


Called to worship, sent to witness: A missional perspective on the Reformed theology in South Africa today

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Received: 03 Apr. 2018

Accepted: 06 Aug. 2018

Published: 13 Nov. 2018

How to cite this article:Maponya, M.S., 2018, 'Called to worship, sent to witness: A missional perspective on the Reformed theology in South Africa today', *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74(3), a5003. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i3.5003>**Copyright:**© 2018. The Authors.
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This article wishes to engage the Reformed church in this era in order for it to ultimately re-evaluate its way of worship and how its way of worship can influence its witness. It argues that ever since its inception, the church's calling was to worship God and be the witness of God's grace to the world. As the world is changing, the church is also responding in its own way towards those changes. The preliminary assertion of this article is that the church has become a self-serving community, where its gathering to worship is no longer mainly about God but rather about what the congregation or people wish to achieve with it and/or benefit from such a gathering. The primary calling of being sent to witness to the world about the incredible grace and love of God appears to be forgotten by the Christians. The article highlights some of my personal observations regarding worship practices that I have noted as undertaken by the Reformed church, which I believe silence the ordained prophetic voice of the church towards its calling and sending. The article engages the themes of Reformation, transformation and change agent from a perspective of the 'missional' understanding of the church. The article engages the notion that the church is called to be a witnessing community to the world.

Introduction

The Reformed church all over the world is in hype in celebration of 500 years of Reformation, and this presents Reformed Christians, particularly in South Africa, with an opportunity to critically engage and reflect on the meaning and purpose of Reformation. This article argues that the Reformation movement is one of the major splits that happened to the church after the (1053 AD) schisms between the Eastern and the Western church. This movement has been a theological discourse ever since and has brought about change in how the church engages in understanding its dogma. As the Reformed community celebrates its 5th century of Reformation and with reference to the Southern African context, the question that one wishes to ask is: 'is the church which was birthed by the Reformation movement still adhering to the reformed principles of continuously reforming?' This question is important to me because although the 16th century Reformation movement was responding to a particular context and issues, 'which sought to return the Western church to a more biblical foundation in relation to its belief system, morality and structure' (McGrath 2011:60), it is the contention of this article that the church in the 21st century has become rather more self-serving, introverted and more inward-looking. It is no longer continuously re-evaluating itself and its state of affairs by looking at how it does its rituals in its worship in liturgy, such that this re-evaluation informs and shapes how it does its witness to have a meaningful and positive impact on the society. The church has become stagnant and its worship in liturgy is not missional-driven but is rather mainly routine and self-serving. The liturgy is not such that those who gather do so to meet God, and not only think about what they are gaining for themselves, but are rather empowered to think beyond the proverbial walls of a church building by reaching out to society, and confronting the ills that the society finds itself in, in its daily living. The inward and introverted way of being a church clearly shows that something is lost or the Reformed church has moved away from the biblical instructions that the church has received from the Lord Jesus Christ when he said 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me' (Mk 8:34), or it may very well be that the church is simply not courageous enough to walk the path of he who has sent it because of fear of the unknown.

Hunsberger (2011) stated that:

How should we imagine the way of the church with the world? How do we? What does our ambiances, our style tend to be with respect to the world of people among whom we live? Are we fearful of it, cowered

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by it, uneasy with it, and perhaps, then socially reluctant? Or are we more testy towards it, even feisty, aggressively taking it on, eager to urge it to do the right thing? Or are we simply cavalier about it, mixing it up socially, going with a flow? Or perhaps we are not really sure just plain confused by the zigzag of voices and models out that tug us in different ways. (p. 7)

The statement that Hunsberger is making is – although directed to the church in North America – in fact the observation that one also notes about the state of affairs that the church in South Africa finds itself in. It seems as if the church is not finding itself evolving with the system in that it is not appearing to be seeking the face of God in its worship in order to capacitate and position itself to be a true representative of Christ in the society's real-life situations; hence, one sees the church as being detached from the world and failing to take responsibility that is obliged on it. In the past two decades, the discourse in theology was confronted with a missiological concept of 'missional church'.¹ This concept basically explores the pattern and life of the church and persuades it to see itself in light of *Missio Dei*. In this article, *missio Dei* should be understood as stated by Bosch (1991) that:

