

THE ROLES OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

**A Critical Study of the Roles of Women in the Church Leadership in (South) Africa, with
Specific Reference to Scottsville Presbyterian Church, Drakensberg Presbytery.**

By

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DECLARATION

This dissertation, unless specifically indicated in the text is the author's own original work which has not been submitted for another degree in any other university.

University of Durban-Westville.

2000

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Francis Muriithi my husband, and our children Wanja and Muthuri whose support and company was a source of strength and encouragement, and to my mother whose role in bringing us up challenges me to explore and examine the roles of women in the church and society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The differentiation in leadership roles between women and men is about power and authority struggle on the part of those in possession of the same.

I wish to thank my family members back in Kenya for their prayers and support. I thank my husband Francis Muriithi and our daughter Grace Wanja for agreeing to join me during the duration of the study, and not to mention our son Emmanuel Muthuri whose coming during the study period meant added joy and a sign of God's presence and blessings in our family.

My regards goes to PCEA Chogoria Presbytery for granting me study leave. To Scottsville Presbyterian Church for helping me emotionally, spiritually and with encouragement when there were difficult moments. To all those who participated in the research, I owe my gratitude. The following among others were very instrumental, Rev. Rob Calder the church minister and Mr Gyvin Wirth the session clerk who were always there when I called for assistance. The company of Mrs Jeannete Dillon who worked with me in the outreach ministry is highly appreciated. Mrs Pam Botha, Miss Jennifer Karanja and Mr and Mrs Sammy Njenga whose love and concern for our family is highly appreciated. David Muller helped me with computer technicalities which were very crucial. The Rev. Dr. Nyambura Njoroge although separated by distance has been closest and a mentor to me. She was a source of emotional, spiritual, physical support. My heart felt gratitude goes to Prof. Isabel Apawo Phiri, my supervisor, whose support, advice, constructive criticism and encouragement was the power behind completion of this dissertation.

My special thanks goes to the School of Religion and Culture for paying my tuition and the Ecumenical Theological Education for the financial assistance towards the preparation of this dissertation and my stay, I owe you a lot of gratitude.

ABSTRACT

Major issues that this dissertation concerns itself with are: patriarchalisation of the church, societal valuation of women, changing culture and the changing images of women, and finally unmasking the sin of patriarchy. The essay will be examining such issues as what makes patriarchy so strong? Why does the church hold dearly on patriarchal systems that exclude and undermine women yet preaching universality of the church which emphasises community of believers? In this community of believers all are believed to be equal in Christ Jesus. How then does the church's witness to the world remain "good news" and valid when the half or the majority of the community remain marginalised and subjugated?

The study traces the background history of the status and role of women in the church. The historical background examines the place and images of women in the Hebrew culture. Women leadership during the patriarchal period is also examined. Christ being the head of the church, the concept of Christology is explored in relation to women. Biblical and Pauline attitudes towards women are also examined since they influence the place of women in the church.

The attitudes towards women in the church leadership roles from both women and men are examined. The status and place of women in the church are influenced by religious, cultural, social and economic aspects. The study therefore, is concluded by raising suggestions that will bring about transformation for the betterment of women's place and status. This is in hope that, the church will become a community of believers where women and men will participate equally.

Core to this is the investigation, exploration and examination of the leadership roles of women in the church. This is from different perspectives, for instance, how are women represented in church leadership positions? What are the numerical ratios between women and men? What role do the structures of the church play in maintaining this? What is the role played by men and women? Answers to these questions raise the challenges that the church should be prepared to face in the new millenium.

ABBREVIATIONS

AACC	-All African Council of Churches
AWT	-African Women Theology
CAWT	-Circle of African Women Theologians
EATWOT	-Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians
GA	-General Assembly
MPLP	-Interim Manual of Law and Procedure
KIC	-Kids in Christ Worship
PCSA	-Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa
PCEA	-Presbyterian Church of East Africa
RPCSA	-Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa
SACC	-South African Council of Churches
SPC	-Scottsville Presbyterian Church
SAP	-Structural Adjustment Programme
UPCSA	-Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa
WA	-Women Association

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration-----	ii
Dedication-----	iii
Acknowledgement-----	iv
Abstract-----	v
Abbreviations-----	vi
Table of contents-----	vi

Chapter one: Introduction

1.1 Introduction-----	1
1.2 The Problem-----	1
1.3 Motivation-----	3
1.4 Aims of the study-----	4
1.5 Methodology-----	5
1.6 Limitations of the study-----	9
1.7 Definition: (UPCSA) /(PCSA)-----	11
1.7.1 The Scottsville Presbyterian Church (SPC)-----	11
1.8 Theoretical approach-----	12
1.9 Structure of the study-----	16

Chapter two: Historical overview of the experience, place and status of women in the church and society

2.1 Introduction-----	18
2.2 Women in the culture where the Christianity was born (Hellenistic culture)-----	19
2.2.1 Images of women in the Hebrew Text-----	19
2.2.2 Women leadership during the patriarchal period-----	23

2.2.3 Christology-----	25
2.2.4 African Christology and women-----	26
2.2.5 The Bible-----	27
2.2.6 Pauline attitude towards women-----	28
2.3 The fundamental aspects of African women theology-----	30
2.3.1 The patriarchalisation of the church-----	32
2.3.1.1 Sexism-----	32
2.3.1.2 Patriarchy-----	33
2.3.1.3 Androcentrism-----	33
2.3.1.4 The Church-----	33
2.3.2 Societal valuation of women-----	35
2.3.2.1 Patriarchal negation of women-----	35
2.3.2.2 Women silenced by culture-----	37
2.3.2.3 Other oppressive practices inherent in African cultural traditions-----	38
2.3.2.4 Women as their own enemies-----	40
2.3.3 Changing culture, changing images of women-----	41
2.3.3.1 Feminist hermeneutic principle-----	42
2.3.3.2 Historical consciousness and liberation of women in the church and society-----	43
2.3.4 Unmasking the sin of patriarchy-----	44
2.3.4.1 Women and men as partners-----	45
2.3.4.2 Equal but different-----	46
2.4 African culture and the church collaborative nature in determining the roles of women in the church-----	47
2.4.1 Understanding culture-----	47
2.4.2 Women and cultural implications-----	48
2.4.3 African black and white women-----	50
2.4.4 The collaborative nature of the African culture and the church-----	50
2.5 Conclusion-----	52

Chapter three: Attitudes towards women in the church leadership roles

3.1 Introduction-----	54
3.2 Research methodology-----	55
3.3 Analytical process-----	58
3.3.1 Attitudes towards women participation in the church leadership roles-----	58
3.3.1.1 Negative response from women -----	59
3.3.1.2 Negative response from men-----	59
3.3.1.3 Positive response from women -----	60
3.3.1.4 Positive response from men-----	62
3.3.1.5 Other crucial issues-----	64
(a) Prejudices-----	64
(b) Biblical bias-----	65
(c) Cultural bias-----	65
3.3.2 Numerical ratio in leadership and decision making of women in relation to men-----	66
3.3.3 Women Association -----	67
3.4 The leadership roles and position in SPC-----	69
3.5 Conclusion-----	71

Chapter Four: The voices of women in Scottsville Presbyterian Church

4.1 Introduction-----	73
4.2 Women sharing their lived experiences in the church institution-----	74
4.2.1 Religio- cultural aspects-----	75
4.2.2 Social -economic implications-----	76
4.2.3 Women mentors in leadership roles-----	79
4.2.4 The church, doctrines and women-----	79
4.3 Dreams about women in the church ministry-----	81
4.4 Conclusion-----	82

Chapter five: Evaluation of the findings

5.1 Introduction-----84
5.2 Research process-----84
5.3 Reflection on female leadership-----86
5.4 Women in the church ministry-----88
5.5 Crucial themes and concerns of the church in (South) Africa-----89
5.6 Conclusion-----91

Chapter six: Concluding remarks and suggestions

6.1 Introduction-----92
6.2 Concluding remarks-----92
6.3 Suggestions-----94

Bibliography-----96

Appendices-----104

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter encompasses the problem of the study, motivation, research methodology, limitation of the study, the definition: brief description of the SPC and the whole UPCSA. It gives the theoretical framework used and finally the structure of the whole study (chapters 2-6).

1.2 The problem

This dissertation is about a critical study of the roles of women in the church leadership in (South) Africa with specific reference to Scottsville Presbyterian Church, Drakensberg Presbytery. The issues of women, church and the roles they play in the church and society have been studied from different perspectives. In the last two decades the roles of women in the Church in Africa was the major issue addressed by a cross-section of theologians and activists concerned with acknowledgment of full dignity and integrity of humanity regardless of gender. The articulation in their areas raised the issues of inclusion of women in the full participation in the church leadership roles, major decision making in the church and formation of the church institution (see Virginia Fabella, M. M. & Oduyoye, M. A 1988; Ackermann, D. M 1992,1994; Kanyoro, M. R. A & Njoroge, J. N. 1996; Kanyoro, M. R. A 1997; Oduyoye, M. A 1986, 1995, 1997; Oduyoye, M. A. & Kanyoro, M. R. A 1990, 1992 Ackermann, *et al*). This raised among many, the questions of ordination and the place of women in leadership and major decision making organisations or committees. Indeed various churches did ordain some women and placed them in some very major position of leadership and decision making. However this did not bring to an end the quest for the concerned.

For instance, the Presbyterian Church of South Africa (PCSA) ordained the first woman in 1976; Reformed Presbyterian Church of South Africa (RPCSA) in 1978; Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) in 1982. These women have climbed the ladders of authority, for instance in 1997 the first woman to be ordained in the RPCSA became the Secretary General of the South African council of Churches (SACC). In 1997, the second woman to be ordained in the PCEA became a

Presbytery Moderator. (Information gathered from the interviews carried out). However the question of marginalization remains crucial as many scholars unearth cultural and institutional aspects that continue to question the place and status of women both in the church and society.

“African culture, especially as interpreted today, prevents women from playing leadership roles in our society and church. One hears of powerful women in African history, but their importance is played down in the same manner in which women in the Bible are played down...there are a lot of African cultural practices that need revision if we are to maintain our important cultural heritages.....Once people exploit, discriminate against and deprive women of their God given status in the name of culture, I begin to have problems as a Christian woman” Mpumlwana (in King,1993:165). As observed by Mpumwalana, there are social, cultural and religious aspects that determine the roles of women in the church. Therefore for successful religious and social transformation articulation these aspects needs to be carefully explored.

African culture and the structural formation of the institutional church influence the roles of women in the church. Ackermann (1986) narrating her struggles in her religious journey expresses that Christianity is designed for men. “The source document of Christianity is written by and for men; the Christian churches are largely shaped and run by men; I try to do theology in an environment dominated by men; I live in a society which is largely patriarchal”.

In my exploration and articulation of the roles of women in the church, it seems to me the roles of women in church leadership are directed or designed on gender lines as expressed by Ackermann. Many books have been written and lobby woman groups formed to address the concerns of women, yet the cultural systems and institutional structures continue to reflect obscurity of the roles of women in the church and society. For instance “ the circle of concerned African Woman in Theology grew out of the decision by the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) at its 1989 meeting to appoint conveners for women's theology groups in each region of the world. The African women of EATWOT decided to form a biennial institute for women in religion and culture, an area in which they saw promise for creating a liberative theology that would respond to

their needs " Amoah (in Offelia,1995). Writing on the religious experiences of women in Africa, Phiri (1997), recognizes the cry from women for recognition as full human beings which had been absent in the patriarchal culture and which Christianity seemed to promise. Our endeavour therefore is to investigate how far this promise is realised in African Christian church.

The roles of women in the church determines their place and status. This raises questions on the holistic ministry of the church to bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ. Due to the status and place of women in the church their roles are either obscured or go unacknowledged. Social, cultural, religious and economic factors influence the roles of women in the church and society. In this study, it is considered appropriate to listen to women's own voices. However my contention is that leadership roles of women in the church are influenced by cultural, religious and economic factors. Although much has been done in relation to the status and place of women in the church and society in Africa, yet much is to be done in the area of leadership roles.

1.3 Motivation

I am motivated to explore and articulate women's understanding of the roles they play in the church more clearly from within the African culture and the institutional church. Examine the scholarly study of one area within the Presbyterian church which is the leadership roles. And also examine the understanding of social cultural religious and economic implications on the place and the status of women in the church and society. Investigate the institutional church and the implications on the status of women as a result of her structural formation.

It is my own observation and my daily interaction with woman that has challenged and occasioned my study during the years 1993-1998, after completing my graduate study in St. Paul's united Theological college in Kenya, I found myself among women and experiencing with them what it means to be a woman in the church. To be a woman means to be ignored, put in difficult situations so as to prove that they can make it and also to be doubted as far as abilities are concerned. Some elders and men ministers insisted that my husband had to be ordained church elder because they felt that I would not keep confidential business of the church from him. Hence we should be both in the

inner circle of the church if I have to continue to execute my duties properly. This was not demanded of men ministers. Therefore my being a trained church minister did not erase the cultural, gender and traditional bias that women can not be entrusted with responsibilities.

My period of service in the church ministry before coming to South Africa in August 1998 exposed me to the experience facing women that are faced due to lack of basic facilities such as education, shelter and adequate health care. Despite various disadvantages however, women are people with unique abilities and have a drive for work, but their contributions are underplayed by the socio-cultural economic bias and prejudice based on gender in Africa (Muriithi 1999)¹.

In the last one and a half years (August, 1998-January, 2000) of my stay in South Africa, my experience has been expanded by my stay and observation especially in the Scottsville Presbyterian Church where I have worshipped since then. My desire to explore the roles of women in the church is raised further. This congregation is unique in that it has black and white people and it has an interdenominational population which raises cross -cultural issues. In my quick observation of the church services, the first impression was that there is equal participation of men and women. However as time passed by I realised there was a need to carry out a research in order to understand the institutional systems.

1.4 Aims of the study

The aim of the study is to explore and articulate women's understanding of the roles they play in the church more clearly within the African culture and the institutional church; to carry out a scholarly study of one area within the presbyterian church: Leadership role. And also to investigate social, cultural, religious and economic implications on the place and status of women in the church and society. I will also investigate the institutional church and her implications on the status of women as a result of her structural formation.

¹The two paragraphs that reflect the writer's experience are extracted from her Bachelor of Theology Honours Research project which was submitted University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg faculty of Humanities in 1999.

This study will reflect on the roles, places and status of women in relation to men. Further it will show the participation of women in the areas of leadership roles and decision making. The numerical ratio of men and women in these areas will be very important for it will lead us into understanding the implications it has on the role of women in the church.

The central aim is to create the awareness in women in the church of their abilities and resources and conscientise them to the need to reassess their participation and involvement in the church. This also aims at challenging the church to reassess the structures that create obscurity of the roles of women in the church.

1.5 Methodology

The following theories, insight and approaches from Philpott (1993), Phiri (1997) and Schalkwyk (2000), will be used as tools for this research process. The three scholars have used different approaches, therefore this study will only use their theoretical framework as much as will be applicable for the current study.

Graham Philpott (1993) in his *Jesus is tricky and God is undemocratic*, proposes the requirement of participatory research. This study employs his research methodological theories since he takes the role of an "activist-researcher", as he considers Huizer's requirements placed upon activist-researcher important. He outline them as follows:

- (1) Required is an awareness of the ones own limitation, a sense of insecurity and of one's relative ignorance (compared to local people involved).....
- (2) Accepting one's relative ignorance, one tries to learn from the people concerned through empathy and friendship what their problems and needs and feelings are.....
- (3) After acquiring sufficient knowledge and understanding of local problems further dialogue with the local people, particularly through discussion in small groups, searching together for possible solution is taken. Huizer (in Philpott,1993:19).

Therefore an activist researcher is one who facilitates the research by being actively involved in the research progress. He/she identifies the major themes present in the discussions and the resultant action. His/her approach is important because the researcher in this particular study had to facilitate

the process by being personally involved during the time of her membership and participation in the Scottsville Presbyterian church, and during the research interviews which she carried out in May-July 2000. The role played by the researcher in this study is estimated to that explained by Philpott in relation to activist researcher.

Since August 1998 to date I have been a member of Scottsville Presbyterian church. During this period the Minister has also involved me in other church activities as an ordained minister of the Presbyterian church. I have had an opportunity to interact with church members closely and especially women when the minister assigned me the responsibility of being in charge of Outreach Ministry which involves a group of women. This group meets on Thursdays where they share their experience, and have Bible study together. They also do sewing, tie and dye and contribute money to help each other meet their economic needs. I have an opportunity to work together and share the experiences of their daily life. Having lived and experienced with them I conducted interviews among the cross-section of the church membership which includes men and women. The holistic life of the church has implications on the roles of women in the church.

Participatory Research is a process "in which the community participates in the analysis of their own reality to promote a social transformation for the benefit of the participants who are oppressed" (Philpott, 1993:21-22). In this study my endeavour is to investigate and explore the roles of women in the church in Africa with particular reference to Scottsville Presbyterian Church of Drakensberg Presbytery geared towards transformation of the fundamental structure of the church. I will be focusing my attention to the leadership roles of women in the church. Therefore as described by Philpott quoting Hammond, this study takes a theoretical framework of participatory researcher since he says;

Participatory research is an educational tool used to help oppressed people gain awareness of their situation through collective investigation and collective analysis and to plan to change these situations through collective action. The researcher in this process is an equal participant in the group who assist others to reflect critically and to work together more productively than might otherwise have been possible Hammond (in Philpott 1993:22).

Outlined below are the characteristics of participatory research which are important in this current study.

1. The problem originates in the community
 2. The ultimate goal is fundamental structural transformation
 3. It involves the people from the community in the control of the process
 4. Its focus is on work with oppressed groups
 5. A central role is strengthening the awareness in people of their own abilities and resources and supporting the mobilising and organizing of the oppressed.
 6. Those specialised knowledge or training often come from outside the community, but they are committed participants and learners in the process that leads to involvement rather than detachment
 7. There is greater use of qualitative method of research than quantitative method of research.
 8. The 'researcher' and the 'researched' work as equal partners. The question of power is unimportant aspect, moving away from a top-down ward to horizontal power relation..."
- Philpott (in Muriithi, 1999:16)

While the participatory research is an important framework in this study, in-depth interviews have been significantly used. Phiri (1997) is the source of this important framework. In-depth interviews involve intensive interviews that seek to gather as much information as possible from the interviewees so as to achieve the set goals. She categorises the questions as follows:

1. Personal identification: which includes age, marital status, educational attainment, occupation, name of the congregation, and the position held in the church.
2. Position of women in the church with leadership roles which includes women organisations and theological education.
3. Chewa Christian women and culture which includes: bride wealth; child marriage; polygamy; widowhood; poverty and remarriage.

To gather information she conducted informal interviews guided by unstructured questions. The goal for her study was not only the liberation of women but also the to realise a community of women and men working together in harmony, therefore her interviewees included men and women.

Following this theoretical framework, in this current study, in-depth interviews will be intensively used, where it was not possible to have person to person interviews, I have used detailed questionnaires. In other occasions I have used informal interviews. The questions in this study are categorised as follows:

1. Identification details which includes: Name, (which is optional;) Age range, Sex, Marital status, Education attainment and Occupation

2. Church historical background including: Women's history in church leadership and their general participation in the life of the church
3. Women church leadership
4. Women experiences in the church

These questions are designed to explore and examine the roles of women in Scottsville Presbyterian Church and to give an approximate picture of the roles women play in the church in (South) Africa.

Schalkwyk (2000), writing on Southern African women's stories of transformation offers some methodological aspects which departs from the traditional objective approach. She embarks on positive research and emancipatory research which she acknowledges that:

traditional Western Science - and theology - was written from androcentric point of view. This in effect meant that male scientists accepted that they know and represent the whole of humanity, and that they can use an objectivist, rationalist scientific approach to study women and other subjugated groups in order to enter into scientific discourse about them and their behalf.

In the wake of research approaches like critical theory, sociology of knowledge, and various forms of action and participatory research, researchers started to recognise that scholars always work from their own frame of reference and that these standpoints are the basis for emancipatory research. In theology, liberation and contextual theologies started to recognise that (oppressed) people are the subjects of their own histories who are the primary agents in the struggle for their liberation from various forms of oppression (Schalkwyk 2000:22).

Schalkwyk acknowledges the fact that objectivist scientific model and emancipatory research disregards women as serious research subjects but feminist researchers consciously place the marginal conditions of women at the center of their research. Marginalisation of women is made key interpretive category. Specific experiences of women is stressed. She argues that, "feminist theory now tends to be explicitly temporal, historical and attuned to the culturally specificity of different groups in society"

(Ibid.p.26). The current study takes the dimension of current feminist theory.

Recognition that the oppressed people are the subjects of their own histories, they (the oppressed) considered the primary agents in the struggle for liberation from various forms of oppression. She

observes that the early emancipatory researchers and liberation theologies did not sufficiently recognise the place and participation of women in the survival and liberation struggles of the oppressed. This recognition led women researchers to demonstrate the importance of recognising the subjective knowledge of women. As she introduces this methodological approach, she has pointed out three important aspects of writing women's stories of transformation.

(1) In the research process, the researcher has to be such a sensitive listener so that she will facilitate and allow the research subject telling of her story in her own voice -as fully, completely and honestly as she desires...

