

**The Role of the Assemblies of God Movement in Zululand District  
in Addressing Needs and Concerns of Pastors' Widows**

by

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## **Abstract**

This mini-thesis investigates the ministry of the Assemblies of God Movement Kwazulu-Natal (AOGM-KZN) towards pastor's widows and their dependents. The aim of the study is to establish the current situation as it relates to pastor's widows and following a biblical survey though focusing on particular passages of Scripture makes recommendations how the ministry to widows could possibly be improved.

The mini-thesis reveals that the AOGM-KZN has some ministry in place mainly in the form of an allowance that is paid towards pastor's widows. However, through its empirical component and theological and biblical reflection, the evidence points to the fact that the AOGM-KZN falls greatly short in terms of the Scriptural norm regarding the multi-layered form of this ministry. However, there are mitigating circumstances that prevents them from performing better.

The mini-thesis made use of the LIM Model, an accepted and clearly defined research methodology. To this end the study used semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and archival records, as well as a survey of the Bible on the topic to ensure the trustworthiness and reliability of the study.

The mini-thesis when interpreting and analysing the data in addition to using Scripture as its highest authority, which illuminates the biblical norm loosely used Maslow's Hierarchy of Need Model in proposing a more holistic and inclusive approach of ministry to widows. The mini-thesis found that a lot of work lies ahead for the AOGM-KZN in living up to the scriptural ideal, this is no easy task but if the principles and reasonableness proposed in this study are followed the Movement would certainly improve on its current practice.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction and Context

### 1.1 Background

The history of the Assemblies of God (AOG) church in South Africa dates back to 1908 with the arrival in South Africa of some early Pentecostal missionaries (<http://aog-in-sa.aspx>). According to Sharoma (2003:21), the AOG was first recognised as a separate national church in South Africa in 1932 by mutual agreement of AOG in the United States of America (USA).

By 1936, the AOG church in South Africa was predominantly a black church with the control in the hands of the missionaries (<http://www.agfbrakpan.co.za/aog-in-sa.aspx>). In 1938 the AOG conference adopted a racial and unprecedented policy which opened the way for missionary bodies to come under the umbrella of AOG in South Africa. This prompted Hubert Philips and the Emmanuel Mission to join the AOG, thereby bringing Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth (N.B.H) Bhengu and James Mullan into the group (<http://www.agfbrakpan.co.za/aog-in-sa.aspx>). In 1940, Bhengu became a member of the first Multi-racial Executive Council of AOG.

According to Bond (1994:236), separate groups in the AOG in South Africa reflected racial divisions in churches. The White churches were known as, and are still referred to, as “the Group” led at the time by John Bond; and the Black churches under the leadership of Bhengu were called Back to God Crusades formed in the 1950s (Luphoko 2005:1). Colin La Foy led the Indians and Coloureds as the Association. The policy of separate but equal were unofficially adopted. Watt (1991:61) notes that in 1964 because differences had become irreconcilable among these different groups of AOG, American missionaries opted to establish their own church in South Africa called International Assemblies of God (IAG).

Bhengu, considered the father of the Back to God Crusades and or Movement launched his crusades in Arcadia and Duncan Village in East London. In 1951, Back to God Crusades was a clearly defined Denomination. It was Bhengu who proudly influenced the development and ethos of the AOG (Watt 1992:31). On the 7<sup>th</sup> October 1985 at the age of 76 this spiritual giant, great leader and apostle, went to



be with the Lord (<http://www.agfbrakpan.co.za/>). In 1990, Bhengu's black churches were renamed the Assemblies of God Movement (AOGM) (<http://www.dacb.org/stories/southafrica/bhengunicholas.html>).

In 2010 at the AOGM annual conference the national executive committee was mandated by the conference to change the name of AOGM back to the Back to God Crusades (BTGC). They were mandated to change the name because the key focus of the church is to spread the Good news of Jesus Christ throughout Africa. BTGC is in line with Bhengu's vision of bringing Africa back to God, however according to 2012 AOGM special conference minutes, the task team is still facing challenges in changing the name ([secretary@aogm.org.za](mailto:secretary@aogm.org.za)).

Apartheid laws passed by the then government, specifically the Group Areas Act No 41 of 1950 proclaimed certain areas for the sole use of particular races (Abraham 1989:34). The Urban Areas Act of 1945, limited Bhengu's evangelizing campaigns to on black residential areas, hence the majority of his converts were Blacks which is why the Assemblies of God Movement in the Zululand district, KwaZulu-Natal (AOGM-KZN)<sup>1</sup> has predominately Black members. In the above-mentioned district, most Blacks are Zulu-speaking people.

## **1.2 Preliminary literature review**

In-depth studies reveal that some authors and scholars have addressed the plight and care of widows in general as well as pastors' widows in particular. For example, Campbell (2004) in his Master's thesis discussed, "The role of the Christian church in South African Society with a scriptural focus on the care of widows and orphans"; and Kubeka (2011) completed his PhD thesis on "Assessing the care of the surviving clergy widows within the Pentecostal church."

Green (1970) in his Master's thesis addressed "The existential vacuum and pastoral care of elderly widows in nursing homes" but did not cover those who are not resident in nursing homes. Richardson (1980) in his study was interested in, "Developing a programme of ministry to widows over forty-five years of age in

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<sup>1</sup> These are Black churches formed by Bhekinkosi Nicholas Hepworth Bhengu using Back to God Crusades, and in 1990 they were renamed as the Assemblies of God Movement (AOGM) affiliated under Assembly of God in South Africa ([http://www.dacb.org/stories/southafrica/bhengu\\_nicholas.html](http://www.dacb.org/stories/southafrica/bhengu_nicholas.html)).

Louisville, Kentucky.” Walker (1991) conducted his research on, “Leading church members to develop a strategy for local church members to develop a stratagem for local church ministry to recently widowed senior adults”; he did not consider young widows; and the majority of them are unemployed and did not re-marry; however, Barbe (1980) in his Master’s thesis proposed a more inclusive “programme of assistance for widows from selected churches in Bluefield, West Virginia”. Chevan and Korson (1975) suggested “Living arrangements of widows in United States and Israel, 1960 and 1961” ([www.jstor.org/4403278](http://www.jstor.org/4403278)) and their study was not limited within a certain age, but widows in general with no particular attention to pastors’ widows.

However, none of the writers directly studied the role of the AOGM-KZN in addressing the needs and concerns of pastors’ widows. This presents a research gap which the researcher has explored.

It is therefore essential to explore the inner workings of widowhood as it affects these women, who have been involved in the ministry with their husbands and examine the role of the church in helping them.

The church, the ecclesiastical body should address needs and concerns of the widows as the Bible argues that it is God who “upholds the widow and fatherless” (Psalms 146:9). Paul, a learned theologian and visionary apostle, was concerned about the care given to widows in the local church (1Timothy 5:3-16), and Jesus was so touched by the widow’s plight that He raised her son from the dead so he could continue to care for her (Luke 7:12-16). The researcher concurs with Kubeka (2011:3) that the ministry of the church cannot be complete without the morally acceptable demonstration of the care for the widows.

### **1.3 Research Problem**

The desire to conduct this research was triggered by episodes observed. The researcher observed the neglect of pastors’ widows in the AOGM-KZN. In this study attempts were made to explore whether widows needs and concerns are addressed as per what is considered to be the scriptural norm.

The first episode occurred when one pastor's widow passed away, my wife and I went to the family to sympathise. Unfortunately, the children did not welcome us. Eventually we were given a chance to pray and share a Word of comfort and encouragement with the family. Before our departure, two of her children came to talk to us. They shared the difficulties, problems and the challenges they faced since their father's death and how their late mother was apparently isolated and neglected by the church until her death.

According to a resolution that was taken at AOGM 2008 annual conference ([secretary@aogm.org.za](mailto:secretary@aogm.org.za)), pastors' widows are paid R1045 per month since 2008 to 2013. Given the financial climate since the economic crises in 2008/9 this amount seemed inadequate.

Having been made aware by this episode, the researcher decided to pay a visit to two more pastors' widows in the Zululand district in order to understand the plight of these women. The first widow visited was married to a well-known evangelist who was actively involved in the Back to God Crusade; he passed away in August 1999. His wife, the widow is living in very dreadful conditions and is without a decent shelter. She has "to cope with financial and household matters that had previously been the responsibility of her husband with little to no help" from the church (<http://www.biomedcentral.com/1472-698x/12/28/prepub>).

In order to test the rationality and validity of this study, the researcher further visited an elderly pastor's widow whose husband passed away in 2007; she is also suffering the same plight; living with two grandchildren who is remunerated through the government social security or grant system, augmented by her meagre financial support from the church. With this little financial support, she has difficulties in meeting health care costs for herself or for family members.

In AOGM pastors are all fulltime workers; they are not allowed to be bi-vocational to supplement their salaries. They, according to the church policy, stay for three years in a local assembly before being transferred. This generally makes it difficult for them to find employment. This is the reason why they are not allowed a self-supporting or bi-vocational status. Pastors' remunerations are discussed and agreed on at the annual national conference, thus they cannot be negotiated with local assemblies and for this reason pastors' salaries are similar across the board.

The majority of pastors' widows rightly or wrongly gave up their paid jobs out of their own accord to support their husbands in ministry. Some of them are unemployed, hence at the death of their husbands they are not left with any income to support their families. There are no pension funds, medical aid, provident or retirement annuity pay-outs this is for their own account. A few of them have no or a very small amount of life cover and a funeral plan provided to assist them.

Even though AOGM-KZN does not prohibit pastors' widows from remarrying, the majority of them decide not to remarry for different reasons. MacQuillan (2003:9) reveals that, "Sometimes remarriage could help the widow to deal with the demands of everyday"; however he also stated that "remarriage has its drawbacks." Remarriage among the pastors' widows of AOGM-KZN is optional hence the church has to devise a strategy to assist these women.

The researcher therefore deems it imperative to pursue his study on the role of AOGM-KZN in addressing the needs and concerns of pastors' widows hoping to arrive at conclusions and recommendations which will be bible-based, vigilant and helpful to the AOGM-KZN.

## **1.4 Research questions**

### **1.4.1 Primary question**

What is the Biblical role of the AOGM-KZN in addressing the needs and concerns of pastors' widows in the light of the relevant Scriptures?