Mission is to be understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It was thus put in the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. He further stated that the classical doctrine of the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another 'movement': Father, Son and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world. (p. 390)

Manala (2012:217) argues that: '*missio Dei* is indeed the work of God, of which Christian worship forms the very heart'. Manala (2012) further states that 'since many churches hold mandatory weekly worship gatherings for fellowship purpose and bringing people together on a regular basis for a common purpose', he indicated that:

[C]hristian worship should also be understood and experienced both as an occasion of God's coming to God's people and of God's people meeting their loving, caring and saving God for praise and adoration, and to have their focus shifted from self-centredness and self-interest to God, to other-centredness, and to selflessness. (p. 218)

Manala's statement clearly shows that the church has been called for a far greater purpose than merely being a community that focuses primarily on what it seeks and wants to achieve; but just like the Son who was sent by the Father, the church should always submit itself under the reign of God. This is highlighted clearly in the temptation story (Mt 4:1–11), in how Jesus rebuked and answered Satan because of the covenant that he had to uphold as the one sent by the Father and to stay dependent on him (Maponya 2013:33). As witnessing flows from worship, the shift of focus from self-interest to God as Manala highlights illustrates how the church's worship service should be conducted, and how the service would be conducted would lead towards the church witness being focused on God, other-centredness and being selfless.

1. See the work done by The Gospel and Our Culture Network, in the book edited by Guder in 1998 called the *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*.

When one encounters and interacts with other Reformed churches, observing how they conduct their worship, be it at their gatherings – that is, weekly meetings, funerals or other ceremonies – it becomes evident that those services are meant for a particular group of people. That is, those services are only conducted for those who subscribed to that particular local congregation. The worship is done by them and for them; if one wish to be included in that circle, one should first confirm one's allegiance to that particular group. In other instances, although one belongs to the particular local congregation, and yet have failed in the past to participate in either monetary or other deeds, one can also be excluded. This way of worship tends to be as Manala (2012:218–219) said: 'influence congregants to be inward looking and neglecting of Christ's commandment of love towards God and others'. It is also Hunsberger (1998a:5) who said the church has been reduced 'to a vendor of religious goods and service in a competitive marketplace'; the term that one might use in my context will be '*Stokvel*'.² The church that is *stokvel*-orientated becomes inward-focused and self-serving, because its only concern is to its members who sing to its tunes; hence, it is my conviction that the church in South Africa after apartheid needs an honest re-evaluation of its liturgy, style and practice to precipitate transformation not only to those who are in one same circle, but also to the community or society it finds itself in. In this regard, it is my conviction that the missional understanding of the church can be instrumental in facilitating that process of re-evaluating the ways of conducting the worship service that is directed more to God, whom upon encountering us shapes us for the world. The missional approach of being a church challenged one to look at ways of being church in a specific context – missional perspective – and how the church could and should be faithful to its calling.

As Reformers speak much about the 'reforming of the reformed church',³ in this article, it is argued that a 'missional' understanding of the church can, in this present situation, be a model that the church can adopt as a way of reforming the reformed church. The reason is that missional understanding of the church moves the church from its comfort zone of being programme-driven, as Hendriks (2007) stated that:

the church that is missional define all that the church is and does, as opposed to expecting the church to be the ultimate self-help group for meeting our own needs and finding fulfillment in our individual lives. (p. 1006)

It challenges the church to move away from the culture of business as usual to business as unusual, because then the church will depend on God who called it for his mission. In the process of answering the question posed above, the focus

2. In many townships around South Africa, a group of people comes together and forms a *stokvel* as a way of helping one another to meet the demands of life. Every month they come together and contribute cash towards a member and they take turns. Others put in money every month and at the end of the year they cash in. Those who form part of that *stokvel* are the ones who determine how to control the money.

3. The term *ecclesia reformata semper reformata* is traditionally used to illustrate the reforming of the reformed church.

of this article is more on reflecting on Reformation in today's world, and to see how this concept 'missional church' can assist the church in being a truly Reformed church in today's Southern African context. I now reflect on the church since its inception, its life and purpose.

