Swinton promotes “the model of mutual critical correlation.”<sup>54</sup> In this model, the conversation takes place between (1) Current Praxis: what appears to be going on, (2) Culture or Context: finding out what is actually going on, with the help of qualitative research, (3) Theology: how are we to understand the situation in the light of scripture and tradition and (4) Formulating Revised Practice: faithful practice. Richard Osmer suggests “the four tasks of Practical Theological Interpretation”<sup>55</sup> as a spiral and bridging concept. They are (1) The Descriptive-Empirical Task: Gathering information to observe what is going on, (2) The Interpretive Task: Drawing on theories of social sciences to investigate why this is going on, (3) The Normative Task: Using of theological concepts to interpret what ought to be going on and (4) The Pragmatic Task: Determining strategies of action to discover how we might respond. This model uses qualitative research in its descriptive-empirical task.

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<sup>50</sup> Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey and London, 2001, p.47.

<sup>51</sup> Helen Cameron, Deborah Bhatti, Catherine Duce, James Sweeney, Clare Watkins, *Talking about God in Practice*, SCM Press, 2010, p.17.

<sup>52</sup> John Swinton, and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, SCM Press, 2006, p.25.

<sup>53</sup> Werner Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance*, SCM Press Ltd, London, 1997, p.65.

<sup>54</sup> John Swinton, and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, SCM Press, 2006, p.95.

<sup>55</sup> R. R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2008, p.11.

Cameron suggests the model of “the four voices of theology”<sup>56</sup> and theological action research in doing Practical Theology. They are (1) Operant Theology: the theology embedded within the actual practices of a group, (2) Espoused theology: the theology embedded within a group’s articulation of its beliefs, (3) Normative theology: the theology derived from the scriptures, the creeds, official church teachings, liturgies, traditions etc. and (4) Formal theology: the theology of theologians and dialogue with other theological disciplines. Here qualitative research is used to find out the gap between the Operant and Espoused theologies.

All these scholars see Practical Theology as theological action research and use various approaches of qualitative research of social sciences as a necessary tool. Jennifer Mason says that “qualitative research aims to produce rounded understandings on the basis of rich, contextual and detailed data. There is more emphasis on ‘holistic’ forms of analysis and explanation in this sense, than on charting surface patterns, trends and correlations.”<sup>57</sup> Swinton says that “qualitative research involves the utilization of a variety of methods and approaches which enable the researcher to explore the social world in an attempt to access and understand the unique ways that individuals and communities inhabit it.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore I have chosen a multi-method approach of qualitative research to produce data and resources, theories of social sciences to complexify and analyze the situation and a conversation of four voices of theology to reflect on the practices. Another reason for choosing a qualitative empirical research method is that the quantitative research provides us with statistics and a general picture of the practices to get an overall idea of *what is going on* but without qualitative research it is impossible to learn *what is actually going on*. In the final section, I have followed the method of Osmer’s four tasks of Practical Theology to develop a strategy of action, a new model of migrant youth ministry.

## V. Methods of the Research

(i) *Participant Observations*: I attended the main services of three congregations. I observed their buildings, their sanctuary, symbols, other rooms, car parking and bicycles etc. I counted the number of worshippers, tried to guess their age and learnt their nationalities. I was particularly interested to observe the presence of the youth, their movements and their relationship with other members. It helped me to understand their resources and social capital. Then I observed the chair and attire of the priest, arrangements of pews, traditions etc. to learn the structures of the authority. To learn the culture, I observed carefully notice boards, the door and the role of the welcoming team, relationship between the members, how they greet each other, their liturgy, lay participation in the liturgy especially of the youth, music and music team, volunteers, coffee time, the topics of their discussions etc. I noted down everything in my field notes and took both still and motion pictures. I tried to connect with the people and to build up a relationship, participated in leading the services, for instance doing liturgical dance, concelebrating the Eucharist, presenting a country report etc. Apart from services I attended various meetings, e.g. Annual General Meeting, a meal with

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<sup>56</sup> Helen Cameron, Deborah Bhatti, Catherine Duce, James Sweeney, Clare Watkins, *Talking about God in Practice*, SCM Press, 2010, p.17.

<sup>57</sup> Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, SAGE Publications, London, 1996, p.4.

<sup>58</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, SCM Press, 2006, p.29.

refugees. I also visited a few houses of congregation members, international students and refugees to learn their everyday practice of spirituality.<sup>59</sup> I too invited a few of them to my house and we shared a meal together.

*(ii) Focus Group and Interviews:* I interviewed the priest/pastor, a focus group of leaders and migrant youth of the three congregations, in total 8 formal interviews and many informal interviews. I made contact with them over coffee time or via emails. When they gave me their consent, we fixed a time for interviews and I sent them a copy of my thesis proposal. I had already formulated a set of questions but I added more questions as they arose during my participant observations. However, our discussion progressed in flexible and spontaneous ways. I recorded and transcribed the interviews as my data resources for this paper. Despite working in a language which was often neither mine nor my interviewee's, we managed to communicate well and were able to ask supplementary questions for clarifications. Later on I sent them the description of their church found in this paper for corrections if need be. Apart from these formal interviews I continued to take field notes of subsequent conversations with leaders and congregation with their consent.

For the Bangladesh part, I gathered information from my colleagues, church secretaries and migrant youth through Skype conferences, email exchanges and phone calls. I have also used my own experience as a migrant youth in Dhaka, diocesan youth worker, a core group member of "South Asia Christian Youth Network" from 2002 to 2012 and a priest of the Church of Bangladesh in Dhaka city from 2010-2015 as well as an international student in Groningen from 2015-2016.

*(iii) Consulting with Literature:* I have studied a good number of scholarly works in the field of Practical Theology to learn the methods of empirical research. I have been especially influenced by Swinton, Ammerman, Osmer, Cameron and others. I have also consulted various research work and literature related to migration, youth ministry, sociology of religions, ecclesiology etc. A bibliographical note is provided at the end. Besides these, I have looked into the websites, Facebook pages, pictures, artefacts and annual council reports of the congregations.

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<sup>59</sup> Nancy T. Ammerman uses the method of studying personal life and lifestyle, stories, pictures, daily routines etc. to find the presence of spirituality or religious practices in the everyday life of people. See her book: *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life*, 2013 (<http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199896448.001.0001/acprof-9780199896448-chapter-1>) accessed on 08 August 2016 at 23:23h.

## Chapter 3: The Context and Situation

This chapter presents a brief history of Dhaka's urbanization and why, when and how the Church of Bangladesh has flourished in the city due to rural migration. It informs us that although young people migrate to Dhaka for a better future, they go through a difficult life. The church had been aware of it, took some initiatives, e.g. building a multi-story building, opening hostels etc., but did not continue. Migration continues and new parishes are being founded and there is a need for more but the denomination is not able to reach and offer help to all the migrant youth due to lack of resources.

### I. Urbanization of Dhaka

Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, is the 11th largest megacity<sup>60</sup> of the world today. According to the "latest census"<sup>61</sup>, the urban area of Dhaka city is 300 sq. km; the population is 9,317,043 people; the density of the population is 8,229 per sq. km. and the growth rate is 3.48%. In the last five years, the population, growth rate and area have grown enormously. According to a private updated census, the present population is 14.6 million<sup>62</sup>. This is due to the massive internal migration of the rural people to Dhaka.

Dhaka's urbanization began under the British colonial power (1757 to 1947). They initiated the development of Dhaka's infrastructure as well as industrial and commercial activities but did not pay much attention to the rural areas. However, the main migration took place after they divided India into two countries based on two major religions: Pakistan for the Muslims and India for the Hindus. The Hindus emigrated to India and the Muslims emigrated to Pakistan, both to East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and West Pakistan (Pakistan). As Dhaka became the provincial capital of East Pakistan, most of the Indian Muslim immigrants chose Dhaka city<sup>63</sup> rather than the rural areas. The Pakistani rulers followed the same pattern as the British. They treated East Pakistan as their colony and did not pay attention to the development of its rural areas.<sup>64</sup> So Dhaka remained the centre of administration, commerce and education. To accommodate the migrants, it began to expand its territory into the surrounding areas including the low-lying lands. Dhaka became the capital city after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. All of a sudden, the population of Dhaka increased from 718,766 in 1961 to 2,068,353 in 1974. According to the population census, the total population of Dhaka city was 4,023,838 in 1981, 5,142,555 in 1991, 7,794,086 in 2001 and 9,317,043 in 2011<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> See

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/0,,contentMDK:21393869~pagePK:146736~piPK:146830~theSitePK:223547,00.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Nojibur Rahman MD, *Population and Housing Census 2011*, National Series, Volume 4, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, p.17

([http://203.112.218.66/WebTestApplication/userfiles/Image/BBS/Socio\\_Economic.pdf](http://203.112.218.66/WebTestApplication/userfiles/Image/BBS/Socio_Economic.pdf)).

<sup>62</sup> See <http://www.newgeography.com/content/003004-evolving-urban-form-dhaka>.

<sup>63</sup> Shahadat Hossain, Rapid Urban Growth and Poverty in Dhaka City in *Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 5 Number 1, January 2008, p.3.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Nojibur Rahman MD, *Population and Housing Census 2011*, National Series, Volume 4, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, p.18.

Dhaka city continues to grow in population and area-wise even more rapidly despite the development of a good number of commercial cities and towns all over the country. Nearly 500,000 people migrate to Dhaka every year. It is said that by the year 2025, the population will reach over 25 million.

Bangladesh is a secular democratic country. However, it also recognizes Islam as its state religion as 86% of the people are Muslims. Others are Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and tribal ethnic groups. Bangladesh is known for its harmonious ecumenical relationships despite some terrorist activities happening. This is reflected in the life of Dhaka. The city attracts people from every faith and ethnic group. Christian youth began to migrate to Dhaka in the early 1980s adding to the number of those who were already there for employment. Most of them were helped by members from their own community. Once they settled, their families joined them gradually. This is the common pattern of migration and resettlement. All of them have their homes in the village but they live in Dhaka until they die. The Christian population of Dhaka was 26,063 in 1981, 36,354 in 1991, 41395 in 2001 and 62,064 in 2011<sup>66</sup>. The present number of them in the city would be more than 100,000.

The main reasons are to achieve better education, employment, and to enjoy the facilities and security available in a city. Climate change is another reason.<sup>67</sup> Bangladesh being the largest delta in the world, the land of rivers suffers from natural calamities every year, e.g. droughts, floods, cyclones, tornadoes, storms, land erosions etc. that make people jobless and homeless in rural areas. Their situation persuades them to migrate to Dhaka. However, in reality the city does not provide them with better living. It is already overburdened with a large population and unable to provide them with basic utilities and human rights. Therefore, the newcomers continue to struggle with poverty and difficulties. Many survive on low-paid jobs and live in poverty. Some get involved in anti-social activities e.g. drug abuse. Those who migrated two or three decades ago also find it difficult to continue to live in this over-populous city. In short, although people leave rural areas because they do not see any hope for a better future there, they are further challenged in Dhaka city.

## **II. Christianity in Bangladesh**

Christianity was first introduced into this land by the traders but actual evangelization took place in the British colonial period. Mostly the backward, poor and untouchable people and especially the British employees and students of missionary schools responded to the Gospel. However, Christianity remained always a minority.

Christians had to go through different experiences and relocations as the Indian sub-continent suffered from partitions three times. At first, the British divided the territory of Bengal into two parts in 1905, West Bengal (a State of India) and East Bengal (Bangladesh). In this period, Christian converts were hated by the community for their connections with the British. The second partition came when the British left in 1947. East Bengal was given to the Pakistan rulers as it had more Muslims, with the new name East Pakistan. In this period, the Christian minority was discriminated against and marginalized. Although the rulers invited

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.22

<sup>67</sup> Climate Migration Drives Slum Growth in Dhaka in Cities Alliance, (<http://www.citiesalliance.org/node/420>).

expatriate development workers, the entrance of missionaries was restricted. Therefore, the local Christians inherited the land and institutions of the churches. The final partition was the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. The Christians took part in the fight for freedom and gave their lives. However, their contribution was not taken into account, nor was their status any better in the post-independent period. They lost their land due to the partitions, yet managed to live on farming on their own or leased land. A few could manage jobs in missionary institutions with their minimal education. As more people later got education, mostly in church-run boarding schools, they got involved mainly in nursing, teaching or working in social development programs. To this day, Christians have been continuing to serve the nation with their medical and educational institutions and social programs.

### **III. The Church of Bangladesh<sup>68</sup>**

The Church Missionary Society, the so-called British Low Anglicans, arrived in 1805 in Kushtia. St Thomas' Church, the present Cathedral, was built in Dhaka in 1819 by the British. The Council for World Mission, the British Presbyterians arrived in 1862. They founded churches in Rajshahi and Chittagong among the Bengalis and Santalis. The Oxford Mission, the so-called British High Anglicans, arrived in Barisal in 1895. They also supported evangelization among the Garos in Mymensingh. The province was under the Diocese of Calcutta. The Diocese of Dhaka was formed in the year 1952 as a part of the Anglican Church in Pakistan. In November 1970, the Presbyterians and Anglicans joined together under the unity plan of the Church of Pakistan. The Diocese of Dhaka officially cut its ties with the Church of Pakistan in 1974 and emerged as the Church of Bangladesh.

The first Bengali Bishop was consecrated in 1975. The congregation was very small, comprising mainly foreign diplomats and development workers with a few Bengali converts. The church continued its mission work among the Bengalis, Garos and Santalis living in Barisal, Mymensingh, Kushtia, Rajshahi and Chittagong. Gradually small parishes were established in the surrounding areas but many of them moved to Dhaka for higher education or jobs. So the parishes of Dhaka were diverse from the beginning. They were from different locations, from different ethnic backgrounds and from different missionary traditions. At present the (United) Church of Bangladesh is a member church of the worldwide Anglican Communion<sup>69</sup> and the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

A second diocese, 'The Diocese of Kushtia', came into being in 1990 followed by the formation of the Synod. New deaneries were formed in both the dioceses in the following years. At present, the Diocese of Dhaka has four deaneries and the diocese of Kushtia has two deaneries. There are four Bishops including two retired bishops, 32 male priests, catechists, nuns, brethren and lay workers to provide pastoral care. The church runs its spiritual and social work all over the country through the Church of Bangladesh Social Development Program (CBSDP), Christian Ministry for Children and Youth (CMCY), hospitals and clinics, primary and high schools, boarding schools, nursing schools, trade schools,

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<sup>68</sup> The Church of Bangladesh in *World Council of Churches* (<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/church-of-bangladesh>).

