

The Dutch Reformed Church and Multi-cultural Ministry: Angolana, a Rural Challenge

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Abstract

The article deals with the complexities of a multi-cultural ministry within the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRCSA). Although the DRCSA is an “open” church where anyone from any race, culture or language is welcomed, the praxis of multi-cultural ministry is not always feasible. This article sets out to explore some of the reasons why the synodical declarations and decisions did not influence or help a rural congregation, particularly a non-white rural congregation in the DRCSA. Herein, the decisions of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa are deliberated, particularly regarding multi-cultural ministry and the implications thereof for congregations like Angolana. Specific attention is given to Angolana because of the socio-political and cultural contexts of this congregation. The role and the calling of the church in a context where a community is challenged by forced removals are also considered.

Keywords: Angolana; Pomfret; 32 Battalion; Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa; multi-cultural ministry



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Introduction

The article deals with the complexities of a multi-cultural ministry within the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRCSA).¹ Although the DRCSA is an “open” church where anyone from any race, culture or language is welcomed, the praxis of multi-cultural ministry is not always feasible, since the DRCSA is still pretty much moulded in the Afrikaans culture. This article endeavours to explore some of the reasons why synodical declarations did not influence or help rural congregations, particularly non-white rural congregations in the DRCSA, like Angolana. Angolana, a Portuguese-speaking congregation in the village of Pomfret, is part of the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Northern Cape (DRCNC).² This was the first congregation for Angolan people in the DRCSA. One of the main reasons why these specific Angolan people are part of the DRCSA is because they were part of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), who withdrew from the Namibia-Angola border war in 1986. This article briefly sketches the background of this select group of Angolan people and then focuses on their struggle to be incorporated in the ministry of the DRCSA as well as the Republic of South Africa.

This article is subject to the following limitations. First, it can be viewed as an ethnographic study. Ethnography develops from anthropological studies and focuses on social and cultural aspects of small communities in foreign countries (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008, 149). The aim of ethnographic studies is to “to observe and analyse how people interact with each other and with their environment in order to understand their culture” (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008,150). As an observer, the author is personally involved in, and in many instances “responsible” for, the current relationship with the DRCSA and writes from his own experience and perspectives. In ethnographic studies we distinguish between the emic perspective (“the natives’ point of view” of a specific culture), and an etic perspective (the researcher applies theoretical conceptions when studying the specific culture). Using an emic perspective, attention to language practices is very important, “what people say and what they keep silent about produce meaning and value in social life” (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008,150). In the context of this article, it is important to notice what the Angolan people as well as the DRCSA and DRCNC “say and keep quiet about.” Second, it is written from a DRCSA/NC perspective and some of the information is autobiographic, based on stories of members of the Angolana Congregation. As such, it is also more from the oral tradition of the people. Third, it mainly focuses on multi-cultural ministry in a rural congregation, with little attention given to socio-political and economic-development contextual issues. Without engaging with very successful multi-cultural ministries of the DRCSA in the urban areas of Pretoria, Johannesburg, Bloemfontein and Cape Town, this article focuses on rural areas. The presupposition of the author is that although there are good

1 For purposes of citations the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRCSA) refers to the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk van Suid-Afrika, hereafter as reference referred to as NGKSA.

2 For purposes of citations the Dutch Reformed Church in Northern Cape (DRCNC) refers to the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Noord-Kaapland, hereafter as reference referred to as NGKNK.

relationships amongst communities of different cultures in rural areas, because they are much more interdependent, they rather keep to themselves when it comes to worship, culture and traditions. A fourth limitation is the fact that it is not within the scope of this article to give attention to important and essential issues like inculturation and enculturation, which are central to multi-cultural ministry.

Background on Non-Afrikaans-speaking Congregations in the DRCSA

The General Synod of the DRCSA (NGKSA 1966, 548) took a decision in favour of the founding of Dutch Reformed congregations for English-speaking members. Further decisions were taken by the General Synod of 1970 to give more direction to the development of English-speaking congregations, which include the following:³

- An English Dutch Reformed Congregation can be founded locally without any borders.
- The minister of an English-speaking congregation may be part of an Afrikaans-speaking Dutch Reformed Congregation
- The evangelism commission of the local synod/presbytery must take responsibility. (NGKSA 1970, 74)

It is important to note that ministry in a Dutch Reformed congregation, speaking a language other than Afrikaans (i.e., a European language), was viewed as the ministry of evangelism, whereas ministry in a Dutch Reformed congregation speaking an African language, was viewed as mission.⁴ History shows that African congregations, or rather non-European congregations, developed as separate churches within the DRC family in southern Africa, known by many as mission or daughter churches.