The church since Pentecost

In order to understand the church, its formation and its purpose in the world, we need to explore the history of the formation of the church to see how worship in the church was formed and its developments over the centuries. The word church is from the Greek word '*Ekklesia*', which means 'called out'. Hunsberger (2011:10) defines this term as 'called into public assembly, a divinely called town meeting of sort, gathered among, for, and with all others with whom we share civic space'. In the course of history, the church was given different models or metaphors for understanding its identity theologically. The church is 'the people of God', the church is 'the community of salvation', the church is 'the community of spirit', and the church is also called 'the body of Christ' (2011:376); these are some of the identities given to the church, but whatever model or metaphor we use, all of them point to the visibility of the people that God has called out from the world for a purpose.

In the Old Testament, God called this visible community of Israel to be his pilgrim people. Although a small tribe, it had a highly significant purpose. It was called to be a royal priesthood and a holy nation (Newbigin 1953:27; see also 1 Pt 2:9). Even in the days of the New Testament, there was an earthly company that was established. Newbigin (1953) reminds us that:

Christ did not leave behind a book or creed, but He left behind a visible community which is considered to be His body, and He has placed in this community the entire work of salvation. (p. 27)

That is, 'the church does not exist or depend on itself, but it exists as a visible body that is called into being by the Lord Himself' (1953:27). The reformers defined the existence of the church of God as 'where the word of God is purely preached and heard and the sacraments are truly administered' (2011:383). While not denying this definition, Newbigin, in his book, *The Household of God*, says more: he sees the church as a community that is defined not merely by the preaching of the gospel and the administering of the sacrament. For Newbigin, the church's very nature also includes its mission. 'It is the continuing historical society which was constituted and sent forth once and for all by Jesus Christ' (1953:59). The two important purposes of this community are its *worship* and its *witness*. The worship is where this community encounters God and God's people; through that encountering with God, it is sent to witness through its being, words and action the great deeds that God has done in Jesus Christ (2013:19). In this way, God uses the church as his instrument and vehicle to reconcile the whole world to him. Let us now briefly engage on the two main purposes of the church: worship and witness.

Church worship

In Manala's view, 'it is difficult to define worship that all aspect of its make-up is covered' (2012:221). But it is also worth noting that he sees worship as a central religious activity of humankind in reverential honour of its deity (2012:221). He further quoted Robinson, who gave a brief but broad definition when he says 'worship is an [*human*] activity in response to God's Lordship'. Hunsberger (1998) defines worship:

as a physical act of falling on one's face on the ground in homage before one's ruler. Thus God the ruler is at the center of the church's worship. The praise and prayer of worship, the reading and preaching of scripture, the fellowship around the table, and the washing of baptism that initiates new citizens of heaven all define an alternative community with an alternative allegiance. (p. 119)

Stutzman and Hunsberger (2004) view church worship as:

a public act often connected with politics, the social order, war, economics, prosperity and power. Worship from its earliest time was the public performance of the deepest assumptions about reality held by a particular social group. Historically, worship is considered glue that holds families, tribes, nations and empires together. (pp. 103–104)

Although Manala indicated the difficulty of defining worship, and from the discussion about it, it becomes clear that worship is about the honour offered to a deity or supernatural force; then Christians who gather on a said day honour their God in worship. That is the attitude we should have in worship, that is, to meet and honour God who, in turn, sends us to walk in his path and be a real and impactful response to life's real problems in confronting society. Worship should nurture Christians and inspire people to work towards performing good deeds, looking upon God who is the initiator. That is, 'worship is meant to be a lived-out reality and not just confessed or sung about' (Labberton 2007:20 in Manala 2012:222). This leads us to our second purpose of the church witness.