(2) A researcher who is interested in the themes of transformation or salvation/ liberation in women's lives, has to listen carefully to what a research subject herself has to say about the moment of transformation or liberation in her life. The research subject is the primary interpreter of her experience of transformation or liberation...The researcher's role is to come in as a secondary interpreter who, in her rendering of the research subject's life, has to focus in those moments of transformation and liberation and has to put it in the context of the whole journey of the research subject...

(3) The transformation/liberation in a woman's life-experience is brought into the open through narrative... (Schalkwyk, 2000:28-29).

Following the above research approach, the primary source for the current study is expected to provide the reality and histories of women in the church in (South) Africa. The primary source includes the Christian women and men of SPC. Some of these women and men will be interviewed personally and others will be requested to answer some questionnaires. All this will be geared towards examining the roles of women in the church specifically in the leadership roles of women. While the research subjects includes women and men, the research is geared towards exploring and examining the roles of women in the church.

1.6 Limitations of the study

My research is limited to the Christian community at the Scottsville Presbyterian Church. This congregation is unique in that it stands on its own as a parish with its own minister and a Kirksession. It also consist of an international population due to its situation near the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. Those interviewed were a cross-section of black and white, men and women of

different status social, cultural and economic background and status, and also the leadership positions. While **the roles of women in the church** (leadership roles) is our main concern, the study takes seriously the experiences of women and their views and observations the contention is that, the reality and histories of women have major implications on women's place and status in the church. The congregation has a large student population which means they are not permanent members. Therefore, much of the information also does not give the long history of the congregation although it gives the international outlook of the leadership roles of women in Africa. I also had some direct person to person interviews.

My investigations are informed by lived and shared experiences of women since I have been in this congregation as a member for the last one and a half years. While this study is focused on this congregation I spent some time with a few members from the neighbouring congregations which offered an opportunity for deeper understanding of the roles of women in the Scottsville Presbyterian Church and in the other parishes in the Presbytery.

Due to financial limitations the researcher did not manage to go far. Time was a major issue since the time for distributing and getting back the questionnaire was very short. While I had targeted about one hundred respondents I managed to get back only forty five questionnaires. I also had the opportunity for getting information from a group of women involved in the in outreach mission of the church. The cross-cultural perspective of the congregation was another big challenge although it was also very enriching especially when reinforced by literary research by reading books and journals about and on leadership roles in the church in Africa. Those interviewed were a cross-section of white and black; women and men and urban and rural folk.

Schalkwyk observed that the role of the researcher should be secondary putting in the context the whole journey of the research subject. The researcher's position as an ordained minister, and a postgraduate student (as introduced in the research station) makes it difficult to deny possibility of biased information or interpretation. However it is the intention of the researcher to try and avoid misinterpretation or the possibility of imposition of her world view or experience.

1.7 Definition: The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) & (SPC).

The church's system of government is Presbyterian. The Presbyterian form of church government is held to be founded upon and agreeable to, the Holy Scriptures². In this form of government the many congregations have common doctrine and they are subject to a common government. The Interim Manual of Law and Procedure (IMLP) of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA), is based largely on the manual used by the PCSA. The common government is exercised through the courts. The courts of the church are, Session (Kirksession), the Presbytery (and the Synod where such exist) and the General Assembly which is the supreme court of the church. Each court is presided over by a moderator. In the Kirksession the moderator is the minister of the congregation. In a higher court the moderator is appointed from among the members. Our study is based at congregational level so the moderator is the minister of the congregation.

The name of the church is The Uniting Presbyterian in Southern Africa (UPCSA). The church comprises, presbyteries in Zimbabwe and Zambia. The present Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa is formed by the former PCSA and Reformed Presbyterian Church Southern Africa (RPCSA). The General Assemblies of the two denominations dissolved on 25th September 1999 (Lund, 1999: 1)³ to form the uniting church. Uniting which is composed of eighteen Presbyteries. It is referred as uniting because this is a process and there is hope of incorporating other denominations.

1.7.1 The Scottsville Presbyterian Church (SPC)

Scottsville Presbyterian Church (SPC) belonged to the former Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa (PCSA), Drakensberg Presbytery. The PCSA congregations were predominantly white while RPCSA

²The description about the church government is extracted from the Interim Manual of the Law and procedure (IMLP) of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa section 4 -form of government and section 5 -Name, constitution and constituent bodies (1999:2)

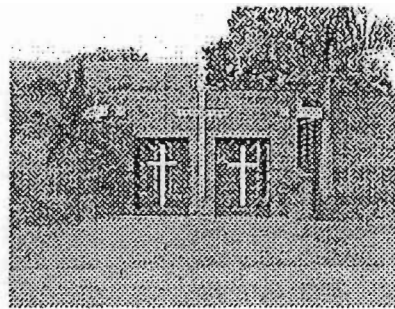
³ Among other things that the journal reports is the striking news of the first woman moderator-designate. Important point to note for our study is that she is appointed moderator designate after twenty six years from the time she was ordained as the first woman minister. Among other women ministers at the General Assembly, she seems to be the only woman.

The Scottsville Presbyterian Church (SPC)



SPC

"Gateway to the Nations"



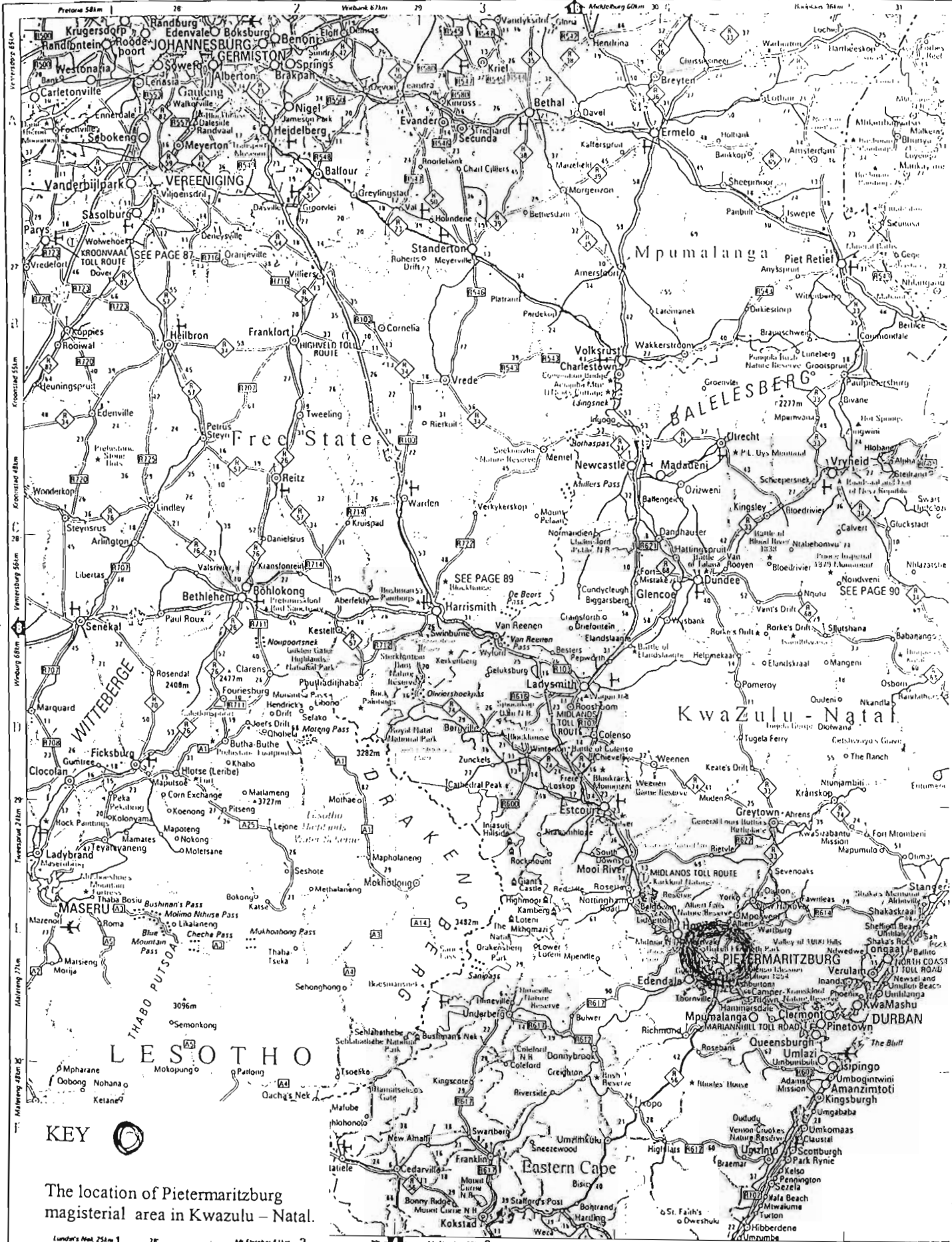
The dedication of the "Gateway to the Nations" was marked by the release of balloons on Easter Sunday 2000.

**"The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee
for you"
Leviticus 25:11**

The pictures give the present outlook of the Scottsville Presbyterian Church..

EASTERN FREE STATE / KWAZULU - NATAL SOUTH AFRICA

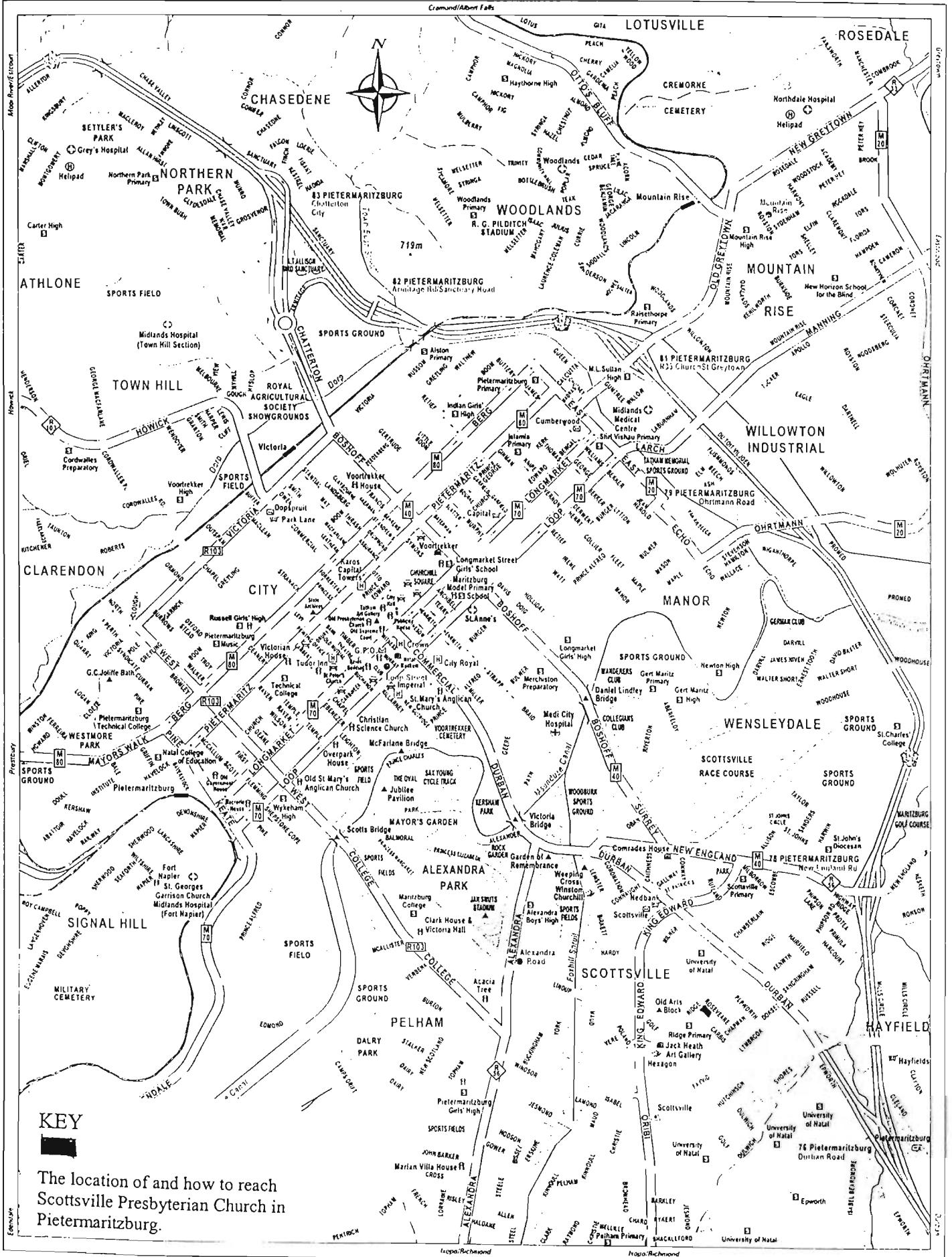
Scale 1 : 1 500 000
0 5 10 20 30 40 50 km
Copyright © Map Studio



The location of Pietermaritzburg magisterial area in Kwazulu - Natal.

KEY

- Freeway & National Road
- Principal Trunk Road
- Main Road
- Secondary Road
- Distances in Kilometres
- Mountain Passes
- Railway
- International / Provincial or Regional Boundary



KEY
 The location of and how to reach
 Scottsville Presbyterian Church in
 Pietermaritzburg.

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|------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Major Airport | Tourist Information Centre | National Monument | Hotel | Police Station | Recreation Centre | Hospital (Casualty) |
| Airfield Parking | Place of Interest | Theatre | Caravan Park | Community Service | Library | Hospital |
| Museum | Cinema | Major Shopping Centre | Post Office | School | Municipal Clinic | |

congregations were predominantly black. Therefore Scottsville congregation was a white congregation which is incorporating black population at a very high rate. The Geographical location of this congregation is between Roseveare and Carbis Roads in Scottsville. SPC is within the Pietermaritzburg magisterial district. The Christian ministry at the SPC dates back to 1945 when the decision to establish a ministry near the University was reached. Building of the Scottsville hall began in 1949 and the building completed in early 1950. The Sunday School opened on 2 February 1950 and the hall was officially opened on 26 March 1950. The evening service commenced on 2 April 1950 with 60-70 members attending. It operated as an extension of the town church (Presbyterian Church of Pietermaritzburg) for the next fifteen years. On 29 June 1965 Scottsville was given its full status. The first Kirksession which consisted of eight members was on 17 December 1967.

The boundaries of the Presbyteries within South Africa are defined into magisterial districts. Drakensberg Presbytery is comprised of the following magisterial districts: Estcourt, Mooi River, Richmond, Ixopo, Pietermaritzburg, New Hanover, Umvoti, Lions River and Pietermaritzburg. SPC is within the Pietermaritzburg "Other developments were inauguration of the Day Branch of the Women's Association in 1972 (the evening Branch had been started in August 1967) and two youth groups namely Junior and Senior Christian Endeavour. The Women's Association (W.A) was dissolved in 1997⁴" (Quick, 2000: 6). The SPC is within the Pietermaritzburg magisterial district. Presently in the SPC the Kirksession comprises of fourteen elders of which three are women. The reason given was that many women are employed and therefore can not manage their job, their domestic chores and active duties in the church.

1.8 Theoretical approach

Women in the church ministry has been an area of great interest for study for many decades now. Such issues as full participation and inclusion of women in the church structures have been widely explored and investigated. Raising major challenges to the church, the church responded in

⁴The dissolution of women's Association is recorded in the minute annual congregation minutes. The request from the W.A was received in the congregation meeting of August, 1995 and the dissolution of the W. A in was effected in October 1997 .

considering them at various levels. Ordination and inclusion of women in the decision making bodies are some of the things achieved by those who advocated for women's disadvantaged place and status in the church.

The place and status of women in the ministry has been influenced by patriarchalisation of the church; societal valuation of the women; changing culture and the changing images of women. My contention is that among others patriarchalisation of the church has major implications on the roles of women in the church. The paper will be examining such issues as what makes patriarchy so strong? Why does the church cling on patriarchal systems that exclude and undermine women while at the same time preaching universality of the church which emphasises community of believers. In this community of believers all are believed to be equal in Christ Jesus. How then does the church's witness to the world remain " good news " and valid when the half or the bigger majority of the community remain marginalised and subjugated? Therefore unmasking the sin of patriarchy is imperative.

The investigation of the implications of patriarchy on the roles of women in the church is a significant issue in this study. This will be studied from different perspectives, for instance, how is it propagated? How is it maintained in place? What role do the structures of the church play to maintain this? and finally what is the role played by men and women? This will raise the challenges that the church should be prepared to face in the new millenium. The African women theologians theoretical framework significantly influences the reseacher's point of reference.

Kanyoro, M. R. A. & Wendy, S. Robbins 1992 (eds.). in *The Power we Celebrate: Women's Stories of Faith and Power*, examines the experiences of women from the dimension of women's stories of faith and power. They raise issues of empowering women to challenge oppressive structures in the global community, their country and their church. Ruether, R.R.(ed.) 1994. in *Religion and sexism* attempts to fill a growing need for a more exact idea of the role of religion in shaping the traditional cultural images that have degraded and suppressed women. She provides a glimpse of the history of the relationship of patriarchal religion of feminine imagery and to the actual psychic and self images of women. (Phiri, I. A 1997). in *Women Presbyterianism and Patriarchy: Religious Experience of*

Chewa Women in Central Malawi gives an account of the religious experience of women and also a woman's place in the church.

Oduyoye, M. A. & Kanyoro, M. R. A (eds.) 1992. in *The Will to Arise, Tradition and the Church in Africa*, attempts to present the reality of being an African woman and a Christian. The life and dreams, the sorrows and the joys of African women and, the roles women play in terms of culture are discussed. They focus on the church, review the biblical attitudes towards women, and show how African women can and should contribute to the life of the African church.

Virginia Fabella, M. M. & Oduyoye, M. A. 1988. in *With Passion and Compassion, Third World Women Doing Theology: Reflections from the Women's Commission of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians* presents the common struggles of third world women to forge their liberative theology. They explore the questions of what it is to be a Christian woman in the third world. They also discuss traditional theological topics, such as Christology, Spirituality, the Bible and others as they affect women. Oduyoye, M. A 1995. *Daughters of Anowa: African women and patriarchy* articulates how Christianity and African culture are partners in oppressing women. She calls upon the church to account on the place and status of women in the church.

Ackermann, et al (1991) in *Women Hold up Half the Sky: Women in the church in Southern Africa* is one of the major volumes to offer extended discussion in South Africa. It presents the voices of Black Southern African women in their debates with their white sisters. These debates are quite revealing on the issues of, **"roles of women in the ministry"**.

Kanyoro, M. R. A.(ed) 1997. *In Search of Round Table: Gender, Theology and Church Leadership*, explores the pressing contemporary questions of Gender, theology and church leadership. She tries to give the church an opportunity to gain an image which encourages the development of a perspective whereby women and men participate in full equality. Levison, M.1992. in *Wrestling with the church* gives her personal encounter with the church. In her struggle for recognition by her church, the church of Scotland and of the validity of the ordination of women, had to face not only theological

opposition but also the complex procedural process of her church courts. Her articulation reveals that women and men are equally called to the ministry by God. It is therefore significant to respect women's calling into the ministry by God not only in the Presbyterian church but in the universal church in Africa and the world.

Personal experience of the writer as an ordained woman minister in the Presbyterian Church of East Africa for the last six years, will be a significant contribution to the study. This may have its own biases but it is not in the intention of the writer to make the study subjective in any way. Personal experience is a major contributing factor to my convictions that there is need to study leadership roles of women in the church. My convictions are that the status and place of women in the church remains a contested area. The reflection in the above contributions constitutes a powerful statements of faith as well as a challenge to existing structures and thinking in the church. The whole collective work is a prophetic voice of women that untangles the structures of oppression, exploitation and offers a vision for human community. Their methodology and context represents a powerful challenge to traditional theologies, religious articulations and authority role structures that include the institutional church.

This theoretical framework will be further developed in the current study. The articulations in this current study will depart from a surface of place and status of women in our institutional church specifically based on the obscurity of the roles women play in the church. Specifically the study aims at understanding the implications of the leadership roles and hierarchies under the influence of traditional patriarchal cultures that directs and shapes the church and society.

The contentions in the current study is that the issues influencing the issue of women in the ministry are patriarchalisation of the church, societal valuation of women, and changing culture and changing images of women. Such terminologies as sexism, androcentrism, patriarchy and the church will be briefly discussed so as to make clear how they are understood in this particular study because they have significant influence in the fundamental aspects of African women theology which is a important framework for the current study.

1.8 Structure of the study

Chapter one offers the focus, framework and the objectives of the study. To achieve this the following issues are discussed: The problem of the study, the motivation, the aims of the study, the methodology, the limitation of the study and the theoretical framework used in the study.

Chapter two gives the historical overview of the experiences, place and status of women in the church and society. This is sub-divided into four sections that includes images of women in the Hebrew scriptures; the Pauline attitude to women; the early church fathers' attitude to women and finally women in church leadership roles. The historical overview explores how this background influences the roles of women in the church.

Chapter three presents the research methodology where different views are taken into consideration and finally general comments are made.

Chapter four presents the voices of women in SPC which includes women's lived experiences and their dreams for the future of women in the church. This section raises such concerns as cultural issues; the status and place of women in the church; socio- economic implications on the place of women in the church and society. The chapter closes with the dreams about the women in the ministry of the church.

Chapter five is an evaluation of the findings, and the following areas are considered: Research process; status and place of women in the church and society; and the crucial concerns and themes of women in the church in Africa. Under this section the following are considered as the crucial concerns and themes: women and culture; Patriarchy and the church hierarchies in the church; women in contemporary theological scholarship and women in religion and social transformation.