<sup>69</sup> The Church of Bangladesh in *Anglican Communion* (<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/member-churches/member-church.aspx?church=bangladesh>).

theological colleges, retreat centres etc. The administrative staffs, associate workers and beneficiaries include everybody irrespective of class, caste, religion, gender etc.

#### **IV. Dhaka Deanery**

The Dhaka City Pastorate was declared a deanery in July 2011. There is a great need to form new parishes in the city as the internal migration from rural areas continues. The priests of Dhaka Deanery have already begun to celebrate the Holy Communion in members' houses in Mohammadpur and in Savar EPZ areas.

(i) *St Thomas' Cathedral, Sadarghat:* There are 70 members in this parish at present. The church runs a theological college, a hostel for the theological students, three primary schools and a social development project. There are 6 students accommodated with the theological students, mainly the sons of the clergy.

(ii) *St Thomas' Church, New Centre, Mogbazar:* This parish was established in 1980 as a daughter parish of the Cathedral parish. This parish will be discussed in detail as a case study in this paper.

(iii) *St Andrew's Church, Mirpur:* This parish was established in November 2000 as a response to the relocations of members of Mogbazar parish as well as the arrival of new migrants in Mirpur due to the cheaper house rent. At present, there are nearly 800 members. The church realized the need to accommodate the migrant youth. Therefore, it built a multi-storey building which had a sanctuary, the theological college, ecumenical youth centre and hostels for migrant youth, both male and female. The building came into use in March 1999 and was named Bishop Blair's Youth Centre. The congregation was consecrated as St Andrew's Church in 2000. However, the hostels were closed down within a few years. The building was changed into the bishop's residence in 2010. The offices of the Synod, Diocese, Church of Bangladesh Social Development Program and Christian Ministry for the Children and Youth were shifted from the Cathedral campus to this building. The theological college was moved to the Cathedral campus. The youth centre has gone and the multi-storey building has become a very congested, busy and restricted building. The youth from the local parish hardly find a place there apart from attending the Sunday services. They are allowed to organize their programs in the church building with the permission of the bishop.

(iv) *Kalachandpur Parish:* The rapid growth of garment industries, beauty parlours, restaurants and foreigners' houses attracted migrant young workers, mainly Garos, from Mymensingh. They began to live in and around the affluent and diplomatic areas in Gulshan, Banani, Baridhara etc. These areas are far from other parishes, not in kilometres but due to heavy traffic congestion and transport problems. These young workers are either not allowed by their employers or have other practical difficulties or are not interested to join the Bengali services in Mogbazar or in Mirpur. Therefore, the diocese has rented a small apartment there for services and for the priest's family. Mogbazar parish supported this parish for a few years. The Garos are happy to have a new parish but are not happy with the building. According to the church register, there are 60 Garo and 20 Bengali families and nearly 200 members at present. However, nobody knows the actual number of the church members in the area. Many

are seen in the streets and markets that do not come to the church. The priest of this parish also looks after two more branch parishes now, namely Tongi and Gazipur.

*(v) St Joseph's Church, Savar:* Savar is an industrial area in Dhaka district. It is 26 km away from the Cathedral and 23 km away from Mogbazar. The diocese purchased a piece of land here in 1985 and founded a residential trade school because of the cheaper price of land. Later on a few families built their houses here for the same reason. Therefore, St. Joseph's Church was founded which included the students of the trade school, staffs and the local members.



# Chapter 4: St Thomas' Church, New Centre, Mogbazar

## A Congregation in the midst of Environmental Change

### I. Description<sup>70</sup>

The parish was founded in 1980 as a relocation of St Thomas' Cathedral parish and functioned as a daughter parish of the Cathedral. Until late 1960, the Cathedral parish had foreign nationals serving as diplomats, government advisors, teachers and a very few Bengali families, students, nurses and job seekers. The number of members reached almost 200 by the year 1980. Most of them began to live in Mogbazar and in its surrounding areas. So the church purchased a one-storey building in Mogbazar in 1980. Church members continued to migrate from Barisal, Kushtia and Mymensingh. Besides being the location for the Sunday services and church business, the small campus of the church became an ideal place for social connections of young people<sup>71</sup>. The migrant youth gathered here every evening for chatting, playing music or playing indoor games with the congregation members. This new parish became the mother parish of other parishes in Dhaka in the last 36 years.

#### a. Resources

The building is nearly 300 metres away from the main road, which keeps it almost invisible. It has none of the distinguishing architectural features of a church except a cross on the main gate. The ownership is vested in the Dhaka Diocesan Trust Board. The parish built its sanctuary on the roof to accommodate all the worshippers. The altar space is decorated according to the High Anglican tradition. It contains a table covered by seasonal coloured draperies. There are a small metal cross, two flower vases, two candles and an opened Bible on the table. A big wooden cross is hung on the wall behind the table. The priest goes to the altar only during the consecration of the Holy Communion. Otherwise the priest leads the service from the right corner of the sanctuary. There is a movable pulpit in front of the altar. Indian local musical instruments are kept at the left side on the floor for the choir. The hall is carpeted for the worshippers to sit on the floor. They also sit in the veranda, on the stairs and on the ground floor during festivals. There are a few chairs and benches attached to the walls around for the sick and elderly people. A small table is kept at the entrance that contains the monthly bulletin, hymnal and prayer book. The staircase has no facility for the elderly or infirm. The sound system is good. The manse, church offices and a small meeting room are on the ground floor. There are four staff rooms. These rooms were used as a hostel for the migrant youth from 1982 to 1994 but the hostel was closed as the rooms were required to accommodate the staff. Besides these, there is a common kitchen, an office room for a church-based micro credit program and a small stage in the grounds. The ground is used for tea time, the love-feast in festivals and for social and cultural programs.

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<sup>70</sup> Based on informal interviews on Skype, participant observations, church documents, artefacts, reports, pictures and personal experience of the researcher.

<sup>71</sup> Information received via email from Dr James Tajos S. Das, ex-secretary and member of St. Thomas' Church, New Centre, Mogbazar, Dhaka.

The sanctity of this church campus is highly maintained. The sanctuary is kept locked apart from the services. The main gate remains closed due to the security reasons. The building is not used for income-generating purposes. However, the Pastorate Committee sometimes allows programs of church-based organizations and of congregation members under certain conditions. In return, it receives gift of money.

The congregation members are obliged to pay monthly membership fees or a secret pledge or both. Those confirmed members who pay the fees regularly have voting powers at the Annual General Meeting. All others who have received the Sacrament of Confirmation are considered members. According to a diocesan ruling, the migrant members need to bring a transfer order from their rural parish after attending the new parish for 6 months. The English Congregation conducts separate services. They contribute a monthly rent for the sanctuary. Apart from this, the parish depends on the offerings and donations for its regular expenditure, e.g. salary, utility bills, entertainment, transport etc. For special programs or expenditure it depends either on fund-raising or on a denominational grant, for instance for renovation of the building.

Since the members are denominational members and attend services in different parishes, it is hard to maintain a members' register. Nearly 200 members attend the service in a week. A rough estimate of total members would be 800. At present the majority of members in this parish are from Barisal division and from a High Anglican tradition; others are from different parts of the country.

The members are relatively more highly educated, skilled, and committed. A few members can be called elite, whereas most others struggle to live on their monthly salary. Both husband and wife work full-time. The house rent is very high. Thus, most of the families live in very small apartments or two to three families share the apartments. All the children, teenagers and youth, study in educational institutions.

An initiative was taken in 1998 by the bishop to organize Garos and to begin a special service for them as well as Bengalis on Sunday evening. It continued for a year but then stopped. It was not encouraged due to the possible creation of tension by having two separate congregations in one parish. However, the English congregation began to conduct English services separately, paying a monthly rent. At present, there are about 25 members. The congregation organizes its worship services and has a shared meal once a month. It has no connection with the Bengali congregation.

#### **b. The Structures of Authority**

The priest is appointed by the Synod and paid by the Pastorate Committee according to the church pay scale. The catechist, women's worker, cleaning staff and caretaker are appointed by the Pastorate Committee. The parish priest is the chairperson of the Pastorate Committee, which has 6 elected members, 1 representative of the Women's Fellowship, 2 representatives of the Youth Fellowship, one male and one female. Two more members can be nominated by the bishop and the priest, if necessary. There are 3 more fully-fledged committees: Women's Fellowship, Youth Fellowship and the Bible School. There are many sub-committees e.g.

Liturgical, Choir, Church Decoration etc. All these committees are subject to the Pastorate Committee. The Annual General Meeting elects the members of all the committees.

The parish is in Dhaka Deanery and under the supervision of the Dean, appointed by the bishop. The Bishop of Dhaka is the highest authority as he lives in Dhaka city. So he holds the position of the Head Shepherd. There is another board called Dhaka Clergy Meeting in which the clergy of Dhaka city meet 6 times a year. They discuss theological matters of the church and prepare the rota for the service leaders in different parishes.

The local Pastorate Committee and Annual General Meeting are free to discuss various matters and take decisions, but the bishop has the final say on any decision made. The priest-in-charge plays the role of authorized representative of the bishop to the Pastorate Committee and is accountable to the bishop. However, the committee members can approach the bishop and seek his advice if necessary. Sometimes this is helpful; sometimes this creates tension and keeps the priest always under pressure. But the bishop himself is not free from the pressure either. As the congregation is financially self-supported, well-educated and professionally skilled, it often does not feel obligated to accept all the diocesan decisions, although it has representation on diocesan councils.

### **c. Culture**

(i) *Participation in the Liturgy:* Since Friday is the weekly holiday in Bangladesh, the congregation conducts its main service on Friday morning as well as on Sunday evening. Both the services follow the liturgy, but the Sunday service is more informal and incorporates a Bible study. The services are conducted in Bengali. The congregation follows the authorized lectionary and uses the 2013 edition of the hymnal. The priest leads the main part of the services. The laity participation includes one/two readings from the Bible, singing in the choir, assisting as altar servers, holding the chalice, collecting the offertory and offering the intercessory prayer. The priest prepares a rota of the participants in consultation with the officers of the Pastorate Committee and publishes the names in the monthly bulletin. The senior and influential people are given importance and priority. The youth are encouraged to take part in singing in the choir.

Among the regular worshippers nearly 30-40 youth attend the service sporadically. The number includes active Youth Fellowship members, irregular members, and anonymous migrant youths alone or as a group. Sometimes one youth is given an opportunity to read a text. Others prefer to sit in the back rows. Some of them do not like the old hymns. “These hymns make us sleep or sound *mora mora* (mourning after somebody has died).”<sup>72</sup> They prefer lively hymns and modern musical instruments. Some do not like the use of the same liturgy in every service. Others do not like the sermons. They go out and come back when the sermon is over. One interviewee said, “Our priests must learn from Assemblies of God Church or Pentecostal churches how to preach.”<sup>73</sup> Yet, they attend the service to pray for themselves and their families. Those who have friends like the social aspects of the congregation. Some others attend because they are forced by their parents.

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<sup>72</sup> Interviews: A migrant youth of the Church of Bangladesh.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

The situation is different on Youth Sundays,<sup>74</sup> celebrated once or twice in a year, in which the youth take all the lay participation. The Youth Fellowship Committee selects the participants including the preacher. The preacher is obliged to submit his text to the priest beforehand. I remember from my youth days that my text was changed so much by the priest that there was hardly anything of my own. The sad part of the Youth Sundays is that the migrant youth are absent in the leading roles.

(ii) *Tea Time*: The worshippers gather on the ground floor for tea after the service. The priest and the leaders go round to meet people. The youth prefer to go to a corner in a small group of their own circle of friends. Some even stand outside the main gate with their friends. The migrant youth stand either on their own or stick to their relatives or village people. Most of the time, they like to avoid the priest and the leaders, for fear of being questioned about their stay or irregularity. They like to remain anonymous or feel shy or feel a kind of guilty. “I am so busy in the weekend to clean my room, clothes that I cannot come to the service. Again the service takes place at 8:00 a.m. but I really feel to sleep more at least in the weekend. But the priest will say to attend the services every week.”<sup>75</sup>

(iii) *Weekly Activities*: House prayer meeting is a very common practice in this parish. The priest leads the house prayer meeting and goes round to visit houses in most of the evenings. The Women’s Fellowship leads the women’s prayer meeting every Saturday. These prayer meetings are for thanksgiving, memorial, for healing etc. The choir practises the hymns every Tuesday. The priest takes the confirmation class for teen-agers every Friday. The emphasis on the sanctity of the church campus pushed away the evening social gathering of the youth. “We used to come here and play, but we now we are not allowed.”<sup>76</sup> Those who live in the neighbourhood meet in the houses or around the road-side tea stalls.

(iv) *Youth Fellowship*: The Youth Fellowship is named *Jugantor Jubo Sangho*. It has its own Executive Committee elected by the Annual General Meeting. Two representatives from this Committee are members of the Pastorate committee. The Annual General Meeting keeps some of the budget aside for the annual youth programs, which is kept in the hands of the Pastorate Committee. If the Youth Fellowship Committee can convince the Pastorate Committee with their program proposal and budget, it is given a sum of money as a church grant. Otherwise, the Youth Fellowship raises funds for its own programs. The committee organizes its meetings, annual picnic, one-day seminar on various topics etc. At Christmastide, they organize a cultural program and carols, publish a magazine etc. The youth also attend the youth programs arranged by the National Council of Churches and by the diocese. But very often they struggle to find anyone to attend these programs as the committee members are busy and they do not have connections with the migrant youth.

At present there are about 15 members in the Fellowship. All of them were born and brought up in Dhaka. A few of them went to English-language or affluent schools and now they are university students. They are skilled, gifted and acquainted with modern networking systems

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<sup>74</sup> Youth Sundays are observed around International Youth Day or on any Sunday decided by the Pastorate Committee.

<sup>75</sup> Interviews: A migrant youth of the Church of Bangladesh.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

and culture. There is a big cultural gap between urban youth and migrant youth from rural areas or boarding schools. This is obvious in their use of language, attires, hair styles, choices etc.<sup>77</sup> So these two groups do not feel attracted to each other. The constitution permits all the youth between 16 to 28 years old, married or unmarried, students or workers, local or migrants to be members of the Fellowship.<sup>78</sup> However, in practice the youth of 16 to 22 years old are registered members of the Youth Fellowship. The married youth is not considered youth any more, both by the Fellowship members and by themselves. Another missing group in the Youth Fellowship is the migrant youth from rural areas and boarding schools although they are either university students or workers at present in Dhaka.