Church witness

Witness is first and foremost the work of the Spirit (Barrett 1998:119); this gift of the Spirit was promised to the church, and transformed the church to be the faithful witness of Jesus Christ. That is:

the church in its evangelism does not have to do something in the private sector, or personal life. But it has to go and witness in public by announcing the risen Christ. (Hunsberger 1998b:197)

This statement of Hunsberger clearly compels and influences the church to shy away from being, as Manala (2012: 218–219) alludes, 'inward looking and neglecting Christ's commandment of love towards God and towards others'. Witness will then refer to:

a person who can give a first-hand report about the facts of the event that happened. In the secular world, this term refers to the one whose report is reliable. The witness does not report hearsay, but facts of the occurrence of event as he/she was there. (Guder 1985:41)

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ said to his disciples 'blessed are those who have not seen but believe' (John 20:29d). The church then is the continuity of the account of the eyewitness reports about the salvation event of Jesus. Even though the church of today has not seen Jesus Christ with its naked eyes, it carries the witness of those who have testified about the risen Christ. The church's witness then will be to give the report of their personal experience about their various encounters, through words and/or action. This message can only become life-transformational through faith, through who God is and through what he has done in Christ and continues to do in this world. This article will demonstrate how worship and witness are related together in mission, and also in the everyday life of a believer. Let us start with a history of the Reformation movement.

The reformation

According to McGrath (2011), the term Reformation:

was used by historians and theologians to refer to the western European movement, centering on individual like Luther, Zwingli and Calvin. The main concern of them was the moral, theological and institutional reform of the Christian church. (p. 60)

This movement became complex in that it did not only address the doctrine of the church, but it also touched on social, political and economic issues. The understanding of the reformers was that the church was getting out of its way, and they deemed it right to address the issues that were moving the church from its primary focus. Martin Luther as one of the proponents of Reformation had more concern for the doctrine of justification. This came after the practice of the Roman Catholic Church of selling indulgences for raising funds for the church's project of rebuilding the St Peter's Basilica in Rome (2011:64). This practice was seen as tarnishing the image and the purity of the church, and the reformation movement brought about a paradigm shift in how the church should approach the understanding of the salvation in Christ and on the world view of the time.

The agenda of the Reformation movement was fundamentally religious in character. Although it reflected on and helped to bring about social, political and economical changes, the reformers concentrated predominantly on theological and religious matters.⁴ In the reformation movement, scripture comes first, as it was regarded as the living word of God in the life of the church. This movement was at first a thirst for purification, for renewal, for restoration and for spiritual liberation in the bosom of the church itself. It is clear that the Reformation movement wanted to give birth to the church that would basically go back to the basics, and those basics would be built on the foundation of God's word. This movement wanted to birth the church that will return to the biblical foundation in relation to its belief system, morality and structure. The church that would also reflect on social issues that were affecting people of the time, issues relating

4. See only study guide for TIC311D. Church Society Across the Ages. Pretoria: UNISA, p. 184.

to the change in society, politics and the economy. These biblical foundations were lost because of the deep corruption of the church, from the pope to the parish priest. It was at this point that the Reformation movement deemed it fit that the church needed to reform, and in doing that it should go back to its biblical foundations, and one of those biblical foundations is its worship.

Evangelicals stemming from Morris critique Reformers, especially Calvin, claimed that 'they had a poor missiology; whereby overseas mission were given no thought or attention' (Haykin & Robinson 2014:15-16). It was Haykin and Robinson (2014:25) who stated that in Calvin's view, 'the inextricably related truths of the pure worship of God and the salvation of souls were the two great concerns of the Reformation'. They further indicated that Calvin understood Reformation and its mission 'represented a recovery of the pure gospel of God, who is on mission to expand his kingdom through the salvation of sinners by the atoning work of Christ on Calvary' (p. 25).

The recovery of the pure worship of God, in my view, is what this article is calling for: the recovery of worship service about God and for God, rather than the idolatrous worship service that serves the people's interest. It was Haykin and Robinson (2014:20-21), quoting the Institutes,⁵ where Calvin stated that in the church of Europe:

Christ lies hidden, half buried, the gospel overthrown, piety scattered, the worship of God nearly wiped out. In them, briefly, everything is so confused that there we see the face of Babylon rather than of the Holy City of God

and so the Reformers did indeed view their task as a missionary one, for they were planting true Christian churches. Haykin and Robinson (2014) further introduced one of the evangelical historians, Kenneth J. Stewart, who:

forcefully argues that Calvin and the Reformed tradition have by no means neglected world mission and evangelism, he claimed that Calvin was deeply concern about the salvation of the lost, which, along with the recovery of biblical worship, was one of the major goals of the Reformers. (p. 22)