Chapter six forms the conclusion of the discourse of the study. It also includes the suggestions from the researcher. There are suggestions that, the church need to reassess her institutional structures to

fully include women in leadership and participation. The church should also introduce educative programs that will enhance the understanding and thinking of womenfolk. This will translate into women becoming more informed and being able to speak for themselves. Women will therefore be more assertive and affirm their integrity and dignity in the church and society.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE EXPERIENCE, PLACE AND STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY

2.1 Introduction

The task of this chapter is to present a historical overview of the place and status of women in the church and society. This overview goes back to Hebrew culture which influences the institutional church in its structural formation and doctrines in relation to the roles of women in the church and society. In the first section of this chapter, important aspects are: images of women, concept of Christology and the church as it is to be understood in this study.

The second section of the chapter presents the fundamental aspects of African women theology as far as the current study departs from its theoretical framework. Patriachalisation of the church and societal valuation of women are the major issues in this section.

The third section of the chapter discusses African Christianity as it is influenced by its missionary background and the African culture. Therefore, major issues are: understanding culture, women and cultural implications, African women (black and white) and finally is the collaborative nature of the African culture and the church in the way in which they determine the roles of women in the church and society.

It is hoped that this overview will provide the reader with the possible reasons for the situations or circumstances in which women find themselves in the church and society in Africa. However, expectation that this single chapter would give detailed and unquestionable articulations would be a very high demand. Therefore the chapter only provides brief background information.

2.2 Women in the culture where the Christian Church was born (Hellenistic culture).

2.2.1 Images of women in the Hebrew text

The questions of how we are to understand and interpret scripture in all its diversity is one of the central issues in theology. The Bible according to an 'ordinary' Christian in any part of Africa is considered as the good news (Mugambi 1989:9-10). It is therefore unbelievable for them to hear that there are some elements in it that distort images of women. However that does not bar us from examining the scriptures critically so as to make our proven statement in relation to the scriptures and the status and place of women in the church and society. Many have found that, in the Hebrew text, which is said to be similar to African societies, a woman is considered a second class citizen. That is, she is inferior to a man physically, morally, socially, intellectually and spiritually. Therefore she is to serve, cook and bear children (Stephen, R. 1997:121). This perception of womanhood belittles a woman in society. Ruether, (1983) in *Sexism and God-talk* articulates male and female images of the divine. She argues that:

From archaeological evidence one can conclude that the most ancient human image of the divine was female....'Mother goddess cult must indeed be one of the oldest and longest surviving religions of the ancient world second ancient cult, found in numerous Ice Age cave painting, focuses on the Shaman, probably male, of the hunting cult..(Ruether,1983: 47-48).

She presupposes that the social origins of male monotheism originates from the nomadic societies which reinforces the social hierarchy of patriarchal rule through their religious systems in a way that was not the case with the paired images of God and Goddess. God is now modelled after the patriarchal ruling class and is seen as addressing this class directly...women as wives becomes symbolically repressed. Wives, along with children and servants, represent those ruled over and owned by the patriarchal class (Ibid. p.53). This order is carried over throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the book of Exodus 20:17, 21:28-29, the basic presupposition of all the laws is a society in which full membership is limited to men whereby only a male is judged to be a responsible person. He is responsible not only for his own acts but those of his dependents as well. These include wife, children, servants and even his livestock, in the extended and fluid understanding of household that pertained in the ancient Israel (Bird, 1974:49). The law addresses heads of the families, for it is the family, not the individual, that is the basic unit of society in the old Israel (Ibid.

p.50). From this perspective one can see clearly an aggregate of male-dominated systems in the Hebrew society. However, the writer in this study is calling for a perspective that has images of God that include female roles and experiences. Images of God must be transformative, pointing us back to our authentic potential and forward to a new redeemed possibilities. God language can not validate roles of men or women in stereotypic ways that justify male dominance and female subordination (Ruether, 1983:69).

Hence, women theologians in Africa like Oduyoye perceive the Hebrew text as a man's book where women appear simply as adjuncts of men, significant only in the context of men's activities. This perception is fundamental, for it describes the terms of all Hebrew text speech about women. The Hebrew text according to the claim, is the collection of writing by men from the society dominated by males. The claim is that these writings portray a man's worldview whereby the description given describes events and activities engaged exclusively by men. Only a reading of the Hebrew text can give an adequate impression of the varieties of the viewpoints and expression represented in its words about women and also expose the threads that run through them. Oduyoye therefore asserts:

In Africa, it is not unusual to hear reminders of what " the Bible says " about women. African churches, with their many variations, have not produced a body of official dogmatics hewn from the African context; however, they have developed a theology of folktalk on what God requires of women. Instead of promoting new style of life appropriate to a people who are living with God "who made all thing new," the church in Africa continues to use the Hebrew Scriptures and the Epistle of St. Paul to reinforce the norms of traditional religion and culture...Although the Christian heritage of the biblical, prophetic denunciation of oppression has served Africa well, oppression strands of the same Bible do reinforce the traditional social-cultural oppression of women (Oduyoye, 1997:173-176).

This perspective is also illustrated in the legal material concerning inheritance, divorce, sexual transgression, religious vows, cultic observances and ritual purity. In these legislations, it seems that the interest of the family are commonly identified with those of its male head. His rights and duties are described with respect to other men and their property. The laws focus mainly upon external threats to the man's authority, honour and property, though they may occasionally serve to define and protect his rights in relation to his rights as a member of his own household (slave: Exod.21:20-2;

Children: Deut.21:18-22;wife: Num.5:11-31). Only in rare cases, however, are the laws concerned with the rights of dependants (Exod.21:26-27; Deut.21:10-14'15-17, 22:13-21) (Bird, 1974:51)

In the Hebrew text, the wife's primary contribution to the family was her sexuality, which was the exclusive property of her husband, both in respect to its pleasure and its fruit. This service was essential to the man in order for him to fulfil his primary role as a paterfamilias. It was as a consequence jealousy guarded. Adultery involving a married woman was a crime of the first magnitude in Hebrew law (Lev.20:10; Exod.20:14), demanding the death penalty for both offenders (Ibid). The issue was one of property and authority. The adulterer robbed the husband of his essential honour, while the unfaithful wife defied his authority, offering the other man that which belonged only to him and that which constituted her primary responsibility towards him (Ibid).

According to the Hebrews, extramarital sex is treated quite differently when a man's wife rights were not involved. The man who violates an unmarried girl must simply marry her, making the proper marriage gift to her father. The only penalty he suffers is that he may not divorce her (Deut.22:28-29). Taken together, the various laws' treatment of extramarital sex evidence a strong feeling in Israel that sexual intercourse should be confined to marriage. Perhaps prostitution among men was tolerated as poor man's substitute. Thus, infidelity among men was not considered a crime (Bird, 1974:51-52).

The subjective role of wives to their husbands as seen in the Hebrew literature is often taken to indicate their subordinate roles to the community. "Perhaps the lowly status of women in the Jewish community was carried over to the Christian community idea of women's role in religious ceremonies and assemblies. The conservative tenaciously rejected the possibility of women priest and resist for radical revolution of this practice " (Owanikin, 1992:210). In the patriarchal family system of Israel a woman had only limited possibility of owning property, though responsibility for managing it may have been assumed with some frequency. Normally, however, a woman was dependent for support upon her father before marriage and her husband after marriage. As a consequence, the plight of a widow without sons was desperate. Her husband's property would pass to the nearest male relative, who was apparently under no obligation to maintain the kinsman's wife. She should be expected to

return to her own family. The frequent impossibility of this solution is suggested by the special plea for defence of the widow that occurs repeatedly in the ethical injections of the Hebrew text (Isa.1:17; Jer.7:6, 22:3; Zech.7:10; Exod.22:22) (Bird,1974:54).

The laws also in the Hebrew text illustrate, both explicitly and implicitly the disabilities of women in the religious sphere. As noted above, the oldest law was addressed only and strictly to men, while the sign of membership in the religious community was circumcision, the male initiation rite. Only the male in the society were required by the law (Deut.16:16) to attend the three annual pilgrim feasts, the primary communal religious acts of later Israel. Consonant with this bias was the assumption of the cultic law that only males might serve as priests. However in keeping with the understanding of the family as the basic social unit, the priest's whole household shared in the holiness of this office and the obligations imposed by it. Thus a priest's daughter who 'defiled' herself by fornication incurred the sentence of death, as she had also defiled her father by her act (Lev.21:9;cf. 22:10-14) (Bird, 1974:53-54).

Women also suffered religious disability that was indirectly sex-determined. Israelite religion, following widespread ancient practice, excluded from cultic participation all persons in a state of impurity or uncleanness in a profane or unholy state (Lev.12.15). An explicitly discriminative expression of the idea of ritual uncleanness is found in the law determining the period of impurity occasioned by childbirth (Lev. 12:1-5). Seven days are prescribed for a mother who has borne a son, but fourteen days for the mother of a female child (Oduyoye, 1995:127). The picture sketched here is not a complete portrait of woman in ancient Israel, but it nevertheless does present the essential features of the place and status of women in the religious spheres and community which for centuries has influenced and directed the Christian thought and action. The Christian understanding of the Bible is that the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old Testament It is therefore imperative to examine this trend in the New Testament. The examination of the New Testament will be preceded by a reflection on women leadership during the patriarchal period.

2.2.2 Women leadership during and after the patriarchal period

The biblical patriarchal period refers to the period between the fall and the exodus. "Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his sons all functioned as patriarchs, leading their households (Hurly.1984:121). Since the Bible is the canon of the Christian church, the history of the patriarchs influences, shapes and determines the theological formation of the church. The cultural system required that the household be led by the male figure but this did not mean that God did not call women and men alike. May be only that the encounters of women were not given significant focus. The excerpt from Groothuis (1997) and Phiri (1997) below confirms the claims or the contention of the study in relation to leadership in the church and society. While Groothuis asserts that women leadership has always been rejected by men in the church tradition, Phiri challenges the African church to re-examine its own structures so as to consider the place and status of women.

-There were female leaders and prophets even in the era of the old testament: Miriam (Exod.15: 20; Micah 6: 4), Debora (Judg. 4-5), Huldah (2Kings 22: 14-20; 2 Chron.34: 11-33), Noadiah (Neh.6:14), the wife of Isaiah (Isa.8:3), and Anna (Luke 2:36). Traditionalists often try to explain that a ministry of such power and prominence as Debora's was an exception to the rule of male authority in the Bible. But exceptions to rules occur in the natural and social realms; they do not occur in the realm of God's moral law. If God called Debora to her ministry, female leadership cannot be said to violate moral principles ordained by God.

It seems clear, for two reasons, that Debora was put in her position of civil and spiritual leadership by God. ...God had a definite and purposeful hand in Debora's rise to power, which shows that there is nothing inherently unfitting or immoral about a woman occupying a position of civil or spiritual authority (Groothuis, 1997: 190).

Exploring into the patriarchal times, Hurly (1984) argues that women were dealing with God directly. He observes that Sarah (Gen. 18:15) Hagar (Gen.16: 7-14) and Rachael (Gen.30:6) encountered God and petitioned their situations (Hurly 1984: 122). "We do not see women priest or matriarchs in the patriarchal period. It has sometimes been concluded from this that 'men' were priests and 'women' were not. I believe that this starting point is a mistake (Ibid.)". This inclusive ministry of women and men was also realised during the mosaic period. "Both men and women possessed civil roles and could partake in commerce, inheritance and government (Pr.31; Nu.27:1-11; 30:3-17; Jdg.4; 2Ki.11:3. In addition God raised women prophets 2Ki. 22:14, 19-20; Jdg.4:4-6) (Ibid.). In response to his

commission by God, Paul preached the Gospel and founded churches. Although influenced by his Jewish background, as a Christian he regarded women and men equally in the Apostolic church. He gives the account of what women did and affirms the facts that they are equal heirs of the kingdom (new covenant)

-The new covenant was instituted at the resurrection of Jesus Christ. God's first move after this momentous change in the spiritual order was to commission the woman who had come to the empty grave with the ministry of proclaiming the Good News (the gospel) to the other believers (Matt. 28: 1-10; Mark 16: 1-7; Luke 24: 1-10; John 20:11-18). This was God's clear refutation of the Jewish belief that women were liars and, hence, could not be trusted as witness...(Groothuis, 1997: 193).

-Traditionalist account for the presence of female leaders and teachers in the Bible by ranking ministry position within a hierarchy of male authority. The general principle undergirding this system is that the highest levels of spiritual authority is occupied by men, while the lower levels may hold both men and women. This, by the way, highlights the fact that traditionalism entails not merely a "difference" in function between men and women, but a restriction of function for only women (Groothuis, 1997: 198).

-A starting point for changing the African church's attitude towards women, is the realization that the context of African theology includes women as well. Therefore meaningful reflection in our experience of God should always be based on our past and present context. If the church is to be relevant to the needs of its people, its major concern should be to discern God's word and purpose in relation to our time and context that takes women's experiences seriously. The African church needs to realize that its female members are struggling for full humanity in the church....In the process of the transformation of the African church's theology toward women, there is also a need for it to implement a genuine program of empowerment for women. This would involve the church going beyond re-examination of its own structures. It would need to motivate women to accept their position as equal partners of men in the eyes of God. Since Christianity empowered men through introducing them to the word of God and providing them with general education as well as theological education, the African church is being asked to use the same instruments to empower women. In order to reach this position the African church needs to recognize that sexism is evil as the racism which it rejects (Phiri 1997: 141).

The above excerpts suggest that the Bible does not prescribe discriminative and oppressive practices of the church. It is therefore important that the issue of the roles of women in the church be approached from different dimensions. It is important to raise questions like: What influences church

life and polity? Who determines church doctrines? Who determines and forms theologies theologies of the church? We are not going to answer the above questions as they are put but we are going to discuss a few issues like the Christology, the Bible, and the church among others to understand what and who influences the roles of women in the church.

2.2.3 Christology

Adequate exploration and/ or examination of Christology must taken into consideration, women in the time of Christ; women and ministry in Jesus' life and teaching and women and ministry in the teaching of the apostolic church. However, to imagine that the concept of Christology can be adequately handled in this section of our study is high expectation. Therefore, it is the intention of this section to give a brief description to show an image that influences the roles of women in the church in Africa. While there are other dimension of Christology that will not be discussed the dimensions taken by the historical Jesus is significant. "Fundamentally, Jesus renews the prophetic vision whereby the word of God does not validate the existing social and religious hierarchy but speaks on behalf of the marginalised and despised groups of society " (Ruether,1983: 35-36). In our current study, a central question is, who is Christ?, and what does belief in him mean, particularly for those who find themselves caught up in conditions of oppression, marginalisation and membership of groups despised groups by society? What are the Christological images and are they redemptive of women in their time-long impression of who they are in relation to the divine? Ruether, (1983) explores the concept of Christology and comes with different Christologies. Significant in our study is how she traces the patriarchalisation of Christology. She asserts:

The transformation of Christian reflection on Jesus into orthodox Christology takes place over the five centuries during which the Christian church itself is transformed from a marginal sect within the messianic renewal movement of the first-century Judaism into the new imperial religion of a Christian Roman Empire. Christology, the Christian proclamation of Jesus as savior, as distinct from Jesus' own proclamation of repentance in anticipation of " one who is to come " *...there were decisive steps that were taken* First the sayings and teachings of Jesus are gathered together in writing and cast in the form of biographical dramas... Second, in the early church only males can occupy the apostolic teaching office and thus represent Christ. Women are to keep silent.....a Christianity installed in political power over the "world " can now reintegrate the Messiah symbol with its ancient roots in kingship ideology. The thousand-year reign of Christ can now be identified with Christendom. The Christian emperor, with the Christian Patriarch on his right hand now represents the establishment of Christ's

reign upon the earth... (Ruether, 1983:122-125).

The above background forms the basis of African Christology which influences the governments and the doctrines of the churches hence having grave implications on the roles of women in the church. She articulates alternative Christologies (Androgynous and Spirit but also propose a Feminist Christology) in an endeavour to unearth a redemptive Christology for women. Our major question at this point is, is Western feminist Christology redemptive for African women in relation to the roles they play in the church and society? What are African women doing to realise a contextual Christology relevant to their situation?

2.2.4 African Christology and women

African women theological articulations, above other things, is pre-occupied by cultural oppression against women characterised by patriarchal social systems and authority roles which are male dominated. Such claims as, culture is the leading issue which has pre-occupied the theology of African women are common. This is because culture has silenced many women in Africa and made us unable to experience the liberating promise of God because, in both private and public spheres the roles and images of African women are socially and culturally defined (Wamue *et al* 1996:6). It is therefore significant to explore if there are cultural implications that influence the African Christology in relation to African women. Teresia Hinga observes that theologians are trying to analyze and articulate the implications of Christianity and believe in Christ for their particular and often quite personal situations. The questions of who Christ is and what belief in Christ means to the oppressed, marginalised and socially despised of the society continues to suffice even in the African context (Hinga, 1992:183).

Hinga, (1992) identifies two images of Christ that came up with the presentation of Christianity by the missionaries, that is Christ the conqueror as the missionaries endeavoured to conquer Africa for Christ. This created a gross alienation as they tried to overthrow what was African, replacing it with what was 'Christian'. This battle brought about legitimization of subjugation of the whole race. The second image of Christ was that of Christ the liberator which was implicit in the charity work of the missionary enterprise. Being critical of these images of Christ for Africans Hinga goes further to

identify the common perceptions of Christ as understood by Africans and their implications on women. She identifies three perceptions of Christ. In exploration of these images one realises that they have far-reaching implications on the roles of women in the church and society.

Firstly Christ is perceived as the personal saviour and friend. In this case Jesus is seen to accept his followers as they are and meet their needs at a personal level. At this level Christ helps them to bear their situations (grief, loneliness and suffering). The second perception is pneumatology, in that Christ is understood to be embodiment of the spirit, where Christ becomes the voice of the voiceless and the power of the powerless. The third perception of Christ is that of iconoclastic prophet, where Christ becomes the critic of the status quo. He challenges the social systems that marginalise and oppress some in society. (Hinga, 1992:190-192).

The challenge is therefore, to articulate an of African Christology that is relevant to the emancipation of women. A Christology that addresses the contextual issues of women at personal levels questioning the social structures and authority roles that influence their roles in the church. In this endeavour the place of the Bible in African Christianity needs to be examined and contextualised so that the use of the Bible as an authority for the church may not be misleading or even give the wrong impression of the images of Christ to African women in the leadership roles of women in the church.

2.2.5 The Bible

The Bible has continued to be very authoritative for Christian thought and action. The obvious answer for it being authoritative is because through it we hear God's word and learn his will. However this raises crucial questions: How do we approach the Bible so that through the text God may speak to us. For this to be meaningful to us, we must realise that the Bible is the common point of reference for Christians and churches. It is also the basis of their faith and the rule of their conduct. Discussing the 'misuse of the Bible in Africa, Laurenti Megessa argues that the Bible is used for the confessional or denominational emphasis of the interpreter and also as an instrument used to preserve the status quo. He states: " within the church the Bible and its interpretation are usually the ally of adult male chauvinism, a bourgeois values and morals, and a white western capitalist ideology. And because of

such a co-option of Bible and message, children, blacks, women, the poor and uneducated have usually suffered as the victims of its interpretation and ethical applications" B. Thihanga & I. Mosala (in Megessa 1997:29).

Presentation of the Gospel in African Christianity raises questions in many areas, and this is more so in the area of women's participation in the church. The Bible has been used as a tool to bar and also restrict women in many areas. For instance, there is a tendency by some churches, under cultural influence to selectively adopt Biblical passages, as support texts for keeping women at the margins of church structures when it comes to matters of authority. Such quoted passages among others include 1 Timothy 2:12a that: 'I permit no woman to teach or have authority over men'. This phrase has been supported by the church and the male centeredness of the western and African cultures to successfully exclude women from authority in the church in Africa (James, 1996:73-74).

The Presbyterian church which is our key area of study accepts women in authority in principle and practice, but this study questions the numerical ratio of women and men in the church leadership positions in comparison to membership. The issue of numerical ratio of women and men is clearly presented in chapter three and members have differing reasons and views about it

2.2.6 The Pauline attitude towards women

Paul at times gives an impression of women that leaves a lot to be desired. He stands for the equality of male and female as equals in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:28). Paul, that old chauvinist rabbi, was notably Christian rather than rabbinic in his attitude to women. Everywhere he went they were included in the churches: Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth (Acts 16:13-16; 17:4, 1234:18:2).(Hurly 1984:126). On the other hand he commands women to be silent and accept their worthlessness before men. The contradictions inherent in Paul's Epistles need to be resolved so that the reading of the New Testament may give the correct image of women in the church. After acknowledging the fact that in Christ Jesus male and female are equal, he then asserts:

Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve and Adam was not deceived but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor (I Tim.2:11-14).

It is significant to note that Paul's stance on women's role in the church could be due to his Jewish background. The common argument against women playing a leadership role in the church is that they are divinely decreed to be subordinate to men, and thus there is no basis for their ruling over men in whatever capacity. Paul's injunction in the 1st letter to Timothy 2:11-12 that women should not speak publicly is very oppressive and discriminatory in the community of believers who look upon the same creator.