### **1.4.2 Secondary questions**

1. What is the current situation of pastors' widows in the AOGM-KZN?
2. What assistance and strategies does AOGM-KZN currently employ to address the needs and concerns of pastors' widows?
3. What biblical principles are needed for addressing needs and concerns of pastor's widows?
4. What practical steps should AOGM-KZN take to enhance their ministry to pastors' widows?

## **1.5 Value of the study**

### **1.5.1 Aims**

The researcher is aiming at:

- Exploring the current situation of the pastor's widows in AOGM-KZN to ascertain the realities on the ground
- Providing pertinent knowledge to AOGM-KZN on developing policies, strategies, action plans, and programmes of assistance in addressing the needs and concerns of pastor's widows

### **1.5.2 Purpose**

This research study purports at raising the profile of pastors' widows in the AOGM-KZN by providing an accurate report on the conditions of these women who seem to be neglected after the death of their husbands. Through this mini-thesis, the national executive committee of the AOGM, KZN district council and local church committees are made aware of the biblical imperative of prioritising ministry to pastor's widows.

The study also attempts to make practical proposals in assisting AOGM-KZN on how to move forward in aligning itself with the biblical mandate as revealed in both the Old and New Testaments in meeting the needs of pastor's widows.

## **1.6 Delimitation of the Study**

In order to limit the scope of the research, common delimitations are considered (Smith 2008:141-142). First, this study is geographically limited to the Zululand district of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa in order for the study to be manageable. Second, it is further delimited to a cultural group, Zulu-speaking believers in the AOGM-KZN. Third, the study focuses is on pastor's widows.

## **1.7 Methodology**

### **1.7.1 Research Methodology**

The intended research will be treated within the discipline of practical theology which often begins by examining the present situation, and then formulates a biblical model

of what it should be like by studying the Scriptures. It “culminates with the development of a practical response” (Smith 2008: 152). Heitink (1969:6) defines practical theology as a theory of action that is “the empirically oriented theological theory”. The LIM model (Cowan 2000) is therefore suitable for this kind of research since it provides a working template given the nature the research topic and the desired end of the study.

In addition to the introductory and concluding chapters, chapters one and five respectively, the three logical steps of the LIM model were used for chapters two (present situation), three (preferred scenario) and four (practical suggestions).

**Table 1:** Chapter by chapter breakdown

Chapter	Description
1.	Introductory chapter
2.	Present situation
3.	Preferred scenario
4.	Practical suggestions
5.	Concluding chapter

This study required an empirical description; therefore, the qualitative research methodology was employed. Interviews were conducted with the following people: pastor’s widows; current pastors and their wives; local elders and deacons; and the chairperson and secretary of Zululand district council. Participants were deliberately selected using the purposive sampling technique, a suitable tape recorder served as a recording method and this helped the researcher to have a complete record of interviews for analysis (Dawson 2002:66).

Qualitative data collated was transcribed from interviews into interview summaries after each interview had taken place. Data was refined, reorganised and analysed (Dawson 2002:122) continually as the research progressed. As already alluded to above, these interviews were conducted, firstly, to understand the current situation. Secondly, to identify the caring system used by AOGM-KZN in addressing needs and concerns of pastor's widows. Thirdly, to also ascertain the biblical teaching on the subject. Fourthly and finally, to propose Bible-based workable suggestions and recommendations.

## **1.7.2 Research design**

### **1.7.2.1 Introduction to Study**

This study commenced by describing the episodes which gave rise to the research question. This chapter also saw a preliminary literature study conducted in order to establish what other studies have done in addressing the needs and concerns of pastor's widows. The researcher further highlighted the aims, purposes, and delimitations of the study. This was followed by a description of the research methodology, the research design, a chapter outline and a code of ethics.

### **1.7.2.2 Chapter 2: Present situation**

This chapter dealt with the analysis of the empirical component of the study where a researcher gathered the data through empirical means using interviews which are a "series of questions a researcher addresses personally to respondents" (Smith 2008:167). Unstructured interviews with open-ended questions, focus group discussions were used to gather information from the following participants: pastor's widows; current pastors and their wives; local elders and deacons; and the chairperson and secretary of Zululand district council. The researcher, moreover, checked the AOG-KZN archival records to evaluate the resource documents and the strategic plans relating to pastor's widows.

The researcher did this in order to understand the predicaments of pastor's widows: what are their needs and concerns; and what caring methods are already being used by the church in helping them. In this chapter, the first step in the LIM model was used to interpret the world as it is and to understand what is going on and why.

The following respondents participated in face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions:

- Seven (7) pastor’s widows in Zululand district was interviewed
- Seven (7) current pastors and their wives
- Seven (7) elders from different local churches
- Seven (7) deacons from different local churches
- The chairperson of the Zululand District Council; and
- The secretary of the Zululand district council

**Table 2:** Participants and reason for selection

Participants	Reason for Selection
<b>Pastor’s widows</b>	They provided information that described their first-hand experience as pastor’s widows.
<b>Current pastors and their wives</b>	These participants provided insight into the existing understanding and expectations of pastoral couples as it relates to the care of widows and what they would like to see happening in the future.
<b>Elders and deacons from local churches</b>	The participants provided insight into the historical and current practice of the local churches and explores their biblical literacy and planning in responding to the needs of pastor’s widows and by extension their children under their care.
<b>The chairperson of the Zululand district</b>	This is the highest office in the district and serves serve as the policy and decision-making centre of the region. The study interviews the chairperson to determine the biblical, leadership and managerial approaches to supporting the



	widows in question.
<b>The secretary of the Zululand district</b>	The secretary serves as an informant and commentator on the archival documents on the topic in question.

Data collected was recorded on the recording device mentioned above; questionnaires was transcribed, refined, categorised and analysed in order to inform the study as it relates to the situation on the ground.

### **1.7.2.3 Chapter 3: Preferred scenario**

In this chapter, the researcher aims at discussing the biblical perspective or scriptural norm on how to address the needs and concerns of pastors' widows. This is step 2 in the LIM Model (Smith 2008:208). In other words, a general view of the Bible in addressing the needs and concerns of widows broadly were surveyed with the aim of applying it to the current situation in the research locale.

The researcher identified and interpreted the data in relation to the so-called 'grey areas' between the biblical instructions and the current practice that needs attention. Apart from the Holy Scriptures, scholarly sources were used to interpret the faith tradition; these included literature studies (books, articles, and commentaries), theological classics and church teachings which are related to pastor's widows. The interpretive lens uses the consulted material as pointed out above by comparing and contrasting it with the tradition and teachings of the AOGM-KZN.

### **1.7.2.4 Chapter 4: Practical solutions**

The chapter provided practical steps that can be implemented to transform the current situation of pastor's widows into what it should be as per the third step of LIM model (Smith 2008:210). This submitted practical suggestions or recommendations on how the needs and concerns of pastors' widows can be addressed. At this stage, the researcher interpreted the research findings from the research conducted in previous chapters to develop a feasible plan and workable solutions to the present problem.

### **1.7.2.5 Conclusion**

In this final chapter a brief summary of the background, research problem, research questions, research aims and purposes are provided. Practical suggestions are put forward in order to address the predicament that the AOGM-KZN finds itself in, as it relates to the caring for pastor's widows.

### **1.8 Code of ethics**

Before the researcher started interviewing the participants, he outlined a code of ethics to ensure that both the participants and the information collated will be treated with all honesty and respect. This also ensures that the researcher intends to comply with the Data Protection Act of 1998 as it pertains to research ethics (Dawson 2002:153). The following values underlines the research code of ethics:

- Anonymity
- Confidentiality
- Right to comment
- Data protection

The researcher complied with all legal requirements and policies, procedures, and guidelines, and in particular the institution's Data Protection Policy. The researcher made certain that the information gathered was used in a way that is fair to individuals and protects their rights. The identity of individuals and churches were protected. Data processing was fair, lawful and confidentiality was upheld. No substantial damage or distress was caused to individuals. The data was not discussed or shared with anybody outside the research domain.

Research is a crucial function. Religious beliefs fall into the category of sensitive data and it requires extra precautions to be taken when processing. The requirements for appropriate security of data was respected by the researcher. The researcher understood that inappropriate use of this information is potentially prejudicial to the data and abstained from using it outside the boundaries of the research intended purpose.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

Two episodes triggered this research endeavour. The episodes in question related to the felt feelings that the AOGM-KZN did and does not adequately for the wellbeing of pastor's widows. Based on the findings of the research these feelings were deemed to have some substance to it. Furthermore, this chapter outlines the background to the research, the research problem and design in exploring how the AOGM-KZN can respond biblically to the criticisms of the people in question.

In the next chapter the researcher will examine the actual experiences of the real life situations of the pastor's widows. This empirical component of the study will involve interviews and focus group discussions with participants who agreed to form part of the study.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Present situation**

#### **2. The Predicament of the Pastor's Widows**

##### **2.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter provided a general outline of the envisaged study. Chapter two presents the findings of the empirical component; it does not attempt to analyse the findings. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the present situation of pastors' widows in the research locale and to present the data findings gathered during interviews, focus group discussions and the document reviews that took place. As indicated in chapter one, the researcher makes use of the LIM Model. The current chapter is step one (1) in the LIM Model: the present situation. This chapter presents the views of the following research participants: pastor's widows, current pastors and their spouses, elders and deacons of local churches, the district chairperson of the Zululand district and its secretary.

##### **2.2 Interviews and Focus Group Discussions with Respondents**

A total number of thirty-seven respondents were interviewed. Nineteen interviews were conducted at respondents' homes and the other eighteen took place in mission houses (parsonages). The interviews were carried out in a non-threatening environment where participants were made to feel at ease to ensure that a richer and a more meaningful interview occurred. The researcher acknowledged the respondents' right to non-participation and privacy, and to remain anonymous.

All interviews were recorded. Some interviews were conducted in isiZulu as some respondents had a limited command of the English language. The interviews conducted in isiZulu were translated and transcribed into English for the purpose of this research. Pastors' widows were the first to be interviewed.

During these interviews it emerged that the first pastor passed away in 1979 and the most recent in 2011.

The research findings are presented in the following need-related categories: physiologically, psychologically, and educationally, socially/familial and spiritual/ministry classifications.