It was also Calhoun who alluded that 'Calvin and his fellow Reformers were by no means guilty of missional absenteeism, rather provided the theological framework that energize global mission' (2014:22). Haykin and Robinson, however, see in Calvin theology that 'served as a catalyst for transforming Geneva into a hub of missionary activity where Reformed ministers were trained and sent to proclaim the gospel throughout Europe and beyond' (2014:23). It was Philip E. Hughes (2014) who concurred with the statement above, stating that:

Calvin's Geneva was something very much more than a haven and a school. It was not a theological ivory tower that lived to itself and for itself, oblivious of its responsibility in the gospel to the needs of others. Human vessels were equipped and refitted in this haven, not to be status symbols like painted yachts safely

5. Calvin, Institutes, 2: 1053 94.2.12.

moored at a fashionable marina, but that they might launch out into the surrounding oceans of the world's need, bravely facing every storm and peril that awaited them in order to bring the light of Christ's gospel to those who were in the ignorance and darkness from which they themselves had originally come ... Geneva became a dynamic center or nucleus from which the vital missionary energy it generated radiated out into the world beyond. (p. 230)

The statement above helps us to see and understand the intention of the Reformed theology, particularly on the importance of worship. I believe that the pure worship that Calvin was referring to is not the one that is inward-looking and serving the interest of people, but rather was the pure worship where people are equipped for their mission, where the welfare and the needs of others are taken into consideration.

The church in post-apartheid South Africa

The question that this article poses is the following: 'is the church which was birthed by the Reformation movement still adhering to the reformed principles of continuously reforming?' The church exists but has become stagnant. The concept of continued reformation is no longer the agenda of the church, because the church has become self-serving. It is common knowledge that Christianity arrived in South Africa with the Settlers, from the times of Jan van Riebeeck in 1652. Ever since that time, South African society and the church had experienced an enormous amount of challenges and change (Schoeman 2012:1). One of the enormous challenges the church underwent in South Africa is the policy of apartheid; this policy pushed for separation and the dehumanisation of other ethnic groups, especially black people. During the time prior to 1994 in South Africa, most churches were vocal in challenging the apartheid system that was oppressive to the black masses. Those churches were, according to Schoeman (2012:1), called the 'resistance' churches because they were the agents of change and transformation in society, and they did so by going against the government of the time's apartheid policies. It is my conviction that in those churches that were called 'resistance' churches, their form of worship and the manner in which they led their lives were not separated; they used the opportunity of worship to meet God, through whose spirit they were empowered to be witnesses by speaking against the injustice which was prevailing in the society. The resistance church was not self-serving, but was raising critical issues that led to the defeat of apartheid.⁶ As the struggle continued, the playing field has also changed; South Africa after 1994 is battling with other challenges that need the attention and the work of the church in communities. We have seen a new type of apartheid that is distinguished by the gap between the rich and the poor, where the rich are getting

richer, while the poor are remaining poor and living under difficult situations. We have seen in social media the killing of innocent people, more especially children and women, and corruption that has found its place among any 'servants' or officials, not only in government but also in churches. The church in South Africa cannot escape these issues, because some of its members are affected by them. In the midst of all this, the observation that led to this article is that there is a shift in what Dinokeng (n.d.:18), in Schoeman (2012:2), emphasises when saying: 'However, since 1994, with a few notable exceptions they have lapsed into their comfort zones and are preoccupied exclusively with the after-life'. This form reduces the church to become inward-looking, churches being transformed into waiting stations where Christians wait to go to heaven and, in turn, neglect their essential nature, which is to participate in the mission of God in the world. Tying up with the questions raised above is the following one: is the church which was birthed by the Reformation movement still adhering to the reformed principles of continuously reforming? The simple answer to this is the church still exists, but unfortunately, it has its own priorities and one of those priorities is self-serving; consequently, its worship does not centre around encountering God, but on individuals and what they get out of it. Witnessing has taken somewhat of a backseat. In worship, it is where God grants us spiritual eyes so that we are able to discern, engage and resolve social issues that are hovering in our communities. Our worship will basically be holistic where the marginalised⁷ are also taken into consideration. The Reformed church in South Africa should constantly re-evaluate itself by asking questions such as 'how can we make a difference in the societies that we find ourselves in?'; this is one of the questions that, as Manala (2012:221) says, 'may help the church return to authentic Christian worship'; it may help the Reformed church in South Africa to stay on its toes; through its missional worship, it will then be led to be a witness.