The subjection of the wife to her husband in the Christian society as in Jewish society is abundantly illustrated in the Pauline literature. The picture of the Christian wife portrayed in 1st Corinthians 11:2-6, is that of a woman as subject to her husband. A married woman is at the bottom line of hierarchy at the top of which is God (Tavard, 1973:28-29). This illustration vividly shows Paul's strong patriarchal mentality which is in-born. This becomes a major handle for women in the church since many thought that the church was a safer place out of oppressive patriarchal homes or society. For instance Phiri (1997) quoting E.J. Walker (1949) expresses the cry for African women to be included in the decision making and full participation which they missed in traditional society. The church seemed to be promising this at the inception of Christianity. The woman observed and commented:

My friends, do you see it? Do you realize what is happening? We are people. In our own village, where are women, when plans are being made and discussed for the good of our people? It is men who are inside the kraal, we women are cut out. Now here in the church we are brought inside. We have been given a place and work to do in the kingdom of God. Here in the church we are people Walker (in Phiri, 1997:11).

The challenge is: is this promise that the church seems to offer endorsed by the scripture and specially the New Testament which is said to be the fulfillment of the Old Testament?. However, it is important to ask ourselves , how is the Bible understood by given people and who interprets the same for who?. For instance Mpumlwana articulating the predicament of the feminist theology, observes: "As women we have always been made to feel that the Bible talks about courageous, good and strong men on the one hand against the weak and sinful women on the other, because the scriptures were being interpreted by men for women and by whites for blacks" (Mpumlwana, 1991:379). This study

contends that, the interpretation of the Bible has major implications on the role of women in the church. Women have been made to perceive themselves negatively hence taking the subordinate place in the church under male leadership without question.

While these illustrations portrays the negative attitude of Paul towards women, that does not rule out the fact that there are areas where hex has spoken positively on women. Nevertheless, these are some of the very widely used Bible verses that have grave implications on the roles of women in the church and society. It is important to note that this attitude has been supported by the church and male centredness of the Western and African culture to successfully exclude women from authority in the church in Africa (James, 1996:73-74). This way women have been maintained in obscurity giving them marginal roles in the church and society.

2.3 The fundamental aspects of African women theology

African women's theology like other liberation theologies has its fundamental commitment to those who are suffering. African women theologians are committed to their own (women) concerns and those of their people Okure (1993). They therefore concern themselves with the community issues which calls for inclusiveness (women and men). African women theology begins from concrete experience of suffering and struggle Njoroge (1997). It is therefore imperative to outline the aspects that they have concerned themselves with. Analysis of everything that African women theologians concern themselves with will be a high demand in a section like this. However, we are going to have brief discussions of the aspects and their interpretations in the light of faith. A significant point to note is that African women theologians uses gender as a criterion for analysis.

African theologies determine and shape the different aspects and decisions of the church. Since African theology is basically a critique of western Christianity which ignored or disregarded African cultures (Mugambi, 1989), it has been questioned by African women's theology. The fundamental aspects identified in this study are, patriarchalisation of the church. Patriarchalisation of the church entails such aspects as, sexism; patriarchy and androcentrism. African culture is also a fundamental aspect. Some cultural practices determine the societal valuation of women: in this case such aspects as patriarchal negation of women; women silenced by culture; and stereotyping are crucial.

To determine the action to be taken, it is significant to consider the changing culture and the changing images of women. Crucial aspects under this are the feminist hermeneutic critical principle, the historical consciousness and liberation of women in the church and society. Finally identification of the core problem which in this study is contended to be the **sin of patriarchy**.

2.3.1 The patriarchalisation of the church

The contention in this study is that no system should be used to dehumanize and marginalise anyone on the basis of gender, race or class. This contention emphasizes integrity and equality as fundamental and formative principles of creation. Women in the church should be able to experience the grace of God and see Christ as the saviour who takes out of them all life-denying situations and gives them back abundant life. The church is seen as the community of women and men but the questions raised here are, do both women and men experience it the same way? Does the church's activities and its structural organization evince the principle of essential unity and equality? The discussion of the following terminologies, (sexism, patriarchy, androcentrism and the church) is important at this point. The issue of women in the ministry remains crucial as the element of patriarchy which shapes the traditional authority of the church is scrutinised. How much does patriarchy still influence church structures and authority? Edet, R. and Ekeya.B. (1990) observes that:

at present there are very few women ministering in the church as theologians, but women are to be found in other areas of the church's ministry as participants in the common priesthood of Christians. Women are in the ministries of healing and teaching, counseling and organizing for community tasks...Women religious deaconesses' and a few ordained into the liturgical ministries participate as much as they are allowed to do by the various hierarchies that control the exercise of charisms in the church (Edet, R *et al* 1990:9).

While Edet and Ekeya observe that there are evident limitations for women in the church ministry, Ramodibe, D (1990) asserts that women experience extreme exploitation, oppression and domination by men in the church. Patriarchal structures of the church must be worked down or challenged if we are to talk of women in the church ministry confidently. Working for the accommodation of women in the church ministry is not in the issue in this study. The issue is that women need to be equal participants with men in the church ministry responding to God's calling. This therefore raises the question, what are the implications of sexism, patriarchy and androcentrism inherent in the church?

While these terminologies are so revealing we will not get into much detail but just the description of how they are understood in this study.

2.3.1.1 Sexism

Sexism is a form of discrimination just as racism or classism. However sexism goes beyond race, class and cultural orientation of persons. "The division of humanity is deepened by the usage of sexist language. Sexism occurs when privileges are accorded to males over females, on the grounds of gender...sexist oppression is vital to identify and combat not because it is the basis of all oppression, but because it is the practice of domination that most people experience whether they are oppressors or oppressed...sexism describes the exclusive ordering of life through gender"(Ackermann, 1991:xvii). In this particular study, the contention is that the roles of women in the church ministry are determined along gender boundaries.

2.3.1.2 Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a form of social organisation in which the father is the head of the family. In this institution therefore, power is held by men. In the words of Ackermann, (1991), "patriarchy means 'rule of the father' and denotes the legal, economic and social systems which validates and enforces the sovereignty of the male head of the family over its members (women, children, workers and property are subordinate to the male heads of families, tribes and societies). Patriarchy therefore has profound implications for women's personal, societal and religious experiences" (Ibid.:xvi). The male images in the church distort the conception of the divine influencing the perceptions and the structuring of the church institution. "The imagination and visualisation of God as male has created an authority in the church that wears blinders to all but male needs and hear plugs to all but male voices...Christian feminist calls the church to open up its structures to unmask the thinking that sets up patriarchal hierarchies and to enable the divine plan for all human relationships between women and men to develop (Oduyoye, 1995:184). As a theological notion, patriarchy has deeply shaped our social systems and perceptions of the relation between God and creation and God and humanity. "The voice of God is the voice of man" (Ackermann 1992:25).^{*}This particular study explores and examines the implications of the theological notions of patriarchy in relation to women in the church ministry.

2.3.1.3 *Androcentrism*

“Androcentrism means ‘male-centredness’ ...when what is thought of as being universally human is not determined by what women and men together understand and experience, but has been exclusively laid down, described and categorized by men, androcentrism prevails” (Ibid.:xvii). Male-centredness dominates in most sectors of human community. African women theological articulations explore the African women’s experience in society and church. Oduyoye (1986) articulates the theological reflections on Christianity in Africa. While she examines other issues she describes the women’s experience focusing on the facts and feelings of women in Africa and of women in the Christian church. Her work has enough evidence that just as in African cultures androcentrism has adverse implication for Christian women in the church ministry. A crucial element in this study is the question of whether the church has always been a community of women and men. How are the structures of the institutional church? Are they shaped by the notions born out of the experiences of women and men? Whatever the answers to the questions raised here, what then is the meaning and the implication of androcentrism for the present status and place of women in the church ministry.

2.3.1.4 *The Church*

While there are other models of the church, this study considers the institutional and servant models of the church. Avery, Dulles (in John deGruchy, *et al*) give the description of the institutional church; and the diaconal or servant models. According to Avery Dulles, the institutional model tends to be static and fails to acknowledge the fact that the church is fallible and subject to judgement. This is imperative in this study since the leadership roles of women have to be explored and examined in the church structure of the institutional church. The other model of the church which is going to apply in our case is that of the church as a servant. Bonnhoeffer, (in de Gruchy, *et la*1994) wrote “the church is the church when it exists for others” John de Gruchy therefore argues that, in this model the church is only seen as church when it is engaged in the need of the world (de Gruchy, *et al* 1994:128-9). In my opinion both the model of the institutional church and servant church have serious implications for the roles of women in the church because although these models could be liberative, in practice they tend to be oppressive to women, because in most cases women take the roles of servants. In my

opinion not because they choose that but, because the institution is structured in a way that women work in the place of or as representatives. In the words of Aurelia T. Fule I will briefly give the description of the church as it is understood from the Presbyterian perspective:

The roots of all Presbyterian and Reformed churches in the United State and in other countries go back to the day of Pentecost, through great the reformer: John Calvin. Those who are Presbyterians also trace our tradition through the teaching of a Scotsman John Knox and the Westminster divines. Moving out in mission during the nineteenth century, we made converts throughout the world....Most of the teachings of my church are those of the church catholic. Our reformation resulted in at least two significant shifts in theological understanding: Scripture is given more authority than tradition, salvation is understood to be by God's grace alone through faith....We long for genuine piety in our life remembering that Calvin considered his formative work, the institute of Christian Religion to be not... according to the custom of the day but.. the sum of piety. We cherish the church as a corporate and committed body whose government is theologically informed and intended to involve the whole people of God through elected representatives. We are therefore, a church that is non-clerically governed. We believe that Christian calling includes responsibilities for transforming society and witnessing in the world..."(Fule 1991:18-19).

Based on the understanding of the Presbyterian church as described in the above quotation, this study therefore raises the following questions. What is the impact of the Gospel on women in terms of presenting the concepts? If the church believes in Christian calling, does God call more men than women into the church ministry or are there some limiting factors for women? If there are limiting factors, which are they? And how do they affect the ministry of the church in her mission of transforming society and witnessing in Africa and in the world? The institutional church structures have remained rigid, allowing little or no change in the changing society to allow participation of women as equal role players with men in leadership roles and decision-making. The questions raised above are crucial as we examine the roles of women in the church ministry, not only in the Presbyterian church, because:

The Western initiated churches in Africa reflect their Euro-American prototypes in structure and mirror the pattern of relationships that male centred societies have evolved. During the missionary times, those women who became Christians were taught how to become good wives and mothers. They were taught cooking, sweeping, gardening, cleaning and how to nurse children of the Europeans. This domestication of education was expanded in the church to include cleaning of its building, making tea and arranging flowers, among others. These services are evident in our churches today" (James,1996:68)

The institutional church cannot retain its traditional structures, theologies and doctrines and yet be

in solidarity with women in their quest for the recognition of their dignity as of full humanity and in their calling and service in the church. As long as we address the issues and concerns of women in solidarity with the church as women, women will continue to be seen as “the other” in the church. They will always be addressed from outside of the “church” as if they do not form the church catholic as it was intended by our Lord Jesus Christ. The future of the church depends on the church of the future accepting and nurturing the gifts of both men and women.

2.3.2 Societal valuation of women

Societal valuation of women is determined by the dominant culture which in this study is presupposed to be patriarchal in nature. The subordination of women by male dominance shapes the perception and conception of women in the church and society. Important aspects to be examined in this section therefore are patriarchal negation of women, how culture silences women in the church and society and how women perceive and conceive fellow women in leadership or otherwise.

2.3.2.1 *Patriarchal negation of women*

African tradition and culture present themselves to women as an oppressive system. It has a male-domineering factor. It is a patriarchal system. This oppressive patriarchal system was found in South Africa even before whites came with their Western capitalistic culture. The patriarchal system has been continued to date by those who see culture as static rather than dynamic...static culture is oppressive culture and the patriarchal system legitimizes the domination of women” (Ramodibe, 1990:15).

Patriarchal systems of the church and society emphasize cultural stereotypes and aspects that place women in obscurity by marginalising the roles they play. Patriarchal systems of the church and society emphasize male-dominated cultures that discriminate against women. The result therefore is that women are lowly regarded and discriminated against in virtually all areas. In her visualisation of the new church and new society that would be liberative for all, and especially women, Ramodibe (1990) observes that:

The women are the church and have been in the church of Christ since its beginning. However, they have found themselves playing a marginal role and generally being regarded as misfits. It is therefore imperative that in this process toward building a new church in Africa, women should face more seriously the task of their liberation. It is here that feminist

theology comes in. By feminist theology I understand the act of reflecting on the significance and influence of our faith on the experiences of women with a view to making women fully human. Women need to emerge as full human beings, liberated from all forces that have kept them in slavery for the past years. The Christian faith should be the great motivating force in this movement toward self-fulfillment (Ibid.1990:19).

Societal valuation of women based on the negative and biased notions of patriarchal social systems is discriminatory. The place and status of women in the church and society is shaped and determined by these biased notions placing women at the bottom line of all social structures. This has therefore maintained women and the roles they play at the periphery. These patriarchal notions that are negative towards women need to be challenged from all dimensions, religiously, culturally, economically, and socially. For any fruitful achievement women and men need to work it out together. However, women need to realise the greater percentage of liberative potential rests in their own hands in the sense that they have to say no to all discriminative stereotypes and structures. The writer agrees with the observation made by Mwaura (1998) thus:

The consequences of these prejudices for men and women have been inequalities on gender lines; non-participation of women in leadership; unequal gender power relations; inculcation of feelings of inferiority within the girl-child, older girls and women; apathy in women, leading to few women aspiring to leadership positions; women's occupation of low decision-making positions...; women's poverty, insufficient food security and lack of economic empowerment; women's lack of legal and human rights; girls's and women inadequate access to education, poor performance and failure to complete their education due to cultural attitudes that favour boys and men over girls and women (Mwaura 1998: 29).

Articulation of women in the ministry and especially in relation to societal valuation reflects aspects of dominant traditional cultures which continue to have remarkable implications. While one would expect a difference with the changing cultures and changing life of women, little seems to change in terms of the experiences of women especially in the church ministry. However one cannot deny the fact that much has been achieved in the advocacy of women's place and status in the ministry. But the patriarchal structures of the institutional church must be challenged to allow for the full participation and inclusion of women in the ministry.

2.3.2.2 *Women silenced by culture*

Culture as a category has been defined in many different ways. It is that " which holds community together, giving a common framework of meaning. It is preserved in language, thought patterns, ways of life, attitudes, symbols and presuppositions and celebrated in art, music, drama literature and the like. It constitutes the collective memory of the people and the collective heritage which will be handed down to generations to come" Van der Bent (in Ackermann, 1994:218). The traditional patriarchal language and symbols continue to be used in our churches and society.

The language and symbols used shape and determine the conceptions and perceptions of the people therein. Mokgoebo laments, " Women experience the church as alienating. For instance, women feel alienated by the church's masculine interpretation of the Bible in general and the interpretation of the Bible's stories about women in particular. Was Eve created only because Adam was lonely? Was Job's wife not affected by the loss of children and wealth? Did the adulterous woman not have a partner in sin? Does the church want all women to be nothing more than the "good wife" as described in Proverbs 31..."(Mokgoebo, 1999:3). This implies that the patriarchal subordinating and subjugating language and images have continued to silence women, placing them at the bottom line of the church and society. Sexism of Christian tradition requires critiquing of virtually all areas, its ecclesiastical structures, certain doctrinal presuppositions, its use of sexist language particularly in the liturgy and in official church documents; its systematic distortion of the image of women (Kaene (1987).

Culture has been an area of great concern in African Christianity for many decades now. It is the source of African theology and the major critique of the African women theology. Oduyoye (1995) provides an analysis of the lives of African women today from African woman's own perspective. It is a study of the influence of culture and religion, based on the traditional African cultures and Christianity on African women's lives. Her study of this contribution, reveals how global patriarchy manifests itself in these social structures, in both patrilineal and matrilineal communities. Oduyoye and other African women theologians questions cultural aspects that are oppressive to women. Their concerns and quests are evident in the formation of the Circle of Concerned African Theologians. Culture is identified as one of the main tools for silencing women in religio-cultural, socio-economic

and political spheres (see Oduyoye 1986 & 1997; Wamue, G. & Getui, M. 1996; Musimbi, M.R.A & Njoroge, J.N 1998). Both in the church and society, culture has been used to silence women in the sense that they are made objects of cultural preservation, for instance the issue of virginity test in South Africa, women circumcision in Kenya, and the widowhood rituals in a cross-section of communities in Africa. There are also the stereotypes which are culturally associated like 'women's place is in the kitchen', 'women causes barrenness and vocal women are trying to become like men'. Therefore women are left with no option but to remain silent in order to be "good women, wives and mothers and more so Christians" This study proposes the need to affirm women's humanity and identity so that their calling in the ministry is not limited by cultural biases.

2.3.2.3 Other oppressive practices inherent in African cultural traditions

African culture is one of the areas that African women theologians have strongly challenged due to its oppressive nature to women (see Oduyoye 1995; Kanyoro, *et al* 1996; Wamue *et al* 1996 and Phiri, 1997). In a cross-section of African countries the following practices are common: circumcision of women, polygamy, widowhood rituals and abuse of the in-laws. In some countries some of these practices are confronted and challenged but they persist.

The circumcision (clitoridectomy) of women among the Kikuyu people of Kenya is meant to initiate young girls into adulthood in preparation for marriage. During this time the girls are educated to be responsible wives and told how to behave towards their husbands (Kenyatta, 1972: 75-86). This ritual has been the focus for many people. Other ethnic groups in Kenya who practice it are the Gusii, Kalenjin and Meru (Okemwa, 1996:177). In her articulations Okemwa says that this practice has been opposed by missionaries, feminists, doctors and government officials. This ritual has got is viewed from different perspectives. Feminists see it as a manifestation of the oppressive patriarchal values which advocate violence against women. Medical practitioners say that it has an effect on the health of women and Okemwa addresses the social effects. She argues that, "the songs and dances that accompany the physical operation are aimed at socializing the young girls into their roles as women in the society. This socialization curtails the performance of women in other sectors of life outside the roles prescribed to them by the society (Ibid., 1996). In agreement with scholars referred to here

and all those opposed to cliteridectomy I also assert that the church needs to work against this oppressive practice as a way of empowering women to maintain their human dignity.

In African societies polygamy is a reality to almost everyone. I confidently say this because even those who are not from polygamous families witness what it involves in those they live with. Women and children are the ones who suffer the consequences of polygamy. Polygamy originated, and persist, for many reasons. In the first place a man had freedom to have one or many wives. Childlessness in a family resulted in the man looking for another woman since childlessness is always blamed on a woman. And it is worse if it is evident that the woman is barren. This reduced the woman's sense of self-worth due to societal socialisation that the woman's primary function is childbearing. Nasimiya-Wasike, 1997 has argued out that in African culture, women are always related to others and fulfil their destiny by being a mothers. Therefore in a violated state, women have remained in the polygamous marriages therefore deny, their human dignity, and violates their marital commitment and maintain them in oppression.

When the missionaries came with the 'good news' of the heavenly kingdom, polygamous men were supposed to renounce other women and remain with one wife of his own choice to be accepted in the church. This act still persists in the churches today. In my parish work this approach gave me much difficulties. The man was only supposed to appear in the Kirksession and state his position. There procedures were followed which leave keeping other women out of marriage. The questions that disturbed me were, What then becomes the 'good news' to the women who are neglected? How about the children of the woman who is put aside even if the father continues to care for them? And finally, how does the church expect that woman to deal with her sexual desires? While the church is in the forefront in calling for peace and consideration for programmes that ensure well-being, this area is not given adequate attention.

It is said that women are used for the preservation of cultural practices. Amongst the womenfolk, widows face immeasurable violation. There are many cultural rites performed once one is widowed which violates a woman's humanity. It is therefore important to look at different definitions of a

widow.

In common English usage, a widow is a woman who has lost her husband by death and has not remarried. The Hebrew word for "widow"-almanah- has its roots in the word alem "unable to speak" Alamanah was used especially to refer to the widow as helpless or exposed to oppression and harsh treatment. Widowhood, almenuth, meant "silence" and the term expressed in poetic form exactly mirrors the legal status of the widow; not spoken for. The Greek word for widow (cheria) comes from the Indo-European root ghe, which means "forsaken" or left empty (Ngaari, 1997).

The above explanation of what a widow is, is equivalent to that in my mother tongue (*muka wa ndigwa*) 'the woman who is left' The aspects pointed out above are relevant. Widowhood meant that a woman become a dependant and required to make several adjustments. The question of remarriage or inheritance becomes crucial. These questions left the woman prone to mistreatment or getting completely disoriented. Different societies organised inheritance or remarriage differently. The other issue is that women do not own property in many African societies, so immediately the husband dies she faces the challenge of managing their properties or she is dispossessed by the relatives of the husband.

The other very oppressive issue for the woman is the funeral rituals. Among the Xhosa, the rites of passage in three are stages: death, funeral and thereafter. "In case of the husband's death from the first day a woman is expected to sleep on the floor. She is also confined in one place behind the door and must cover herself with a blanket. She is not supposed to attend social gatherings" (Monona, 1997: 106). During the funeral the wife and other women sit next to or around the coffin during the service. After the funeral the widow is excluded from the entire community. In present days due to the influence of Western civilization, there is an option for black material to be worn by women as a symbol of mourning. There is a set period of time in which a woman cannot remarry before. These rituals are not required of the widower (Ibid.,13-115).