## **2.3 Physiologically**

During interviews, pastors' widows highlighted two features which are considered in this category, namely their living space and the necessity for food. According to the model presented by Maslow

(<http://psychology.about.com/od/theoriesofpersonality/a/hirerarchyneeds.htm>) it is apparent that these two features are basic [biological] needs. Basic needs refer “to those fundamental requirements that serve as the foundation for survival ([www.caction.org/basicneeds](http://www.caction.org/basicneeds)). Physiological needs are therefore fundamental to human survival (Mwamwenda, 1996:345).

### **2.3.1 Living space**

Living space is an important issue for this study hence the researcher endeavoured to find out *a) where was the pastor's family staying when he died and b) where and with whom are they currently staying?* The study shows that pastor's widows interviewed were living in mission houses (parsonages) when their husbands passed on. They mentioned that they were asked to leave the house within three months of their husband's deaths to make space in the mission house for the new incoming pastoral family. This caused them great heartache as many of them had really no place to go. Many of these widows are currently staying with their adult children, extended families or live on their own. Those who stay on their own live in incomplete houses.

The current pastors and their spouses revealed they are aware of the 'arrangement' that if the pastor (the male-partner) dies that the mission house must be vacated. They expressed the view that they understand the reason why the house must be freed up but they also conceded that this does not make the situation any easier for the widow and her children who are in need of accommodation.

The secretary and the chairperson of the region, elders and deacons as well as focus group discussion confirmed that: *a) the widow and her children who live with*

*her must vacate the house in an agreed timeframe with the local church and b) this is not the best course of action as it makes no provision for the widow and her children once the pastor-husband has died.* The general feeling is that the current practice, though a practical one is perhaps not the best course of action given the dependency of pastoral couple's initial living space arrangement and the absence of a contingency plan for pastor's widows once the pastor passes on.

### **2.2.2 Food**

Food is a requirement that has to be met for the human body to continue to function well, and is necessary to live a healthy and productive life (<http://www.com.question/what-is-a-physicalneed>). This is especially important for children. The widows indicated that feeding their families is one of their biggest concerns. Not only do they wish to feed them, but they hope to feed them in such a way as to enhance their overall health and longevity. Many of the widows are living as 'dependents' and are not really able to contribute financially. They often stay with their children as well as with extended families and this makes it difficult for them to give constructive input on the purchasing of food items.

The responses of the current pastors, their spouses, chairperson and the regional secretary did not touch on the physiological need relating to food nor did it provide any significant insight into any other need that could be classified under this category.

## **2.4. Psychologically**

According to Mwamwenda (1969:345), security needs fall under psychological needs. This concurs with Maslow's five levels of hierarchical needs (<http://psychology.about.com/od/theoriesofpersonality/a/hirerarchyneeds.htm>), where he mentioned steady employment (financial income) and health as examples of security needs. During the interviews, employment and health care emerged as some of the major concerns of pastor's widows. The majority of the respondents are not employed and this causes financial stress. They are left to care for the bereaved children and to meet needs such as health care without their spouse. Dube agrees (2008:166) stating that health is an issue of concern for almost all people and especially women and even more so for widows.

It also surfaced that some of these widows are suffering from depression and exhaustion stemming from caring for their husbands towards the end of their lives. This might be as a result of the period of time spent on anticipating their husbands' death and becoming a widow ([www.york.ac.uk/spru](http://www.york.ac.uk/spru)).

Anxiety and fear are prominent psychological problems that widows face time and again (Safieddin 1999:2). Murray (1987:121) argues that because of the psychological problems Christians must therefore take their faith out of the pew and put it into practice by helping widows. Dube (2008:48) furthermore, states that it is incumbent upon the church to assist widows to deal with psychological effects and problems associated with the death of their partners.

In addition, their grief was exacerbated by the fact that they feel that they are no longer recognized, respected, accepted and cared for as pastors' wives by the movement. These feelings emanate from the fact that they are not used as church 'servants' as before, and are not invited to fellowship with pastoral couples. They are also not considered for annual Christmas functions meant for pastoral families where they used to receive financial gifts and presents. It was further revealed that local churches (where their husbands last served) are no longer caring for these women's physical needs, which affects them psychologically. They do not provide them with monthly groceries as they used to when their pastor-husbands were still alive, which adds to the feeling of neglect. Attesting to these feelings, Castle (1998:98) has found that one of the fears of the widow is that "those who supported her will drift away". This feeling was further confirmed by Kubeka (2011:145) who notes that surviving clergy wives feel "completely rejected by the churches which their husbands once faithfully served". According to Mwemwenda (1996:345), rejection, and the need for recognition, respect, acceptance and caring are expressions of some of the psychological needs these widows may experience. These experiences could have either a positive or negative impact on their lives depending on how it is processed.

The current pastors and their wives echoed the same sentiments as that of the pastors' widows in the above paragraph. It is for that reason that they categorically stated that they are not expecting anything from the church when the wife becomes a widow, because they have seen that widows are disregarded by their movement.

With intent Cueni (1988:43) states that in “Congregations in which people do not feel loved and appreciated are troubled” often develops resentment towards their church.

## **2.5 Social/ Financial/ Familial needs**

The study found that pastors’ widows have family problems such as raising children as single parents. The widows reported that the death of their husband had economic implications which left them in need of financial support. They also reported that the life challenges they faced after the death of their husbands was exacerbated because the husband was the major income provider.

These widows were further questioned concerning what the church is doing to assist them to sustain their families’ day to day living. There was a widow’s fund established by the national executive committee of the movement. It was discovered that the church initially assisted them with a stipend of R300 to support the family. This has increased to R1300 in more recent times. This gesture is well appreciated by the recipients, but the economic realities and living conditions make it impossible to make ends meet with this amount of money seeing many of them are unemployed.

According to the research findings, current pastors and their wives are aware of the sufferings of pastor’s widows, and that the church is struggling to provide necessary assistance to help. It also emerged from the interviews that some pastors expressed their concerns and worries of what will happen to their families when they die since their church lacks strategies to care for pastors’ widows “as a community of care” (Pityana and Villa-Vicencio 1995:9).

The focus group alluded to the fact that the young and uneducated pastors’ widows are the ones who suffered the most because they struggle to find jobs to supplement the money received from the church. Those who are young, educated and employed are seemingly managing to survive.

## **2.6. Educational needs**

### **2.6.1 The Widows**



Research revealed that some of the pastors' widows did not proceed to tertiary education and hence could not find decent well-paid jobs. The primary reason for not having proceeded to higher education was a lack of money on the part of their parents. The second reason was that they got married before receiving tertiary education after which they fully supported their husband's ministry and could not further their education.

### 2.6.2 The Dependent Children

The other major feeling of the widows expressed was that they are now more concerned about their children's tertiary education. They are frequently worried about educating their children since the church does not have a special education aid for pastor's children. Consequently, some of their children abandoned tertiary education due to financial problems. The widows reported that for these children it is not easy to find employment and in some cases some of them ended up partaking in high risk social behaviour, such as crime, drug peddling and prostitution. However, those who are in public schools have no problem because they are still enjoying the benefits of free basic education although the quality of education at school level is debatable and hopefully these children will make use of the potential free tertiary education program that we see students fighting for.

## 2.7 Spiritual Needs

The data revealed two main forms of support that the widows expected from the AOGM-KZN. They were financial and spiritual support. Earlier the study reported on the financial contribution the church makes to the pastor's widows and their children. The study also reported that the widows although their financial support was appreciated, they communicated that the funding was not enough to meet their daily needs. Here the research reports on the spiritual need of the widows.

The interviews with pastor's widows revealed that they are not visited nor are prayers offered specifically for them by current pastors. This means that there is no form of spiritual support offered by the church.

## **2.8 Assemblies God Movement Archives and Records**

Finally, the researcher consulted the AOGM archives and records to establish how the movement addresses the needs and concern of the pastors' widows. This revealed that both the local churches and Zululand district council year planners do not have any events planned for these widows and the recorded minutes do not include any discussions concerning pastor's widows. At the national level of the AOGM (Assemblies of God Movement) financial records, annual audited financial statements, and minute books from annual conferences showed that there is little expenditure on pastor's widows in spite of millions of rands of income. The church financials indicate that the stipend towards widows could be increased by a fair amount. The church magazines (an in house magazine) said very little about pastor's widows. It is in light of these findings, that the church has to develop an appropriate programme and mechanism to address the needs and concerns of pastors' widows.

## **2.9 Conclusion of the chapter**

This chapter uses the first step in the LIM model to describe the real situation of pastor's widows in the AOGM-KZN. In a nutshell, the research findings revealed that the participating pastor's widows are struggling to earn a living and survive in the current economic climate even though the archival records show millions of rands of income and the income-expense statement shows there is money to increase the financial support to widows. More alarmingly, the study found numerous areas where the church is seemingly neglecting its duties as it pertains to the caregiving activity orientated towards widows. The findings at this stage suggests that the onus is on the AOGM-KZN to help alleviate the profound suffering of these widows.

In the next chapter, the researcher will discuss the general view of the Bible in addressing the needs and concerns of widows broadly, and specifically how it ought to be applied to pastor's widows. The purpose of the chapter is to develop a biblical model, the preferred scenario in ministering to needy widows.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Preferred Scenario**

### **3. The world as it should be**

#### **3.1 Chapter Introduction**

In the previous chapter, data was collected through interviews among the pastor's widows, current pastors and their wives, local elders and deacons, the regional chairperson and the secretary of the AOGM-KZN; a focus group discussion was held and archival documents were consulted in order to provide a description of the current experiences of widows, as well as the church's response to the plight of pastor's widows. The findings revealed that the pastors' widows have needs and concerns that need to be addressed by their movement. These needs were categorised as physiological, psychological, social-financial-familial, and spiritual.

This chapter endeavours to apply the second step in the LIM model: the preferred scenario. The general view of the Bible in addressing the needs and concerns of widows broadly are reviewed, and specifically how this could be best applied to pastor's widows in order to understand the "world as it should be", and to uncover "what ought to be going on" (Cowan in Smith 2008:212).

This chapter therefore attempts to identify and discuss Biblical principles on how widows' needs are addressed in both the Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT). This will assist the researcher in formulating a biblical or theological model of what the preferred scenario should be.

#### **3.2 The Old Testament**

Many biblical texts outline how God himself loves and cares for women who have lost their husbands. These verses provide insight into the manner in which widows should be taken care of, and these are frequently coupled with instructions to help the fatherless and stranger; the tabulation below depicts these instructions<sup>2</sup>:

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are from the New King James Version (NKJV).