The General Synod of the DRCSA 1978 took the following important decisions on white Dutch Reformed congregations of “other” languages (other than Afrikaans):⁵

- The congregations can no longer be viewed as transit houses (*deurgangshuise*) or evangelism congregations (*evangelisasiegemeentes*).
- The Dutch Reformed Church must establish “foreign language congregations” for people who because, of language or culture, are not catered for in the Afrikaans congregations. These congregations are doing the work of the church to reach out to immigrants and evangelise non-Afrikaans-speaking people.
- The relationship of these congregations within the structures of the church is the same as that of the Afrikaans-speaking congregations. (NGKSA 1978, 909–910)

3 All synodical decisions in this article are the author’s translation from Afrikaans to English.

4 It is not within the scope of this article to discuss the theological views of the Dutch Reformed Church on evangelism and mission, during the 1900s.

5 This is not the complete decision.

In 1982, the General Synod received a recommendation from the synodical commission of Southern Transvaal to establish a separate church for the Portuguese-speaking people in South Africa (NGKSA 1982, 748)—mostly people originally from Portugal. The decision was taken that the Portuguese-speaking members of the DRC may form separate congregations, and even a separate presbytery, but they would form part of a District Synod as appointed by the General Synod (NGKSA 1982, 1422–1423). At the General Synod in 1986, it was approved that the Portuguese-speaking people be a presbytery within the Synod of Northern Transvaal (NGKSA 1986a, 52, 591). However, at the General Synod of 1994, it was approved that the presbytery for the Portuguese-speaking people within the Synod of Northern Transvaal would be disbanded (NGKSA 1994, 388, 505).

In light of the decision by the General Synod to disband the Portuguese presbytery, the Synod of Northern Transvaal asked the Synod of Northern Cape to accept the Angolana Congregation of DRC as a member of the Synod of Northern Cape. After negotiations with the presbytery of Mafikeng, who first accepted the Angolana Congregation as a member, the Northern Cape Synod of 1995 welcomed the Angolana Congregation as a member of the synod (NGKNK 1995, 10, 240). From the acceptance of the Angolana Congregation within the structures of the Northern Cape, it was clear that this was a “special need congregation”⁶ because of the socio-political context. As such, the congregation was helped as reported by the synodical financial commission of the Northern Cape Synod to the synod meeting in 1997:

The congregation is helped to establish and sustain a temporary proponent position for the time between the departure of the chaplain (of the SANDF) and the last members of the congregation. The residents of the town Pomfret are moved to Zeerust. (NGKNK 1997, 7)

As will become clear when the background of these Angolan people is discussed along with the documents of the Synod of Northern Cape, this move to Zeerust never included all the residents of Pomfret. In light of the decision of the Synod of Northern Cape in 1997, Proponent Pieter du Plooy reported to the Synod of Northern Cape in 1999 on the difficult circumstances in Pomfret (NGKNK 1999, 227). Based on the report of Prop. Du Plooy, the synod decided to sponsor his ministry in the Angolana Congregation for another six months and asked the presbytery of Mafikeng, as well as the Synodical Commission of Service of Mercy (*Diens van Barmhartigheid*), to do a planning exercise on the future of the congregation (NGKNK 2001, 231–232). It was reported at the Synod of Northern Cape (NGKNK 2003, 6) by the presbytery of Mafikeng and Synodical Commission of Service of Mercy, that Prop. Du Plooy’s position was terminated and that it would not be filled again. The Synodical Commission of Service and Witness (*Diens en Getuienis*)⁷ was helping the presbytery financially to provide some food aid,