## II. The Needs of the Migrant Youth

Some of the special needs of the migrant youth are<sup>79</sup>:

i) *They need to receive a friendly welcome.* “I attended church services many times, but no one paid any attention to me. I had my tea and then went home. Now I go to the Roman Catholic Church in Ramna with my room-mates”<sup>80</sup> Therefore if the congregation and the Youth Fellowship approach them in a friendly way at tea time, take initiatives to get to know them well and show an interest in developing a relationship with them, they will be able to build up a relationship between the congregation and the youth. This relationship will help them to grow together, to learn from each other and to share information.

ii) *They need to be respected irrespective of their background.* The age limit for the youth needs to be revised to create space and opportunity to encourage relatively senior students and workers. “What will I do with these *picchi polapan* (very young)? There is no one of my age in the youth group. I am around 25 now and these youth are like my little brothers and sisters.”<sup>81</sup> The question of marital status should not be an issue as long as they fall into the age group. Many migrant youth are meritorious, skilled and gifted. This can be discovered only by providing them with opportunities. “The migrant youth like to sing in high pitch, and we cannot sing in that high pitch. So do not tell him to play harmonium with us.”<sup>82</sup> The more the congregations and the Youth Fellowship are open and welcoming to the diverse culture and gifts, the more they will be enriched. Creating ways for participation in the liturgy, in the church activities or in the voluntary work can be some of the good efforts.

iii) *They need to be confident in their sense of belonging.* The challenge here is to invite them not only to the activities but also to take part in the decision-making systems, even in a small forum. “When there is a need to decorate or clean the church, only then we are approached.”<sup>83</sup> The councils who vote for the Youth Fellowship Committee members may

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<sup>77</sup> Participant observations.

<sup>78</sup> Formation of the Pastorate Committee in *The Constitution of the Church of Bangladesh. Section: 5*, p.77(b).

<sup>79</sup> Based on informal interviews and personal experience of the researcher working as a diocesan youth convener and as a priest of the church.

<sup>80</sup> Interviews: A migrant nurse of St Thomas’ Church New Centre, Mogbazar.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Interviews: a choir member of St Thomas Church. (The problem is not with the pitch actually, but unwillingness to accommodate the migrant youth in the choir by the urban youth.)

<sup>83</sup> Interviews: Migrant youth.

consider electing a variety of youth to it representing age group, gender, cultural and regional background.

iv) *They need to be offered practical help.* The migrant youth live in isolation in a strange city far from their family. They lack relationships, information and guidance. Their relatives may live in the other corner of the city or may not show much interest in them, fearing they will be taking on an extra burden. So they need to be integrated socially in their immediate neighbourhood. They would like to be invited by friends and families on special occasions. Nowadays the house-owners do not want to rent their houses to bachelors. Families may also help them by sub-letting them space in their apartments. Living with a family, rather than in a private hostel, helps them more to keep to their moral teachings. The members may also provide them with assistance in applying for a full-time or part-time job or directing them to better institutions. “I do not get a job because I do not have *mama chacha* (uncles) to recommend for me,” most of the migrant youth say this.

v) Finally, *their human dignity needs to be respected.* Along with their parents, they should feel secure in all the activities of the Youth Fellowship. This is an important question especially for the young women in the culture of Bangladesh. “Parents do not allow their daughters to attend youth programmes.”<sup>84</sup> At the same time, the youth’s personal choice and rights need to be respected. No one should feel threatened and everyone must have an equal voice in expressing themselves.

### **III. Reflection**

#### *a. Summary*

The church was founded as a response to the migration of its rural members. In its heyday the church provided “social ties of exchange, obligations and trust which produce social and human capital.”<sup>85</sup> There were diverse people from different backgrounds in the congregation including the English congregation. It was a busy and growing church with lots of spiritual and social activities. It accommodated nearly 10 migrant youth in the church campus. The campus was crowded every evening, especially by the youth. The Youth Fellowship had a good number of active migrant youth. However, in later period, many people shifted to the Mirpur and Kalachandpur areas. Although the migration continued in full swing in the last two decades, this particular congregation did not grow in that ratio. Therefore, although there is a clear picture of decline in number, financial strength, activities etc, the congregation seems unable to realize the reality.

#### *b. Theoretical Reflection*

This church came into being through migration and it was a blessing to it. Now its present policy and practices around migration appear to be a problem. “Congregations that do not try new programs and new forms of outreach when they are faced with environmental change are

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<sup>84</sup> Interviews: Youth leader

<sup>85</sup> R. A. Cnaan, S. C. Boddie, G. I. Yancey, *Bowling Alone But Serving Together: The Congregational Norm of Community Involvement* in C. Smidt (ed.), *Religion as Social Capital. Producing the Common Good*, Baylor University Press, Waco, Texas, 2003, p.22.

not likely to survive past the life spans of their current members.”<sup>86</sup> Lack of material resources should not be used as an excuse. At present the church has better resources than before, e.g. a suitable building, spacious grounds; educated, skilled, efficient leaders, members and youth. So “What seems far more important than material resources for the survival of these voluntary organizations are the human resources that make it possible for change to be imagined and planned for.”<sup>87</sup> It seems that the congregation is unable to integrate and to make use of the social capital it has. The problem also lies with the hierarchical structures of authority. The congregation is dependent on the denominational authority for funding and decisions. The youth fellowship is dependent on the Pastorate Committee for the same. If the denominational and local authority can work in concert, there is a possibility of positive results. The problem with the culture is that those who migrated two decades ago consider themselves the people of Dhaka parish at present and look at the new migrants as foreigners. They are not interested in providing them with welcome and hospitality.

Often urbanization is related to modernization, individualism, poverty, media, technology etc. For example, it is often said that people are more sociable in a rural parish and that they have more social connections than the people in an urban set-up. However, Ammerman would argue: “that city people have fewer close relationships with their immediate neighbourhood does not mean that they have fewer relationships.”<sup>88</sup> They are connected through social media on Internet, meet in offices, organizations, clubs, and restaurants. “Individuals are still very much embedded in networks of social relations that supply the social capital necessary for community life.”<sup>89</sup> Therefore if the church can make use of the social and human capital it has to offer welcome and hospitality to the migrant youth, only then is there a possibility to connect with them, integrate them into the congregation and provide them with pastoral care.

### *c. A Conversation of the Four Voices of Theology*

*Operant Theology:* The congregation puts its emphasis on incarnation theology. Popular preaching highlights that Jesus was born poor and lived with the poor.

*Espoused theology:* The Good News was first revealed to the poorer community of the society<sup>90</sup>. Jesus’ teachings gave priority to the poor, for instance the Sermon on the Mount begins with “Blessed are the poor, because they will inherit the kingdom of God.”<sup>91</sup> Thus, poverty is not seen as a curse but rather as a way to receive God’s favour as God is always on the side of the poor. . Jesus said, “You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.”<sup>92</sup> Therefore, the church overlooks the problem related with the poverty and seems very passive in its response to the practical needs of the migrant youth. Again in a poor

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<sup>86</sup>Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey and London, 2001, p.323.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p.326.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p.350.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p.352.

<sup>90</sup> Luke 2:8f.

<sup>91</sup> Luke 6:20.

<sup>92</sup> John 12:8

country, poverty in Dhaka is not given any attention. So the church is interested in providing them with pastoral care only in a spiritual or religious sense.

*Normative theology:* The theological authority belongs to the scripture as well as to the monastic traditions of the missionaries who preached Christianity in the land. The first missionaries were monks and nuns from Europe who left their wealth and embraced poverty for the sake of the Gospel. The other major religions, e.g. Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, were preached by sages.

*Formal theology:* So the challenge for the congregation is re-reading and re-interpreting the Bible in the light of liberation theology, Christology and Pneumatology, so that the theology of the congregation reflects the mission of the Triune God. Moreover, incarnation theology does not praise poverty, but rather it demands the sharing of our wealth with the poor. The Son became poor so that we can be rich. He gave his life so that we can have our life. Jesus asked the rich young man to sell his property and give the money to the poor<sup>93</sup>. He demands the same today from us *the other way round*. The congregation members need to share what they have with the needy migrant youth. In a land of poverty, not knowing what the migrant youth may need, not sharing with them what the congregation members have, not responding to the issue of poverty and not raising voices against unjust practice are sin according to the teaching of eighth century's prophets and Jesus.<sup>94</sup> The congregation generates huge *social and human capital* which needs to be used effectively to participate faithfully in the mission of love and care commanded by God, who offers us welcome and hospitality in the Kingdom of God through the Son<sup>95</sup> and guides us in following His teachings through the Holy Spirit<sup>96</sup>.

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<sup>93</sup> Matthew 19:21.

<sup>94</sup> Matthew 25: 31f, Luke 6: 24,25, Isaiah 58:6f.

<sup>95</sup> J. M. Woodward, *Welcoming the Stranger: A dialogue between Scriptural understandings of and Catholic Church policies towards migrants and refugees and pastoral praxis in the migrant and refugee pastoral care bodies within the Archdiocese of Perth* (Doctor of Pastoral Theology (PThD)), University of Notre Dame Australia, 2009 (<http://researchonline.nd.edu.au/theses/44/>) accessed on 11 August 2016 at 10:52h.

<sup>96</sup> John 14:26.



# Chapter 5: Grace (Groningen Anglican Church)

## An International Congregation of Welcome and Hospitality

### I. Description<sup>97</sup>

Grace Church is a church plant. The church began in a private house as a worship group before they found a worship place in the heart of the city of Groningen in 2012. Their vision is “bringing together people whose desire is to know Jesus, follow Him and make Him known in the city of Groningen.”<sup>98</sup> Their main strategy is to welcome people and provide them with hospitality. The people include Dutch people as well as migrant youth, be they international students, workers or refugees. Their website says, “whatever your nationality or background, we hope you feel at home among us.”<sup>99</sup> This one sentence, especially the word *whatever*, gives an idea of the place and inspires confidence in its readers to expect a welcome here irrespective of their differences. The church is a part of the Anglican Church whose “mission statement”<sup>100</sup> includes five major aims. These are (1) proclaiming the Good News, (2) teaching, baptizing and nurturing new believers, (3) responding to human need, (4) advocacy and working for peace and justice, and (5) safeguarding the integrity of the creation. Grace Church as a church plant of the Anglican Church tries to reflect more or less some of these aims in its functioning.

#### a. Resources

The congregation meets for services on two Sundays a month in the building of the Old Catholic Church. Since it is a very young church plant and most of its members are university students, economically they are not in a position at this moment to have their own building to worship every Sunday. But they do meet on the first Sunday of every month in the building of a local organization for GraceTalk, a presentation and sharing session followed by a shared lunch. The building of the Old Catholic Church has a sanctuary, a vestry room and a meeting room. There is a sacred space on one side which includes an altar, three candle stands, flower vases, a cross with crucifix on a stand, a crucifixion on the table, a censer, a lectern etc. Opposite to the altar sits the musical team with a piano, trumpet, drum etc. The pews are arranged on four sides with around fifty chairs. There are also sacred spaces near the entrance that include shelves containing images of the Saints and candles. The entire arrangement belongs to the Old Catholic Church. The meeting room has a few chairs and tables. The worshippers can use this place for children’s time, coffee time etc. Another building rented for GraceTalk has a meeting hall, a kitchen and a small garden. Both the buildings now seem smaller as the congregation is growing and the same is true with the number of chairs in the

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<sup>97</sup> Based on interviews, participant observations, artefacts, pictures etc.

<sup>98</sup> See website of Grace Church. (<http://gracechurchgroningen.com/about-us/>) accessed on 11 August 2016 at 10:54h.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> See Marks of Mission in *Anglican Communion* (<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/identity/marks-of-mission.aspx>) accessed on 11 August 2016 at 10:56h.

sanctuary. They are also in a process of exploring the possibilities of having a worship service every Sunday. It will depend on their further growth and future financial capacity.

The priest is a volunteer, appointed by the bishop of the Diocese in Europe as a part-time worker. Originally he came from the USA. But now he is settled here after marrying a Dutch woman. He also discharges his duties as a University Chaplain, Area Dean and Assistant Director of Ordinands. The congregation has 40 to 50 people attending the Sunday Services. It includes people of different ages: elderly, middle aged, youth and children. However two-thirds of them are students at university at Master's and Doctoral level and in part-time or full-time study or employment. Many are international students from all over the world. Most of the members are highly educated, talented, committed, open-minded and sociable. The congregation is not stable, as international students and transient people often leave after one or two years. Only the Dutch members remain permanently. The congregation does not enforce a strict policy of membership or pledge. They experience the Grace of the Lord by being a congregation of welcome and hospitality.

The expenditure is met by the Sunday offering and bank donations from the members. The latest financial report shows that last year's collection was about double the expenditure. Besides the money, the members contribute to the church programs in various other ways, e.g. by bringing food or drink, sharing their belongings and providing volunteer labour etc.

The congregation has a regularly updated website and Facebook page that serve as means of social networking and connection. The websites provides all sorts of information about the congregation and its upcoming events. Thus, they serve as its primary tools to welcome people into their worship services and social life. The members are given access to use the Facebook page to communicate with each other, form groups, arrange programs and invite people to the church and to their houses for prayer meetings or individual occasions. They are able to make use of online and personal resources to meet the needs of their congregation. That is how they overcome the problem of not having their own building. Often they communicate with other organizations or individuals to use their buildings when they need.

#### **b. The Structures of Authority**

Grace Church has its denominational connection with the Anglican Church in the Netherlands which is part of the Diocese in Europe of the Church of England. It is a daughter congregation of Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Utrecht. However, the congregation is free to take its own decisions as long as it goes along with the Anglican Church. The priest in charge is the chairperson of the leadership committee first formed in 2014. There are six members in the leadership team, s/elected by the Annual General Meeting. All are youth between the age of 20 to 35. Decisions on organizing the life of Grace Church and its services and events are made by this Leadership team. The activities are done by the volunteers who take the responsibility of its worship music team, welcome and hospitality, website updating, tech support, safeguarding, cycling group and children's programs. They perform their tasks out of their high commitment, effective networking and mutual trust.