**Table 3:** Texts of compassion towards widows

<b>Text</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Exodus 22:22</b>	“You should not afflict any widow or fatherless child.”
<b>Deuteronomy 27:19</b>	“Cursed is the one who perverts the justice due to the stranger, the fatherless, and widow.”
<b>Deuteronomy 10:18</b>	“Administers justice for the fatherless and widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing.”
<b>Psalms 68:5</b>	“A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, Is God in His holy habitation”?
<b>Psalms 146:9</b>	“Relieves the fatherless and widow...”.
<b>Jeremiah 7:6</b>	“Do not oppress the strangers, the fatherless, and the widow.”

These are but a few of the many Old Testament references that show that the care of the widows is significant in God’s social order. In ancient Israel given the dynamics of their social life, the widows had no one to protect or care for them, therefore, God in the Old Testament text and through human instruments championed the cause of widows and orphans.

God further shows His commitment to the care of widows when He laid down specific instructions and laws of social responsibility: (a) to the families and (b) to the Israelites as His chosen instrument on how to handle the responsibility of caring and providing for the widows and orphans.

### **3.2.1 The role of families**

Ancient Israel was aware that the care of the widows was first placed squarely on the shoulders of their relatives. In this community orientated structure, the immediate and extended family was the most significant social unit in caring for the needy, especially widows. For example, Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth came back from Moab as widows and needed somebody to take care of their needs. Boaz, who was a distant relative of Naomi's husband took care of them as part of his family responsibility (Ruth 2-4). This indicates that Boaz understood that the primary responsibility for supporting widows belongs to the family hence he cared for Naomi's family by being generous with:

- a. Compassion by providing for all their needs (Ruth 2:8-9)
- b. Courtesy having invited Ruth to join his staff for a meal (2:14)
- c. Crops when he told his reapers to put out extra bundles of grain for her to find (2:15-16).

(Maxwell and Elmore 2007:317)

Jenkins (2006:174) believes that the book of Ruth provides a manual for family responsibility towards kin widows in order to save them from penury.

### **3.2.2 The Levirate Marriage**

The levirate marriage system was another form of caring for the widows because after the death of the husbands, widows were left with none to take care of them. Olanisebe and Oladosub (2014:1) define levirate marriages as "the custom of a widow marrying her deceased husband's brother or sometimes a near kin." This kind of marriage is stated in Deuteronomy 25:5-7, which makes provision where the deceased died and has no son to provide for her; "her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel."

Taking into consideration the aforementioned verses, besides perpetuating the name of the dead in his inheritance (Hubbard 1988:53), levirate marriage as mandated in the book of Deuteronomy ensures that the family of the deceased has someone to

care for them. For example, Boaz as *goel* (p.51), a responsible next-of-kin entrusted with various family duties, took upon himself “the care and protection of the childless widow Ruth, and married her in exercise of a levirate-type responsibility” (Leggett 1974:294).

Therefore, the Biblical principle provided here is that: just as ancient families took care for their widows, present families and the church as God’s family, should fulfil their Biblical obligation by caring for their widows. In terms of our cultural and moral understanding in the 21<sup>st</sup> century marrying your sister-in-law is offensive, distasteful, and unthinkable but the principle of caring and providing for her needs is not only courteous but a social and moral responsibility.

### **3.2.2 Early Israel**

It is evident from the OT the care for widows among the Jews was a matter of regular concern. In caring for the widows Israel as a nation had a role to play. Erwin (2010:5) writes, “God implemented a system where the widow would be taken care of by his people.” In Deuteronomy 24:19-21, God gave His people harvest instructions to ensure that fatherless and widows would have food:

“When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless and the *widow*...When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the *widow*. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterwards; it shall be for strangers, the fatherless, and the *widow*.”

It emerges from these verses that widows were allowed by law to glean the fields after the harvesters, by gleaning, they “gather what was left behind to help feed their families” (Erwin 2010:5); this was a way of caring for them. But it also teaches that the space was created for them to act and contribute towards their own survival. This was much more than relief; it was the development of human capacity and development. The church must therefore not exhaust all its resources without considering the widow and her children who are minors and dependent on her. A certain portion of its income must be set aside to care for these women. In addition,

certain 'fundraising or resource mobilisation' efforts should be geared to provide for widows.

It is also noticeable that in ancient Israel most of the widows fell under the category of the poor. MacArthur (<http://www.gty.org/resources/study-guides/40-5209/caring-for-widows>) suggests a possible reason for this: "In ancient Israel, widows were in an especially difficult position because honourable employment for women was not readily available, neither were there any institutions to provide for them," widowhood was of course "a life of penury" (Ushe 2011:27). The situation is very similar to widows whose husband-pastor served in the AOG-KZN Movement. In addition, for example, Elijah saved a widow of Zarephath who was about to die of hunger (1Kings 17:8-16). Another widow cried out to Elisha that her husband was dead (2 Kings 4:1), and her poverty was about to reduce her and her children to debt and slavery (Jenkins 2006:174). The predicament of these two widows typifies the state of poverty and the precarious position the widows found themselves in when their husbands died. It was for this reason the book of Deuteronomy further commands:

"When you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase in the third year- the year of tithing- and have you given it to the Levites, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow; so that they may eat within your gates and be filled" (26:12).

The above passages communicates the special arrangements that were provided in the OT, to ensure that widows share in religious feasts and offerings (tithes). The researcher therefore agrees with Kunhiyop (2008:263) who advises that we are to follow God's example and give high priority to the needs of widows.

If in the OT, God gave many laws of social responsibility to the families and Israel as a nation to treat widows in general with compassion and to provide for them, similarly, the AOGM-KZN as a family of God has to create a comprehensive methodology of care for its pastors' widows and fulfil its duty to "individuals in terms of their specific needs" (Hulme 1973:22).

### **3.2.3 A Plea for the Rights of the Widow**

One of the texts, which speaks pointedly of the rights of the widow, and the responsibility of the next of kin, early Israel as a nation, kings, and neighbours had towards the widow is found in Isaiah 1:17e. The text commands Israelites to "defend

the fatherless, plead for the widow.” (1:17). This text is briefly studied to explain the charge the OT presents to us in taking our social responsibility seriously as it relates to widows.

Isaiah uses the word widow in this passage for “a woman who has lost her husband, by death or divorce. The orphan and widow are often mentioned in the OT as epitomizing the helpless and impoverished who have been left without the necessities of life due to the loss of a family provider” (Nida and Louw (2005). Utley (1996:29) agrees, “the pair – orphan and widow is a symbol of all oppressed and socially disempowered people (cf. Exod. 22:21-22; Deut. 24:17,19,20,21; Job 24:3; Ps. 68:5; Jer. 7:6; Lam. 5:3; Ezek. 22:7; Zech. 7:10; Mal. 3:5).”

Utley also reasons that God’s will in relation to the orphan and widow is expressed in his follower’s righteous acts of compassion (1996:28). Turner (2004:77) explains the Hebrew word for righteousness is *tsedaqah*. She asks the question: What righteousness in the OT is? She answers,

“In the Old Testament, righteousness was not only being right or living in accordance with a certain norm, law, or understanding. It was much more dynamic than that; it was living in covenant relationship with God and with others. A right relationship with God and a right relationship with other people were inseparable. The righteous one served God, and, at the same time, delivered the poor from their poverty and took care of the world’s most vulnerable people. Often, in the prophetic world, these are the widow and the orphan; they are deprived of the protection and care of a male head of household.” (2004:90).

Though the picture appears gloomy and somewhat hopeless the prophet’s call is to the children of Israel to listen and change their behaviour (Bruce 1986:720). The prophet Isaiah is concerned with apostasy with resultant social injustice. Verse 17a-c calls on the nation to: “Learn to do what is right! Promote justice! Give the oppressed reason to celebrate” (NET).

The three verbs learn, promote and give are to be read in relation to the rights of the orphan and widow. It calls for a demonstration of the gospel in deed. The prophet strives to stir the spiritual and social imaginations of the ‘faith community Israel’, and



invites a response to act on behalf of the orphan and widow. Isaiah is aiming to persuade his audience to act justly. The call based on the Hebrew word for justice, *mishpat*, which is related to the Egyptian word *ma'at*, refers to balancing the commercial scales (Turner 2004:78). In other words, the nation must ensure that the scales are balanced and the needs of the orphan and widow are met as an act of justice.

The phrase to celebrate (v.17c) carries with it the notion of the Jubilee orientation. During the Jubilee celebration, to summarise, the oppressed, marginalised, voiceless, and dispossessed received favour, their burdens were lifted and their needs were taken care of. The prophet Isaiah brings a strong word of God's operative grace and mercy. "In their accounts, God was often pictured as the one who called the nation back to faithful living" (Turner 2004:79). Covenant living requires the faithful to meet the physical and spiritual needs of the widow in particular.

Turner speaks of Israel in Isaiah being caught in misguided choices and misplaced priorities. Though this might not be the case in the AOG-KZN Movement where the general income of local churches and the region is low and operational needs are receiving most of the monies although as previously mentioned million of rands are received by the national office. It is a chilling reminder as in the day of Isaiah that acting positively on behalf of the widow is urgent.

God has certain expectations of his people. To this end the Lord brings a legal charge against Israel. The implication for the AOG-KZN Movement could well be that God wants them to act intentionally and purposefully not because of a legal charge being brought against them but to act faithfully in terms of its social responsibility towards pastors' widows. God asks in the following verse 18 if Israel could reason with him or dialogue with him regarding their sin and social injustices. The purpose of the dialogue is for them to become what God intended for them and to restore the socio-economic equilibrium envisioned in the Law of Moses.

According to the researcher the time is ripe for the AOG-KZN Movement to consider the Scriptural plea to provide for the needs of the widows. The time is now to dialogue along these lines to be instruments of righteous actions by being faithful in discharging their responsibilities to the widows in general and more specifically to the

widows of those who laboured alongside their husband in ministry who has gone on to be with the Lord.

Isaiah 1 is a complaint from the Lord. But the chapter also presents hope (cf. v.26). Similarly, there is a complaint against the AOG-KZN Movement but there is also hope, hope that the movement would not abdicate its responsibility in providing for the relevant needs of widows who have served alongside their husbands in ministry.