Missional church

It is McNeal (2009) who, in Pillay (2015), said, 'the rise of the missional church is the single biggest development in Christianity since the Reformation'. McNeal pointed out that 'this is not doing church as-usual'. He further stated that going missional requires three shifts: (1) from internal to external in terms of ministry focus, (2) from programme development to people development in terms of core activity, and (3) from church-based to kingdom-based in terms of leadership agenda (MacNeal 2009:xiv). This form of being a church compels the church to think differently about the mission. Pillay added that 'this is different from the church growth model which focuses primarily on building the local church' (Pillay 2015:1). For Pillay, missional understanding of the church is not about making the church attractive, or bringing people into the church, but is about being missional by taking the church into the

6. See A cry from the Vall area to all churches in South Africa: Wake up! In Kairos Southern Africa Vision: A Humanity with a Kairos Consciousness. This is a group of ordinary church members from different denominations who do not feel at home in the church.

7. In this article, by 'marginalised' I refer to those who are always cast outside and do not feel at home because how we conduct our worship excludes them.

world in so doing to transform the world to reflect the glory of God. I have indicated above about my observation when one encounters different Christians and their way of worship; the two statements by MacNeal and Pillay clearly support how worship should be conducted, being a way of nurturing Christians to take a next step that is taking the church to the world rather than being inward-looking. Missional living or missional worship is illustrated by Mashau (2013:96) when he said it 'is a way of living'; he further indicated that 'Christians are called not to act religiously but to live religiously'.

Viewing the church as Missional means that:

Mission is not secondary to its being; rather the church is by its true nature missional; the church exists in being sent and in building itself for the sake of its being. (Guder 2003:46)

This view simply strives to illustrate that a church cannot have something called mission as part of an activity in their programme, as if mission is something that the church does; this view shows that mission is the nature of the church. Mission flows out of what the church is as a worshipping community. In Hendrik's (2007) view, the church that is missional:

define all that the church is and does, as opposed to expecting the church to be the ultimate self-help group for meeting its needs and finding fulfillment in its own individual lives. (p. 1006)

This definition of the church that is missional compels the church to view itself as a sent community, rather than the community that focuses primarily on its maintenance and feeling good about itself; it is a community that is called and sent to participate in the 'missio Dei' the sending of God in Latin (Saayman 2010:9). The statements above clearly emphasise that there is more to the worship and witness of the church than a mere community of people who are seeking and fulfilling their own interest. It is rather the community that was sent to make a difference in the life of people as agents of change and transformation.

As indicated above, missional understanding of the church can be used as one of the models that help us to understand the vision of the Reformation movement, as it does not dwell much on what the church can do by designing attractive programmes, but rather on the church taking part in the mission of God. In this time and era, where there are a lot of 'fall movements', 'protesting' because of service delivery, the reformed church should re-evaluate itself and see if among those challenges South Africa is facing today it is still reforming how they conduct their worship service in a way that can align and nurture Christians to be the change agents in the communities they find themselves in as Castro, in Pillay (2015), suggested that:

we are called as human being to participate in the coming of God's kingdom; this kingdom has to do with the welfare of the whole person, not excluding the social, political and economic aspect of life. (Castro 1985:56-60)

Reformation and missional church in relation to church's worship and witness

As the Reformation movement's call was to return the church to its biblical foundation of being a church, the church will understand itself as partaking in the mission of God rather than the self-serving church or a vendor of religious goods and services as Hunsberger (1998:81) indicated. On the other hand, the missional understanding of the church calls for advancing of the reign of God. This way of being a church has the implications on the church's worship and witness. The worshipping and witnessing of the church that is rooted on the biblical foundation birthed by the Reformation, and of missional church, will be different from the worshipping and witnessing of the church that is self-serving and inward-looking.