6 The description of the context later in this article will clarify the naming used here.

7 This commission was newly formed as a combination of the Synodical Mission Commission and the Synodical Commission of Service of Mercy

and when possible, church services were led by ministers from the presbytery. In 2005, the Northern Cape Synod instructed the Synodical Commission of Service and Witness to collaborate with the presbytery of Mafikeng to find sustainable and long-term solutions for the ministry in the Angolana Congregation, to the benefit of the whole community of Pomfret (NGKNK 2005, 157). The Commission for Service and Witness managed to negotiate with the Dutch Reformed congregation Bainsvlei in the Free State to render some services of Rev. Frikkie van Niekerk, who was fluent in Portuguese. The Northern Cape Synod of 2008 decided to continue to render the services of Rev. Van Niekerk and also asked all congregations in the Northern Cape to attend to and implement the documents on “profiling of poverty” and “community development” (NGKNK 2008, 280). In discussions between Caritas⁸ and the Presbytery of Mafikeng, it became clear that due to the geographical location and context of Pomfret, neither the community nor the church had the resources to be involved in the development of the Pomfret community. When Rev. Van Niekerk received a call to the Dutch Reformed congregation in Lusaka, Zambia, in 2009, he helped to identify some of the spiritually mature members of Angolana who had done the Timothy theological certificate at Bible Media. After deliberations with the Church Order Commissions of the Northern Cape and General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, Mario Hongolo was ordained as territorial minister (*Standplaasleeraar*)⁹ of the Angolana Congregation, on 28 November 2010.

Since the situation in Pomfret had not changed in any way and further deterioration had taken place, the last official decision the Northern Cape Synod took in 2016, reads as follows:

The Synod decides to request the presbytery of Mafikeng and the Synodical Commission for Service and Witness (task team diaconate and Caritas Community Focus NPC) and possible other stakeholders:

- 1) to alleviate distress in the community of Pomfret and to encourage Dutch Reformed congregations to get involved;
- 2) that the people of Pomfret will be assisted in moving to other communities;
- 3) that the Synodical Church Order Commission be requested to provide guidance and, if possible, help the Angolan communities to form one presbytery within the Northern Cape Synod (across synodical boundaries) to address specific unique issues in that way. The presbytery of Angolana will at this stage be linked to the presbytery of Mafikeng to act as a mentor;
- 4) that events will be arranged where the Angolan community can address the current trauma and historical trauma.

8 Caritas Community Focus is part of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Northern Cape. It is a registered non-profit charity organisation, which consists of Caritas Child and Youth Care Centre (038–135 NPO), Caritas Community Focus Kimberley (037–545 NPO), Caritas Community Focus Vryburg (044–421 NPO) and Caritas Community Focus Head Office (007–404 NPO). Services are delivered to children, families, and individuals within the Northern Cape and North West Provinces.

9 Territorial minister (*Standplaasleeraar*) is only acknowledged as an ordained minister of the Word within the specific group of people, like the Portuguese.

- 5) that the Synodical Commissions are requested to assist the above operations financially, namely the SKDG [*“Sinodale Kommissie vir Diens en Getuienis/Commission for Service and Witness”*]; SKBO [*“Sinodale Kommissie vir Bedieningsondersteuning/Commission for Supporting the Ministry”*]; and SKHD [*“Sinodale Kommissie vir Hulpdienste/Commission for Administration and Finances”*]. (NGKNK 2016, 280)

Since the 2016 decision, the community of Pomfret has reconsidered a process of possible relocation. The DRCNC (Rev. Mossie Mostert) and the presbytery of Mafikeng (Prof. Hannes Knoetze) helped the community in facilitating the process between the community of Pomfret, the local and national government, and the lawyers for human rights, which will be described later on in this article. The above historical overview of the DRC’s official decisions elucidates how the Angolana Congregation officially became part of the structures of the DRCSA and DRCNC. Attention now shifts to the Angolan people’s journey to South Africa and the founding of the Angolana Congregation in Pomfret.

Angolana Congregation

The initial members of the Angolana Congregation were all related to the 32 Infantry Battalion (hereafter 32 Battalion) of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), which was founded in 1975 and disbanded on 26 March 1993. The Angolan members of the battalion joined the battalion after they fled the war in Angola; some of them were still children when they were caught up in the war. Many of them fled after their villages were attacked by the warring parties such as *The People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola* (MPLA) and *The National Liberation Front of Angola* (FNLA). Many of them lost their families in the chaos that ensued. As they fled, some were caught by the SANDF, and others from the refugee camps in Namibia joined the SANDF willingly. Although the Angolan people were from different ethnic groups in Angola, the Christians were almost equally divided between the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and the Protestant faith. Initially, the Angolan members of 32 Battalion were ministered to by lay preachers in both the RCC as well as the Protestant denominations with a visit from the SANDF chaplain from time to time. In Pica Pau, the Protestants gathered in the community hall for Sunday services, while the RCC gathered in the school hall. The Afrikaans members of 32 Battalion at Pica Pau gathered in the dining room or under the trees for their church services (Mostert 2020, 1).