Christian service calls upon the church at large to bridge the spiritual-social divide. John Wesley according to Stott (2006:25) remains the most striking instance. He inspired people to take up social causes in the name of Christ. Stott continues as he says that throughout church history evangelical leaders were committed equally to evangelism and the pastoral task and social action (p.26). Today, the church broadly views passages such as Isaiah 1 as a call to an holistic mission, which brings the social and spiritual aspects together and views it as two sides to the same coin. The Isaiah passage speaks of works of mercy or compassionate ministries, which arise as we commit to live the gospel and build special ministries to assist the poor, orphan, and widow.

### **3.3 New Testament**

Caring for the needy and especially widows was also a major concern in the NT. For example, the passion for compassionate ministry towards widows was demonstrated by: (a) Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry, (b) early church in Jerusalem (c) disciples such as Dorcas (d) and the Apostle Paul in his first epistle to Timothy.

#### **3.1. Ministry of Jesus Christ**

Jesus had a tender compassion for the needy especially the widows. At times miracles were performed for social and economic reason. For example, Jesus raised a widow's son from the dead in the city of Nain probably that he may take care of his widowed mother (Luke 7:11-15). This widow had no one to care for her, so the Lord stops a funeral procession, violates Jewish tradition by touching a coffin and raises her dead son who could probably care for her.

The second example where Jesus shows his concern for widows is when He warns the Israelites about experts in the Law. They seem to be religious, but they devour

widows' houses (Luke 20:47); such men he reasons will receive a more severe punishment.

In the above mentioned examples, Jesus shows us that God's interest in widows was not confined to the OT days but it is a consistent theme throughout the Bible.

As Christians, we are expected to emulate Christ in deeds, by having compassion for the needy and widows, and by taking care for them.

Moreover, the researcher agrees with Sadler (1997:24) that "The church has the biblical mandate to care for widows". Summarily, the Biblical principle here is that, as Jesus laid down His life for us (1John 3:16-17), we should also be prepared to lay down our lives for others by sharing our possessions. By doing so, we as Christians, will be fulfilling the law of Christ which is love (Brown 1992:75).

### **3.3 The early church**

The early church showed that the church has social responsibilities one of which was to take care of the poor widows as the church in Jerusalem did (Acts 6:1-6). Steury (1998:112) attests to the fact that one of the early church's first social ministries was caring for the neglected widows. Widows' ministry was done within the framework of the local assembly in Jerusalem, and the background that led to the church having deacons today was to care for widows on behalf of the church. Sadler (1997:25) highlights, "many scholars purport that the first deacon body was conceived... as mentioned in Acts 6:1-6" to satisfy the widows in their daily food distribution. Therefore, deacons in our churches have to emulate the early church by running a widows' ministry as a social service arm of the church.

The apostle Peter also performed a miracle for a similar purpose (Acts 9:39-41). Dorcas a member of the early church made coats and garments for widows. According to MacArthur (<http://www.gty.org/resources/study-guides/40-5209/caring-for-widows>) "Dorcas had apparently used her own resources to make clothing for a number of destitute widows." This is why they all wept before the Apostle Peter when she died, and she had to be raised from the dead to continue with her ministry of caring for the widows. Ushe (2011:28) is of the opinion that Dorcas was raised to life so that she might continue her works of charity to widows.

These examples from the early church teach Christians today that they must take their faith out of the pew and put it into practice (Murray 1987:121) because “Faith without works is dead indeed” (James 2:17).

Likewise, the AOGM-KZN as a church has to meet the needs of its pastors’ widows. By doing so the church will be fulfilling the parable of the Good Samaritan who found the person who was in trouble and took action to meet his immediate needs (Luke 10:30-37). Pierpont (<http://kevinpierpont.com>) significantly notes, “how we as a church care for widows in need is another way we present Christ to those who are watching us to see if we will practice what we preach”.

### **3.4 The Apostle Paul**

Sadler (1997:45) suggests, “The major text in the New Testament concerning the care of widows is 1Timothy 5:3-16”. Paul in this epistle to Timothy shows his concern about care given to the widows in the local church. He therefore gives some practical counsel to the church and widows’ families that they have a Biblical obligation to support their needy widows.

#### **3.4.1 The role of the Church**

The church as a godly family has a responsibility to honour widows who are truly widows, who do not have family to support them (1Tim 5:5-10). These widows should be cared for by the church (1Tim 5:3-10). Erwin (2010:12) notes, “The Bible clearly states how the widows are to be cared for, and it is the church’s responsibility to provide that care to whatever extent is needed”. Honouring widows includes financial support because in most cases, when their “husbands die, widows are left without money to sustain themselves and their orphaned children” (Dube 2008:90).

On the other hand, MacArthur (<http://www.gty.org/resources/study-guides/40-5209/caring-for-widows>) highlights, “Some husbands may have left their wives with wonderful resources such as a home and some money”, and therefore, the church has to exercise wisdom to determine which widows qualify to receive its support. Steury (1998:111) emphasises that widows to be honoured by the church should be “Those who are genuinely widows, without any family support”.

### **3.4.2 The role of the widow's family**

Paul affirms (as mentioned in 2.1) the fact that it is a family's responsibility to provide for the widows; hence widows' ministry should begin at home. If a widow has children or grandchildren, they have the responsibility to take care for her, especially if she has no other means of support. Erwin (2010:13) confirms that if a widow "does have a family, its primary responsibility involves caring for and supporting her" and Steury (1998:111) agrees that children or relatives of a widow are obligated to support their needy family members.

Other church members who have widows must take care of their widows so that the church is not overburdened (1Tim 5:4). According to this epistle, Paul warns, "...if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (5:8). The emphasis is therefore on widow's family taking care of her, instead of leaving it all up to the church, and MacArthur (<http://www.gty.org/resources/study-guides/40-5209/caring-for-widows>) confirms that widows with families should receive support from them.

It is in light of Paul's counsel, the researcher concludes that, it is a biblical principle that children or grandchildren whether they are believers or not, must take care for their own widowed parents. MacArthur (2014) strongly emphasises to those who are believers that, the first place to demonstrate their godliness "is in the context of family living, which includes making sure each family member is provided for".

Paul in his epistle (1Timothy 5:3-16) established a Biblical principle that, it is really up to the family to take care of all its members, especially the widows who are in need, and this can be carried over into our modern day context.

To sum up the biblical principle as outlined here, the scriptural norm is that, it is incumbent upon the family and then the church to care for the widows who are left behind and therefore in need of financial support and other needs such as encouragement, love, and support in every way possible.

### **3.4.3 Widows**

The widows also bear the responsibility, in other words, they have to do all they can to survive as the Bible declares, "For every man shall bear his own burden"

(Galatians 6:5). The church as a spiritual family has a responsibility to honour widows who are truly widows, who do not have family to support them. These widows should themselves meet the following requirements (1Tim 5:5):

- Have a fixed hope on God and be a woman of prayer like Anna (Luke 2:36-38)
- Her life should bear witness of her good works
- She has cared for children and been kind to travellers
- Has washed the feet of the saints and helped those who are in trouble

Paul advises the church in this epistle to honour those that meet these requirements and encourage young widows to remarry, bear children and manage their homes (1 Tim 5:11-15). However, as Christians, compassion should be a central aspect of our faith and identity (Ndlovu 2008:112); hence we have to take care of widows even if they do not meet these above-mentioned requirements. Paul never intended his response to be a manual for how to respond and treat widows and the modern day church must also apply its mind in new situations applying principles consistent with NT teaching. Non-Christian widows whose family structure could be missing because of having no children and grandchildren, abandonment by the children, or even the children's death may need help from the church (<http://www.gty.org/resources/print/study-guide-chapter/54-37>) as the Bible advises, "Do good unto all men...unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

Furthermore, Paul gives the church some Biblical principles to apply in caring for widows, that, if the family can provide for the widow it should do so, but if there is no family to provide for her, the church, if it has the means, should provide for her. Young widows should remarry or alternatively get a job and support their families.

In both Old and New Testaments, God's Word calls for the care of the widows. If God Himself, early Israel, Jesus Christ, the early church and the early disciples all cared for the widows, then so should the AOGM-KZN and the entire church. From a biblical perspective, it is the biblical responsibility of the church to care for widows, and for the purpose of this study, more specifically pastors' widows because "Godliness involves care of widows and orphans" (Kunhiyop 2008:263).

In summary, as Christians, we must learn to think Biblically and ask ourselves, “What does the Bible say about helping needy people, especially the widows?” As the church, we are taught the principle in both Testaments that we have to provide for needy widows and not send them away empty-handed (Job 22:9). Ndlovu (2013:112) accentuates that the church’s mission is to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to entire human race and care for those who are in need.

### **3.5 Honour widows that are widows indeed (1Timothy 5:3)**

A biblical text that addresses caring for widows by the church and family is found in the epistle written by Paul to Timothy. This passage commands the church to honour widows that are widows indeed (1Tim 5:3) and it will be briefly studied to explain the caring for the widows by the church.

The word *honour* in Greek *timao* means *to have in honour, to revere, to venerate* (Thayer 2007:624). This word *timao* (*honour*) as defined by Wommack ([http://www.awmi.net/bible/1ti\\_05\\_03](http://www.awmi.net/bible/1ti_05_03)) from the Vines’ Expository Dictionary means “to honour...the respect and material assistance to be given the widows”.

However, Wuest’s Word Studies argues that the word *honour* means more than just paying a respect, and in this context (1Tim 5:3) the idea of financial support to be given to the widows is added. Moreover, Jesus used the same Greek word *timao* when He referred to *honour* children should show to their parents (Matt 15:4, 6). Therefore, to *honour* is used for support in relation of supplying necessities.

The word *honour* does not mean any expression of respect but that special care of widows, that they might be supported out of the common funds. ([http://www.ccel.org/ccl/caluim/calcom\\_43.iii.vii.i.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccl/caluim/calcom_43.iii.vii.i.html)). Therefore word *honour* “*timao*” may denote any required assistance with special emphasis on financial assistance or a stipend the church and the family should give to the needy widows.

Paul also uses the phrase “widows indeed”, the word *indeed* is studied here because the word *widow* was dealt with in subsection 2.3 as used by the prophet Isaiah 1:17.

According to Thayer (2007:448) a Greek word for *indeed* is *ontos* which means *real, in need, genuinely in need*, thus widows who are in need and without any family

support, are the ones that have to be honoured by supporting them in terms of material needs.

Hayford et al. (2002:1704), also describes “really widows” (KJV) as those who have no relatives to care for them”.