#### **c. Culture**

*(i) Participation in the Liturgy:* The congregation conducts two services per month: on every second Sunday there is a more informal Service of the Word and on every fourth Sunday a Holy Communion Service. Both services follow the Church of England's Common Worship, but the former is more open and varied, while the latter has a more specified and routine structure. For music and other elements the priest, with the help of worship leaders, prepares an additional service sheet. It includes music classical, temporary and Taize chants, lessons of the day from the Anglican Church Lectionary, prayers and announcements. A group of youth come a bit earlier to make the necessary arrangements for the service. The welcome team stands at the gate to greet arriving worshippers and give them the Order of Service and music and readings sheet. The worshippers come in, greet each other and take their seats wherever they like. The priest, music team and leaders enter into the sanctuary in an informal procession from the vestry. The secretary welcomes everyone, announces the theme of the day, mentions if there are any special prayer requests and inquires as to who wants to read the lessons. Any two persons in the congregation are free to raise their hands to offer to read. Then the music leader explains the hymns and their contexts. The priest leads the worship from the lectern. His preaching includes a lot of humour and illustrations, worldwide issues and challenges, and practical implications of the texts in worshippers' daily life. Often guest speakers are invited to preach. The listeners are allowed to laugh loudly and express their reaction instantly. The intercessory prayers are offered by one or more members who prepare them beforehand. The sharing of the peace is done in such a way that all leave their seat to exchange peace with others and nobody is missed out. The offertory is collected by two leaders. If it is a Holy Communion service, two more persons help in administering the chalice. The priest has trained a small group of interested people for these tasks. The congregation stand in a circle while they receive the Communion. In keeping with Church of England canon law, all Christians who are baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity and receive communion in their own churches, are permitted to receive communion at Grace Church. Whoever is not entitled to receive communion or does not wish to receive it can opt for receiving a blessing from the priest instead of the elements. There is active lay participation throughout the service involving the young people, musicians and others from different parts of the world. The service is conducted in English, although occasionally a Dutch translation of the text is provided. The congregation holds special services at Christmas and Easter season, in which they often accommodate both Dutch and English. They also attend joint worship services with the Old Catholic Church.

A significant part of the service is the special prayer ministry group available after the service. They invite anybody who wants a special prayer to be offered for him or her. The group listens to the prayer requests and prays accordingly.

The congregation is open to experiment by inserting new things in its service, for instance including a liturgical dance in its service. For this they invited me to dance with the song 'How great thou art ...'. The entire congregation danced with me. On a different Sunday the congregation celebrated the gifts of diverse languages. Use was made of ten different languages for the prayers, Bible readings and reflections. Here again I was invited as a priest to consecrate the Holy Communion in Bengali.

(ii) *GraceTalk*: On the first Sunday of every month the congregation invites a guest speaker from within or outside the congregation to make a presentation on a particular issue, context or theme. The members gather in the meeting hall of a local organization. After the presentation there is an opportunity for open discussion. The program ends with a prayer followed by a shared lunch for which everyone brings some food or drink. This is a good time to get to know each other and to make social connections.

(iii) *Coffee Time*: The duty warden invites everybody to join the coffee time that takes place in the meeting room after the service. The priest stands at the door to meet people who need to leave early. As the worshippers leave one by one, the priest takes the opportunity to get to know them better. At the same time, the hall room is warm with people chatting in a small group with a cup of tea or coffee. The small group may involve a homogeneous group or a variety of people at one table. Some stay there for more than an hour.

(iv) *Weekly Activities*: There are Wednesday Prayer Group, Grace Housegroup Bible Study, Alpha Course, music practice etc. in the weekly programs of the church. These are arranged by the members facilitated by the priest and the leaders. The leadership team shares the responsibility among them according to their availability and it is not obligatory that the priest must be present in all these programs. Most of the programs are directed to help the newcomers to grow more in faith and in social relationship with each other.

(v) *Special Activities*: This includes the cycling group, touring to a different country, visiting refugees, BBQ, picnic, inviting people in personal celebration etc. The women of the congregation organize clothing exchange program in which they exchange dresses and other items they like. “Some girls just came to me without knowing me and asked me hei how you are doing with your clothes? And I told them that I did not have much and they had the small thing you can exchange clothes with each other for free... At the end when everybody left they asked me hai if you like more clothes just take it. And whatever I liked I just took. It did not cost me anything. So I got a lot of clothes free.”<sup>101</sup> So this creates an opportunity to share their clothes with the needy and poor. The congregation raises funds and provides warm clothes for the refugees. Some of the members of this congregation are closely linked with social and service organizations. They work as intermediaries to connect the congregation members and social and service organizations to work together. The congregation is growing through these sorts of connections.

The congregation is financially not in a position to meet all its needs, for instance to have their own building or to pay for the stipend of the priest, yet their annual financial statement shows that they had kept some budget aside and helped the poor and needy directly and through International Student Mission.

## **II. The Needs of the Migrant Youth**

The findings specifically on the needs of the migrant youth that discovered during interviews are:

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<sup>101</sup> Interviews: A migrant youth of Grace Church.

(i) *They need help due to cultural differences.* There is a big cultural difference between the developed world and the developing or poor world. Those who arrive from Asia or Africa in Groningen may find everything very strange, for instance locating a congregation through their website or Google maps. “In general cultural difference is bigger. People from Spain and Germany in general manage quite well but for example Chinese or East Asian or Asian, African, Middle Eastern students they struggle a bit more. For them it is not only a new place but also a new culture.”<sup>102</sup> They may also feel uncertain due to inferiority complexes or shyness as to whether they would be accepted by others. They may not feel at home in an English-speaking congregation if they are not good in English, especially the refugees. They may like to pray in their own language as well as being interested in familiarizing themselves with the Dutch language and culture as a way of adapting to a second environment.

(ii) *They need help for psychological reasons.* Some may feel isolated and suffer from frustration; some may feel cultural shock; some may feel neglected and/or some may feel homesick. They need to relate with friends and build up trust to share their personal inner feelings. “What disappointed me was that I always thought that being in Europe I would feel more protective because I thought it was a Christian country. European countries are Christian. That was in my mind till one of my friends said to me, who told you that Europe is Christian? It is not a Christian country. Christians are not like that. That was a big time of disappointment.”<sup>103</sup>

(iii) *They need to have more Dutch friends besides their own circle* for practical reasons because the Dutch know the land and its system better. The Dutch can offer help when someone lacks information or does not know how to get access to the official procedures or may have a housing problem etc. “I think the church can play a larger role in involving the migrant youth, making them part of the community. It does not always happen.”<sup>104</sup> In a secularized and developed country, the state is expected to provide social and other assistance. But in developing countries the church takes more responsibilities and initiatives to offer members with education help, medical help, financial help etc., as the state cannot. The priest and the leaders visit people’s houses, experience their situation and offer pastoral care and practical help. People who are brought up in such situations may expect the same from the churches in the Netherlands. “I expected from the priest that he would ask me where I came from, or who I was. For me I was new in this country so it was difficult for me to go to the people and say hei I am so and so, and I am from Pakistan. I would rather expect those people to take the initiative.”<sup>105</sup>

(iv) Finally, *they need regular spiritual exercise.* Some migrant youth especially the Anglicans have a habit of attending a service every Sunday. “I do not go to Grace Church, because they do not have service on every Sunday.”<sup>106</sup> It is very important to them to hear the

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<sup>102</sup> Interviews: Grace Church Focus Group.

<sup>103</sup> Interviews: A migrant youth of Grace Church.

<sup>104</sup> Interviews: Grace Church Focus Group.

<sup>105</sup> Interviews: A migrant youth of Grace Church.

<sup>106</sup> Interviews: A migrant youth from International Convivium, Casa Mundo, Groningen.

Word of God and to receive the Holy Communion every Sunday. This helps their spiritual need as well as supplying more frequent social encounters.

### III. Reflection

#### *a. Summary*

The church came into being as an extension of the mission of the Anglican Church in Groningen, but in policy and practice the congregation is responding to the needs of the migrant youth. The vision of providing welcome and hospitality to the people of any background is reflected in its practice. As a church plant, it does not yet have enough material resources, so it uses its human resources effectively. The priest follows the Anglican liturgy. However, his emphasis is on the flexibility, freedom and choice of the youth and friendship between the members. He understands his members well and is able to explain things to them, and therefore is able to integrate their gifts and offerings. Although the church has traditions, values, norms and disciplinary matters, it is very open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with Niemandt's statement: "to witness to Christ today by sharing in God's mission of love through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit"<sup>107</sup>. There is a balance between the Word and the Spirit. There is no structure of offering practical help to the migrant youth but the members do it voluntarily from their own resources. The church plays an active role in creating volunteers who are active in the church and also help migrants, refugees and their friends. Henk de Roest and Herman Noordegraaf share "theoretical reflections on the tri-dimensional linkage between religiosity, volunteering and social capital."<sup>108</sup> They claim that "churchgoing is an important predictor of voluntary service"<sup>109</sup> and it is the teaching of the church that encourages people to get involved in the volunteer service. Now the leadership team feels that they need to build up structures and divide responsibilities, to motivate volunteers, to visit international houses and refugee camps, to work more with other churches or groups, to focus more on relational links and social aspects like sports, shared meals, non-religious activities, to organize inter-cultural and inter-church activities etc. The leadership team and the members have a strong sense of belonging. The priest and the members are highly committed in their voluntary task for the betterment of the congregation. Therefore, despite of the lack of material resources and strong denominational structure, the church is growing and functioning well.

#### *b. Theoretical Reflection*

The congregation is in a process of responding to the changing social and religious ecology of society and involves itself in accepting the challenges and dealing with them through its social capital e.g. connection, network of skills and mutual trust with its members. Therefore, the process of secularization, modernization, individualization or urbanization that begin

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<sup>107</sup> C. J. P. Niemandt, Trends in Missional Ecclesiology in *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 68 (1), Art. 1198, 2012 (<http://www.hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/view/1198/2403>).

<sup>108</sup> Hendrik P. de Roest and Herman Noordegraaf, We Learned it at Our Mothers' Knees: Perspectives of Churchgoing Volunteers on Their Voluntary Service in *Reformed World* 59, no. 3, 2009, p.213.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

with dichotomies, an either/or position<sup>110</sup>, cannot be an obstacle in their mission. For example, the theory of dichotomies places secularization against religions. But in reality qualitative research shows that the people are not less religious in a secularized world, rather they are differently religious. Another example would be that people are less involved in a community life and are more individualistic in an urban life. But this is not true. Urban people may have more connection with people through the modern networking system than rural people have. Grace Church seems to be able to find that connection and use it to strengthen its social capital. What they need is more connection with the local people<sup>111</sup> as the international students, transient employees and refugees may leave after one or a few years. So to become strongly rooted on the ground and continue as a stable church it needs to attract the local Dutch to continue to welcome the newcomers.

*c. A Conversation of the Four Voices of Theology*

*Operant theology:* The congregation sees itself as the people of God and feels responsible to welcome strangers irrespective of differences and offer them hospitality.

*Espoused theology:* Their operant theology derives from the theology of peace and justice of the Pentateuch. According to it, the covenantal community will be judged on how it takes care of the elderly, widows and foreigners<sup>112</sup>. The congregation also emphasizes missional ecclesiology, for instance on Jesus' reaching out and embracing the people who were poor, needy, sick, outcast etc.

*Normative theology:* The theological authority belongs to the Scripture as well as to the church. The gap between the espoused and operant theology shows that the congregation has yet to go a long way to play a prophetic role.

*Formal theology:* Welcoming people and offering them hospitality are things God wants from God's people. The final judgement will be based on the love shown to the brothers and sisters as told by Jesus.<sup>113</sup> In a secular country the congregation finds it difficult to reach out to people in for example refugee camps due to governmental restrictions. Therefore, the challenge for the congregation is how it plays a prophetic role by raising its voice for the migrant youth, to reach out to them and to ensure peace and justice for them.

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<sup>110</sup> Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey and London, 2001, p.351.

<sup>111</sup> See Marten van der Meulen, *The Continuing Importance of the Local African Churches and the search for Worship Space in Amsterdam* (<http://www.martenvandermeulen.nl/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/200910-the-continuing-importance-of-the-local.pdf>) accessed on 11 August 2016 at 11:23h.

<sup>112</sup> C. J. P. Niemandt, Trends in Missional Ecclesiology in *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 68 (1), Art. 1198, 2012 (<http://www.hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/view/1198/2403>).

<sup>113</sup> Matthew 25:31f.

# **Chapter 6: Immanuel Church**

## **(Protestant Church in the Netherlands)**

### **A Church of Unity in Diversity**

#### **I. Description<sup>114</sup>**

Immanuel Church, Groningen is a part of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. The present congregation is formed out of four Protestant congregations who were declining in numbers due to the wave of secularization in the last thirty years. “I think most of the people have always tried to get people, to integrate young people and also to change the strategy and they have tried everything but secularization was a big wave and the congregations could not resist it. So three churches declined and they joined together.”<sup>115</sup> All four congregations as well as the newcomers were different in their characteristics, culture and resources, but they are now functioning as one congregation. It was challenging to bring diverse people together and it took time to adapt to the changes. However, their openness and cordial efforts to do so made it possible to be a church of unity in diversity. The congregation welcomes “seekers, believers, young and old and helps them to grow in faith through various spiritual and social activities”<sup>116</sup> through their website.

#### **a. Resources**

The congregation owns a building in the main city. The modern architecture of their new building, its bell tower and its position make it visible and attractive. It has a big sanctuary, several meeting rooms and a big dining hall with an attached kitchen. Therefore, the building itself is welcoming and suitable for organizing different kinds of spiritual and social programs.

The sanctuary is spacious and higher than the level of the pews to signify its holiness. It has an altar, a pulpit straight behind the altar, a lectern on the left side, two flower vases in two sides, a big candle with a sign of the Cross and a projector screen on the right side. The chairs are organized in a crescent shape. The sound system is very good. If someone dies, an additional candle is lit with a special prayer. There is a chair for the pastor in the sanctuary. The organ is placed at the level of the first floor. The building can be rented out for group programs, prayer meetings, concerts etc. as long as they comply with the sanctity of the church building. However, not many groups show such an interest and therefore the income is negligible. Part of this new building was built for them by the City Council; in return the Council took a part of their ground. All the expenditure of the church is met by the gifts of the members. The gifts include offertory, donations and voluntary membership fees. The

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<sup>114</sup> Based on the website, interviews, participant observations, artefacts, house visits, pictures etc.

<sup>115</sup> Interviews: A leader of Immanuel Church.

<sup>116</sup> See the website of Immanuel Church

(<https://translate.google.nl/translate?hl=en&sl=nl&u=http://www.immanuelkerk-groningen.nl/&prev=search>).



members very happily contribute their talent, treasure and time to run the church activities. Besides this, they have an amount of reserve money for their future.