The first official chaplain of the SANDF appointed to the Angolan unit of 32 Battalion was Rev. Isaias de Almeida, and in 1981, Lieutenant Manie Taute became the first of several national service chaplains to serve with the unit full time. The official founding of the *Igreja Reformada Angolana* took place in August 1981 in Namibia with the help of Rev. Peet Strauss, the then missionary secretary of the DRC in Namibia with his office in Windhoek. In the end, the *Igreja Reformada Angolana* did not take part in the structures of the DRC in Namibia but attended the meetings of the synod of the

Evangelical Reformed Church in Africa (EGKA), which is the missionary synod of the DRC in Namibia (Mostert 2020, 1).

During 1989, members of the 32 Battalion and their families were withdrawn from Namibia to Pomfret in the Northern Cape. Older members of the Angolana Congregation tell the story of how mothers with babies were divided from their families and had to take with them the small children of other families to fly to South Africa with the “flossie.”¹⁰ The men, women, and older children were loaded on the train to travel to Vryburg in the North West Province of South Africa. Reaching Vryburg after four days (21–24 April 1989) on the train, they were loaded directly into railway buses to travel another 220 kilometres on gravel roads to a place they had never heard of or seen before, known as Pomfret. It was only here, upon their arrival in a foreign country at Pomfret that, after days of separation, some of the women and small children were reunited with their families.

Pomfret is a rural town on the edge of the Kalahari Desert within Kagisano-Molopo Municipality, the site of an old asbestos mine. The SANDF obtained this “farm” of about 30 square kilometres from the mining company. The *Igreja Reformada Angolana* in Pomfret became the first congregation of Africans to be accepted as a full member of the Portuguese presbytery of the DRC Northern Transvaal. On 4 March 1989, the name of the congregation was changed to *Congregation Angolana* and Chaplain Middlemost was appointed the first minister. The first baptism in Angolana Congregation was on 17 September 1989, and according to the register, it was Florano Antonio. Since the community at Pomfret was still part of the SANDF, and still known as 32 Battalion, a second chaplain position was approved in 1990 to serve at Pomfret with its 6 000 residents, and Rev. Manie Taute was appointed (Mostert 2020, 1).

Between 1989 and 1993, the SANDF used 32 Battalion soldiers to patrol the townships of South Africa to maintain peace and fight all possible riots. This fact puts the people in Pomfret, who received South African citizenship on their arrival, in an unenviable position with the ANC government ruling from 1994 in South Africa. In March 1993, 32 Battalion was disbanded, and the most able-bodied men were deployed to other SANDF units. The largest collection was deployed at 2 SAI in Zeerust. However, a large group resigned the SANDF and received a less than desirable severance package. It is these veterans—“the package people”—together with some of the widows and orphans, that are currently still part of the Pomfret community. According to the 2017 statistics, the Pomfret community consists of a total population of about 5 000 people and a school with more than 600 learners; about 500 of these residents are Portuguese-speaking adults; around 200 are pensioners; and two thirds of the community are women. According to the report by South Africa’s Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), 23% of the residents are from surrounding settlements, while as

10 A “flossie” is a military aeroplane.

many as 70% of the residents of Pomfret have been living there for up to 20 years (DPME 2017, 28–29).

Since many of the Angolan people have moved to different towns, the Angolana Congregation of Pomfret currently has members and wards in the following places:

- Pomfret = 233 members, Sunday attendance 89.
- Zeerust = 144 members, Sunday attendance 55.
- Mafikeng Extension 39 = 75 members, Sunday attendance 50.
- Oskraal = 52 members, Sunday attendance 33.
- Kathu = about 100 members attending other churches.

Currently, the congregation is ministered to by Rev. Mario Hongolo at Pomfret; Rev. David Chicate at Zeerust; mother Rosvita Epalanga at Mafikeng; and mother Eunice Ningui at Oskraal. The Angolana Congregation has about 470 members on the books, of whom about 230 are active.