MacArthur ([www.gty.org/resources/print/study-guide-chapter/54-36](http://www.gty.org/resources/print/study-guide-chapter/54-36)) therefore writes:

“Widows receiving honor are qualified as "widows indeed." The Greek term (ontos) translated "indeed" means "in reality" or "in point of fact." The fact is they are alone and therefore in need of financial support. So "widows indeed" are to be distinguished from widows having financial means.”

The church must be committed to widows who genuinely need assistance, whatever the cost might be. It may mean transferring money out of optional church programmes so that basic needs can be met. The church should be willing to do that because it shows God's compassion toward the destitute. Even when widows have financial resources, the church needs to come alongside with encouragement, love, and support in every way possible.

In fact caring for widows in the NT is therefore as important as in the OT; however, Paul writing to Timothy clarifies that not all the widows need to be taken care of by the church only but “widows who are really widows” (1Tim 5:3).

The AOGM-KZN as the church should take care of its members specifically pastors' widows who are in need, but it does not have a duty to support financially widows who have other means of survival or have children and grandchildren who can look after them.

### **3.6. Conclusion**

This chapter discusses Biblical principles relating to caring for the widows as they appear in both the Old and New Testaments. In the OT, God's concern about the widows, the role of the families and that of ancient Israel as a nation were discussed. In the NT, caring for widows is discussed as exemplified by Jesus, the early church in Jerusalem, the disciple (Dorcas) and the counsel of the Apostle Paul to the local church. Paul one of the prolific writers of New Testament epistles lays out more



detailed instructions (Biblical principles) on how to care for widows (1 Tim 5:3-16). The next chapter will provide the recommendations and possible practical solutions on how the AOGM-KZN may take care for pastors' widows in order to meet their physiological, psychological, social/familial, educational, and spiritual needs.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Practical Suggestions**

#### **4. The Strategic and Action Plan**

##### **Introduction**

The previous chapter identified several principles in both the Old and New Testament delineating the responsibility the church has towards widows. The researcher used a Bible-based approach and opted for a bird's eye view or a snapshot of what the Bible teaches regarding the role and obligations the church have towards widows generally. This was done to provide a biblical framework (theological perspective and/or theoretical model) for the research.

This chapter reflects on the data derived from the empirical component of the research and engages the literature findings and categories as presented in chapter two and three. What follows are practical suggestions on how the AOGM-KZN can develop action steps in assisting pastor's widows and their children following the death of their husband and father amid the current practice of the church.

Chapter four represents the third step in the LIM model, and as already alluded to above the focus is on the church's obligation in light of the empirical component and the biblical framework established in the previous chapter. Smith argues (2008:21), that doing practical theology means acting accordingly and evaluating our action. In this third step, the researcher must consider what constitutes "faithful and feasible responses to the situation that concerns us" in light of the current situation which the research paid attention to.

What is presented in this chapter are possible interventions. An intervention in psycho-therapy is when a crisis is looming or is playing itself out bringing heartache, pain and suffering to people's personal lives. The reason for the intervention is to suggest the presence of God in the lives of those who are facing some sort of human struggle (Carr 2002:186). But it also entails being faithful in our response to Scripture when the church is negligent in some of its practical duties.

In this chapter, the researcher attempts to create some sort of interface between chapter two (present situation) and three (the preferred scenario) by putting forward action steps, which will make a practical difference in the lives of pastor's widows

and their respective children. In addition, the chapter hopes to empower the AOGM-KZN by providing Bible-based practical wisdom with the hope of strengthening and deepening the church's ministry to widows.

#### **4. Finding 1: Physiological needs**

##### **4.1.1 Living Space**

Erasmus (2008:54) identifies shelter, water, sanitation, health care and food as basic human needs. He also points out safety, income and welfare as basic social needs. This is not much different from Maslow's hierarchy of needs in which he sees physical needs, namely, housing, food and safety as the most fundamental human need (Meier et al. 2008:90). Green (1991:15) says that when needs and wants are incompatible with resources and abilities or opportunities problems are experienced. This is the current status of widows and their children. The empirical data revealed that they are experiencing problems as their needs and resources are incompatible with each other.

Most widows and their children are requested to leave the mission house not long after the passing of their husband and father. This indicates that a basic human need is denied over and above the emotional and psychological pain that they are experiencing in the mourning and grieving process which lasts way beyond the funeral. The current policy and practice indicates that for practical reasons, and to accommodate the incoming or new pastor the houses are to be vacated. Little, if any, assistance is provided to the widow's family in finding suitable accommodation.

Section 26 (1) of the South African Constitution (Act No. 108 of 1996), as amended states that everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing. Sub-section (2) takes this further by stating that the state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realization of this right. The above section in the constitution communicates the sociological grounding and the constitutional right of every individual; a right widows are denied in light of the AOGM-KZN operative policy amidst the circumstances.

Furthermore, Bentley (2011:222) implies that the idea of land ownership or housing should not be viewed only in economic or practical terms, which seems to be the approach of the AOGM-KZN. Housing as pointed out above speaks to issues of

safety and security. This is especially important, as SA is one of the highest crime ridden areas in the world.

There are also other emotional, psychological and practical aspects attached to a home. For example, the memories or history shared in years gone by with their pastor, husband, friend and father. To be so soon removed from the house ignores several other psychosocial needs and sympathies.

#### **4.1.2 Food**

Following on from the above in SA, one in four children goes to bed hungry. If no proper or considered action is taken by the AOGM-KZN in ensuring that, the widow and her children have something to eat in the aftermath of their loss they could end up being subject to chronic hunger and malnourishment. In chapter two, the researcher established that a stipend of R1300 is being paid to the widows at present. This amount on average in SA is R75 below the amount needed for those who live in abject poverty and who are on an expanded social security system, which is established at R1375 per person or at R5500 per family of four.

The World Health Organisation (Africa Hunger Report 2013) recommends that in order to live a healthy life a person must take in 2100 calories per day; this amounts to two healthy meals per day, which is estimated at R62.50 per person per day, which will include access to running water, electricity, hygiene and sanitation.

In SA, one in four individuals suffers from hunger and malnutrition. Another one in four individuals is a food security risk (McLaren 2014:9)

[\(http://www.sabreakingnews.co.za/2014/10/14/as-world-food-day-approaches-one-in-four-south-africans-are-hungry/\)](http://www.sabreakingnews.co.za/2014/10/14/as-world-food-day-approaches-one-in-four-south-africans-are-hungry/)). The AOGM-KZN must ensure that they do not contribute to this alarming statistic. Based on the findings in chapter two, it is the view of the researcher that the signs are there that they are in fact knowingly and or unknowingly contributing to this moral dilemma.

Section 27 of the South African Constitution guarantees the right to have access to sufficient food to all people in our beloved country. As Christians, we are called to a higher calling and we should do our bit in guaranteeing that widows and pastor's widows and children who sacrificed along with their husband-father in ministry must put policies in place and implement action steps that secure their right to food.

## **4.2 Recommendation 1: Develop a Contingency Living Arrangement and Food Distribution Plan**

Reading the OT one learns how important land was to the Israelites. Land was central to the promises and aspirations of Israel. Although the possession of land pointed forward to an eternal inheritance, land served as a source of identity for the Israel nation as God's chosen people, communicated their sense of dignity and the realisation of the promise of God that not only will the nation but also each tribe and family will inherit land. Similarly, people in general and Christians including pastor's widows are to be ensured a living arrangement that underscores these archetypes.

When pastor's widows are asked to leave the mission house what message are communicated to them? That the living arrangement was merely transactional? As the church the AOGM-KZM must develop a contingency plan to assist these widows and their dependent children. For example, develop villages for clergy's widows and their dependents. This could be transitional arrangement based on their circumstances. Set up an office to assist these women to apply and find social housing that is cost-effective. Train these women and their children alongside the pastor regarding the mission house and how it functions in order to manage emotions and expectations.

In chapter three the researcher reviewed the biblical narrative on how God's Civil Laws placed the responsibility on Israel (the believing community) to ensure that no one goes hungry (Deut 24:19-21, 26:12; Ruth 2:8-16; Acts 1:6-7). Furthermore, Jesus in Matthew 25 speaks of how giving a cup of water and bread to a stranger and poor individual is in actual fact doing it as unto him. These biblical principles should form the bedrock of the social policies of the AOGM-KZN and the national office and in the context of this research, as it relates to pastor's widows and their dependent children.

A fund could be set up and or a food bank could be established where monies and food are saved in order to assist the widows and children in the event of the passing of the pastor. They could also strike partnerships with places like Woolworths Food, PnP, Checkers and Shoprite where they collect food which must be consumed before the expiry date. Many Faith, Non-Government and Non-Profit Organisations have such arrangements in place.

### **4.3 Finding 2 Psychological needs**

Besides physiological needs, Maslow's hierarchy also identifies other human needs such as belonging, self-esteem and self-actualisation (Meier 2008:90). Mwamwenda (1996:345) categorises these needs as psychological needs. Pastor's widows like other human beings need to have their psychological needs met and satisfied. Satisfaction of these needs results in self-confidence, self-worth, and a sense of purpose.

However, the findings of this study in chapter two have revealed that in the AOGM-KZN, pastor's widows are suffering from negative psychological effects. They are not viewed or appreciated to the same extent as when their husbands were alive. They almost sense that they are viewed as a financial burden and a distraction that places undue pressure on the church. Although this is not communicated to them the manner in which they have been treated suggests so. The initial experience that offset the research where a pastor was addressed by the children who articulated their views on how badly their mother, the pastor's widow was treated by the denomination; this highlights the psychological impact not only of the death of their father on their mother but also depicts the attitude of the church towards the pastor's widows and the children. In this instance one could almost sense resentment towards the church. These experiences by pastor's widows and their children could result in them leaving the church and if this treatment of them becomes more broadly known in the denomination, it could see an exodus of people from the local churches of the AOGM-KZN.

### **4.4 Recommendation 2: AOGM-KZN must Become a Channel for Belonging, Provide Pastoral Counselling and Support Structures**

In order to deal effectively with the sentiments revealed above as it relates to the psychological need of pastor's widows and their children, the AOGM-KZN must once more put systems in place to deal with the psychological and emotional pain of the affected parties. Based on the above findings, the researcher suggests that the AOGM-KZN should attend to the psychological needs of the pastors' widows particularly the need for belonging, and also make use of pastoral counselling and other support structures in addressing their bereavement, mourning and grieving.