The congregation has a regularly updated website that includes practical information about the congregation, its location, upcoming events, reports of past programs, a brief introduction of different activities etc. The Sunday service is broadcast online for their elderly members and for anybody who is unable to attend the service.

There are one full-time and one part-time pastor. They are appointed by the local congregation but paid according to the pay scale of the denomination. The organist and the choir members are given a small amount of money as a gift.

The church register lists nearly 3000 members. However, the congregation receives annual membership fees from about 650 houses. Each house consists of either a single person or a small family. Based on this calculation, there are about 900 members committed to pay. Around 200 of them attend the service regularly or sporadically. A few members attend the service broadcast on the website. Most of the members of this congregation are middle-aged and elderly people including a large number above 80. About 5 to 6 children attend the children's church. The missing group is the youth group of 16 to 28, the target group of this research paper. "We have not so much youth and we have one between 18 to 35."<sup>117</sup> The congregation is middle class in their social, educational and economic status. It has three levels of educated people in it: primary school, high school and university graduates. All the services and church programs are conducted in Dutch. The congregation needs to be provided with a Dutch translation if there is anything non-Dutch.

## **b. Structures of Authority**

The congregation has its denominational link with the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, of which the Synod is formed by representatives of the individual congregations. The church follows the Calvinistic Order of Ministry, which distinguishes between three offices: the office of minister, the office of elder and the office of deacon. All three offices together form the Local Church Council in every congregation. Their roles are stated in the Church Order in Articles V and VI. The authority at every level is shared and is not a directive authority, as it is mentioned: "So that one office shall not lord it over another, one office bearer over another, or one congregation over another but that all things shall be aimed at obedience to Christ, the Head of the Church, the leadership in the church is entrusted to ecclesial assemblies."<sup>118</sup> Immanuel Church has its local Church Council formed by 2 ministers, 8 elders and 11 deacons and the council is chaired by an elected lay person. It takes decisions on local matters and the City Church Council directs the life and work of the church as a whole and oversees the major financial matters. Apart from the councils, there are a good number of commissions and groups to organize church programs.

## **c. Culture**

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<sup>117</sup> Interviews: A leader of Immanuel Church.

<sup>118</sup> Article VI (1) in *Church Order of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands* (<http://www.protestantsekerk.nl/Lists/PKN-Bibliotheek/Churchorder-protestant-church-articles-I-XIX-2004.pdf>).

(i) *Participation in the Liturgy*: The congregation conducts its main service at 9:30 a.m. on Sundays. A Themed Service takes place at 11:00 a.m. ten times a year. The pastor prepares a liturgy for the main service following the liturgy of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. However, she adds lighting of a candle and a hymn at the beginning of the main service and is free to make minor changes in the liturgy for special services. The liturgy includes welcome, silence, hymns, greetings, prayers, moments for children, readings, sermon, memorial prayer (if needed), service of prayers and gifts, notice of diaconal work and announcements. The liturgy is slightly different in a Holy Communion service. The pastor is free to choose readings from the lectionary of the Protestant Church or the Roman Catholic 3 yearly cycle of readings or readings based on a particular book of the Bible. The liturgy includes both old and new music drawn from the 2013 hymn book. But the priority goes to the old music. “Young people would like more happy songs, but our organist finds it difficult to play from the *You Tube*, well he can but not that kind of songs, and we do not want to force him.”<sup>119</sup> There are three choirs, but only the organist is seen playing. Most of the parts of the liturgy are led by the pastor. The laity is involved in welcoming the pastor and congregation at the beginning, reading the lessons, offering intercessory prayers, making announcements, collecting the offerings etc. There is an opportunity for the youth to take part in the liturgy. They invite international students from the Protestant Theological University to take part in leading. I was invited in the main service to make a presentation about the Church of Bangladesh and its mission in a multi-religious context.

The liturgy includes a high concern for the congregation’s participation in diaconal ministry. This is reflected in their preaching, prayers, announcements, hymns etc. They have three types of collections. The first one is for the diaconal ministry; the second one is for the congregation, and the third one is to help a particular needy person or group. The church does its social work through the organization *Church in Action*<sup>120</sup> and offers financial help to the poor people in the Netherlands and elsewhere.

*The Themed Service* is organized by six groups. The assigned group meets several times, chooses a particular theme, discusses it and finally prepares a liturgy. This is an experimental service which includes liturgical elements as well as a variety of participations from the laity. People from different age groups are invited to participate and contribute their gifts and creativity. *The Children’s Service* is conducted at the time of the main service. Children are told a story by the pastor in very informal and dramatic way. Then they go out in a procession taking a lit candle for their own service. They rejoin the congregation before the closing hymn. *The Teenagers’ Service* takes place once a month in which the teenagers sing and pray together. The pastor writes a letter based on a biblical theme which is read out. Then the teens are free to reflect on it. A local teacher leads this service in English. *The Messy Church* meets every three months. A few young parents bring their very small children here and sing, pray, read and reflect on a Bible passage together. *The Meditative Walk* is arranged once a month. Nearly 20 people walk together in the neighbourhood in silence. Then they sit for a while to

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<sup>119</sup> Interviews: A leader of Immanuel Church.

<sup>120</sup> See Kerk in Actie (Church in Action), (<https://translate.google.nl/translate?hl=en&sl=nl&u=https://www.kerkinactie.nl/&prev=search>).

read a Biblical text, or poems, or any statement and walk again reflecting on the text in silence. At the end of it, they spend some social time.

(ii) *Coffee Time*: All the members are invited for a cup of tea or coffee after the main service on Sundays. They also have a shared lunch once a month. This is a warm time of socializing. Most of the members are keen to chat with the visitors. But there are some others who “behave differently and if by chance the newcomer reaches to that table, he or she never comes again to our church.”<sup>121</sup>

(iii) *Weekly Activities*: The congregation organizes different programs in different weeks. Some members have chosen to be in a particular group that has its own programs. The diaconate groups organize meetings in which they try to connect faith and life. The aim of these meetings is to listen to an expert on a social issue, discuss it and move towards practical actions. The Square Dinner brings people together from the congregation and neighbourhood. The choirs practise hymns on weekdays and enjoy their time together. The Ladies Group over 55 years old meets every week. Then there are the ‘Talk and Eat Group’, Elderly Afternoon, Plaza Dinner and many other programs. Their website says: “In celebrations, discussion groups, movie nights and all forms of encounter, reflection and action we believe we are trying to connect everyday life for ourselves and for the purposes of society”<sup>122</sup>.

(iv) *Special Activities*: The congregation organizes various programs to express their hospitality and concerns for the international students living together in a house in the neighbourhood. It invites them to their service and takes them out for sight-seeing. The students are also invited to a member’s house for a dinner with the group. A few members keep their connection with students throughout and welcome them into their houses. The congregation also provides hospitality to the refugees. One of the members offers lessons in the Dutch language. A group of members arrange shared meals for the refugees every week. About 20 refugees attend the meal. The members approach them with love and care, try to communicate with them through non-verbal language and a few of them invite one or two refugee families to their houses. Recently, the congregation invited refugees to use their kitchen to cook by themselves for a shared meal so that they can cook their favourite food.

(v) *Appointment of Youth Worker*: The City Church Council appointed a youth worker to communicate with the young people. He visited most of the young people below 18 including those in Immanuel Church, but it did not bring any positive result. “The youth worker does not help, because he has not enough connection with our community... He visited the youth but could not grow any interest among them.”<sup>123</sup> Another person said that “He worked for one year. Since there was no outcome and he was unable to do anything, he was released from his work.”<sup>124</sup>

## II. The Needs of the Migrant Youth

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<sup>121</sup> Interviews: A leader of Immanuel Church.

<sup>122</sup> See the website of Immanuel Church.

(<https://translate.google.nl/translate?hl=en&sl=nl&u=http://www.immanuelkerk-groningen.nl/&prev=search>).

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

The findings on the needs of the youth in general that came out from the experience of the leaders and international students are as follows:

(i) *They need company of other youth.* Youth attracts youth. Since there is no noticeable youth in this congregation, the migrant youth do not feel any interest. “The church is too grey.”<sup>125</sup> Therefore, the teenagers after completion of their Teen Church may be organized as a Youth Fellowship and as a recognized group which they would own.

(ii) *They need to follow the service.* Since the main service is conducted only in Dutch, the migrant youth cannot follow anything. “I do not feel to go to Immanuel Church because their service is only in Dutch.”<sup>126</sup>

(iii) *They need to build up and continue the relationship.* Any relationship needs some kind of continuation to nurture it. If there are too many varieties of programs and big gaps between them, then it is hard for the migrant youth to keep track. They need friendship, regular contact and support that continue. “The international students do not attend our service any more, but they are related to some of our family members. They visit each other often.”<sup>127</sup> So, instead of arranging special programs for the migrant youth once or twice a year, if a few families are in touch with them regularly, they would experience ‘a family away from family’.

(iv) *They need to be active in church life.* The youth are action oriented and therefore need to be encouraged to participate actively in the liturgy and in social activities. The church may adapt something new as many churches in Groningen for instance Free Baptist Church, Vineyard, Grace Church etc. are trying to attract the youth. However it is not interested. “There are churches that have more youth, but we do not want change ourselves like them, I think the challenge for our church is not to become that kind of church, because our youth do not go to those churches either. Our youth are just secularized.”<sup>128</sup>

### **III. Reflection**

#### *a. Summary*

The present congregation already went through the process of adapting to changes to integrate sister congregations one by one. Many members still have good memories of their own congregation. So they have the courage to integrate new people. Now many of them are old and the congregation is likely to decline with the death of its older people. “We expect a decline again.”<sup>129</sup> The decline in number will also reduce its skills and income. The congregation is aware of this and takes initiatives to attract children, teenagers and young parents through a variety of spiritual and social programs. However, at this point its main focus is to look after its elderly people and to provide them with care, love and fellowship. It tries to keep the members in peace by avoiding any conflict that may arise in the adaptation

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<sup>125</sup> Interviews: An international student of Casa Mundo.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Interviews: A leader of Immanuel Church.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

to further changes. The middle-aged members are committed to share all the work of the congregation. They invest their time, money and labour to organize all the programs. So the congregation has a huge social capital that needs to be brought into the strategy of attracting youth. For example, the congregation members are aware of the needs and aspirations of their own young people. They need to be made more aware, motivated, mobilized and trained by regular seminars, symposiums, conferences and workshops. These will help them to be reflective, to envision the future of their loving church, to use their connections with their own youth and to integrate them in the church.

### *b. Theoretical Reflection*

Not only Immanuel Church, almost all the European churches refer to secularization as the main reason for their decline and failure to attract the youth. Grace Davie quotes Casanova's definition of secularization as (i) differentiation of the secular spheres from religious institutions and norms, (ii) decline of religious beliefs and practices and (iii) marginalization of religion to a privatized sphere.<sup>130</sup> But American scholars argue from their studies in America that the problem is secularization. People can be still religious in a secular context<sup>131</sup>. The problem lies in European churches' failure to understand the changes taking place among the people and in their choice of the practice of faith. The main question arises how we define religion and religious people today. Grace Davy argues that just because people do not want to be attached to a particular religious institution anymore or do not have a life-long commitment to them, this does not necessarily mean that they are not religious. She uses the term "believing without belonging"<sup>132</sup> to explain that although they do not belong, they may still believe. She further adds that people are moving "from obligation to consumption."<sup>133</sup> She explains the "Rational Choice Theory"<sup>134</sup> that claims that the problem of Europe is the absence of a religious market. But she argues that it is not the absence of the religious market but that "the market does not work"<sup>135</sup> in Europe. Ammerman uses a "new methodology"<sup>136</sup> to learn people's everyday lived religion, their personal oral life history through interviews and oral diaries, personal practice, household, work, health and stories of their community and their sacred consciousness etc. Joep de Hart says that "religion still appears to be an important element of various social processes, an undeniable source of inspiration for many organizations and a vital motivation in the acts of numerous individuals."<sup>137</sup> Other studies show parallel movements against secularization, e.g. spiritual

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<sup>130</sup> Grace Davie, *The Sociology of Religion: A Critical Agenda* (2nd edition), SAGE Publications, London, 2013, p.51.

<sup>131</sup> Timothy C. Tennet, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, Zondervan, Michigan 2007, p.7.

<sup>132</sup> Grace Davie, Religion in Europe in the 21st Century: The Factors to Take into Account in *European Journal of Sociology*, 47/2, 2006, pp.274-276.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p.281

<sup>134</sup> Grace Davie, *The Sociology of Religion: A Critical Agenda* (2nd ed.), SAGE Publications, London, 2013, p.67.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p.87.

<sup>136</sup> See Nancy T. Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life*, 2013, p.1 (<http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199896448.001.0001/acprof-9780199896448-chapter-1>) accessed on 08 August 2016 at 23:23h.

<sup>137</sup> Joep de Hart, P. Dekker and L. Halman (eds.), *Religion and Civil Society in Europe*, Springer Press, New York, 2013, p.2

revolution (from life-as to subjective-life spirituality)<sup>138</sup>, liquid churches (mobile, mutable, fluid, flexible)<sup>139</sup> emerging churches or fresh expressions (spirituality based on modern conceptions of self and community)<sup>140</sup> etc. These are controversial but the reality, and show the presence of religion in different forms. Thus, there is a possibility of reaching the people if the churches can redefine religion and church. Immanuel Church has already initiated the Fresh Expressions, the Messy Church as a “proper church”<sup>141</sup> to attract the young parents. Fresh Expressions means “the offering and opportunity of community and communion with Christ”<sup>142</sup> and it emphasizes making disciples.

### *c. A Conversation of the Four Voices of Theology*

*Operant theology*: The congregation has welcomed and integrated three congregations and tries to function as *one body of Christ*.<sup>143</sup> Though there are differences and diversity, they are able to do marvellous work together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit<sup>144</sup>.

*Espoused theology*: The congregation takes care of its elderly people; provides hospitality to the international students and refugees; and places importance on diaconal work. The members as part of the body share all the responsibility for doing these tasks. Therefore, it is a community of love, care and fellowship.

*Normative theology*: The theological authority belongs to the Scripture and the church order. However, one important organ is missing in its body: the youth between 16 to 28.