2.3.2.4 *Women as own worst enemy*

There is a common saying that women are their own worst enemies. To a given extent this statement seems to be true. For instance when voting, although women are in majority, in the most cases women vote for men. Women ridicule other women who take positions that are said to be areas of male

domain. Women have also been vehicles of violation of other women. For instance, in the case of polygamy, men neglect their families to live out of their wedlock with girlfriends, and in prostitution. In all these cases it is surprising that men always come out very clean and women are seen as the perpetrators. Even in the Biblical tradition this is not new since Solomon was considered as a hero for having 700 wives and 300 concubines while the penalty for a woman who goes out with another man in Leviticus was death. In the New Testament, the woman presented to Jesus for committing adultery was without a partner. It is not known in many African cultures where women raise alarm in cases of battering or violation of marital commitment.

Considering this background this study contends that while the imaging of the whole situation pictures the woman as being an enemy of the fellow woman, the setting is shaped and determined by the traditional dominant patriarchal culture. The structures, language and symbols make women to have negative internalisation of the self. The perception and conception of what a woman ought to be is that of second class person prone to subordination of men dominance. The opinion presupposed here is that while women seem to be enemies of fellow women, they are usually not representing their own opinions but the opinions of the dominant patriarchal culture which undermines and subjugates women in the church and society.

However this is not an easy situation to struggle with but, with determination and given opportunity, it can be eradicated. This can be done through educational programs in the church and society involving both women and men. In these programs, elements of gender-based oppression and discrimination need to be challenged. Authority structures of the church and society also need to be reevaluated. And finally the African cultures that are interpreted in such a way that bar women from affirming their own humanity and personal identity must be critiqued. Women will therefore be able to support one another and stand up for their self-worth.

2.3.3 Changing culture, changing images of women

When one talks of change, many questions arise. What change? Whom does the change affect? Who benefits from the change?: In what direction does the change take those involved in effecting and

those affected by the same? For instance in this case, what aspects of culture have changed thus far and for whose good? While one cannot deny the fact that time has witnessed women's inclusion and participation in areas that they would never enter in the traditional cultures, there are also other imaging of women that are suspicious to me. The language used, as we address the issues of women's participation and inclusion in authority structures and the numbers "allowed" into the same, is questionable.

The programs presented by the media to the society leaves a lot to be desired. On many occasions the media present women in such a way that they are objects of men's sexual pleasure (nudity of women while men are usually dressed in suits). This among others has continued to endorse traditional patriarchal culture where women must do what pleases the male counterpart. The hermeneutical principle that does not address itself to the language, images and symbols and sociocultural conditionings that are gender biased continue to be wanting. At this point then, it is imperative to explore the feminist hermeneutic critical principles and historical consciousness and liberation of women in the church and society.

2.3.3.1 Feminist hermeneutic critical principle

The feminist hermeneutic principles are influenced by the feminist consciousness which includes many elements. "In order not to risk trivialising the central insight of feminism, however, it must be understood to include within it at least two closely related principles: (1) the principle of equality and (2) the principle of mutuality (Farley, 1985: 44-45). In the issue of equality, the questions of inferiority of women under men superiority and the gender inequality are crucial. On mutuality, the questions of relational levels on humanity is key. They function moreover, to ground a strategy of commitment to the well-being of women to counter whatever biases that perpetuate gender inequalities and structural barriers to human mutuality.

The hermeneutical feminist principles should have pastoral implications for the physical and spiritual needs of women. This is more so in the case of women in the ministry. Imperative are the studies of the biblical stories concerning and about women. How do these stories image women and how are

they interpreted? Other issues of concern are the patriarchal demands in the scripture. As a pastoral implication, women need to develop positive images of self and one another devoid of patriarchal demands that lack divine requirements of humanity. The vocation of women as mothers entails the struggle for their God-given rights by rejecting measures that contradict their divine vocation as agents of life. There should also be sustained efforts to educate both men and women to develop a positive and unbiased attitude towards humanity (women and men). This would therefore awaken and free people from sociocultural and theological conditionings based on the false understanding of the teaching of the Bible concerning women.

As realised from the commitment of the African women theologians, the biblical teachings, sociocultural and theological understanding are not adequate if the individual and collective experiences of women in the church and society are not put in perspective. Njoroge (1997) postulates the interest of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians as “articulating the voices, cries, fears, silences, images, songs, sermons and prayers that are heard, seen and stored in the memory of the community of faith and in the society as people struggle to live out their faith. Their starting point is their individual and collective lived experiences in dialogue with scripture and culture” (Njoroge, 1997:78). Therefore the voices of those women in the church in whatever capacity are crucial for any relevant hermeneutical approach and articulation.

2.3.3.2 Historical consciousness and liberation of women in the church and society

The new understanding of women which entails their understanding of their place in religious communities and their relationship to scripture can be called the “the feminist critical consciousness”. This consciousness has grown over the years. It all began with the concern for the roles of women which has been referred to as “soft feminism”. The concern for the roles of women later developed into concern about equality which is a departure from soft feminism. Women’s studies therefore expanded women's understanding of biblical authority and suggested inclusive language which enabled women to praise God and criticise the distortions perpetuated by the majority. In its fullness, feminist consciousness strives to develop an authentic, interpretative framework for all biblical, historical and theological work (Zikmund, 1990: 21-29).

Due to feminist consciousness, women's studies developed into feminist studies. This consciousness came with the realisation of the need to deal with patriarchal tradition. While women studies cared about those aspects of life where women played a part, feminist consciousness was not limited to women. Inclusive questions were and are essential. Women studies took society beyond double standards and invited women to discover unknown and unexplored parts of their history which presupposed that women and men are equal. The enemies of feminist consciousness are named and feminism tries to work down all the patriarchal structures and institutions in an effort to realize an inclusive community (1bid.).

The ultimate aim of feminism is but to make the experience and insight of women available to the entire world. It also aims to develop new methods of liberating their faith from patriarchal patterns. The knowledge would serve to create the awareness of the evils of patriarchy. Consequently, conscientisation on what can be done to bring down the patriarchal structures and institutions and reconstruct these institutions in an effort to realize a community of women and men where equality, equity in sharing and mutuality, will be valued. This is not an easy venture but once the sin of patriarchy is unmasked, the whole process takes root giving new dimensions in the church and society.

2.3.4 Unmasking the sin of patriarchy

The time-honoured patriarchal culture which has all along influenced the church and society, has faced criticisms and challenges that call for great attention. The patriarchal sociocultural influence in the church and society has major implications. Areas that cannot go without mention are the areas of leadership and authority which are designed on gender lines. This therefore raises major questions on the issues of women in the ministry. What therefore are the sins of patriarchy in relations to women in the ministry that require unmasking to realize a meaningful and fulfilling response of women to God's calling in the church ministry? Or has the church realized partnership of women and men in the church ministry? Are women and men able to enjoy their participation and celebrate their inevitable differences without necessarily making any of them inferior or superior to each other?

2.3.4.1 *Women and men as partners*

To realize partnership of women and men in the ministry means, the church's ability to break the existing patriarchal evils of marginalisation and exclusion of women from the church's active leadership and full participation as equals with men. These evils have been magnified by the silence of women in the church and acceptance of structural and institutional measures that are discriminative and oppressive. These structures need to be challenged so that women and men may live as partners in the church. The following are the observations made by women in the church ministry today:

-Women keep the church afloat, yet very few women are involved in decision-making processes. Tokenism is still the order of the day...women need to be treated with dignity and their skills need to be fully utilised. There are women professionals who have a lot to offer the church (Majiza, 1999: 2)

-We in the African Independent or Indigenous Churches believe that men and women should be treated as equals in the church. We also believe that it is the Holy Spirit that must guide and direct the church in the way of goodness...The Independent Churches within African tradition will continue to pray for men who abuse their power by denying women ordination...Jesus affirmed both women and men in his earthly ministry (Mofokeng, 1999:3)

-Women experience the church as alienating. For example, women feel alienated by the church's masculine interpretation of the Bible in general and the interpretation of the Bible stories about women in particular...The hierarchical and patriarchal structures of the church alienate women who struggle for emancipation. We are told that we are trying to undermine the bishop and the rulers of the church...When a woman becomes powerful and challenges the structures of the church, they say, 'This woman is a man (mosadi o ke monna)'...On the other hand the church has the potential of emancipating women, if only it could begin to listen to, and incorporate, the experiences and perspectives of its women (Mokgoebo, 1999:3).

If we compare the observations of these women in the church ministry today with the experiences of women in the 19th century like Mary Levison which is articulated in Levison, (1992) *Wrestling with the church: one woman's experience*, the struggles seems to be the same although we cannot deny the progressive changes. The contention here is that the patriarchal hierarchies of the church continue to perpetuate evils of discriminating against women in the church leadership, decision-making and full participation. The challenge being raised here is, there is need to develop strategies that will emancipate the church from theological, structural and institutional measures that are oppressive and discriminative against women. This will then lead to women and men enjoying equality in the church ministry and celebrating their inevitable differences as God-given wealth in the church.

2.3.4.2 *Equal but different*

The articulation of equality and difference between women and men is tricky. It requires that one raises several questions which will end up being shaped and directed by the dimension of the subject matter. In this case religious, cultural and social dimensions since we are examining the church and society taking into consideration the traditional cultural implications. Therefore in the words of Rasolondraibe (1997):

-What do the promotion of equality between women and men and the full participation of women in the church and society entail? What are the issues and challenges we must face together for us to be an inclusive community? On the one hand, the promotion of justice and awareness of rights for women brings challenges. We must acknowledge openly that many men feel threatened by talk about equality with women. Like most privileged groups, men fear that equality means in practice loss of power, authority and privilege. Fear and lack of understanding beget resistance, conservatism, and even chauvinism.(Rasolondraibe, 1997: vii)

The feminist critical consciousness as discussed earlier, unveiled the underlying causes of experiences of women in the church. Much was achieved by questioning the doctrines, images, symbols and structuring of the church institutions. Out of this venture it is realised that the attitudes of the early church fathers influenced the roles and place of women in the church ministry This is because the traditional doctrines and structures of the church continue to influence the life and the practices of the present church. Kaene (1987) correctly argues, "Christian tradition requires critiquing of virtually all areas of that tradition, its ecclesiastical structures; certain doctrinal presuppositions; its use of sexist language, particularly in the liturgy and in official church documents; its systematic distortion of the image of women and failure to reflect seriously the women's experience...The fathers resisted the tendency to accept the leadership of women..." (Kaene, 1987: 3-5). For instance:

-In his discussion of the bisexual creation of mankind, male and female, Thomas follows in his view that the male is ordered to be more noble activity, intellectual knowledge, whereas the female, although possessing a rational soul, was created solely with respect to her body, as an aid in reproduction for the preservation of species. Thomas also follows Aristotelian biology in his assertion that girl child represents a defective human being, the result of an accident to the male sperm which was thought to contain the complete human being *in potentia* and to reproduce by nature the likeness of its origin, that is, another male...(McLaughlin, 1974: 213).

These misleading images and language have continued to have adverse effect on women in the church since the perceptions and conditioning of the church structures of these figures continue to influence

the practice and procedures of the present church. For instance the missionaries who planted churches in Africa endorsed the patriarchalism that has continued to image a woman as one who is supposed to occupy the inferior position in the church and society. This study challenges the church in her Christian witness which proclaims the equality of all in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28). Meeting this challenge would mean that the church in the 21st century will reassess herself in all the dimensions and redress all the inequalities between women and men.

While the church preaches the equality of all in Christ from a spiritual perspective, the traditional dominant patriarchal culture has continued to influence the church to consider biological differences between women and men. For the church to realise equality, equity in sharing and mutuality of all, the church must reject and demolish measures and structures that maintain discrimination, oppression and exclusion of women under whatever circumstance. When this is achieved, the community of faith will be realised where inclusion and full participation of all will be celebrated in the church.

2.4 African culture and the church collaborative nature in determining the roles of women in the Church

2.4.1 Understanding culture

Earlier in this study it is argued that culture is that which holds people together. At this point it is important to stress the fact that "the very act of defining 'culture' is itself a declaration of what it is to be human-that is, a moral statement of identity- in other words, a political statement. That is because the attempt to understand and define culture is also part of culture" Robert (in Akermann 1994:218).

Dealing with the questions of culture in a cross-cultural community for me raises the question of whether these people (SPC congregation) have already developed their own culture as a community. In this case, a culture influenced by their different backgrounds. What binds them together and what is the visible achievement of human beings in their past experiences? Core to these questions, it is important to note that, "culture is the leading issue which has pre-occupied the theology of African women as earlier discussed. Culture has silenced women in Africa and made us unable to experience

the liberating promise of God... In both the private and public spheres the roles and images of African women are socially and culturally defined" (Wamue *et al*, op.cit.,p.6).

This study is based on a cross-cultural, international and multi-racial community. It is imperative therefore to explore how these different cultural orientation reflect or agree into our problem of the study '**the role of women in the church**'. What are the differences and similarities and how do they unify to confront the reality of the pros and cons of the roles of women in the church and society. The differences and similarities found in this richness of the cross-cultural, international, and multi-racial community of Scottsville Presbyterian Church are appreciated in this study to realise the end result. This study explores and examines the roles of women in the church with an intention of seeking to find out what has been, and what the present and the future of the roles of women in the church and society are.

2.4.2 Women and cultural implications

African cultures present a woman as one who has to fulfill her destiny by being a mother. In becoming a mother this woman renounces her personality or personal identity, she is simply referred to as the wife of...or the mother of....she belongs to her husband and she does not possess but rather she is possessed. She is the rural land less woman who works for the farmer and earns a meager which she has to subsidize. She works sixteen to eighteen hours a day. She suffers in silence and weeps in secret." She is the candle and her children are the light she gives (Nasimiyu-Wasike 1997:176).

The above sentiment presents an African woman as one whose life has to be directed and determined by another (man). She has no right of expression whatsoever. Supposing this refers to a black woman, how different is it for a White African woman who is also a member of the Scottsville Presbyterian Church? Articulating 'Christian African patriarchal culture' in relation to women, Ackermann,(1994) states;" in both ancient Greece and in Israel, women's social cultural world was determined by their inclusion in male-dominated families. Patriarchal cultures defined women as legal dependents of the heads of their families; as economically dependent in the sense that the economic productivity belonged to their fathers or husbands; as having restricted rights to their persons in that they could not decide who they marry, and as not fit for the exercise of public roles of power and culture by excluding them from the credentials that lead to these. Patriarchy was the social construct inherited

and perpetuated by Christianity over the centuries" (Ibid.:219). Oduyoye (1995) describes the experiences women in the Akan and Yoruba communities as follows:

The Asante culture provides no more equality of status for women than does the Judeo-Christian cultures of the West or the Yoruba culture, which is patri-potestal as well as viri-local and patriarchal. The woman is not responsible as "subject": she is expected to labor in exchange for "protection" and maintenance...A woman is not expected to be autonomous. In fact, in Africa no person is, but society ensures that women feel particularly dependent (Oduyoye,1995:136).

Indeed culture has subjugated many women in Africa and made them unable to experience the liberating promise of God. Some aspects of our cultures which diminish women are embraced without their oppressive nature. Their enforcement both in oral media and in their practice often makes women objects of cultural preservation. In Yoruba Akan societies, women are excluded from decision making. This exclusion of women from participating in decision-making obscures and marginalises women, affecting the roles they play in the society, which includes the church. This is unfair for women because they are "ruled without being consulted, so that in effect the systems of the Akan and Yoruba are both male dominated" (Ibid.p.19).

In our articulation in religion and social transformation, it is significant to take the warning of Ackermann (1994) seriously that " the politically manipulative use of the term 'culture' should not be confused with what culture legitimately is and what it expresses about human existence. Culture gives meaning to our daily experience as human beings in the broadest possible sense, by selecting from it and organising it" (Ackermann, op.cit.,p.218). In this study therefore " culture" is understood to be a legitimate ingredient of human existence, but it has been misused and misinterpreted by the patriarchal systems of the church in relation to leadership roles, and consequently this marginalises the roles of women in the church despite their being a majority in the church membership.

The understanding of social, cultural and religious implications on women is imperative in the articulation of the leadership roles of women in the church as they are determined by the church and society. The contention is that the traditional historical social-cultural and religious implications on women impacts strongly on the institutional church and her implications on the status of women as

a result of her structural formation. The core issue is that structural formation of the church does not offer opportunity to realise the limiting aspects. Rather there is legitimized placement of authority roles which give women subordinate place. In her "Mary the pilgrim of faith for African women" Nasimiyu-Wasike, (1997) observes the place of Mary the mother of Jesus in the protestant tradition, where she deduced that the protestant tradition reaffirmed the goodness of marriage, reaffirmed the need to maintain the subordination of women in the church, in the family and in the society. (Nasimiyu, op.cit., p.172). While understanding the term "culture" is crucial, the interpretation and presentation of the concept bears more implications on the roles of women in the church and society. It is also important to ask who interprets and determines the cultural aspects that influence the roles of women in the church and society.

2.4.3 African black and white women

In her *Daughters of Anowa: African women and patriarchy*, Oduyoye, (1995) contends that Christianity and African culture are partners in oppressing women. However, she acknowledges that African culture is not all oppressive, but the patriarchal systems picks on the aspects that are oppressive to women. Since the community on which our study is based is cross-cultural, international and also multi-racial it is necessary to explore if the African white women shares these experiences. Do they experience the roles of women in the church differently from black women? While we are not ruling out the possibility of difference, Mpumlwana, (1993) states that: "Generally the majority of women are subjected to threefold oppression: as women, as workers, peasants, and black therefore black reality differs from that of the white women...they see the God they worship through similar eyes as women, but different eyes as blacks and white in South Africa as the privileged and the underprivileged" (Mpumlwana 1993:163). While this articulation dates from the former apartheid regime it is imperative to explore if white women have the same experiences. Is it true to say that "as women we have always been made to feel that the Bible talks about courageous, good and strong men on the one hand and weak and sinful women on the other because the scriptures were being interpreted by men for women and by white for the blacks"? Mpumlwana challenges blacks and whites to join hands as sisters, privileged whites to empower underprivileged blacks to play a meaningful role in the church and society. She stresses, "the extent of the oppression felt by the white

women in the church differs drastically from the pain felt by black women” (Ibid.). This study therefore has to explore and investigate the struggles of women in church leadership roles regardless of race or cultural orientation. “ From a feminist perspective, cultural norms and practices which have a damaging impact on women’s lives deny cultures role in making and sustaining community in a significant way. They also impend women’s participation in the making of meaning and the quest for identity away from the ‘otherness’ coercively imposed on women, therefore it is core to engage in an investigative articulation to identify the gap that creates this ‘otherness’ in this case, the roles played by exclusion of women in church leadership roles and major decision making. To get a clear picture, chapter three will present empirical experiences of church members raising their views and observations.

2.4.4 The collaborative nature of the African culture and the Church

Christianity in Africa continues to reinforce male domination over women by the use of Hebrew text and Pualine literature which tend to marginalise women. Instead of preaching the equality of humanity before God, “the church in African continues to use the Hebrew scriptures and the Epistles of St. Paul to reinforce the norms of traditional religion and culture” (Oduyoye, op.cit.,p.174). The church and African culture need to go through a given change or transformation to measure up to the challenges which entails redeeming women from the evils of subordination, oppression, indignation and disrespect for women as the “other” in the church and society. “African men at home with androcentrism and patriarchal order of the Biblical cultures, have felt their views confirmed by Christianity. The Christian Churches have not encouraged or even accommodated women who raised their voices in protest” (Ibid.p.183).

Christianity’s silence on the oppression of women in church and society means that the church is in agreement with what is happening. “My criticism of African Churches is made to challenge them to work towards redeeming Christianity from its image as a force that coerces women into accepting roles that hamper the free and full expression of their humanity....on issues of gender discrimination, the church seems to align itself with forces that questions the true humanity of “the other” and at times seems to actually find ways of justifying the oppression or marginalisation of “the other”

(Oduyoye,op.cit.,p.173). Evaluating the emerging theologies in Africa, Maluleke (1997) asserts that, "it is a serious indictment of African male theologies that women's issues have not received immediate and unreserved acceptance (Maluleke, 1997:20). This legacy is likely to take longer than many expect since Christians in Africa find reassuring biblical endorsement for their own male-dominated culture and the fact that the Bible continues to hold the place of the authoritative Scripture the word of God. Women need to be present where theology of the church they serve is cooked. They need to actively contribute their perspectives as full participants and not as representatives. This will consequently mean that women are not coming in the church as the other but in the church where they belong discussing issues of that concerns the church and not women; forming theology of the church that caters for men and women who form the community of believers.

2.5 Conclusion

From the historical overview of the experiences, place and status of women in the church and society, it has been quite evident that the images of women from the Hebrew text have had great impacts on how women are portrayed in the present Christianity. This background has shaped and directed the structural formation African Christianity especially, given the missionary-founded churches in Africa.

The patriarchal systems of these churches condone the exclusion and marginalisation of women in society which is seen to reinforce patriarchal African cultures. This tendency, continues to put women in obscurity in relation to the roles they play in the church and society. Theologies of the church present the divinity as male and leadership roles portrayed as positions only to be occupied by male figures, while women are supposed to take secondary or representative roles. While the churches have by acts seem to have heeded to the quest for inclusion and participation of women in the leadership roles and major decision making, yet the condition of the place and the status of women in their roles in the church leaves a lot to be desired.

Our task in the next chapter therefore will be to analyse the research data in an endeavour to find out describe the situations in the Scottsville Presbyterian Church which will give us a picture of what is happening in our churches in Africa.