#### **4.4.1 Need for belonging**

According to Maslows' hierarchy of needs, belonging is the part of major human needs that motivates human behaviour; it is a desire for interpersonal attachments and is found to some degree in all humans and all cultures (Baumeister & Leary 1995:499). Belongingness helps people to experience companionship and acceptance. According to Hall ([www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com)), a feeling of belongingness is most important in seeing value in life and in coping with intensely painful emotions.

The AOGM-KZN, should therefore endeavour to address this human need among the pastors' widows by renewing their credentials which would allow them to attend church conferences and other special church meetings and this would make them feel recognised, wanted, accepted and seemingly would create a deep sense of belonging. They should also be allowed to enjoy all the benefits that pastors' wives are enjoying, be invited to pastors' fellowship, be used as speakers in some services, receive groceries, transport fees and also Christmas presents and bonuses as it was before, even though this might not be on the same scale. These would make them feel that someone or the church cares for them, that they are being loved, have a sense of being part of the church and that they are respected.

#### **4.4.2 Pastoral counselling**

Furthermore, psychologists declare, "the death of a husband as the number one stress event in a woman's state of being" (Sajana n.d:4), hence the AOGM-KZN cannot ignore this fact that pastors' widows are facing some psychological problems. These problems are associated with the death of their partners. Dube (2008:47) suggests that widows should be helped to deal with the psychological effects and insecurity that stem from losing their husbands. However, the research reveals that pastor's widows and their families did not undergo any form of counselling during their bereavement, mourning and grieving to help them to accept their new social status.

Considering the Biblical principles discussed in chapter three, the care of widows has long been an important task of the church and "widows have good reason to turn

to the church as the resource most likely to extend comfort, emotional support and spiritual guidance” (Adeyemo 2008:323). The church therefore should “give encouragement, guidance and healing where there are psychological, spiritual or other needs” (Collins 2007).

Like Dube (2008:47), the researcher suggests that pastoral counselling should be provided to help widows to solve their psychological problems as they adjust to widowhood. Collins (2007:36) defines counselling as “attempts to provide encouragement and guidance for those who are facing the loss, decisions or disappointments”. In the *light* of this definition, AOGM-KZN should ensure that pastoral counselling in particular is used to provide encouragement to pastors’ widows immediately after the death of the pastor until they make reasonable peace with the new situation. Pastors with special training in psychology and theology can apply clinical therapies within the context of religious tenets ([www.wiesegeek.com](http://www.wiesegeek.com)) and Collins (2007:36) agrees that this kind of counselling should be done by ordained pastors “with educational theology and often with specialized training in pastoral counselling.” This would be clinical pastoral counsel. Kubeka (2011:87) also buttresses this view that the pastors should be the ones who counsels these women who are traumatized by the death of their husbands to accept the realities of their new social status and situation.

Additionally, the death of the spouse is rated as an event that has the highest stressful impact in the life of a person as per Holmes’ Social Readjustment Rating Scale (Meier et al. 2008:94). It is therefore suggested that pastor’s widows should undergo counselling during the first year of bereavement. Bereavement and grief are words used to conceptualize the experience of losing one’s spouse to death, psychological reactions of those who have experienced loss of a loved one, which is regarded as a wound that needs attention to heal (Nalungwe 2009:13). Pastoral counselling as suggested will assist widows to ultimately “experience healing, learn coping and rational skills and grow both personally and spiritually” (Collins 2007:36).

#### **4.4.3 Support Structures**

In terms of health and well-being many faith-based organisations establish departments or partnerships to assist their employees or people associated with them. There exists numerous Christian health and wellness programmes. As a



service to these widows the AOGM-KZN could research this idea and apply their mind on how to set-up these centres or partnerships at cost to them and at minimal or no if any cost to the widow and children. There are also government support services available which could be utilised; the church must ascertain the extent of these services and where relevant use these well-being centres to assist the widow and children. For example, it should establish whether HELPLINES or CALL CENTRES are available; are the social workers, psychologist or counsellors available; the hours that the offices and centres are open and where they are situated; if there is a face-to-face facility, etc. Having been actively involved in the church at a local, district and national level, I am personally aware that this information is not readily available.

#### **4.5 Finding 3: Educational needs**

The study found that most pastor's widows do not have a post-secondary education and their service records at companies does not reveal extensive years of service given the nature of the pastoral call where they are moved to different pastorates and many times they are not in the same city or province.

The study found that most of them do have a basic education qualification. Section 29 (1) of the South African Constitution (Act No. 108 of 1996) emphasises, "everyone has right to basic education, including adult basic education". The South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (SASA) forms the legal foundation for schools and makes schooling compulsory for all learners aged seven to fifteen years old to give all citizens a fair start in life and equal opportunities as adults.

Pastor's widows and their families are benefiting from this right since schooling from primary to secondary level in some public schools is free but unequal. However, South Africans have to pay for their post-secondary education. Recent developments in the country have led to a student uprising, which is aimed at making post-secondary or tertiary education free for historically disadvantaged students. This was as a result of a nationwide unrest at our university campuses, called the FeesMustFall Campaign. This opportunity might become available perhaps not so much to the widows but their children.

Post-secondary education is at the heart of the process of providing job opportunities and is the key for self-development (Sajana n.d.:40), and this is in agreement with South Africa's Treasury Report that "post-education is the key to employability" (<http://contractaccounts.wordpress.com/2012/06/12/why-is-tertiary-education-so-important-in-south-africa>).

#### **4.6. Recommendations 3: Seek Tertiary Education, Change the Approach to Ministry and Employment and Promote Entrepreneurship and Encourage Educational Plans**

##### **4. 6.1 Tertiary Education**

Pastor's widows must be encouraged to seek post-secondary education (when the husband is still alive) in order to find employment and be somewhat independent and self-reliant. This study has established that pastors' widows who have tertiary qualifications are employed and are managing to survive in the absence of their husbands. This corresponds with Geekie's (2011:78) finding that "some of the widows in his research were educated at secondary and post-secondary level, and were able to find employment."

Findings from chapter two revealed that most of the pastor's widows in the AOGM-KZN fall in the category of the unemployed. According to the researcher, this is mainly caused by their lack of education, specifically tertiary education and therefore struggle to find proper jobs to meet their financial needs.

If they have tertiary education qualifications it will allow them to have savings, perhaps use medical aid or a hospital plan, invest in a home-savings account, or purchase or take out a home loan. They could then rent out their property while living in the mission house. It could happen that by the time the husband passes on that the house is paid up, if not maybe the money if any received from his will could help to settle the amount. Or the house could be sold and the profit made used for rent or to purchase a smaller house.

##### **4.6.2 Change Approach to Ministry and Employment**

Considering the findings in chapter two and the viewpoint of Geekie, the researcher suggests that current young pastor's wives must not be fulltime unless God has called them to full time vocational ministry and are also salaried but instead be

empowered through tertiary education. If they are empowered, they will stand a better chance to acquire good decent paying job. If they are employed, generally self-reliance and being self-supportive will reduce financial stress and could improve their circumstances (Zastrow 2004:431).

Current young pastor's should play an important role in ensuring that their wives are educated because training and further education would be vital to encourage women to develop more advanced skills to ultimately gain economic independence (Dube 2008:169).

#### **4.6.3 Promote Entrepreneurship**

The church should provide skills acquisition and entrepreneurship development centres where pastors' wives are encouraged to learn skills that may assist them in making a regular income while their husbands are still alive. Baloyi (2010:740) and Dube (2008:113) are of the same opinion that these acquired skills will assist them to start small businesses that will enable them generate income to meet their daily needs.

The findings also established that pastors' widows are also concerned about their children's tertiary education. Some of their children abandoned tertiary education due to financial problems and are often disadvantaged because of a lack of educational opportunities (White 2012:11).

Generally, youth employment is one of the greatest problems facing South Africa (<http://businesstech.co.za/news/general/71390south-africas-fastest-growing-city>), but widows' children suffer the most because of their lack of post-secondary education. They struggle to find jobs and those employed are in low skilled jobs with low salaries, which make it difficult for them to take care of their parent (1Tim 5:4). What is more stressful for the widows is that some of these children end up in high risk social behaviour.

It is therefore recommended that rather than relying on tertiary education as the only means of creating job opportunities, pastors' children should be encouraged to try other options such as entrepreneurship, enter learnerships programmes, consider vocational training-colleges, government funded programme such as: Fundza

Lushaka bursaries, National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) etc., in order to get an acceptable qualification and obtain a decent job that will ensure social mobility.

#### **4.6.4 Encourage Educational Plans**

The AOGM-KZN regional council committee (RCC) should also play a role making sure that the late pastor's children get educated by putting in place an education aid plan or set up a scholarship fund (Koons & Anthony 1991:134) to increase their prospects for the future and for employment opportunities with better salaries, possibilities for a better life in the future in order to experience social mobility, and which could result in the fulfilment of self-actualisation needs.

#### **4.7 Finding 4: Social/ familial needs**

According to Maslow's hierarchy needs, social needs, that is, need of belongingness are placed at the third level (Meier et al. 2008:90). Every normal individual wants to know that someone cares for and love him or her and that he or she has someone to care for (Mawmwenda 1996:345). When a husband dies, a widow loses someone who cares and loves her. She has to assume the duty of caring for the children alone. Research has shown that widows may have trouble in "adjusting to their status of parenthood with its all demands" (Tan 1991:19) more especially raising children as a single parent with none to share the burden. It is apparent that the death of a husband signifies the loss of a companion and emotional support, and heralds a radical change in her social status and the role she plays (Owen 1996:7).

#### **4.8 Recommendation 4: Follow the Biblical Pattern and Allow for Self-Organising**

##### **4.8.1 Follow the Biblical Pattern**

From a biblical perspectives, based on the role of the family in caring for widows in both OT and NT, as discussed in chapter three, families in the Bible were taken care of by their widowed relatives. Likewise, in our present generation, relatives should take care of real widows until their children become adults (1Timothy 5:3; 8). Keener (1993:617) further comments that even pagans believed in supporting destitute widows who are their relatives.

The Apostle Paul's advice (1Timothy 5:4) should be adopted where adult children are encouraged to make their primary responsibility the caring and supporting of their widowed parents, especially those who have no opportunity to earn wages (Keener 1993:616). If they work far from home, they may take her to a nursing home and pay her regular visits so that she will not feel lonely and unwanted (<http://kevinpierpont.com>) if not taken in by family members, which would be the ideal.