*Formal theology*: The congregation seems not comfortable with the present day’s youth culture following the *good examples* of e.g. international or Pentecostal or mega churches in Groningen, like many congregations who see Pentecostal as a noun rather than an adjective<sup>145</sup>. Again the congregation prefers not to create tension and conflict among the members like “most congregations (who see) conflicts as a sign of distress.”<sup>146</sup> However, Jesus accepted challenges and conflicting situations to reach out and connect with the youth from different backgrounds and mingled with them even though the contemporary leaders and people did not like it. “Jesus was constantly crossing social boundaries to bring God’s love.”<sup>147</sup> So the challenge for the congregation is how it attracts the youth by engaging “a

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<sup>138</sup> See Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*, Blackwell Publishing, Singapore, p.3.

<sup>139</sup> Pete Ward, *Liquid Church*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, 2013.

<sup>140</sup> Gerardo Marti and Gladys Ganiel, *The Deconstructed Church: Understanding Emerging Christianity*, Oxford University Press, 2015.

<sup>141</sup> Clare Watkins and Bridget Shepherd, *The Challenge of Fresh Expressions to Ecclesiology: Reflecting from the Practice of Messy Church*, p.93

([http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/docserver/journals/22144471/1/1/22144471\\_001\\_01\\_S006\\_text.pdf?expires=1470961446&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=7C91C0318D7CFD6DE08EA2061AAED767](http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/docserver/journals/22144471/1/1/22144471_001_01_S006_text.pdf?expires=1470961446&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=7C91C0318D7CFD6DE08EA2061AAED767))

accessed on 12 August 2016 at 02:11h.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p.108.

<sup>143</sup> I Corinthians 12:12,13.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Timothy C. Tennet, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, Zondervan, Michigan 2007, p.187.

<sup>146</sup> Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey and London, 2001, p.344.

<sup>147</sup> R. R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2008, p.195.

life-style of common ground with the world but without moral or spiritual compromise”,<sup>148</sup> a characteristic of missional churches.

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<sup>148</sup> W. Rodman MacIlvaine III, *What is the Missional Church Movement?*, p.91.

# Chapter 7: The Russian Orthodox Church

## A Home Away From Home

### I. Description<sup>149</sup>

The Russian Orthodox Church was founded in Groningen in 1968. The aim was to provide the Service of Sacred Liturgy to the Dutch people who had shown their interest in the Orthodox faith. They were mainly Dutch people who had experienced the Orthodox traditional liturgy abroad. There were also people who were looking for an alternative to the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant Church after the Reformation. A Dutch person supported by an Orthodox monastery in The Hague began Orthodox services in his house in a village before some more people joined him. Then they moved into the city. The present two priests were two Dutch brothers converted to the Orthodox faith from a different church background. Although it was started by the Dutch, later on it became ‘a home away from home’ to the migrant people. The war refugees, Greek captives of the Germans, workers and students from Greece, Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia, Armenia, Lebanon, Syria, Africa, Ethiopia and other Eastern countries joined the church, outnumbering the Dutch within a very short time. At present, Dutch and migrants are all one in the Orthodox faith. They share the experience of a common Sacred Liturgy. As the migration to Groningen continues, especially from Eritrea and Syria, the church is also growing in number. Most of the migrants are youth and they live in scattered areas of Groningen. They find the church through their connection with their relatives or people from the same country. “We are not looking for people especially those who are going astray, because we believe that if people look for God, they will find their way. They come here through their connection with their own people who are our members.”<sup>150</sup> Those who do not know anybody in Groningen find the church on the website.

#### a. Resources

The church owns a building in the city of Groningen. Traditionally the Orthodox Churches build a church according to the architecture of the old Jewish temple, which consists of three parts. “The number three also refers to the Holy Trinity.”<sup>151</sup> However, here they could not build their own church building due to financial problems. The Dutch converts bought a warehouse in 1988 which was being used for packing peanuts. Then they gave the building the shape of an Orthodox church before the bishop consecrated it for the Holy Services. The three parts of the sanctuary are: narthex, catholicon or nave and altar space. There are numerous holy icons of Jesus, Mary with the infant Jesus, and other Holy Saints. They are placed on the lecterns or hung on the walls depicting the significant facts of the life and

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<sup>149</sup> Interviews: Most part of the descriptions are based on interviews, participant observation and looking at to the website, artefacts, etc.

<sup>150</sup> Interviews: A leader of the Russian Orthodox Church.

<sup>151</sup> See website of the Russian Orthodox Church

(<https://translate.google.nl/translate?hl=en&sl=nl&u=http://www.orthodoxekerkgroningen.nl/&prev=search>).



mission of Jesus as well as of the Old Testament. There are also icons of their Patron Saint Jacob (James), son of Zebedee, and of Bishop Simon. The icons are regarded as liturgical objects and mediators but are not to be worshipped, as “God alone is worthy to be worshipped.”<sup>152</sup> The icons are decorated with clothes and candles as a sign of their significance and holiness.

The church does not rent out its sanctuary but admits any group of migrant believers that does not have its own church but wants to organize a prayer service or catechism in its own language in Groningen.

There is a shop on the first floor of the building in which holy objects and church publications are sold. The priest in charge lives in the building. The assisting priest, who lives in a monastery, joins him at the weekend. There is a dining room with tables and chairs with an attached kitchen on the third floor. The building is small and congested for the number of the congregation members.

The priests do not take any remuneration according to their tradition. Their expenditure for living, travelling, networking etc. is reimbursed. Other expenditure includes the elements of worship services, utility bills, building, insurance, entertainment and program costs etc. All this expenditure is met from the offertory, monthly donations, selling of candles and from the income of the shop.

The congregation is in their second generation now. According to the church register, it has nearly 500 members. However, 60 to 70 people attend the Sacred Liturgy on Sundays. One third of them are elderly and middle-aged people and the other two thirds are migrant youth. A few members live in the city whereas others live in scattered areas of the Netherlands. Some attend the service regularly and some sporadically. About 200 to 300 people attend the Easter procession.

The congregation has a website that provides all necessary and practical information about the congregation, annual church calendar, Holy Feasts and events of the church and the texts. It also provides the descriptions of the icons, symbols, traditions, creed and the Sacred Liturgy. They are written in Dutch but with the help of Google translation anybody interested can read them. They also have a Facebook page for social connection.

### **b. The Structures of Authority**

The church is denominationally linked with the Moscow Patriarchate and functions as a parish under its jurisdiction. The Holy Patriarch holds the highest authority to interpret the scripture and to maintain the traditions of the church. Archbishop Simon is the current bishop of this church but he involves himself only if there is any dispute. The priest in charge is the chairperson of the Parish Board, which consists of lay leaders, with at least one representative from each nationality. The priest takes decisions for the parish in consultation with the Board. The country representatives help in socializing newcomers from a particular country. All the members of the parish are invited for the Annual Assembly in which they can contribute their

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

thoughts and opinions. But on the whole the church relies on God's will and decisions passed on and discerned through tradition and history, not on democracy.

### **c. Culture**

*(i) Participation in the Liturgy:* The church conducts the Sacred Liturgy on Sunday morning with an additional preparatory service on Saturday evening, called the evensong or vespers. The condition for receiving the Holy Communion is that "Only the Orthodox believers who through prayer, abstinence and request for forgiveness have prepared, approach the Sacred Mysteries."<sup>153</sup> Residents of the city or close by are requested to attend the evensong for the individual confession of sins. Those who live far away are welcome to do it during the Sacred Liturgy. There is a service on Wednesday, called 'The Icon of the Mother of God', in which 10 to 20 people attend. Besides these regular services, any other service, e.g. baptism, marriage, anointing with oil etc., is organized via a prior appointment with the priest.

The gate is open throughout the Sacred Liturgy. The worshippers come in at any time and go out if necessary. Next to the gate is the narthex, which is regarded as a part of the sanctuary. A few services begin here, e.g. weddings, funerals etc. The wall contains icons, symbols, prayers, holy alphabets and texts, a big icon of the crucifixion etc. They are in different Eastern languages brought from different countries, thus representing a multi-cultural set-up of welcome. The worshippers can buy a candle here and fill in a form with the name of their beloved one living or dead for whom they want to pray. Prayers are said for their good health and peace of mind. A good number of youth stand in the narthex during the Sacred Liturgy. Some of them buy candles, some offer individual prayers in front of the big icon of the crucifixion and kiss the feet of Jesus on the icon.

Although a particular time is mentioned for beginning the Sacred Liturgy, chanting and reading from the book of Psalms and incensing begin in the catholicon earlier. The electric lights are put off as hundreds of candles are lit. Thus a very special atmosphere is created to separate the world and the divine. A few worshippers light a candle and offer an individual prayer quietly in front of an icon at the right corner. Others wait for the Liturgy standing and experiencing the beauty of the holiness. There are a few benches and chairs for those who may need to sit during the sermon. Otherwise, the worshippers are to remain standing during the Liturgy. A few people are part of the choir that stands in the right corner to assist the priest by singing the litanies, prayers and responses of the Liturgy. The youth are welcome to take part in singing. The Sacred Liturgy is in Slavonic and in Dutch. Slavonic is a liturgical language from the 8<sup>th</sup> century in which all Slavonic languages e.g. Serbian, Russian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Polish, Slovakian etc., are put together. The first reading from the Epistles is done in more than one language, including Dutch. The youth are welcome to read the text. Other languages are used for the response of the intercession, especially when there is a prayer request or commemoration of the departed souls. Therefore, 5 to 6 different languages are used in the service. All the Orthodox believers are familiar with the Sacred Liturgy from their childhood. Thus the Liturgy unites the people from different backgrounds.

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

The separation wall divides the catholicon from the most holy space, the altar. The priest leads the Sacred Liturgy sometimes from the altar and sometimes from the catholicon, depending on the Liturgy. Two male altar servers, deacons or volunteers, enter into the altar to assist the priest. The separation wall holds the holy icons and a royal door through which devotees get an insight into paradise. The door is closed during the consecration of the Holy Communion. There are icons of the Holy Trinity, resurrected Jesus and other symbolic elements inside the altar. The mystical body of the living Christ is placed on the table. The main significance of the Sacred Liturgy is the mystical presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. It is kept through the traditions of the church. The crucial message is Christ's victory over death, which offers His believers a new life after death. This assurance cannot be found in the outside world. This is a mystery that can be experienced only in faith and by the grace of God. The readings are done according to the church calendar. The church uses the Greek calendar as it is partly Western and partly Orthodox. Therefore, it is accepted by both the Dutch and the migrants from the Eastern countries. The sermon is preached by the priest in Dutch according to the Holy Feasts. The Feasts include Dutch as well as Eastern Saints. The announcements are made in English so that everybody can follow.

Those who fail to make their confession on Saturdays are welcomed one by one during the Liturgy and receive absolution from the priest, so a good number of youth take this opportunity. Often it takes a long time, but the worshippers remain standing praying quietly for them or listen to the readings with patience. A few worshippers leave before the Liturgy ends. After the final blessings, the priest stands with a cross in his hand and the worshippers kiss the cross one by one. Then they receive a fragment of bread before they disperse and go to the dining room for coffee time.

There are spaces in the Liturgy for the youth to participate in leading for instance, singing in the choir, reading the text, serve in the altar (only men) etc. However, the Orthodox Church puts its emphasis on participation through praying rather than singing or reading or in any other ways. "We say you participate in prayer, and having your textbook before you does not say your spirit is there... Mystery is not done by singing."<sup>154</sup> They believe that praying to the Lord with a humble heart is more important. The prayer of the publican and the Pharisee from the Gospel of St Luke is seen as an example. The priests try to incorporate as much language they can in the Liturgy. However, language is not seen as a barrier as the worshippers can always pray in their heart and mind. The church also teaches the 'Jesus Prayer',<sup>155</sup> which can be prayed during the Liturgy as well as whenever people want to.

(ii) *Coffee Time*: The worshippers gather in the small dining room and interact with each other over a cup of tea or coffee and cookies. The room is congested and noisy with the warm fellowship of happy faces. Here, the connection is that they are all Orthodox irrespective of their cultural differences. Yet, different tables are occupied by the different homogenous groups as different islands, mainly because of linguistic affinity. "There are islands. We have

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<sup>154</sup> Interviews: A leader of the Russian Orthodox Church.

<sup>155</sup> Jesus Prayer (prayed repeatedly): "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner."  
(<http://www.spiritualleadership.com/the-jesus-prayer/>).

the Greek island, Serbian island, Russian island and so on.”<sup>156</sup> This is also because they live in scattered areas and do not see each other elsewhere. This coffee time helps them to connect socially and to share their joys and difficulties. However, no one feels isolated as there are a good number of people from each country and there is always somebody who knows Dutch and English to translate.

(iii) *Weekly Activities*: The weekly activities include catechism for two groups: for the children up to 16 years old and for the adults. The curriculum includes Orthodox faith, the history and traditions of the church, the Sacred Liturgy, church administration etc. The church is not interested in evangelism or reaching out people who are losing their faith and going astray. They believe that if someone wants to look for God, even in the midst of a secularized and individualized world outside, s/he will find God. The Holy Spirit is at work to guide them to the church. The church is present here to welcome them where they can worship God and to help them to grow in faith. The priests are ready to teach them and to answer their questions in the awareness that the mystery of God cannot be explained by words. According to the Orthodox faith, our worship must be connected with the tradition of the centuries in which the Holy Spirit is present. God becomes visible in the Sacred Liturgy, which comforts us and brings hope to the people. The catechumens, those who are not yet baptized in the name of the Triune God, are baptized here.

(iv) *Special Activities*: The church involves itself in social work through its connection with the City Council of Churches. One of the parishioners represents the church in the Council. They respond to the need of the poor people of different countries. As the government and social organizations look after the practical needs of the migrant people, the church does not do it pro-actively. Yet, if there is anyone in need, they help him or her in a small way as they know the person well, but maintain the privacy and dignity of the individual. There is no structured form of practical help. Practical difficulties are seen as temptations through which God helps people to strengthen their faith. The members individually offer help to the migrant people from their own territory, providing them with information, directing them to proper organizations for education, treatment, sports, any learning course etc.

## **II. The Needs of the Migrant Youth**

The church lifts up the Orthodox migrant youth to God in its prayer with a deep faith that God will take care of their needs in God’s own time. Some of the needs discovered during the interviews are:

(i) *They need company of the believers*. They `suffer cultural shock to see the unbelief in the Netherlands, which is contradictory to their own culture and upbringing. They find it difficult to adjust to these new circumstances and to connect with the people. Some even feel they are becoming dirty in the outside materialistic world and develop a sense of guilt inside. “I always had the feeling that I was becoming dirty.”<sup>157</sup> They look to God to confess their sins and to clean their heart. At the same time, they look to God’s people, the believers, who can direct them to God and become a moral support to them.