Worship

The diversity of Christian traditions leads to different ways of worship. Some want to maintain their traditional way of doing worship which they feel comfortable with, while for others, worship has to do with religious entertainment with the aim of attracting people, fulfilling their spiritual needs. The one that I am proposing, missional worship, has nothing to do with maintaining what we feel comfortable with or being entertained. It is rather a form of worship that equips Christians for their sending. As the agenda of this way of worship is drawn from God who sends, it will then have a sense of transformative spirit, because it will be working towards making life better in communities. The church needs to recover the centrality of worship for the life and witness of the mission community. Guder (1998) indicated that:

worship should be directed to our calling and sending in the service of Christ's. The primary focus of worship is for people who are called and sent to encounter God. In that encounter, God shapes them for the sake of the world that they were called from and sent into in order for them to shape that world for forgiveness and healing as part of God's salvific plan for reconciling everything to Himself. (p. 242)

The church needs to understand that our spiritual needs are not the ones that should define how we do worship. Instead, in worship, the emphasis should be the pronouncement about the reality of God for the entire world. Hence, Guder (1998:243) states that the walls and windows of the church should be transparent, that all should see and be part of this worship community of God.

Witness

In his book, *Bearing the Witness of the Spirit*, Hunsberger (1998:97) teaches us that each of those elected 'has to bear the witness of the spirit'. This is done by transmitting the good news about Jesus Christ as a means of reconciling the people to one another and to God. As Abraham was called to make known the plan of God, so too was Israel elected to mediate God's revelation. This vocation is also transferred to the

church; the church should be the witness, the servant and the light of the nations (1998:97); the church has been elected and lives up to its witness. The church is a sign, a foretaste of the kingdom of God; it follows that, in its witness, it should strive to direct people to its centre which is Jesus Christ rather than itself. The church has been elected to bear the witness of the spirit, that is, the church in its mission should be the representative of God to persons and communities by announcing the good news of Jesus Christ.

Relationship between worship and witness

I have indicated above that witness flows from worship and how you conduct your worship determines the kind of witness you will be. In this article, the two might be regarded as two sides of a coin because they work together. A witness who is a change agent, or who is a servant and the light of the nation, is the one who has been equipped in the worship service. That is, the worship service that they lead is not the one where one maintains the status quo and does things they feel comfortable with or feel good about it. It is rather worship services that sensitise the Christian community in such a way that it will not neglect its missional calling. Labberton (2007:170), quoted in Manala (2012:227), sees the public witness of God's people as 'resulting on whether Christians live out their identity'. The worship should not be about what an individual wants, but needs to be conducted in such a way that is not inward-looking and self-centred. It has to be outward focusing on God, who, in turn, shapes and equips believers towards a ministry of love of God and others, which is the welfare of other people including the social, political and economic aspects of life as indicated by Castro above.

Conclusion

I wish to point out that as we commemorate 500 years of Reformation, the Reformed church in the South African context should look at newer ways of being a church. It needs to re-evaluate the centrality of its worship as a means of being equipped for witness. The article states that missional understanding of the church should be a model that the Reformed church should recover to return the church to an authentic worship that will equip Christians to be witnesses; this can only be realised if the church moves away from being self-serving to being missional. I concur with Pillay (2015:6) when he says 'this missional focus is going to renew, restore and revitalize the church in its ministry and relevancy in the world'. In being missional, it will mean that its way of worship, whether traditional or liberal, will not centre on itself but on God, who shapes and empowers the church for his mission. Guder (1998:243) states this clearly by saying 'every occasion of public worship is a sending event'. He further indicated that 'in its worship, a mission community

needs to develop space for people who find themselves in different places as they respond to God's call'. In being missional, the church will be better positioned to be in touch with the issues confronting the society it finds itself in, and will best respond to them by bringing hope, being the light and causing positive behavioural change on the community. The church will then be able to witness by being the agent of change and transformation.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships which may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

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