The AOGM-KZN should encourage family members and relatives to adopt widows' children (Kunhiyop 2008:265). For example, Mordecai adopted an orphan Esther (Esther 2:7). Charlton (2009:9) supports this view and says, "adopting a child can be a demonstration of love". An adopted child may be assisted to get a better tertiary education. There are some weaknesses here but this does not mean that the child will not have the love and support of her biological mother and siblings. Arrangements could be made to ensure that the relationship with the above mentioned remains in place.

#### **4.8.2 Allow Self-Organising**

The researcher suggests that the AOGM-KZN should establish a widows' committee that would organise seminars, workshops, information sharing and support groups on widowhood and single parenting; this suggestion is in line with that of Dube (2008:47), who recommends social services to be provided to widows that should include "solutions to family problems on how to raise children and deal with them" as a single parent.

#### **4.9 Finding 5: Lack of Ministry to Widows**

The study found that very little if any ministry is intentionally directed towards widows. Either the church does not know how to minister to these women and children or this ministry is not viewed in a very serious light. Either one of the two aspects above is of grave concern to the researcher. Furthermore, the study reveals that there is no on-going spiritual support provided; pastors' widows seem to be isolated by the Movement they once co-served with their late husbands. It was also noted that they are not visited or prayed for by their current pastors or the local churches.

According to Erwin (2010:4) the church in obedience to our Lord, should plan, prepare, and implement an ongoing ministry to widows after their bereavement. Clinebell (<http://www.takingcharge-csh.umn.edu/create-healthy-lifestyle/life-purpose-spirituality/what-life-purpose/seven-spiritual-needs>) says, “every human being needs spiritual resources to help heal the painful wounds of grief...” and these needs come after basic material needs. The AOG-KZN may address some of the pastor’s widows needs through; house visits, church services and financial assistance.

## **4.10 Recommendation 5: Arrange House Visits, Fellowship Times and Teach Entrepreneurship Skills**

### **4.10.1 House visits**

The AOGM-KZN as a spiritual home of these women has to create a methodology of care for them and fulfil its mission to “individuals in terms of their specific needs” (Hulme 1973:22). It is thus suggested that house visitation teams should be formed that will do home visitation offering prayers and other spiritual support (James 1:27). Kubeka (2011:296) stresses, widows should be empowered with encouragement to pray and grow in the Spirit. Clinebell (2014) highlights, spiritual needs include prayers, meditation and counselling.

According to Erwin (2010:4) “the church’s positive witness to the family and friends of the widow is increased through the demonstration of Christian love to their widowed mother, sister, daughter and friend”. James 1:27 advises that true and pure religion “visit orphans and widows in their affliction”. The AOGM-KZN should have a clear programme of action on how to visit and pray for pastors’ widows and their families.

### **4.10.2 Church and fellowship services**

Furthermore, during interviews, pastors’ widows pointed out that they feel neglected in the sense that there are no church services set aside for them on the church year planner. Based on this finding, the researcher suggests that the regional council of AOGM-KZN through the widows’ committee should be in a position of organising quarterly church services, fellowship opportunities, outings or activities for pastor’s widows and their families where they will be encouraged and prayed for.

It was also established that widows find it difficult to communicate their issues and concerns with others who do not understand or who have not experienced widowhood. It is on this ground that the researcher suggests that fellowship services should be organised quarterly where pastor's widows can talk about their feelings and needs amongst themselves. Dube (2008:114) argues that widows in this fellowship service will have opportunities to meet and discuss matters affecting their wellbeing. These widows' programmes must be reflected on the year planner. This will show intent and a budget should also be set aside to fund these activities and fellowships.

#### **4.10.3 Business skills**

In entrepreneurship development centres suggested in 4.4, sewing classes could be conducted, vegetable gardens, 'sparza' shops, baking and catering business programmes could be designed where pastors' wives (widows) are empowered with business skills in terms of sustainable livelihoods. These skills will assist women, pastors' widows in particular, in times of need. They could form co-operatives and sell school uniforms and provide vegetables to schools for example that have national nutrition programmes. Pastor's widows/wives could therefore be able to earn a living even after the death of their husbands.

#### **4.10.4 Financial assistance**

It is also a concern that there are no funds collected for the pastors' widows by the AOGM-KZN to address their needs, not even a pension fund is available for the fulltime pastors and their wives at retirement although there is a stipend paid to the widows.

This finding leads to the following recommendations:

- (1) The AOGM-KZN should have a benefit scheme, which will provide a retirement fund at the age of 65; this payment may depend on the number of years served. In addition, this scheme must include a pension that will be paid to the pastor when he retires, when the pastor dies, 50% of his pension may be paid to his surviving wife and the rest in monthly instalments.
- (2) The church should allow pastors to be bi-vocational or self-supporting pastors based on the size and income of the churches. These pastors, do not depend on

the church for their financial support as fully funded pastors ([www.crosswalk.com/church/pastor-or-leadership/8-benefits-to-bi-vocational-ministry.html](http://www.crosswalk.com/church/pastor-or-leadership/8-benefits-to-bi-vocational-ministry.html)) and they are able to pay possibly for the education of their children, build houses for their families, and have investment policies for the future of their family.

It was further established by this study that pastor's salary is terminated immediately after his death and widows receive their stipends after a few months. There is no other immediate provision made to assist the widow to make ends meet and for pastor's widows who were fully involved in the ministry with their husbands and depend only on their income to struggle as they live a life of subsistence. They must also be assisted to access the government social assistance pension and child support grant.

The basis of the above findings suggest that the AOGM-KZN should refrain from terminating husbands' salaries immediately when they pass on. They should act ex gratia perhaps for a period of six to twelve months seeing most of the wives who become widows are not employed. It should be considered that their families are still alive and in need of daily provisions unless other means to help are provided. This will assist them to pay for medical expenses incurred while caring for their sick husbands, funeral arrangements, etc.

Besides the current economic condition in South Africa, the AOGM-KZN "as a community of care" (Pityana and Villa-Vicencio, 1995:9) should be committed to widows who genuinely need assistance. It may mean transferring money out of optional church programmes so that basic needs of pastors' widows can be met. The church should be happy to do that because it shows God's compassion toward the destitute. Even if the widows have financial resources, the church needs to come alongside them and demonstrate encouragement, love, and support in every way possible.



## **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter provides practical suggestions on how the physiological, psychological, educational, social and spiritual needs of pastors' widows can be addressed. Here, the researcher explores and interprets the research findings from chapter two (current situation of pastors' widows) and submits workable solutions to the present problems in light of the biblical framework. The Lord has called us to reach out to one another in love, bearing each other's burden as we help and counsel one another. Donison (2010:58) advises Christians by citing John Wesley, "do all the good you can, by all the means you can..." In so doing, we demonstrate the reality of a genuinely caring and compassionate church that reaches out with the love of Christ to draw more people to Him.

Like the early church that was an extremely caring community (Collins 2007:40), the AOGM-KZN should consider the Biblical plea to take care of the widows and more specifically pastor's widows as highlighted in this study. The next chapter summarises the findings and brings the study to a close.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Summary and Final Thoughts**

#### **5. Introduction**

This final chapter gives the overall picture that emerged from the study about the role of the AOGM-KZN in addressing the needs and concerns of pastor's widows in the light of the relevant Scriptures. Chapter one provides a descriptive context and provides a research plan for the study. Chapter two presents put forward the empirical findings of the study. Chapter three summarises biblical principles and highlights general caring principles of the widow[s] from both the Old and New Testament. Chapter four provides the ideal or preferred scenario. Finally, this last chapter presents practical solutions and recommendations based on chapters one through four.

#### **5.1 Research Participants and Research Locale**

This study focused on the AOGM-KZN. The aforementioned denomination is a Pentecostal church and was founded by Nicolas Bhengu in the early 1950s. He had a profound effect on reaching the African Black person. His work spread and the church was established in Kwazulu-Natal where the research took place. The study was completed using semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and consulted archival records in-lieu of the churches ministry to widows.

#### **5.2 Findings**

The study reveals that the majority of the widows are in a precarious position. This affects their children who are dependent on them. Although they receive some help from the church and for which they expressed an appreciation, they still have many unmet needs. These were communicated and categorised into five main areas, namely: physiological, psychological, financial, educational and spiritual classifications. Although not fully representative, the five main areas are consistent with the various hierarchical needs identified by Maslow. The five major categories have several sub-categories.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Various recommendations were made which the researcher believes are well within the means of the AOGM-KZN. The researcher in chapter three took a bird's eye view of what Scripture teaches on the subject of widowhood. This allowed the researcher to formulate several principles on which the recommendations were based.

The researcher having collected the data proceeded to interpret and analyse the same and made recommendations in light of what Scripture reveals in both the Old and New Testament. As an evangelical church, holding a very high view of Scripture, the AOGM is bound by the teachings of Scripture. The researcher made several recommendations and hopes that the findings and recommendations informs the perspective, policy and practice as it relates to the church's response to the dire situations of many of the pastor's widows.

The research pointed out that the church should minister to the need of all and especially on those of the household of God. The research highlighted the uniqueness of pastor's widows and their dependent children, many of whom sacrificed alongside their husbands in ministry. Many of these women gave up jobs to allow and follow the call of God placed on the lives of their husbands. In view of their monumental sacrifices the least the church can do for them is to follow the biblical teaching by ensuring that these women and their children have their basic needs met as it relates to living space, food, emotional and spiritual support, have their financial needs seen to and are shown a sense of 'ministerial dignity'. Many of them felt that they can continue in some sort of ministerial capacity and that they could still make a difference in the lives of people as their ministerial knowledge and experience could serve the church well. They could also possibly mentor and coach pastor's wives as they are generally more senior to them in terms of ministerial expertise.

### **5.6 Conclusion**

Chapter one orientated the reader concerning the study in question. That included, among others, the identification of the research problem, the research questions, aims and research methodology. Chapter two focused on the findings of the research which are based on physiological, psychological, social/familial, spiritual

and educational essentials of pastor's widows within the AOGM-KZN. In chapter three, the researcher dealt with biblical principles on general caring for the widows from both OT and NT with the aim of establishing the preferred scenario. The fourth chapter presented a summary of recommendations of the research. The final chapter summarises the research in terms of findings, biblical principles and recommendations.

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