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<sup>156</sup> Interviews: A youth of the Russian Orthodox Church.

<sup>157</sup> Interviews: A youth of the Russian Orthodox Church.

(ii) *They need spiritual and moral support.* Cultural shock raises spiritual and moral questions in them. They are puzzled when they try to discern the truth. They look for trustworthy people with whom they can share their difficulties freely and who will be able to provide them with the answers to their questions. Some young people are satisfied with their interaction with the priests or members of the church and they continue to come to the church. However, there are also others who feel that the church is interested in promoting its own spirituality and tradition and not in them. “In my opinion there are too little of youth activities are happening in our church... Our priests are active in promoting Orthodox faith as many people are living without faith... All other things are kept into God’s hand.<sup>158</sup> So they do not come back to the church again. They feel that there needs to be a connection between mystery and logic.

(iii) *They need relational and friendly support.* They often feel isolated, helpless and disconnected with the people around. They miss their family and culture back in their own country. Often they lack strength and support. Then they begin to look for their own church and people and to develop their own circle of friends. If they find them in the church, they feel relieved and encouraged. “I knew a person who knew other people here and that was how I was able to make the connection.”<sup>159</sup> Those who do not find anyone, they do not feel interested in coming to church.

iv) *They need to be engaged in actions.* They want to involve themselves in the Liturgy and in social activities. Some are very glad that they can actively participate in the Liturgy by reading a text or by singing in the choir. The chances are limited, gender based and are also mainly taken by the elderly people. Others are happy to involve themselves in volunteer work, for instance in cleaning the church, decorating the church at Easter or Christmas, helping with technical stuff etc. But there are also others who would like to involve themselves more in social and youth activities. “I would like to see some changes... I would like to participate more... and I think we can learn logical things from the Western churches and they can learn mysticism from our church.”<sup>160</sup>

v) Finally, *they need practical help* like correct information, proper direction, proper networking, strong social bonding and support from the community. “We are not networkers.”<sup>161</sup> They also want a place where they will be considered equal and without any practice of nationalism.

## **Reflection.**

### *a. Summary*

The church was established in Groningen to provide a new choice for the Dutch people in the post-Reformation period and against the wave of secularization. At the same time, it wanted to provide the migrant Orthodox believers with a home away from home, a common place where they can mingle as one church. At present, the number of Dutch people is declining but

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Interviews: A youth of the Russian Orthodox Church.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

the number of migrants is growing every year. Although there are many inactive Orthodox believers in and around the city, the church is neither interested nor able with its limited resources to reach and make connections with them. However, the individual members play the role of making connections with their own people and try to bring them to the church out of their own interest, as “relationship matters”<sup>162</sup> Another important factor is how they are raised in their families. “Our parents played a role in our upbringing.”<sup>163</sup> The priests also play a very important role in this church. They are highly committed and try their best to integrate people into one church through multi-cultural arrangements and multi-linguistic liturgy and the Parish Board consists of representatives of different groups. Ammerman says: “A pastor who works effectively at building personal relationships. Who is seen as expert and knowledgeable, and who convincingly wears the mantle of religious authority can wield considerable influence in the congregation.”<sup>164</sup> They try to develop a personal relationship with the migrant youth, answering their many questions as spiritual Fathers and teaching them catechism. “Our priest is unique in the world. Have you seen in his eyes? It just gives us a feeling that you are saved.”<sup>165</sup> However, the part lacking is organized youth activities.

The challenges for this church are how it provides spirituality and hospitality to its inactive members and to those who are out of its reach. “Outside the church we are not very active. The focus is mainly on Spiritual work in the church and not really on social.”<sup>166</sup> For this, it needs to change its policy and increase its resources, both human and material. It is important to continue to attract more Dutch people. A research done by Marten van der Meulen shows “the continuing importance of the local, even for transnational religious movements.”<sup>167</sup> The research claims that “migrants have difficulties acquiring local benefits”<sup>168</sup>; therefore the local Dutch can still be rich human resources as they helped to establish this church. Now the questions are how the church works on keeping a balance between the needs of the locals and migrants and whether it wants to become a Dutch international church rather than a migrant church with its original vision. There needs to be a balance in responding to the spiritual and practical needs of the migrant youth. If the church can organize the youth and begin spiritual and social activities for them, it will help the youth, who find it difficult to interact with the people outside, to participate more in the church activities. It will also prevent them from going astray.

### *b. Theoretical Reflection*

The Orthodox Church is very special in respecting the divinity of the Lord and keeping its traditional liturgy and practices at a very high level. For the members, the holiness of God is

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<sup>162</sup> Hendrik P. de Roest and Herman Noordegraaf, We Learned it at Our Mothers’ Knees, Perspectives of Churchgoing Volunteers on their Voluntary Service, *Reformed World* 59, no. 3, 2009.

<sup>163</sup> Interviews: A youth of the Russian Orthodox Church.

<sup>164</sup> Nancy T. Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, USA, 1997, p.53.

<sup>165</sup> Interviews: A youth of the Russian Orthodox Church.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Marten van der Meulen, *The Continuing Importance of the Local African Churches and the Search for Worship Space in Amsterdam*, p.159 (<http://www.martenvandermeulen.nl/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/200910-the-continuing-importance-of-the-local.pdf>) accessed on 11 August 2016at 11:23h.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p.161.

far more important than the social aspects of a religion. In the Netherlands, where people are becoming more and more secular and going away from God, this church has a lot to contribute to revitalize the country as spiritual and cultural capital. Stoffels says that “The presence of Christian immigrants and immigrant churches in the Netherlands... have a potential for contributing to Dutch civil society and to the revitalization of Dutch Christianity”.<sup>169</sup> However, the challenge is that they need to grow in number and in influence as Marten van der Meulen finds that “Migrant Christianity is a sizeable minority, but still a minority, having a limited impact on the religious landscape of the Netherlands.”<sup>170</sup> On the other hand this minority needs to grow for its own survival in future. Finally, the congregation has many members “believing without belonging”,<sup>171</sup> as Grace Davie categorizes members and also calls the religion “vicarious”<sup>172</sup> because the priests and a small group of people perform religion ‘on behalf of the members’ and are ready to help them when they need for instance a funeral.

### *c. A Conversation of the Four Voices of Theology*

*Operant theology:* The congregation gives its priority to mysticism with awareness that nobody can explain it. “Who can explain the mystery?”<sup>173</sup> Samartha says that mystery “is beyond the cognitive knowledge, but is open to vision and intuition. It is near yet far, knowable, yet unknowable, intimate, yet ultimate.”<sup>174</sup> The church believes that only by the grace of the Lord can one experience God’s love and vision of paradise.

*Espoused theology:* Therefore, the theology of grace plays the main role behind the spirituality and functioning of this church. The emphasis is on humble prayer, for instance the prayer of the publican for which he received salvation, and not on human efforts by doing good works as the Pharisee attempted.<sup>175</sup> Christ is mystically present in the world through the traditional Liturgy of the Eucharist.

*Normative theology:* The theological authority belongs to the tradition of the church, in which the Patriarch holds the authority to interpret the scripture. The church teaches to love God more than anything or anybody else.

*Formal theology:* However, if we reflect on incarnation theology we discover that God has already made Godself known to us in and through the Christ. God wants us to love God as well as our neighbours. Jesus commands us to love one another<sup>176</sup>. The story of the Good

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<sup>169</sup> Hijme Stoffels, *A Coat of Many Colours: New Immigrant Churches in the Netherlands, A Moving God: Immigrant Churches in the Netherlands* (International Practical Theology, vol. 8), p. 26.

<sup>170</sup> Marten van der Meulen, *Assessing the Impact of Migrant Christianity. A Case Study of the Netherlands* (S.I.’s.n.: 2015), p.19.

<sup>171</sup> Grace Davie, *Religion in Europe in the 21st Century: The Factors to Take into Account*, *European Journal of Sociology*, 47/2 (2006), p. 276.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p.278.

<sup>173</sup> Interviews: A leader of the Russian Orthodox Church.

<sup>174</sup> Stanley J. Samartha, *The Cross and the Rainbow: Christ in a Multireligious Culture* in John Hick & Paul F. Knitter (eds.), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, Orbis, Maryknoll, 1987, p.75.

<sup>175</sup> Luke 18:9-14 (NRSV).

<sup>176</sup> John 13:34,35 (NRSV).

Samaritan<sup>177</sup> challenges us to love and worship God by responding to needy neighbours. The practice of the church seems to follow ‘a *dispensary* approach’ in which the doctors sit in a hospital and are ready to serve when patients come to them. But Jesus’ approach was a mobile approach, the core of incarnation theology. Hooker says that “the church is not a building or an institution but a community of witnesses, called into being and equipped by God and sent into the world to testify and participate in God’s work.”<sup>178</sup> Christ was connected with His heavenly Father who had sent him to the world to fulfil God’s mission. Jesus reached out to people and appointed his disciples *to be with God* and *to be sent* out with the power they received.<sup>179</sup> Similarly, the nation Israel was chosen in the grace of God to be the light so that they can enlighten other nations and bring them to God<sup>180</sup>. Therefore, loving God and loving each other are two sides of a single coin, like the two sisters, Martha and Mary<sup>181</sup>. The challenge for the church is how it incorporates a collaborative and holistic theology based on Trinitarian aspects of God and on incarnation theology<sup>182</sup>. This will encourage it to reach the migrant youth where they are, which is possible by surrendering the church to the work of the Holy Spirit, the ultimate interpreter of the scripture, the guide and giver of strength.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Luke 10:25-37 (NRSV).

<sup>178</sup> C. J. P. Niemandt, Trends in Missional Ecclesiology in *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 68 ( 1), Art. 1198, 2012 (<http://www.hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/view/1198/2403>).

<sup>179</sup> Mark 3:14 (NRSV).

<sup>180</sup> 1 Peter 2:9, Matthew 5:14 (NRSV).

<sup>181</sup> Luke 10:38,39 (NRSV).

<sup>182</sup> Sammy Alfaro, *Divino Compañero: Toward a Hispanic Pentecostal Christology*, Pickwick Publications, Eugene, 2010, p.148 and also C. J. P. Niemandt, Trends in Missional Ecclesiology in *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 68(1), Art. 1198, 2012 (<http://www.hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/view/1198/2403>).

<sup>183</sup> José Comblin, *The Holy Spirit in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology**, edited by Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino, 462–81, Orbis Books; CollinsDove, Maryknoll, N. Y.; North Blackburn, Victoria, Australia, 1993, p.479.



## Chapter 8: Conclusions

### I. Descriptive-Empirical Task

We now have pictures of the practices of four different congregations in two different contexts. Let us recall the research questions in our concluding chapter. The main target was to look for theoretical and theological insights that can be applied in the migrant youth ministry in Dhaka. This approach involves learning from other congregations' good practices and relates it to the present practice and available resources of the learning congregation.

**Table of Comparison of the Practices of the Four Congregations**

		<b>St Thomas' Church, New Centre (Anglican Communion)</b>	<b>Russian Orthodox Church (Orthodox)</b>	<b>Grace Church (Anglican)</b>	<b>Immanuel Church (Protestant)</b>
1.	Resources				
	Material	Spacious building, owned by the Diocese	Congested building, owned by the local church	Congested buildings, (not accessible on all Sundays a month) rented	Spacious building, management by the denomination
	Human	Average attendance: 200 Total: 1000	Average attendance: 70 Total: 500	Average attendance: 50 Total: unknown	Average attendance: 200 Total: 900
	Income.	Offerings, membership fee, monthly pledge	Offerings, gifts of money.	Offerings, bank donations	Offerings, rent of building, membership fees
	Youth Programs' Cost	Church grant and registration fees	Shared	Shared	No
2.	Structures of authority	Hierarchical: Denominational. Local Pastorate Committee	Hierarchical: Denominational. Local Parish Board	Hierarchical Denominational. Leadership Team	Shared in the Presbyterian (Synodal) Tradition. Denominational. Local Church Council
3.	Culture: Youth.				
	Youth (16-24 yrs) attendance	30-40	30-40	30-40	5-10
	Welcome team	No	No	Yes	No
	Participation in liturgy	Seen in: reading, choir	Seen in: No	Seen in: Reading, choir, offering collection, prayer	Seen in: No
	Form of Liturgy	The book of common worship, formal	Sacred Liturgy, formal	The book of common worship, informal	Liturgy of the Protestant Church, informal.
	Theme and Readings	Lectionary	Church Calendar	Lectionary	Free to choose
	Language	Bengali	Slavonic, multilingual	English	Dutch
	Coffee/tea time	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

	Weekly activities	Choir practice	No	Wednesday prayer meeting, house group Bible study	No
	Special activities	Youth Fellowship	Catechism	GraceTalk, Alpha Course	Themed Service, Teens Church, Messy Church
4.	Theology (expressed instantly)	Incarnation/kenosis	Mysticism	Welcome and hospitality	Body of Christ, diaconal
5.	Pattern	Migrant community from rural areas in their 1st or 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation	Migrant church. (Dutch and international)	International church. (Dutch and international)	Dutch church, united with three sister congregations.
6.	Priests/Pastors	1 Youth	2 Elderly	1 (Volunteer) Middle aged	2 Middle aged
7.	Social activities	Through Pastorate Committee	Through City Council	Leadership Team	Through City Council
8.	Contexts and challenges.	Urbanization Modernization Minority Poverty Social crimes and corruption	Migration/ Transnational migration/ Immigrants. International students and workers Refugees Secularism, Individualism, Liberalism Multi-cultural Economically advanced vs. unemployment		
9.	Migrant youth: connection	Through members	Through members, website	Through members, website, Facebook page	A team of members
	Practical help offered by	Pastorate Committee	Church members of same region	Members	A team of members

### **Q: (I) what are the needs of the migrant youth?**

The needs of the migrant youth discovered during interviews are already listed in chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7. They need congregations' support that can be classified into the following four categories:

- (i) Spiritual and Moral Support: Worship, biblical teachings, answers to questions etc.
- (ii) Psychological Support: Mutual respect of culture, background, language, age, gender; assurance of human dignity and safety; confidence in sense of belonging etc.
- (iii) Cultural and Relational Support: Friendly welcome and hospitality; active participation in liturgy and social activities; continuing relational support from both the local youth and members of a congregation and fellow migrant youth etc.
- (iv) Practical Support: In regard to advocacy, finances, accommodations, information, direction, social needs etc.