Angolana, Pomfret and the Government

As alluded to earlier in this article, the socio-economic and political situation has deteriorated to such a degree since the late 1990s, that the living conditions in Pomfret have become inhumane. In the early 2000s, many journalists reported on the absence of basic services in Pomfret. Electricity was cut, water was only available some days of the week via water trucks, and the clinic, the police station, and the mortuary were closed down (Pomfret Court Interdict 2008, 17–19). In the meantime, the situation has deteriorated further. The government has acknowledged the dire situation, and the DPME's 2017 report indicates that:

[T]he town is currently under the ownership of the National Department of Public Works and as a result, the District Municipality is unable to source funding for the provision of services. These complicated institutional arrangements appear to further exacerbate the situation. (DPME 2017, 1)

However, the same report states:

These basic services are the rights of all citizens and need to be restored. Government's neglect to provide these may constitute violation of the rights of the community. (DPME 2017, 3)

Without consultation with the community, government through cabinet decided on 18 July 2003 to relocate the residents of Pomfret “and gave a mandate to the Department of Defence to implement the relocation of the civilian community resident in Pomfret” (Pomfret Court Interdict 2008, 15). It was only in January 2005 that the residents of Pomfret became aware of the decision of cabinet to relocate the community, when General Bobo Moerane arrived in Pomfret to inform the community of the relocation and the demolition of the town. At this stage, local and national government had

already withdrawn all basic services in the community, and residents lived in absolute poverty. It seems as if government wanted to force the people of Pomfret to relocate, as General Moerane informed the residents “that he had the backing of the police and the military, in case cooperation was not forthcoming” (Pomfret Court Interdict 2008, 15).

There is much speculation about the reasons for the government’s decision of relocation. Some high-ranking officers from the SANDF indicated political reasons when addressing the community after the decision was taken. The main reason propagated by the politicians, and stated by General Moerane, was the danger of the asbestos in the area. The community fought the attempt of forced relocation by the government with a court interdict in the High Court of South Africa in Pretoria on 17 November 2008 (Case number: 427985/08). With this court order still in place, the government stated in its 2017 report: “[T]he court interdict that suspends this relocation is still in place and needs to be dealt with before any other relocation intervention can be carried out” (DPME 2017, vii). Although the same Pomfret Court Interdict (2008, 35) stated the repair and reinstatement of basic services, like water to individual households, the sewerage network, adequate basic health care service, social welfare services, and effective policing, these basic services were never reinstated to the satisfaction of the residents. Instead, the DPME (2017, 3) report stated: “From the analysis of the study, the community is still without basic services such as electricity, water sanitation, health and policing services”; and “The limited service provision to the community of Pomfret since 2008 (after the halt of the relocation process), has culminated into the deterioration of infrastructure, such as electricity, water and sanitation as reported in 2014” (DPME 2017, 5).

About 76% of the households earn an income of below R2 500 per month, while the main source of income is social grants, of which almost 50% is child support grants, and 19% is pension grants (DPME 2017, 29). The mobility of the community is very limited as only 1.2% drive their own vehicles, while 22.3% walk, and 66% rely on public transport. This information is important, especially considering that 20% of the community utilises a clinic in Ganyesa about 135 km from Pomfret, while a mobile clinic is available only once a week (DPME 2017, 32).

As indicated in the DPME (2017, 49) report and observed by the community, 93% of the residents are willing to relocate. However, although this might be the best option, it is certainly not an easy option. One of the core problems of the possible relocation of the Pomfret community is stated in the DPME (2017, vii) report as follows: “What has emerged from the study is that there appears to be no explicit legislation that talks to how relocation should be conducted in South Africa.” Except for the court interdict, the immediate causes of the failure of the relocation process are indicated as the relocation process itself, and the lack of sufficient resources (DPME 2017, 37). In addition to these factors, there are other factors hindering the relocation from taking place. These include the backlog of RDP housing in the communities of Vryburg, Tosca, and Mahikeng, and the possibility of xenophobic attacks, amongst others.

It is against this background that negotiations between the Pomfret community, government, lawyers for human rights, and the church unity commission are facilitated by the DRCNC.