CHAPTER THREE

ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP ROLES

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has sketched out the traditional overview of the roles of women in the church and society. In essence it gave the background that is seen to have influenced the roles of women the church over the centuries. This chapter will examine the attitudes towards women in church leadership roles in Scottsville Presbyterian Church, which it is hoped and will increase our understanding of the present status and place of women in church leadership roles. The writer agrees with M. N. Retief that:

The issue of attitudes is very important in our lives. All our deeds and words and behaviour are influenced by our attitudes...If there is something wrong in our attitudes towards our fellow men [sic], then this must necessarily have an obstructing influence on all we do or leave undone. To know a person, one must know what his/her attitude is towards others M. N. Retief (in Phiri, 1997:91)

The task of this chapter is to present the research methodology used in acquiring the information for the study. The other major issue is the analytical approach which includes: the attitudes towards women's participation in the church leadership; the numerical ratio of women to men in leadership and decision making bodies; the Women's Association; the leadership roles and positions in the SPC. The chapter endeavours to unearth the attitudes inherent in the church, and what influence they have on the roles of women in the church.

Since the sketchy overview portrays that the traditional church and society marginalises women in leadership roles and major decision-making, this chapter explores and examines the experiences, feelings and thoughts of women about the position in which they find themselves in the church. What is the feeling and response of both women and men towards this situation? Are women contented with what is done for them? What is the numerical ratio of women to men in the leadership? An understanding of the attitudes of women and men is important since the church institution ought to be a community of believers whereby all are equal in Jesus Christ and in which responsibilities are

shared by all believers regardless of gender. Since the contention in this study is that women are disadvantaged due to the patriarchalisation of the church, views from men and women will help the research to understand the situation better. However one must bear in mind that the experiences of women are central in this endeavour.

3.2 Research methodology

Response to the above questions was sought by gathering information from the Scottsville Presbyterian Church which was done through conducting interviews, distributing questionnaires, observation of what goes on in the church and participation of the writer as a member of the church for the last two years. Twenty five women returned their questionnaires, with information and their names. Among the twenty five women five were interviewed personally. The interviewed women belonged to different categories: one is a long serving but no longer active elder from East London who is now a member of SPC; one is a single woman working with African Enterprise; one is a widow of the former minister with the RPCSA; one is widow of a former PCSA minister and finally one woman is from the outreach ministry of the domestic workers.

The writer interacted with women in the church outreach ministry of women domestic workers which has been entrusted to her by the church minister for the past year. She has also been involved with the group of women which is international in composition (countries represented are Cameroun, Burundi, Kenya, Angola, Congo (DRC), and Zimbabwe) which meets for prayers once every week. This group is not officially attached to SPC but it has been very significant as far as women's experiences are concerned. Their perceptions on the roles of women in the church and society are significant in the study. This broad category of women gives the impression of the experiences of women, their thoughts and feelings about their status and place in the church and society.

In total there were ten men respondents. Four of the ten who returned the questionnaires were interviewed personally. The interviewed men included: the church minister in charge, the session clerk, and two elders.

As far as educational attainment is concerned, the women ranged from graduates with masters degrees to those with no formal qualifications. However they all could communicate in English. Among men

respondents, were a university lecturer; doctoral students and diploma holders. Educational attainment is important for us since it had implications for the roles of women in the church. Some women expressed the opinion that lack of educational attainment limited their access to leadership positions. Those who have relatively high education are preferred in the allocation of duties.

The writer was the only researcher and the tools used were the questionnaires, the interviews which she conducted herself, observation and participation in the life and activities of the church.

The stable membership of the congregation is 300 members. But the church list which includes those who are always in transits goes to around 550 including children (this figure was estimated by the clerk and the church minister). The membership of this congregation is a mixture of white and black South Africans and international members. Since the questionnaires and the interviews were carried out on the basis of membership, nationality was not an issue. Therefore the people interviewed were from different countries. This was also appreciated since the study endeavours to examine the roles of women in the church and society in (South) Africa.

The interviews were conducted at the church because it is a central place. It was not possible to go into people's homes and mostly the reason given for unavailability was that the respondents were on employed jobs and that evening was the only time they had for their families. The ages of the people interviewed was from 13 to 50 years and above. Many people preferred giving age range rather than actual years. Out of 25 women respondents 8% were in the age range 13-19 years; 20% were 20-29 years; 28% were 30-39 years; 8% were 40-49 years and 36% were 50 years and above (see appendix 2). Those who were 50 and above years were the majority.

Out of ten men respondents, age range 13-19 years there was no response; 20- 29 years there was no response; age range 30-39 years 60%; age range 40-49 years 20%; age range 50 years and above 20%. (see appendix 4). Those who were age range 30-39 were the majority.

The questions were in three categories, as follows:

1. Personal identification which includes: name, sex, marital status, educational attainment, and

nationality.

2. Position of women in the church leadership roles which includes: elders and other official positions of the church.

3. Women and culture: This area was very challenging. Since the congregation has a multi-cultural population there is no unifying culture. Therefore the references were based on the person's experiences, or personal opinions which depended on his or her own background. However this multi-cultural dimension had its own richness in the study.

The researcher was a member of the congregation for one year and seven months by the time she wrote letter in May, 2000 requesting permission to her carry out the research. This was accepted and the distribution of the questionnaires started at the beginning of June the same year. The whole exercise of getting the questionnaires back and the interviews took place between May and early August, 2000. The minister introduced the researcher as a member of the church, a masters student, a minister of the Presbyterian church of East Africa who is researching the roles of women in the church. This introduction had its own implications on how men and women responded. Generally men felt that this was a women's thing. Many women were excited to share their experiences, although they wanted to remain anonymous and many questionnaires were returned without names. Apart from those respondents who were directly interviewed, it was difficult to get clarifications from those who had the questionnaires. However, the minister in charge and the session clerk were very willing to assist and provide the information whenever they were called upon.

The researcher used both the questionnaires and informed in-depth interviews following the methodology of Phiri, (1997) and Philpott, (1993). Most women were happy with discussion even after handing in their questionnaires but men preferred the questionnaires and did not entertain further questioning or discussions. In the month of May, the researcher happened to have attended the Eston Conference 2000 where she met the Moderator-elect of the UPCSA who is a woman, Rev. David Kock from the neighbouring parish (Upper Umgeni, Howick) and the first woman moderator of the UPCSA. These people were very significant because they offered an outside perspective of the church which was important for the researcher in understanding the SPC better.

3.3 Analytical Process

This section is divided into categories according to which the response of both women and men are examined. The categories are as follows: The attitudes towards women's participation in the church leadership roles which is divided into three sections as follows: Negative response from women, Negative response from men. There are other issues that came up very strongly under the negative section which cannot go without mention and those are: prejudices, Biblical bias and cultural bias. These were raised by both men and women. The second section is, Positive response from women and men and finally the evaluation of these responses. The second category is the Women Association. The third category is the numerical ratio of women in leadership roles and decision making in relation to men. The fourth category is culture. Cultural issues which are mentioned in the area of cultural bias were very challenging due to the fact that the congregation is multi-cultural. Hence the research was dependant on a wide range of experiences and personal opinions.

3.3.1 Attitudes towards women's participation in church leadership roles

Women's place in leadership roles in the church is influenced by the attitudes of those in leadership and those of women themselves. There were several reasons given for the positions taken by different people in relation to women's participation in the leadership roles. Both men and women did not seem to have problems with women in leadership roles but indicated that women should not go beyond given limits. For instance there are those who do not believe in the eldership of women. They also said that men should always be in the majority and in key positions like eldership because this is the major decision making body. Among the reasons given, are that women are emotional and quickly irritated and therefore they should not be in administrative positions. Women are supposed to be more involved in the domestic chores so they should not get so involved since this would affect their families. Other issues that came up were personal prejudices like the claim that women cannot make church elders, women prepare flowers for the church, biblical reference like, it is not biblical for women to preach, women should be submissive...Cultural biases like women are supposed to bear children and take care of the domestic chores. Finally the time factor, many argued that since women are now on the employment, it is not good for them to increase church responsibilities because they

will not have time for their families.

3.3.1.1 Negative response from women

Three out of twenty five (12%) women respondents had reservations about the roles that women play in the church. One argued that women can be in leadership positions but the extent to which they go should be limited. One reason given was that of people's perceptions, understanding of the scriptures and women's low-self image raises questions on women leadership roles. They were of the opinion that:

- Not many people have accepted women wholly, for instance there is no problem if a woman preached but many people are not comfortable with a woman serving holy communion. The holy communion table is perceived to be a place for men.
- Church administrative work is supposed to be handled by men and not women. Women are emotional and irritable hence may not make rational decisions or judgements.
- Biblically and culturally women are supposed to be more committed and devoted to domestic chores. Sharing the time for her domestic duties with church responsibilities means denying ones family of its right. Although this may be seen as prejudice, time and experience has proved it quite right

The responses given reflect the effect of internalized perceptions by women of how far they can go in the church leadership. Certainly, this reflection is shaped and directed by their previous experiences. This shows that over a long period, women have observed what is done by men and what is done by women and therefore by confirmation of culture and biblical affirmation designed by patriarchal social systems, women have taken it as the custom of the church.

3.3.1.2 Negative response from men

Generally, men respondents were few and majority of them did not want to state their stand on what they hold in relation to women's participation in church leadership roles. However there were views that were raised but not owned by the particular persons who raised them. Mainly the argument was "women are wholly accepted in the church" but the following were the issues raised by men in relation to women's participation in church leadership roles:

- While the church has allowed women to participate in the church leadership roles, women

do not seem to set very good examples as leaders in as far as self-image is concerned.

-The church has no problem with women being in leadership positions but the cultural background many of us belong to does not accept women to rule over men and this is also what the Bible says.

-Women are supposed to be home makers and therefore if they divide their work, the result may not be as perfect. So women should only take the church roles that are not very demanding and leave the very involving work of the church to men.

-It is very risky for women to travel, be out late in the night, and also in the company of other men apart from their husband or relatives.

-Women are too soft hearted, compassionate, emotional and irritable to handle some of the complicated issues involved in being a leader.

The arguments raised here at once lead one to ask: what is the church? The language used portrays a woman as a person who is not part of the church and must therefore seek permission to be part of it. There are cultural, biblical, and prejudiced issues that need to be sorted out in the church to have women participating in leadership roles without strains. One also notices the seeds of African patriarchy which is reinforced by Christianity to maintain the subordination of women under men dominance. For instance, leadership continues to be male dominated and women continue to play representative roles.

One may find it strange that these opinions were expressed in an urban church with a largely educated multi-cultural congregation in an age that has seen Indira Gadhi, Golda Meir, Mrs Bandarenaika, Margaret Thatcher, Benazir Bhutto, Corazon Aquino and Mary Robinson as leaders of national governments not to mention thousands of other women all over the world who are leaders in politics, administration, the professionals e.t.c. This is an indication that we have a long way to go to eliminate prejudices and gender stereotyping among people in Africa.

3.3.1.3 Positive response from women

Apart from three women (12 %), the rest (88%) held the opinion that women and men should be given equal opportunities in church leadership roles. Unlike the men, women were proud to own and stand for their convictions on what they believe should be the church leadership. For the 88%, the church leadership is supposed to be based on God's calling and the abilities of the particular leader irrespective of whether one is a man or a woman. Experience has it that women are more trustworthy

and committed to what they are entrusted with as compared to men. Therefore many men who oppose women leadership are simply fearing competition. Common concerns raised by the 88% were:

-As long as one is responding to God's call in leadership, nothing should be used as a stumbling block. If a woman can stand in the pulpit and preach, go out for evangelism and be active in raising funds for the growth of the church, what is so special in administrative work? Women should be given full opportunity to respond to God's calling and be able to realise God's redeeming promise in its fullness. This means our human dignity and integrity as servants of God need to be acknowledged by the church structures and be experienced by women.

Cultural reasons have been cited as one of the factors that marginalise women in church leadership roles. But many women are of the opinion that since many things have changed in society, even the church should be ready select the positive aspects of culture and leave out the aspects that are oppressive to so that the church becomes truly a community of believers.

-It is surprising that, up to today, many people find refuge in cultural reasons for barring women from church leadership but they praise the social changes in secular society in the name of modernity. We should only hold on to cultural aspects that regard both women and men as equal human beings respecting their dignity and integrity.

While the church advocates changes in secular society, the structures of the institutional church are very resistant to changes. Even when the official acts of the church state that women should be fully included in the its things are too rigid and also men seem to be very opposed to this move. However women seem to be quite flexible.

-It is incomprehensible that the church is in the forefront in advocating change in society yet her own changes come very slowly. For instance, while the church advocates affirmative action for the previously disadvantaged who include blacks, women, physically handicapped etc. the church does not seem to recognise the gap between women and men in all aspects in the church institution.

The small number of women in leadership and major decision making bodies was cited as being the major cause for women remaining in the background. It is unfair for women that even those issues that concern them directly are decided on by men. Women only implement without questioning in order to be 'good' Christians. Why has the number of women remained small in leadership and decision making bodies like the kirksession, presbytery and the general assembly? Is it that God does not call many women or the structures of the church requires that women should be few?

-While the ordination of women in our church dates back to the 1970s, the number of ordained women is too insignificant. In fact the ordained ministers have very little or no impact to our ordinary members since they are very few. This is still true for the number of women elders in comparison to men elders.

Due to patriarchy in African culture which holds precious the subordination of women under male dominance, which has also been reinforced by the Christian teachings, many women feel too intimidated to question the structures of authority. The church has always been portrayed as predominantly male in that the divine is male and the church leadership has always been male dominated. Those women who go for ordination are seen as people going for what does not belong to them. They are understood as people who join the men's job or sphere.

-It is also important to note that many women are not happy with the place and status of women in the church leadership but they are afraid to question the system for many reasons. For instance for a long time, I thought it was sinful to question the church leadership. Many, up to this time believe that church leadership belongs to men, and women just come in to assist or represent the women's concerns.

The above concerns and observation raised by women reflect the fact that women in favour of women leadership in the church. But they have been socialised in a way that makes them admit or give in to the prejudices and stereotypes that have maintained them under male dominance. The internalisation of the long-honoured patriarchal valuation and perceptions of women in the church and society influences the reactions of women towards women in the church leadership today. Insistence on the fact that women are different and that men and women must take different roles and that women should take subordinate roles makes women to maintain low self-image. This influences what they feel and how they react towards fellow women in leadership positions.

The reaction of women in this study reflects what was observed by Philis Trible almost a decade ago. Trible's "Feminist hermeneutics and biblical studies" 1990 surveys three approaches to the study of women in the Scriptures. From a feminist perspective she finds that there is abundant evidence of inferiority, subordination and abuse of women in the scripture but observes that the judgement fails to evaluate it in terms of Israelite culture. Secondly, some feminists concentrate on discovering and recovering traditions that challenge culture and thirdly retell sympathetically the stories of terror about

women. In her exploration it is evident that the roles of women in biblical times, however significant were not given due recognition. Fascinating among her examples is the role played by women in the birth and rescue of Moses a corpus that presents the Exodus faith (Trible,1990:23-29). This is also the basis of Christianity and the church history. In this study therefore the response from women reveals that while there are changes in the status and place of women, there are very crucial gaps to be filled, traditional prejudices and stereotypes to be overcome for women to wholly develop a positive image about themselves and fellow women.

3.3.1.4 Positive response from men

Although men expressed positive views about women in leadership roles, they were hesitant to own their claims (common phrases were: “people argue”, “It is believed” or “it is held”, instead of stating their personal convictions). While the number of men respondents was relatively small, only four (40%) seemed to be convinced that women should wholly participate in church leadership. However two (20%) strongly expressed it is surely an opinion that men and women should have equal opportunities in church leadership roles and especially the area of administration and major decision-making. The two men held that:

-The Presbyterian church is a reformed and reforming church and in our structural formation and foundational teaching, responsibilities in the church are supposed to be taken by all the believers regardless of gender. So as long as a woman is a believer and she is responding to God’s call nothing should stop her. The church needs to be practical in her appropriation of her belief in the priesthood of all believers (women and men alike).

-The majority of the church membership is predominantly women. Therefore women leadership has a very promising future if only women can be given equal opportunities with men. Equal opportunities go hand in hand with proper conscientisation so as to erase the former biases and misconceptions that have all along kept women at bay in the church leadership roles.

The issues raised above are very supportive for women leadership in the church but the big problem that this study continues to identify is that, the number that is in support of the whole issue brings to a positive debate into a dead rock. Out of the ten men respondents only two men are in support, and yet most of the decision-making bodies and major courts of the church are predominantly men. This would therefore be translated to mean that as much as women are seen in the church structures, if men want to maintain the patriarchalisation of the church, women still hold the minority vote. Numerical

Figures therefore remain crucial as we examine the place and the status of women in the church.

3.3.1.5 Other crucial issues

Prejudices against women, Biblical biases and cultural biases have been widely used to maintain women in obscurity in the roles they play in the church and society. Presentation of women as a silent majority in the church raises serious questions for theology. Androcentric thinking is evident in the hierarchy, liturgy, lectionary and theology of the church Domeris (1986).

It is evident that, there have been attitudes, mind sets and laid down structures that have resulted in the low status and place of women in the church and society. We are not going to have exhaustive discussion of the issues stated below but brief descriptions to give an impression of the implications they could have on the roles of women in the church and society.

(a) Prejudices

There are such prejudices as, women are emotional, physically weak, irrational, and also that there are specific duties that they are supposed to perform. Therefore it is argued being irrational, emotional, and physically weak, they cannot manage leadership roles especially in the area of administration and management. 60% of men respondents were of the opinion that women need to be committed to domestic chores placing more emphasis on children and their husbands. Regarding single women, they still felt that a woman would not make it without a man supporting her. They (men) expressed the feeling that not many people have much confidence in single women since they are looked on with suspicion and many people even scorn them.

These prejudices are not only found among men but also in women. A number of women observed that women and men are different. They also stressed that there are duties that are supposed to be performed by men and others by women. For them it is acceptable that women should be content to teaching sunday school, counsel the youth, visit the sick, do other charitable works and be actively involved with the women associations.

(b) Biblical bias

Biblical bias remains very strong in the life of the church to maintain women in subordinate marginalised positions. Both men and women observed that many have continued to use especially 1 Timothy 2:12, "I permit no woman to teach or have authority over men". Men and women were of the opinion that the biblical biases are very influential on the role of women since the interpretation remains the same, and there are many who want to take the Bible literally as the word of God.

(c) Cultural bias

Issues of culture were more or less ambiguous since the congregation is now going through a major transition. It was initially white but presently they are putting much effort into incorporating blacks. Many of the white respondents feel that it is only the African members who could be experiencing the cultural change. However some of the white respondents are of the opinion that white and black Africans alike have cultural traditions that need to be modified to realize women emancipation regardless of race. White and black women in Africa need to confront cultural issues equally, they need to join hands without counting who is more affected than the other. The following were some of the major observations:

-In South Africa cultural issues shape life in such a way that males play a dominating role while women play less dominant roles. Therefore the following are major challenges: understanding cultural differences so that communication and understanding among members can be maximized; finding a balance in our transformation from the 'old to the new' (purely white congregation to a white and black congregation); trying to find our 'place' redefining needs, approaches, reevaluating skills needed to meet the new challenges; very little is 'routine' and everything seems to be new.

-Very assertively one of the black women observed that much is yet to be done to have a good working relationship between white and black women. The struggles of white and black women are not the same, most of the black women are disadvantaged in that they have very low level of education and therefore need more empowerment from their white sisters which does not come easily.

-There are cultural rituals and practices that are still condoned by Christianity and the church institution which must be confronted not only by the blacks in the church but the church as a community of believers.

Culture has been a major issue in African women theology. For instance "feminists ask how far women's experience has been taken into account in the articulation of and theological reflection on

a specific religion and in the cultural formation of meaning. They examine the extent to which traditional religious teaching and cultural norms can address women's needs and remain credible" (Ackermann, 1994:213). The current study has a reveals that changing cultural implications for women will still take a long time, although much has already been achieved. In this current study, it is being discovered that the church is rather slow in implementing changes. More so the eradication of cultural aspects that are oppressive to women. Such aspects are male dominance in leadership roles, upholding the stereotype that women's place is in the kitchen....is a major challenge.

3.3.2 Numerical ratio in leadership and decision making of women to men

Most of the issues that women have advocated for many decades have in a way been implemented like ordination of women, inclusion of women in major decision-making, participation of women in leadership roles. However, the numerical ratio between men and women in the leadership and major decision- making remains a challenge that cannot go without mention. Among the members who responded to this issue there were differing opinions such as:

- While men are many in the leadership roles women are fully represented in the church and supported by the church leadership.
- In SPC the issue of women being few in leadership is not a structural problem but women do not seem to be ready to take up responsibilities. While women seem to be fully represented women need to be more than this in leadership.
- While many people talk of women being few in leadership positions, I am of the opinion that it could be that God calls few women in leadership and many in other areas like hospitality, pastoral care, and other services in the church. This is because when God has destined something human beings cannot alter the situation. Therefore women being few in the church leadership positions is God- destined and not to be blocked by men leaders of the church
- Men and women complement each other in leadership in SPC. Even where women may not be personally in leadership, they clearly offer an integral and supportive role to their husbands.