The contexts of Dhaka and Groningen are very different. One is a city of a developing country and the other is a well developed country. However, there are a lot of similarities in the needs of the migrant youth. Moreover, migrant youth in Groningen includes migrants from all over the world including developing and poor countries. Therefore, the problems of the migrant youth whether in Dhaka or Groningen need to be seen through their eyes.

## **Q: (II) what are the present practices of congregations?**

### *A. Resources*

Not all the churches have the material resources and financial strength they need nor are all the buildings welcoming to the migrant youth. Some give importance to the sanctity of the campus and push the youth outside; some are congested whereas some are spacious. Only the Russian Orthodox Church uses multicultural symbols in its building to welcome the migrant youth. Three churches effectively use the Internet e.g. website, Facebook, broadcasting service etc. to welcome newcomers and encourage bonding. The seating arrangement of Grace is more inclusive than others.

All churches have committed priests/pastors and leaders including women pastors in Immanuel Church. Like the leaders, they are occupied with many works. There is no appointed youth worker in any congregation. In the Church of Bangladesh and the Protestant Church in Groningen, the denominational-level youth workers proved unsuccessful in outreach and connecting with the youth. However, all the churches have skilled, educated and committed human resources, both men and women. Except Immanuel Church, all have a good number of youth including migrant youth.

*Insights:* Some congregations might be rich in material resources, others might not, but all the congregations generate “the basic social capital of association, along with the civic capital of communication and organizational skills.”<sup>184</sup> It is found that congregations inspire leaders and volunteers who play the main role in connecting with the migrant youth. They welcome and provide hospitality to the newcomers, offer the needy practical help from their own resources, arrange and share the cost for social programs and offer friendship in and outside the congregation. These connections play the main role in integrating the newcomers with the congregation. Therefore, this research finds that more than material resources human resources are important in the migrant youth ministry.

### *B. Structures of Authority*

All churches are linked to denominations that follow either hierarchical or Presbyterian polity. However, all have local executive committees and general assemblies. Except Immanuel Church, the other three churches need to take decisions in concert with their denominations. However, except for the Russian Orthodox Church, the local general councils of the other three churches may support or resist changes. So there is always a possibility of conflicts. As Ammerman says “attempting significance changes will involve conflict and congregations unwilling to engage in conflict will not change.”<sup>185</sup>

*Insights:* If the local church council proposes a major change in the practice to provide pastoral care to the migrant youth, there is always a possibility of resistance either *from the denomination or from the general body*. However, on the whole it seems that if the local

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<sup>184</sup> Nancy T. Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, USA, 1997, p.365.

<sup>185</sup> Nancy T. Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, USA, 1997, p.335.

congregation is not dependent financially on the denomination and is willing to change, they can change. Therefore, the social and human capital of a congregation seems to be the main tool for congregational decisions, changes and actions.

### C. Culture

All the churches have some strengths and weaknesses in their ecclesial vision and no church seems to have a balance in holistic mission. It is found that one puts more emphasis on the mission of the Father, another of the Son and another of the Holy Spirit. Although all the congregations believe in the Triune God, their mission does not reflect it. Again in practice, one gives more importance to the spiritual aspects, another gives importance to diaconal aspects, another gives importance to welcoming internationals and migrants and another gives importance to existing members and their well being. All are concerned to serve the world faithfully but no church seems to follow “missional ecclesiology that combines mission and church”<sup>186</sup> with equal significance.

All the churches follow authorized liturgies and lectionaries. The same pattern creates lack of interest in many youth. It is a little different in Grace Church, where we find flexibility in liturgy and a more informal style of worship that attracts the youth. Neither the sermons nor the intercessory prayers regularly emphasize the problems of the migrant youth in any of these churches and “Too often...sermons fail to connect with the youth of the congregation.”<sup>187</sup> Except in Grace, the youth’s choice of music or instruments is not taken into consideration. In most churches, the language used depends on the level of comprehension of the majority rather than the difficulties of the minority, including the migrant youth, being acknowledged. Finally, all these churches want to remain far from the Pentecostal and charismatic style of worship. There is a kind of hesitation to learn from others; rather they stick to what they know and have been doing throughout.

All the churches have coffee time which is full of spirit and very helpful for socializing. However, in Groningen the migrant youth are specially welcomed by the church members, thus giving them a ‘feel good’ experience whereas in Dhaka they are not given any special welcome or attention.

*Insights:* Each congregation is different from others in its culture. The priests/pastors through the church services and sharing sessions offer the migrant youth spiritual and moral support. However, a lot of changes are needed in the culture of the congregations to encourage the youth to participate in liturgy. The sermons, prayers, music, use of instruments etc. need to be done in such a way so that the youth feel at home in the service. It is found that the members provide the migrant youth with cultural, practical, psychological and mental support out of their own interest and resources. *It is the social capital produced by the congregations that plays the main role in attracting and integrating the migrant youth against the wave of religious, social and ecological changes.* Thus, this research paper proposes to target and use

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<sup>186</sup> C. J. P. Niemandt, Trends in Missional Ecclesiology in *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 68 (1), Art. 1198, 2012 (<http://www.hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/view/1198/2403>).

<sup>187</sup> R. R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2008, p.37.

the social capital of a congregation creatively and effectively as the main tool in the migrant youth ministry.

## II. Interpretive Task

After studying 23 congregations in the United States, Ammerman points out that the social capital is a valuable resource for congregations' survival in the face of changes. In her theory of social and religious ecology she uses "the metaphor of an ecology"<sup>188</sup> to explain that when the environment changes and cannot supply the necessary resources, some species die, some still try to survive knowing that they will not last long; and some others find adaptive mechanisms to survive and finally emerge in a new form. For congregations "the most crucial resource is membership"<sup>189</sup> as they create the social capital needed for the congregations' survival, functioning and to adapt to changes in practice and in policy. Therefore, this research paper proposes a model based on the congregation members and the social capital they generate as the main tool for adapting to changes with a goal to provide pastoral care to the migrant youth. However, the changes are also needed within the congregations' frame and model of practice and how they respond to the environmental and societal changes. In his "Open Systems theory" Osmer describes this through the use of the metaphor "the web of life."<sup>190</sup> The term 'open' indicates that all forms of life interact with their environment to draw energy and resources and transform themselves to survive. The term 'systems' indicates the interconnectedness of various parts and subsystems within the boundaries of the existing form of life. Thus the open systems theory examines the contextual changes, the present practices of a congregation and the internal changes needed to adapt to the external changes. The three sub-questions of this research paper were formulated based on this theory.

Thus, out of the insights gained in Groningen and in the light of the above discussions, this research paper proposes to adapt *A Family Based Migrant Youth Ministry* as a response to migration as an additional approach in the practices of the churches. It targets *the group of members or an individual in a house that live/s as a family and are/is closely related with each other*' of a congregation as they produce a huge amount of social capital, but it does propose changes in the 'frame' and practice of the congregations. In this paper, the term *family* refers to the social and human capital: relationship and mutual trust.

## III. Normative Task

The object of this research is not the quantitative growth or decline of a congregation, but its faithful participation in the mission of the Triune God in the world. When we talk about 'a home away from home' or 'church as a family of God', we try to shape a congregation in the light of our homes and our family bonds. But let us ask: why not try it the other way round? We all believe that the church is not a building or an institution; rather, it is the fellowship of believers. Thus, our families are the primary unit of a church and our homes are the temples

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<sup>188</sup> Nancy T. Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, USA, 1997, p.346.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> R. R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2008, pp.199,200.

of God. We should not make a big difference between our homes and the church building or church campus. For example, if we allow our youth to be raised in a modern way at home and expect them to behave in the church building in a traditional way, then the youth will suffer from confusion and will be where they feel comfortable. Therefore, the changes must begin in our home and in us. Our mission to provide welcome and hospitality for newcomers must begin there. We all know the saying that charity begins at home. In the Hebrew Bible narratives, we see that there is a shift in the understanding of God's people: from individual to family, from family to community and from community to the entire world. For example, first Abraham was called to serve God as an individual, and then his family was involved<sup>191</sup>. At one particular moment, the whole family of Abraham provided instant welcome and hospitality to the three guests<sup>192</sup>. In the Christian Bible narratives, we find the house of two sisters and one brother: Martha, Mary and Lazarus in Bethany who served the Christ and the disciples with welcome and hospitality<sup>193</sup>. Although there are many other narratives, it will be enough for this paper to focus on this one.

#### *The family of Bethany: the temple on the way to the Jerusalem Temple*

Bethany was two miles away from Jerusalem. There lived a family to whom Jesus was once a stranger but as the time passed, he became their guest and finally their close friend. Jesus with his disciples not only visited them but stayed in their house a week before his death; he performed a miracle by giving Lazarus new life; and ascended to heaven after his resurrection close to this house. The relationship grew out of the welcome and hospitality provided to Jesus by this family. "Each sister is depicted showing hospitality to Jesus in her own way."<sup>194</sup> Martha paid attention to the practical needs of Jesus, and Mary listened carefully to what Jesus had to share and teach. Lazarus became a friend for whom Jesus cried. Through all these, the house did not remain merely a house; rather it became a small temple of God through the presence of the Christ and the work he did there, on the way to the Jerusalem temple. It is from this understanding that this paper proposes a model of family based migrant youth ministry.

#### **IV. Pragmatic Task**

**Q (III) what are the changes that need to be made based on the needs of the migrant youth?**

#### *A Model of Family Based Migrant Youth Ministry*

How this model will be worked out in different churches in different contexts is a matter of further research and up to the individual congregation. While this paper does not attempt to

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<sup>191</sup> Benno van den Toren, *Growing Disciples in the Rainforest: A Contextualized Confession for Pigmy Christians*, ERT (2009) 33:4, p.313.

<sup>192</sup> Genesis 18:1-8 (NRSV).

<sup>193</sup> Luke 10:38-42, John 11:1-2.

<sup>194</sup> J. M. Woodward, *Welcoming the Stranger: A dialogue between Scriptural understandings of and Catholic Church policies towards migrants and refugees and pastoral praxis in the migrant and refugee pastoral care bodies within the Archdiocese of Perth* (Doctor of Pastoral Theology (PThD)), University of Notre Dame Australia (<http://researchonline.nd.edu.au/theses/44/>).

give any definitive solution, it does offer some recommendations for the Church of Bangladesh to consider in its migrant youth ministry in Dhaka city. They are as follows:

1. The building and the symbols need to reflect both the holiness of God and the different cultures the migrant belonged to. They must be able to feel the presence of God here and recognize it as much as their parents' simple house where they grew up. The campus needs to be welcoming for social life on weekdays.
2. In 1997, the church ordained two single women who have subsequently retired. Although many women receive the vocation to enter the priesthood and study theology, they are not ordained. But they, whether single or married, can be very helpful in providing pastoral care to the migrant young women, the nurses, beauty parlour workers, house helpers and so on. It is culturally difficult for the male priest to reach them and to work with them.
3. *The model of family based migrant youth ministry* needs to be taken seriously at denominational and parish levels. Workshops, seminars, conferences and preaching on the model need to be organized and promoted. The clergy and laity need to be encouraged and involved.
4. A special service desk for volunteers from different backgrounds needs to be established in Dhaka Deanery. A website needs to be launched with information and contact. Social networking systems e.g. Facebook need to be used effectively.
5. The age of youth, question of marital status, professions etc. need to be revised in the constitution. Migrant youth of 16 to 35, married and unmarried, students or workers need to be allowed and encouraged to join the Youth Fellowship and all should have access its leadership.
6. Special multi-linguistic and multi-cultural services need to be conducted on the theme of migrant youth; sermons and prayers need to reflect on various topics, for instance the problems of the migrant youth, welcome and hospitality and the role of the host played by people in the scriptures. The migrant youth must be involved in leading the liturgy and enabled to offer their individual and cultural gifts.
7. The migrant youth may be offered a formal welcome during the announcements in the service and introduced to the congregation. They need to be approached at tea time; offered attention, welcome and friendship; and invited to a post-service youth gathering.
8. The regular programs of the Youth Fellowship need to be encouraged and supported. They must be able to select their own themes and sub-topics for seminars, conferences etc. The youth must be encouraged to share the cost of their activities.
9. All the youth must be respected and allowed to share their views, express their feelings, and raise their questions and voices.
10. Differences and otherness need to be celebrated.

11. All the members of the congregation need to be made aware of the needs of the migrant youth. It would be very helpful to listen to the youth themselves. For this, the congregation may arrange dialogues with both urban and migrant youth. Interested families or individuals need to be motivated, mobilized and trained to provide welcome, hospitality and pastoral care, and finally to integrate the youth into the congregation. Experts may be invited for better learning.

12. Since different families live in different areas and they know the migrant youth from their own background, they may look out for the youth in the service, at tea time, in the work place, in the street, in the neighbourhood or wherever they are seen. Members can approach them, exchange contacts with them, and invite them to their Fellowship and houses on a regular basis, especially at weekends and to other events such as prayer meetings and family gatherings.

13. A support group of families could be formed to provide pastoral care to the youth and offer support in matters like information, employment, education and other issues.

14. As the local Women's Fellowship is very strong and they visit houses, they can encourage the families to be welcoming to the migrant youth.

15. Like Martha of Bethany, families may help the migrant youth with all sorts of practical needs including sub-letting them space in their house. They may help them like Mary by listening attentively to their psychological, spiritual and practical problems and provide counselling and any help according to their abilities. The youth of the families may offer the migrant youth a close friendship as Lazarus did to Jesus.

*Conclusions:* The list of recommendations above is kept open for further research. The research has shown that the contexts of Dhaka and Groningen have similarities and differences. The problems of migrant youth have local characteristics but these are also reflected in other places and each situation can learn from the others. Possible solutions in one context can throw light on those in the other ones examined. It is hoped that this research will help both the Church of Bangladesh and the churches in Groningen involved in their mission with migrant youth.

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C. (i) Rev. Jannet van der Spek, (ii) Focus Group, and (iii) Migrant and Dutch students of International Convivium, Casa Mundo. (Immanuel Church)

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B. Priests of the Church of Bangladesh in Dhaka City: Rev. Saurobh Pholia, Rev. Hemen Halder, Rev. Mrityunjy Mondol. Rev. Philip Biswas and Rev. James Baroi

C. The migrant youth and urban youth of St. Thomas' Church, New Centre, Mogbazar, Dhaka

D. Missionary priests who have worked in Bangladesh: Rev. Eileen Carol Thompson (Scotland), Rev. Matthew Bicket (Scotland), Rev. Alwyn H.J. Jones (England), Rev. Bart Baak, Rev. Albert Ferwerda, Rev. Dineke Ferwerda (the Netherlands)

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