The Calling of the DRCSA in a Multi-cultural Context

The General Synod meetings of the DRCSA from 2002 up to 2011 have made clear declarations on their calling, which includes subjects like poverty alleviation, justice, human dignity, church unity, and related matters. During these times, the DRCSA also engaged in a season of listening, followed by a season of human dignity. The DRCNC states its calling declaration as:

A synod is congregations within a denomination who are committed to each other and who are prepared to listen to the Word of God with each other and to keep walking together to help each other to discover our calling, to encourage each other and to give hope in the way we live [own translation]. [*'n Sinode is gemeentes wat in 'n kerkverband aan mekaar gebind is en as kerk saam na die Woord van die Here luister en die pad so saamloop dat ons owns roeping ontdek en mekaar moed en hoop gee om dit uit te leef.*]

Although there might be wonderful stories of how these declarations and seasons have changed people's lives, it seems that they have not made any difference to the lives of the people in Pomfret. For this reason, this article has endeavoured to explore some of the reasons why the synodical declarations did not influence or help these rural congregations, particularly Angolana.

In his book, *The White Man's Burden*, Easterly (2006) gives an insightful description of why poverty alleviation does not succeed in Africa. These insights might elucidate the context of Angolana and the DRCSA. He describes two approaches, namely, the traditional approach by the "Planners" and an alternative approach by the "Searchers."

A Planner thinks he already knows the answers; he thinks of poverty as a technical engineering problem that his answers will solve. A Searcher admits he doesn't know the answers in advance; he believes that poverty is a complicated tangle of political, social, historical, institutional, and technological factors. (Easterly 2006, 6)

Thinking about why the declarations of the DRCSA/NC did not have a transformational influence in the community of Pomfret, one may easily say it was because of the calling declarations of the Planners, and nobody held congregations or synods accountable to live this calling. According to Easterly (2006, 10), accountability is one of the main reasons why the actions of Planners are unsuccessful. He indicates that when Planners give solutions to the problems, they give orders and even resources, but they do not keep anyone accountable, and they never follow up. Searchers, on the other hand, work from the bottom up, since they believe "only insiders have enough knowledge to find solutions, and that most solutions must be home grown" (Easterly 2006, 6). This might be an indication that the Synods of the DRC still carry the burden of saving the world—saving Angolana—instead of listening and encouraging the insiders to find solutions.

However, I also do not think it is that easy, as each context will have its own external and internal issues that complicate matters. Regarding the people of Pomfret, I want to highlight two important matters that are crucial for the relationship between Angolana and the DRC.

The first is more of an observation. Although the people of Pomfret are all Angolan people, we must remember that they were all refugees from different communities in Angola. It was only when the SANDF engaged the men in the war to form a battalion that the men and their families formed a new community with a military identity—32 Battalion. The implication is that this new community of individuals and families from different tribes and geographical areas, was formed and operated primarily within military structures for almost a decade. The consequence was that they were indoctrinated to take orders and not to make their own decisions as a community. This is evident when one becomes cognisant of how the community operates; the veterans still respect people according to their military ranks, while the younger generation wants to make decisions in a democratic way. This is one of the factors creating tension in the community, with a definite influence on the decisions to be made by the community regarding the relocation process.

The second has to do with different models or understandings of multi-culturalism in the church and society, which become very important, especially with a second generation of immigrants. Yang (2017, 70–77) describes four different multi-cultural models, namely: The mono-cultural model—“a biological family”; the friendship model—“a shared house”; the partnership model—“an intercultural engagement”; and the integrated model—“a blended family.” The question is, which multi-cultural model of church will serve the Angolana Congregation and the DRCSA best? This becomes an important question, especially for the second and third generations, since those born in South Africa are more “South Africanised” compared to their parents, as they have received their education in South African schools, studied South African history, and so on. Their mother tongue, Portuguese, might no longer be their first language, and they might no longer follow their parents’ preferred ways of doing things. In addition, they might have more friends in the wider local community than in the mono-cultural church or community.

Without going into too much detail, let’s take a bird’s eye view of the historical, multi-cultural choices the DRCSA made to get a better understanding of the current context. When the Europeans came to South Africa in 1652, they were immigrants to Africa. Although there were no Christian churches in South Africa, they followed an integrated model when planting the first church, as the slaves and the local people became part of the “blended family.” It was the 1857 decision of the DRCSA to allow for separate services for Holy Communion that developed into a mono-cultural model—“a biological family” church. “In this model migrant communities form separate churches reflecting individual language, ethnicity and cultural groups” (Yang 2017, 70). This mono-cultural church was confirmed many years later by the General Synod of the