The above responses reflect that women are few in leadership positions in the church (SPC). The other point is that it is taken to be acceptable since women are only supposed to take representative roles in the church implying that men are the rightful persons to be in the leadership positions. The legacy of women taking a helping role which is perceived to be an inferior position is strongly reflected. The challenging thing in this position of the SPC is that in the Kirksession, which is a major decision making body, out of fourteen elders there are only three (21.4%) women elders yet majority

of the women respondents are content with it as adequate representation. This to me reflects the fact the internalisation that church leadership is supposed to be male is deep rooted in women so that they never question the unfairness in the differentiation in the numerical ratio of women and men in the church leadership and major decision making positions.

3.3.3 Women Association

The Women Association is a highly contested area in the UPCSA because it was held dearly in the former RPCSA and not very strongly in the former PCSA. Asked to comment on this issue, the minister of SPC had the following to say:

-The Women Association became the institution through which women with leadership gifts were able to take a role in the church. This meant that this group became a force in the church. This group was organized at local level and national level. It however created, as one minister put it, a "church within a church". In the black community this was especially true where women were disempowered and in fact this still remains true today.

Prior to the introduction of a Stewardship Department in the church in 1980 the W.A had great influence in the life of the church in terms of fundraising. In the white congregations, as people were taught the principles of tithing and planned giving, the need for fund-raising diminished. This meant that the W.A's role in fund-raising was not necessary. At the same time, many white women began to be employed. Due to the demands on their time, they were to attend their meetings on monthly basis. Because of this constraint W.A.'s in most white congregations dwindled and died. Another factor in this transition was the introduction of home cells and Bible study groups that replaced the W.A's function to provide a meeting place for women. However in the black congregations, the W.A still remains a vital part of the church's life.

Other respondents had the following to say:

-Many women are now working and usually meet in the home fellowship groups in place of the Women Association.

-In the black church the W.A is the foundation of the progressive activities

-Women's Association is significant because women need to come together and plan the following activities: Ladies teas, lunches, breakfast, sewing various items, flowers arranging, church decoration etc.

-Women Association is important because women need to encourage and strengthen each other in an informal and more formal way.

W.A is important because since its inception it has been active in helping the needy, building of churches, has always been engaged in the Christian outreach, evangelism, youth work, empowering girls and has always supported church projects.

-W.A. is not necessary where home groups are active. Also the integration of women and men

is important so that when women want to have specific issues handled they can go for retreats and invite speakers.

The remark made by the clerk to the session of SPC is an interesting one to close with.

-We used to have a very active W.A. However many women in the congregation are mothers of school going and pre-school children. Added to this, many families rely on dual income. Therefore many women in employment find that their time is restricted. It was found that support groups be founded in the home fellowship groups rather than W.A. At the request of the W.A, the session agreed to the dissolution of the W.A. It must be noted however that there is still a fair group of older women who meet together in a home fellowship

In our theoretical framework one of the reasons for women to come together is to share their own concerns as women. And as Okure puts it, the primary consciousness in doing theology is not method but life and life concerns of their own and those of their own people (Okure 1993:76-77). The very important question to raise, here is, What were the objectives of the W.A? The responses imply that as much as there are those other activities, women needed and still to have some time to address own concerns.

While it is recognized that women need to come together to address issues unique to them , in this particular congregation, the W.A was dissolved. Due to conflicting views raised by different respondents from the congregation, the situation leaves a lot to be desired. There is abundant evidence that the women are to a given level have been socialised to perceive themselves as 'home makers.' And that their most significant role is to take less dominant roles in the church such as decorating the church, youth activities, evangelism and helping the men leaders of the church.

The language used here has an implication that womenfolk in the church are a force that comes from the outside to counter church authority a 'church within a church'; women being a 'disempowered group in the former RPCSA; and finally the fact that W.A was significant when they had the task of fundraising has an implication that women are in the church as servants and not part of the church community. They are there to give services and only on permission from the 'church'. Therefore immediately the task is accomplished the structures of the church on which they depend can divert their objectives without consultation.

3.4 The leadership roles and positions in Scottsville Presbyterian Church (SPC)

This section presents the people who form the body of the church that leads and makes the major decisions of the church. The views expressed by this group of people significantly influences and shapes the attitudes, perceptions, and the roles women play in the church. The following are the different leading bodies which are either the court or the committees of the church. The Kirkesession comprises of the minister and the elders. The minister is equal among equals in that he is a teaching elder while the others are ruling elders. The Kirksession comprises of fourteen elders of whom three are women and ten men. Therefore in the major decision making body of SPC congregation women are 21.4%. Among the home groups eight out of nine have joint male and female leadership. One home group is comprised of all ladies leadership. The home groups have nothing to do with authority or decision making. In the home groups women leadership is 55%. In the Kids in Christ worship (KIC) ministry mentors, six out of seven are women and the overall leader is a woman. Women in leadership this group is 87.5%. In Holiday Harbour, the overall leader is a woman working with three to four couples. The worship team is lead by two women and the others who work with them are six men. The prayer co-ordinator mission fund management, pastoral care and Bible class are all led by women.

Asked to comment on leadership of women in the SPC and the UPCSA in general the minister and the clerk of the Kirksession of the SPC had the following to say: The minister;

-As far as the status and place of women in the church is concerned, the position has changed greatly but in some congregations of the UPCSA women are still not permitted to rule or have authority over men. However in SPC there are men and women who accept the church's leadership positions and appointment of women elders, but do not believe that it is Scriptural.

-Women have had vital role in both local, regional and national levels. I personally benefited from the shared leadership and insight, gifting, and fellowship of the women who I have had the privilege of working with at every level

-In the former PCSA white women in general assumed leadership position at all levels in increasing measure. Whilst a few have been "militant" in their approach and stood for their rights, most women that I have encountered have simply got the task at heart. They have generally been a little reticent (humble) to accept the office but exercised it responsibly and competently. In the black congregations of the former PCSA, however I have seen few women in leadership positions as elders. There are many who are competent but have not been elected

to offices. At Presbytery and General Assembly level there has been real willingness to involve women in the courts and offices of the church.

The session clerk of SPC observes that:

SPC is a multinational and multicultural congregation that recognises and celebrates the diversity of cultures. The challenge therefore is to face the challenge of multicultural growth having a vision of meeting the needs of the church as a community of believers. That is women and men regarded as equals in the church structures.

This section of the study gives the impression that women are in the majority in leadership positions. Most of the groups are either led by women or the majority of leaders are women. Nevertheless, there is a realisation that, in the decision making body (the Kirksession) women are in the minority. All the decisions are passed in the Kirksession where there are three women and ten men. Therefore one would not be wrong in deducing that women in the inferior bodies of the church implement the decisions of men leaders of the church. This therefore keeps women contented that there are enough women leaders in the church, not asking themselves what roles do they take? What impact do they have and whose perceptions and interest do they stand for? For instance who discusses the dissolution of the W.A in the Kirksession? Why only after the church had developed an alternative method of raising funds which women had operated for a long time? It should be noted that while there are women who feel that the W.A is time consuming hence not important, there are other women who feel that it is still valid to have it. Hence the need to ask if the needs of women are fully catered for.

Women have continued to be regarded as home-makers so that it is only women who are supposed to relinquish their duties in the church leadership for the sake of the family in order to play the supporting roles to their spouses and attend to the needs of the growing children. This is also reflected in the fact that some women and men still feel that the W.A. would be important so as to take care of ladies teas, lunches and decoration of the church.

The observation that the Presbytery and the General Assembly shows willingness to have women in the courts and offices of the church seems ironical since they should have promoted the same from

the grassroots (Kirksession) because women cannot be in the Presbytery and General Assembly courts and offices having not passed through the Kirksession. Probably this will take long to be achieved since while the multinational and multicultural challenges are easily identified by many, including the clerk to the session who is an executive officer of the court, the gender differentiation in the major bodies of the church is not identified as an immediate concern. Instead, observation by many is that although women are few there is proper representation. This means women continue to play representative roles and are not full participants in the making of the church which they belong to and serve.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored and examined leadership roles and positions in SPC through field research findings. The issues examined are attitudes towards women's participation in church leadership roles, the ratio of men to women in leadership, major decision making bodies and finally the Women Association.

In this endeavour, it is evident that the traditional perceptions towards and about women, still shapes the roles of women in SPC and the church in general. The attitudes of women and men have implications for the socialisation of women in the church and society for they shape and direct the roles women play in the church. Women have therefore continued to take inferior positions in the church leadership and are given positions that seem to be a kind of token in the sense that the positions are a way of silencing women from questioning the church institution/structures. Women who are assertive and stand for their rights as women are said to be "militant". As the church gets into the new millenium, it must confront the reality of the status and place of women in the church in terms of the equal participation and representation in the leadership positions and major decision making bodies that impact the on the roles women play in the church.

It is very crucial for women to realise that, whatever kind of emancipation they may be calling for will only be realized if they themselves take the initiative. The liberative power is in their hands if any anything is to be achieved at all. For instance when women support the dissolution of the W.A

because it has been identified as being a “church within a church”, the first thing to ask is, why is it a threat to the institution yet performing positive duties? If some women consider it time wasting/consuming how about those who feel they need it for their heartfelt concerns and the concerns of the others that they need to address as women. Women must be more aggressive and assertive in approaching issues that concern leadership and decision making in the church and society.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE VOICES OF WOMEN IN SPC

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the voices of women in the SPC as they express their experiences and point out the issues that influence the roles of women in the church. While the previous chapter dealt with research findings which necessitated detailed accounts of those interviewed, this chapter discusses specific concerns and cries of women. Such concerns are: socio-cultural aspects; and socio-economic implications for the place of women in the church and society; orthodox theological formation of the church and the structures of the institutional church. The researcher will be pointing out what she deduced and how she perceives the articulations of women.

Schalkwyk (2000) in "Writing Southern African women's stories of transformation-some methodological aspects" has discussed the research approach used by the feminist researchers. She argues that the research subject is the primary interpreter of the social reality while the researcher is a secondary interpreter. In her view "the "researcher" and "research subject" jointly and interactively work for the transformation of (social) reality in order to include more fully the humanity of women and all other marginalised groups" (Schalkwyk, 2000:23). Following the approaches, insights and theories of Philpott (1993), Phiri (1997) and Schalkwyk (2000) this current study acknowledges the importance of specified experiences and participatory involvement for the interpretation and transformation of the social reality. While in the previous chapter, the researcher discussed the issues raised by both women and men, this chapter will discuss the stories of women only. The major question here is, what are these women saying? To keep the stories from the sources (research subjects) as informative as possible the researcher will try to quote in full.

The chapter explores how women tell their faith stories and experiences in relation to the roles they play in the church. This will be used to understand and learn how they understand their roles in the church and how their roles influence their status and place in the church and society. This knowledge

and experience will enable the articulation of the challenge to the structures of the institutional church to reshape her theological formulation which were generated from within the context of male dominated church structures that obscure the roles of women.

4.2 Women sharing their lived experiences in the Church institution

Transformation of the patriarchally shaped structures of the church that direct, shape and determine the roles of women in the church, calls for the stories that challenge and transform the structures of institutional church. However, there are aspects that the researcher need to be careful about in order to realise a fruitful and undistorted yield. The researcher has to be a sensitive listener in facilitating and allowing the research subject to tell her story. The need to recognise the fact that the research subject is the primary interpreter of her experience of transformation. Finally the transformation in a woman's life-experience is brought into the open through narrative (Schalkwyk, 2000).

The sharing of lived experiences by women (of SPC) were so revealing in as far as religio-cultural and economic implications influence the roles of women in the church and society are concerned. The researcher bearing her personal experience as a woman in the church ministry was careful to identify such crucial issues as: the request from some women for their names to remain secret; some questionnaires returned without names but one could tell that the views were from a woman; women's outright dissatisfaction with the church leadership and others expressed the fact that they just take what is offered to them without questioning.

Some women acknowledged and approved the discrepancy in the ratio between women and men in leadership. They also approved of women taking representative roles in the church leadership. "Women's voices need to be heard in our own language. This means that we claim the power to name our experiences, to tell our stories in our own way, to use our language" (Ackermann, 1991: xviii). The researcher cautiously noted the language used and was careful to pick out the imaging of women in as far as cultural, social, and religious attitudes towards women are concerned. In the words of Jacobsen (1991) "learning that the inclusion of women does not merely mean their accommodation into a male structure, but also involve the challenge of changed attitudes, behaviour, and even

structures is not an exercise which any institution learns quickly, and in our church this will certainly be a lifelong process" (Jacobsen 1991:250).

4.2.1 Religio-cultural aspects

Culture has been the major critique of African women theologians (see, Oduyoye, M. A.1986, 1995; Kanyoro, M.R. A *et al* 1998; Wamue,G. *et al*; Phiri, 1997) but still seems to be at the center of what women experience in their religious struggles. In SPC in particular, cultural concerns mainly take the dimension of merging different nationalities and ethnic communities but not addressing cultural issues that affect personal identity and especially women's understanding of their humanity in relation to their Creator. Chapter two dealt extensively with the issues of women and culture. Neglecting to address cultural issues that influence the roles of women in the church, denies women a chance to realize their damaged humanity by cultural, social, and religious attitudes towards them. Most respondents were of the opinion that it is difficult to address cultural issues in SPC because the congregation is a multi-cultural, multi-national and multi-ethnic community that does not have common cultural concerns, but admitted the fact that our cultural backgrounds determine the place and status of women in social and religious spheres.

The other dimension was, the fact that SPC was initially a white congregation. Most of the white respondents seemed to dismiss problematic cultural issues as affecting only the black community. The researcher identified neglect of real issues, since there were white and black women who shared their being single women as a problem; that being a working woman, a mother, a wife and a leader in the church as a complex thing to do. The researcher perceives this to be a cultural issue that influences the roles of women in the church but many women have not understood it that way. On religio-cultural issues women had this to say:

-I have witnessed different cultures in the SPC and this has changed our way of doing things in many ways. While we are friendly as people (black and white) we cannot deny the fact that there are some social, cultural and economic differences.

-There is a greater openness to enhancing the racial culture in the church and incorporating people of various backgrounds; cultures; encouraging participation. However I would like to see a greater involvement in church activities and particularly the praise and worship in the

church 'from our African brothers and sisters'. Their witness and testimonies to the faith would be a tremendous encouragement to others.

-Women are still manipulated and subjugated in the name of culture. However I am of the opinion that white and black women need to struggle together to fight out the oppressive cultural aspects. To a great extent I feel that the white women did not set the ground for the black women in many ways that would be emancipating for women from cultural oppression.

-I think that many women take it that their primary roles are those of homemakers as wives, which is correct. However I think that sometimes if a woman assumes a leadership role, it is frowned upon because she is seen as being out of place or that she is taking a man's place, or that she will neglect her family. At times this is related to cultural norms and values. While it is true that the family may be neglected, I think it is the responsibility of the woman to ensure that this does not happen. I also think there are many men who carry out their responsibilities and do not neglect their wives and children. Culturally women are not expected to spend more time away from the home.

The reflections here do not point at a given cultural aspect that is oppressive to women, but there is an implication that women are not happy with their cultural placement and expectation. Women have been socialised in a way that makes them internalise the negative cultural aspects and perceptions about self. This has made them remain silent about the cultural oppression which is very evident since some women accept that women should abide with some of the oppressive stereotypes. For instance there are those women who are of the view that women's primary roles are those of home making and being a wife. Others hold that women cannot manage administrative positions because they are emotional and irrational. It is my opinion that, for any transformation to take place, the cultural issues that are discriminative and oppressive to women, should be identified and named.

4.2.2 Social- economic implications

The socio-economic status of women has been a concern for many individuals and organisations. Although this situation has been discussed for a long time now, we cannot talk of it as being a problem solved. Socio-economic questions may be difficult to approach since they are interdisciplinary as well as global concerns. What then does it all entail?

At the simplest level, one answer to the question might be: adequate fulfillment of basic human needs and parity in care-giving responsibilities. Thus from the vantage point of women, the objectives of economic policies should be to sustain life, to promote general human development, and to eradicate poverty. Thus ultimately the quest of a good economy should be to work towards meeting the fundamental needs of all people...yet today the

empirical evidence shows that for many people worldwide this is not the reality, in fact, for countless numbers of women the day- to- day reality is a frustrating search for food, fuel and firewood (Williams, 1997:101).

This economic predicament for women dictates their social status. For instance, citing a Kenyan situation, Grace Ongile gives a sectoral overview of structural adjustment policies and their implications for women. She deduced that the SAPs have negative effects on women. She asserts:

A vast majority of women strive to labour in activities with little or no monetary rewards. The paramount goal for most women in the rural labour force is survival. They strive to generate income to purchase food, shelter, and clothing. They labour primarily to acquire food, clothing and shelter...In the urban areas, women are heavily concentrated in informal sector activities. The economic contributions of these activities have been generally underestimated...Although employment of women in the post independence period has increased, historical, traditional and cultural barriers continue to hinder women's entry into the formal sector...Women activities in the informal sectors have therefore been relegated to low income enterprises (Ongile, 1994:23-24).

This may sound like a large generalisation but, upon this background of socio-economic status of women which takes a global perspective, this section of the study allows women in the SPC to share their views or concerns on the same and in relation to their roles in the church and society. In this section the primary concern is to pick up the socio-economic implications of the roles of women in the church. If they are, are there women aware of them and do they understand their root cause? If they do, what are they doing about them? Is the church involved in any way to work out this situation in solidarity with women? Below are the views and sharing from SPC women:

-Low education standards of women, especially among those of us who come from the black communities is a reality that affect the vast majority of women. The low level education leads to lack of employment or employment in the informal sectors or taking the lowest positions in the formal sectors leading to very low earnings. Although we contribute to the church's development and social life, our contributions do not seem to be given due regard since they are not primarily in monetary form.

-Social status has a lot to do with the roles of women in the church. As a single woman with a poor background, I feel that the church leadership just ignores us. This is because, if one has got strong economic background and is single the church leadership pays attention to her. If one is single and has a poor background like mine, the church leadership simply ignores those of lower status in the society.

-As a member of the church I feel for the domestic workers and I am convinced that they need some skills. That is why I started this group of women. We had many objectives such as, coming together so that they can share their common concerns since they work far from their

homes and they do not have anybody to feel close to at the place of their work. Since they do not have any skills we started learning tie and dye, sewing, patchwork, cooking, knitting and other small activities that can earn something and this has been very beneficial for them. The only challenging issue for me, and I feel it is an area of great concern, is Bible study which I feel incompetent to handle. This group of women was big but as time has passed it has reduced in membership, maybe because we do not have new things to work on what we have learnt. We are grateful to the church for allowing us to use the compound and their shelter because we do not all belong to the Presbyterian church.

-The roles women play continue to take a domestic chores perspective. For instance many women still do the work of catering, sewing, baking and to a lesser extent leading worship, pastoral care and charitable calls.

The sharing and the views of women in the SPC have some indicators that reflect some socio-economic aspects that have adverse implications for the roles they play in the church. It seems to me that the traditional cultural placement of women in the domestic spheres still prevails in the society, hindering women from taking prominent roles in the public spheres. The economic status of women continues to be low. Since it seems that leadership is related to economic standing, women continue to remain on the periphery. Should they continue to work out this situation as women or should the whole church work in solidarity is a major challenge raised by the lady who has for a long time been working with the outreach ministry (a group of domestic workers)? She feels that the church has been kind and charitable but still needs to do more to achieve the best from this ministry. One of the women in this group observed that the white sisters did not lay solid foundations for them to build successfully. She is of the opinion that white and black women must work together for the common good of women and the church at large.

Women must improve their economic status in order to take leadership roles in the church. The traditional and changing socio-economic and religio-cultural situations have a diversity of implications for the roles of women in the church in relation to their status and place in the church. However, women cannot afford to just let things go. Therefore there is need to explore if the women in the SPC find any future for their ministry in the SPC and the church at large.

4.2.3 Women mentors in leadership roles

Considering that a mentor should be a wise and trusted counselor or teacher, then this can be a very fertile ground for women to exploit since they have a most privileged opportunity of interacting with children. Young and old women feel that the church does not have women mentors in the area of leadership. Young women have always been taught by the older women to be submissive and silent in the church. By observation they have always seen women take subordinate roles and therefore young women do not aspire leadership roles in the church. The following was observed:

-In my own observation, women have got soft and kind hearts therefore the most appropriate roles for them are: hospitality, and charitable works. This is already very real in our church since women prepare tea for the church, they visit the sick in the hospitals and they are more sociable.

-It is only on very rare occasions that I have seen a woman preach in the church. But they are very active in other areas like ushering, catering for the youth worship team

-As I interact with women who are very active, I have quite often heard them talk of the need to be submissive. This is significant because a woman need to be submissive to earn respect and integrity in the church and society. Women need to read the Bible carefully and especially proverbs 31:10-31, Ephesians 5: 21-33 and 1Peter 3:1-6.

The observations made here are not subjected to any critical evaluation. They base their observation on what the Bible or the constitution says about or demands from a women. In my opinion, the way women respond to duty or the work has major implications. Moreover these observations are based on what the active women (those who have active in the church roles) do and say about the requirements of a woman in the church. This does not deny the fact that there are those who have been inspired to take up leadership roles but the question is, how inspirational is it? How many have the opportunity to take up the challenging task?

4.2.4 The church, doctrines and women.

The generally approved beliefs, attitudes, and doctrines of the church have implications for the roles of women in the church. The doctrines of the church were formulated by men influenced by the traditional patriarchal culture. Therefore, it becomes sensitive when the church which is known to believe in the priesthood of all believers in practice it is known to suppress some, making women take inferior roles.