DRCSA in 1974 when they approved the document, “Race, People and Nation and Peoples’ Relations in the Light of Scripture” [own translation] [*Ras, Volk en Nasie en Volkere Verhoudinge in die Lig van die Skrif*] (NGKSA1975). However, when the General Synod of the DRCSA in 1986 approved the document, “Church and Society” [*Kerk en Samelewing*] (NGKSA 1986b), they chose *again* for an integrated model—“a blended family” as they declared forced separate development—“*apartheid*”—a sin. According to Yang (2017, 72), one of the key problems for churches reflecting an integrated model, is power issues, for instance, in the South African context between Afrikaans-speaking and “Languages Other Than Afrikaans” (LOTA) members, enabling LOTA members to take on positions of leadership, etcetera. It is my view that when Angolana joined the DRCNC in 1995, it seemed more like a partnership model—“an intercultural engagement.” “A metaphor for the partnership church model is ‘an intercultural engaged couple’ who are committed to an ongoing relationship. ... Ethnic identity and differences are given room for expression in their own services, yet they join unity with one another in vision and mission” (Yang 2017, 71). This model makes room for second generation migrants to integrate into a multi-cultural context, which usually takes place in English. This is one of the main reasons why the partnership between Angolana and the DRCNC has not grown since 1995, since the DRCNC congregations are not (yet) willing to accept LOTA in their worship services. Therefore, if and when second generation Angolan people (or for this matter, any other African youth) grow up, they feel more at home in the African charismatic and Pentecostal churches where the worship services are conducted in English. Yang (2017, 76) points out that multi-cultural churches need to spend a lot of time contextualising and building relationships, which can be demanding, tiring, and time-consuming. Taking into account the geographical context of Angolana/Pomfret, it is almost impossible for the DRCNC to contextualise and build good relationships. This was already proven by the wonderful declarations and decisions taken by the synods. However, there is not enough commitment, energy, resources, and time within the presbytery of Mafikeng and the community of Pomfret to follow this through.

It must also be stated that the people of Pomfret have chosen for themselves a mono-cultural model (“a biological family”); they want to be an Angolan Portuguese-speaking congregation, since their common identity, values, and culture are very dear to them. This choice is completely in line with migrants who have experienced trauma, since the “affirmation of traditional culture and language can be an important part of healing” (Yang 2017, 73). It also helps young people to feel connected to their homeland or their parents’ homeland. There is no doubt that Pomfret is a traumatised community; it originates from refugees within the context of war on the borders; as SANDF members, they are used to fighting against the citizens of their “new homeland”—South Africa; and after 1994, especially in the new millennium, they live as “immigrants” in the South African context, characterised by sporadic xenophobic attacks. The Angolan people have thus chosen the best multi-cultural model that suits their needs.

This leads to the question: What is the calling of the DRCSA and DRCNC when the government wants to relocate one of their mono-cultural congregations to different locations, and as such, force them into an integrated model?

Conclusion

South Africa is a multi-cultural country where the residents are still on a journey of understanding how to become a multi-cultural (“rainbow”) nation after the first democratic election in 1994. This might imply at least three things. First, there is still a plurality of mono-cultures within the South African society. Second, there are many examples of healthy interaction between the different cultures within South African society. These interactions are mostly dependent on the different contexts. And third, a spectrum of intercultural experiences between the first and third generation of democrats and or immigrants in the new democracy is taking place. The DRCSA is on the same journey to understand how to become a multi-cultural church since its 1986 decision of church and society.

This implies that there is no one correct answer to the question on the calling of the DRCSA and DRCNC—especially regarding multi-culturalism—but that it is rather an ongoing journey. On this journey, the DRCSA has to deal with congregations who choose to be mono-culture congregations, like Angolana, and most other congregations in the presbytery of Mafikeng and the Synod of Northern Cape. However, there are also congregations in the presbytery of Mafikeng and the DRCSA that could serve as examples of healthy interaction between the different cultures. Then there is, especially within the context of the earlier mentioned “English” congregations/ministry in the DRCSA, a spectrum of intercultural experiences between first and third generations.

It is the conclusion of this article that the DRCSA will not become a multi-cultural church through decisions and declarations, and therefore, must stop acting as Planners, and instead, become Searchers. Time, energy and resources must be spent on engaging with congregations (like Angolana) and the residents of disadvantaged communities (like Pomfret) at grassroots level to empower them to take responsibility for their own decisions.

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