Groothuis (1997) responds to the claim that women and men are 'equal in being but unequal in function'. There has been biblical and traditional engagements that influence the theological formation of the church doctrines. There are stereotypes inherent in the theological basis on which the church is built that influence the status and place of women in the church. Groothuis explores the Old Testament women in spiritual leadership and the New Testament women who ministered with authority. Her synthesis implies that God gave leadership authority to women and men alike. This is a highly contested area in this study.

Phiri, (1999) articulates the issue of women church and theology. Considering the background of women in the church there is an implication that women have always been in the church but cultural aspects have always been a major obstacle to their visibility. She therefore questions if Christianity is liberative to women or oppressive. She explores some controversial verses in the Bible which are oppressive to women. It is clear that although women played major roles in the founding of the churches and the subsequent years, their roles were all the more played down. I understand this to mean that Christianity bears the message of liberation and not oppression. Therefore the church's doctrine and theology should be liberative and not oppressive to women. Women in the SPC had the following to say in as far as their understanding of the church doctrines is concerned:

-I think it is alright for women to preach, teach, be in charge of the women and youth. But I find it difficult to accept a woman pastor. For instance in the area of administering the Holy communion. It looks better when a man minister administers the baptism.

-In the recent past, many things have changed. Personally I am comfortable when things are done in a given order but these days our church keeps on changing common procedures.

-Although I have been hearing of women ministers I have not been served by one. It would look strange to encounter one in practice. (*Do you as a minister have a parish and perform all the duties of a minister?*)

-I think it is not biblical that women should become administrators or even pastors. This I say because, there are still very few women ministers of the church. Some of us have not seen one. It is not practical to us that, a woman would serve just like a man minister. How would a woman manage pastoral duties and visitation bearing in mind that one may be required to operate at night? More so, how would a woman minister counsel men clients.

There has been a common phrase "the practice and procedure says....While it is right to refer to it as the constitution of the church, regularly it has been misquoted or misused and sometimes referred to in order restrict women. Although there may be no doctrinal basis that puts women below men, the

practical life of the church portrays the church leadership as male. For instance in our area of research, the minister is a man, the session clerk and the majority of church elders are also men (out of the fourteen elders only three are women). Since the church institution is structured in hierarchical way, it is imperative to consider how women and men are represented. The major question at this point is, how does the structures of the church influence the participation of women? How does it affect the way women predict the future of women in the church ministry? Answering these question leads one to ask, what are women's dreams and aspirations about their place in the church ministry?

4.3 Women's Dreams about their place in the Church Ministry

Generally the researcher understands leadership as a vision in the sense that the leader needs to have set goals to be achieved. Looking at it from this perspective, the researcher considers the following aspects as essential ingredients: empowering and releasing people; connecting people; motivating and maturing people; servanthood; a learning process; decision making; the art of getting things done through people and enthusiasm.

As we articulate the dreams of women in SPC or even in the church in general, the question of what women expect as leaders is crucial. In my opinion a leader has a vision and takes responsibility for pursuing it. The vision is a picture of the future that produces passion. The other crucial issue is that people do not join the church only to hear the preaching but also to be given ministry opportunities. It is imperative that women in their dreams for the future church ministry, should state their quest quite clearly. Are they seeking leadership because men have been leading for a long time or because they identify a missing dimension in leadership in the church? The following are the voices of women as far as their dreams are concerned:

- Women are more flexible and can integrate more easily. Therefore given opportunity, women in the ministry is promising and productive venture.
- Much is in store for women if only the church can be more proactive in its role in empowering women to identify their potential, abilities, and resourcefulness. Women just need to be incorporated in the areas or regular activities of the church. That would encourage other women to take up leadership roles in the church and society. In a period of major changes in the country women's voice must be given a hearing and women must be more assertive in their quest for recognition and inclusion in the active participation in the church.
- Acknowledgement of the fact that women are responsible for their own emancipation, is a

big step forward towards achieving and sustaining women leadership in the church. The fact that many women realise that they are full participant in the ministry and not just representatives, means that major changes in the women leadership in the church are underway.

-While women have not received due recognition and acceptance in the church leadership roles, they have had a vital role in both local, regional and national levels where the church has benefited from shared leadership and insight, gifts and fellowship. Given the fact that more women are now coming up, the future of women in the ministry takes a positive dimension.

The future of women in the church ministry depends strongly on what women want to make of the church as women. While women have their part to play, to realise a fruitful struggle, they need unreserved support and empowerment from the church institution and society which shapes their present situation. Economic empowerment is crucial so that women are to contribute to the development of the church without depending on men (fathers/guardians or husbands). Women need to be empowered academically. It is evident in our research that women's educational attainment is generally low as compared to men. Participation in church leadership roles requires good education. Lack of education may make one inefficient in his/her responsibilities or be looked down on by others.

Economic empowerment for women is also crucial because while in the church leadership one needs to participate in the developmental issues when called upon. If one is not able to contribute like others, that may result in feeling of inadequacy or intimidation. Empowering women will translate into women experiencing and enjoying recognition of their being. Recognizing their full humanity, dignity, integrity and self-worth, will ensure that women and men will be in a position to participate in the church equally.

4.4 Conclusion

The overview and articulations presented in chapter three before exploring the views and observations of women in SPC is deliberate. Significant to note is that, whatever the women in the SPC raise is not new but it is very important for this study because it legitimises the fact that, while something has been achieved on women and church issues much is yet to be done. There are

indicators that show clearly that religio-cultural and socio-economic issues raised in SPC are not only issues of concern to South Africa, but in the whole continent. They are issues that have caused concern in other areas/disciplines not only in religion (church).

There is enough evidence that religio-cultural and socio-economic issues impact strongly on the place and status of women in the church and society which has tremendous implications for the roles of women in the church especially in the area of leadership roles. While women in SPC have not named their limitations assertively it is evident that the church needs to re-examine their structural formation in relation to women and the leadership roles. Much is also to be done in empowering women to be vocal and assertive in their articulation of their experiences and expression of how they perceive their identity in relation to their response to the calling of God.

In our next chapter all the issues and concerns raised will be evaluated. The evaluations will be based on the research findings which includes the issues voiced by women against what has been empirically found by the earlier researchers. The chapter will also give the conclusions of the study whereby the research findings (especially the voices of women) are part of the basics.

CHAPTER FIVE

EVALUATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the evaluation will consider the research process, reflection of the female leadership, women in the church ministry and finally highlight what the study considers as the crucial themes of the church in (South) Africa. In the previous chapter, the voices of women in the Scottsville Presbyterian Church are articulated. This includes women's lived experiences and other aspects that affect their roles in the church and society.

5.2 Research Process

During the research process, the researcher made observations which are directly related to the paradigms utilised. The researcher observed that that participatory research process can be abusive to the research subjects because it is easy for them to subscribe to the conceptions of the researcher. This can be specially dangerous when the researcher is seen to be a member of the hierarchy being investigated. For instance the researcher was introduced as 'a masters student and minister in the Presbyterian Church of East Africa'. The researcher therefore must be about cautious her/his commitment in realising a result whereby the research subjects become the primary interpreter of their social reality. Allowing the members to either give or leave out their names made the members more relaxed in giving their information. Where the researcher had the opportunity to interview members individually, or discuss with the women in the outreach group or in the prayer meeting group, there was evidence of the connection between women's lived experience and their place and status in the church (leadership).

The intention of the researcher is explore the status and place of women in the church leadership roles with the aim of creating awareness among women of their limitation and potential. This raises the questions of women leadership in the biblical tradition, early church and society. The study gives enough evidence of women in leadership in the Old and New testaments and also the Apostolic era. The researcher therefore proposes a transformation of the church structures to effect the structural

systems that recognise women's humanity in the church leadership which is highly contested to date.

During the research process it was evident that the black population in this congregation has grown very fast due to its location near the University of Natal Pietermaritzburg and its drawing in of the student population. This means that the congregation has to both local and international black members. There are also black members who are not students. This is an indication that this church has been working hard to remove the racism which separated blacks and whites. The question therefore being raised is, how much is the church fighting sexism which is central to marginalization of the role of women in the church?

The choice therefore ensures that the study not only gives the perspective of the role of women in the church in South Africa, but on the continent of Africa. The researcher's work was greatly enriched by the fact that, apart from being a participant in the SPC congregation, she is also an African woman in the church ministry. While it has been the intention of the researcher to avoid making the study subjective as a woman in the ministry, her experience is a significant contribution as part of lived experience from the perspective of women in the ministry.

This research being based on one congregation is a major limitation in that the findings are not compared or contrasted. The members also do not seem to be anxious to compare themselves with other congregations. The other factor is that the influx of the black members is so recent so that they are still considered visitors and they also feel that they are visitors. While the roles of women in the church is assessed from the congregational basis, the voices of white women are vocal. This raises the danger of representational view (white women representing black women). Also the women who are seen in the leadership are mainly white.

While it may not be the reason, I attributed the poor response from men to this fact that the research was based on one congregation. The majority of the men who were approached dismissed the study as a women's thing. While there are limitations in carrying out the research in one congregation, it is also an advantage since the researcher had been in this congregation for one and half years before

the commencement of the compiling of the research data and findings. Hence she was able to be more focused and consistent with empirical information.

My observation is that, participatory research is not always liberative to the community. This is because the research subjects can fall into the trap of subscribing to the opinions of the researcher. Therefore I am of the opinion that the researcher needs to be cautious of such dangers as leading the researched to subscribe to his/her opinion; making sure that the researched are in a position to interpret their own experiences for the transformation of their social reality.

5.3 Reflection of the female leadership

The focus of this study '**the roles of women in the church**' takes a wide perspective: social, cultural, religious and economic perspectives and their leadership roles in the church. It is strongly contended in this study that patriachalisation of the church is the major influencing factor for the status and place of women. This has been examined from various perspectives. The issues dealt with in the study will be evaluated. Our criteria of evaluation is the place of women and men as it is influenced by biblical traditions which is the basis and foundation on which the church is built.

As discussed in chapter two, Groothuis (1997) and Hurly (1984) have clearly shown that women were positively regarded in leadership positions during the patriarchal period. This is also echoed by Ruether (1983) as she explored the images of women in the church. Ruether exploring the images of women in the Jewish and Christian tradition argues that the feminine image of the divine was obscured by the male monotheism which lies in nomadic herding societies which possibly lacked the female gardening role and tended to image God as the Sky-Father (Ruether, 1983:53). Hurly (1984) also argues that, between the close of the Old Testament and beginning of the New Testament (intertestamental period), significant events happened within the Jewish nation. The exile, Roman rule and foreign cultural influences led to a retrenchment in social customs and a different view of women. Women were increasingly seen as less intelligent than men and sources of sexual temptation. This negative imaging of women in the biblical tradition has major implications for their roles in the church and society. Phiri (1997) confirms the claims or the contention of the study in relation to

women and leadership in the church and society. While Groothuis, (1997) asserts that women leadership has always been rejected by men in the church tradition, Phiri challenges the African church to re-examine its own structures in relation to the place and status of women.

The vilification of women by the male chauvinism and sexism has translated into women being discriminated against and oppressed by the church structures whose theology and doctrines has influenced traditional theology and cultures of the people. Those in power need to recognise that:

the new covenant was instituted at the resurrection of Jesus Christ. God's first move after this momentous change in the spiritual order was to commission the woman who had come to the empty grave with the ministry of proclaiming the Good News (the gospel) to the other believers (Matt. 28: 1-10; Mark 16: 1-7; Luke 24: 1-10; John 20:11-18). This was God's clear refutation of the Jewish belief that women were liars and, hence, could not be trusted as witnesses...(Groothuis, 1997:193).

The authorities of the church are therefore challenged to re-examine their institutional structures for them to be to be relevant and Good News to women. They should re-examine the traditionalist account for the presence of female leaders and teachers in the Bible. Ranking ministry position within a hierarchy of male authority needs to be challenged so that it can to be inclusive of women. The traditionalism entails not merely "difference" in function between men and women, but restriction of function for only women (Ibid. 198). A transformed church institution should reject all that which would restrict some of her members from full participation in the social life and service to God. For the church to be fully emancipatory to women, the attitudes towards women need to change. Women need to be empowered: The church needs to appropriate the purpose and word of God in relation to women by taking their experiences seriously. Taking into account the fact that women are less advantaged in education, the church should ensure that women access to general education and also theological education. This will result in women being more competent in leadership and being able to translate and interpret the word of God for themselves.

In the SPC women leadership takes a representation perspective in that, instead of women and men participating in approximately equal numbers, women are very few. There are also no women in the main offices in the decision making court (Kirksession). Nor have women been socialised to

appreciate taking representative positions. For instance, it is common to hear, “women are few in leadership but they are well represented”. It is therefore important for the church to re-examine its structures to identify the area that requires transformation. Is it the authority or does the church need to conscientise women to be more vigilant in coming forward to offer service in the church.

5.4 Women in the church ministry

God called women of old like Debora into leadership position which involved civil and spiritual authority (Groothuis, 1997). Although a Jew steeped in Jewish culture, Paul included and taught women during the time of Apostolic church (Hurly, 1984). Mary Levison (Levison, 1992) petitioned the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland because she was convinced that God called her to the ministry. Ackermann *et al* (1991). *Women hold up half the sky* raises the voices of contemporary women from Southern Africa in relation to the church. It has been contended that women are unclean to handle 'sacred' functions of the church'; women cannot be trusted or they are not allowed to preach or administrater. There is enough evidence in this study to show that, there is nothing unfitting or immoral about a woman occupying a position of power and authority. In the SPC the place of women in leadership is not an issue of discussion because there is the feeling that women are adequately represented. However, this study is all about full participation of women in the church life and polity. The church is challenged to transform the institutional structures that deny women full participation.

In this respect much has been achieved: for instance, inclusion of women in the decision making bodies, ordination of women....Oduyoye, (1995) and Phiri (1997) call the church to account for the general status of women in the church. This study identifies a specific area (numerical ratio in leadership) that impacts adversely on the roles of women in the church. However this study contends that in all these areas the reasons for the obscurity of women's roles is the disproportionate number of men in leadership positions. This has resulted in the disregard of women, or their experiences being given secondary consideration. The church therefore needs to re-evaluate its structures and introduce programmes that empower women. In this study it is evident that women are disadvantaged in educational attainment and economically which adversely affect their place in leadership.

The study contends that the roles of women in the church are influenced by patriarchalisation of the church which is characterised by subordination of women to male dominance. This is evidenced by androcentricism and sexism in the church which is discriminatory and oppressive to women. This study identifies some significant themes and concerns of and about women in the church in (South) Africa.

5.5 Crucial themes and concerns of the Church in (South) Africa

The church is understood to be a community of believers. In this case, women and men need to be in a position to share equally in all that pertains to church life and polity. Being a woman in the church ministry I identify with the rest of the womenfolk as they name their pains and hurts. There are systems in the church and society that deny the “ordinary” woman a chance to identify and name the oppressive aspects against women. This has made it very difficult for the few exposed and conscientised women to make an effective front. It is proposed in this study that unmasking the sin of patriarchy will be a major step towards the emancipation of women in the church context. The emancipation would mean women being able to enjoy their full humanity in participation in church life. Since it is argued that if women continue to be the only ones concerned with their status and place in the church, they will continue to be the “other”, the whole church of Christ (women and men) needs to identify themes that are liberative to women.

There is enough evidence that patriarchy in the church is not ordained by God. Groothuis (1997), Hurly (1984) and Ruether (1983) have argued that patriarchalisation of the church is as a result of male-centredness. The institution of patriarchy is all about power and authority. Therefore the church must re-examine her authority structures especially in relation to leadership. Its structures must go through a kind of transformation that challenges the male-centredness and becomes inclusive of women. By introducing education programmes for women to create awareness the church need to address androcentrism and sexism that has determined and shaped the roles of women in the church. The theology, language and symbols of the church that were founded on patriarchal thinking need to be challenged. There is also need to openly acknowledge that patriarchalisation of the church is the basis of open and unfair differentiation between the roles of women and men in the church.

The place of women in the church leadership is handled in a way that makes the advocates of full participation of women to look as if they are blaming the church. By this I mean, women are so many but the question is, what impact do they have in the formation of the theologies and doctrines of the church they faithfully serve? The church needs to acknowledge the fact that although there are women in the church leadership, they are in secondary positions and there is need to have them in key leadership positions. It should also be noted that numerical ratio is very important. For instance there is need to ask what is the ratio of women to men among the elders? What is the ratio of women to men among the clergy even before we boast with the fact that the moderator of the General Assembly is a woman? This is because the majority vote determines the decision of the court or the committee.

The general and theological education of women should be considered as a major concern for the church. This is important because education is seen as the major drawback of women in the leadership. To be in the church leadership, theological education is vital, so that one is able to articulate the issues of the church well. It is also challenging that in the contemporary theological scholarship women are still few and do not get the chance to advance easily. At this point I wish to give a personal experience as a woman in the church ministry (*the researcher*)⁵

There is little encouragement given to women who are interested in theological education. I first indicated my interest in attending a theological institution in 1986 and it became a long struggle because many people thought that I would not make it. I qualified to join a theological college in 1989 but I was allowed to start the studies in 1990. This delaying tactic was a way of discouraging me. During the years 1990-1993 when I studied for my first degree (B.D), in a class of 32 students we were only two women. In a college population of over 200 students there were fewer than ten women.

While it is easy for men ministers to go for further studies as long as one meets the criteria, it was a big struggle for me to be accepted for post-graduate studies. When I was enrolling for my Bth.

⁵The figures given in the experience of the researcher are only estimates because it is not easy to get to the home country (Kenya) to get the real figures but the estimation is very close to the real figures.

Honours I was challenged and advised to finish the Honours degree and go home because I may not succeed with a Masters. This experience has been making me think that the many who are not strong willed have either not started or have given up on the way.

In my opinion, the church should start programmes that encourage women to advance in the general and theological education. There is need for more women in the church ministry and theological/religious studies institutions. This, for me, will translate into women creating impact in religion and social transformation.

Women in religion and social transformation remain a crucial issue. In the words of Ackermann, I assert that:

A growing number of women in the world of religion, among whom I count myself, are however growing restive and critical and are seeking change. What can the rights concept entailed in the idea of freedom of religion offer women who experience discrimination and lack of freedom within religious systems? (Ackermann 1994:214).

For women to be productive in religion and social transformation is inevitable. They must realize that the change they are calling for is in their own hands. However, the church must also realise that women need to be empowered and supported. Therefore the effective change can only come from the whole church. Women and men members of the church need to work together to identify the wrongs and correct them.

5.6 Conclusion

The evaluation of the research process gives the indication that the participatory research method needs to be given more attention. The researcher has proposed that in that kind of research paradigm the researcher and the researched need to keep their boundaries and respect each other's humanity.

The issue of female leadership and women in the church ministry remains a contested area. The chapter therefore discusses the crucial themes and concerns of the church in (South) Africa. It is therefore suggested that women are crucial in the transformation that will be liberative to their status and place in the church.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions which entails the articulations of the whole paper and ends with the suggestions from the researcher. The previous chapter serves to evaluate the issues raised in the study, leading to the suggestions in the current chapter.

6.2 Concluding remarks

From the historical overview of the experiences, place and status of women in the church and society, it has been quite evident that the images of women from the Hebrew text have had great impacts on how women are portrayed in contemporary Christianity. This background has shaped and directed the structural formation of African Christianity.

The patriarchal systems of these churches condone the exclusion and marginalisation of women in the society which is seen to reinforce the patriarchal African cultures. This tendency continues to women in obscurity in relation to the roles they play in the church and society. Theologies of the church present the Divine as male and leadership roles are portrayed as positions that are only supposed to be occupied by male figures while women are supposed to take secondary or representative roles. While the churches have by their acts seemed to have heeded to the quest for inclusion and participation of women in leadership roles and major decision making, yet in practice the place and the status of women in the church is still marginal.

It is evident that the traditional perceptions of statutes and about women in the church still shapes the roles of women in SPC and the church in general. The attitudes of women and men have implications for the socialisation of women in the church and society for they shape and direct the roles women play in the church. Women have therefore continued to take inferior positions in the church leadership and are given positions that seem to be a kind of token in the sense that the positions are a way of

silencing women from questioning the church institution/structures. Women who are assertive and stand up for their rights are said to be “militant”. As the church goes into the new millennium, it must confront the reality of the status and place of its women in terms of the equal participation and representation in the leadership positions and major decision making bodies.

It is very crucial for women to realise that, whatever kind of emancipation they may be calling for, it will only be realised if they themselves take initiative. The liberative power is in their hands if anything is to be achieved at all. For instance when women support the dissolution of the W.A because it has been identified as being a “church within a church”, the first thing to ask is, why is it a threat to the institution yet performing positive duties? If some women consider it time wasting/consuming how about those who feel they need it for their heartfelt concerns. Women must be more aggressive and assertive in approaching issues that concern leadership and decision making in the church and society.

The overview and articulations presented in chapter three before getting into the exploration of the views and observations of women in SPC is deliberate. Significant to note is that, whatever the women in the SPC raise is not new but it is very important for this study because it legitimises the fact that, while much has been achieved on women and church a lot is yet to be done. There are indicators that show clearly that religio-cultural and socio-economic issues raised in SPC are not issues of concerns to South Africa only, but in the whole continent. They are issues that have caused concern in other areas/disciplines not only in the church and religion.

Religio-cultural and socio-economic issues impact strongly on the place and status of women in the church and society which have tremendous implications for the roles of women in the church especially in the area of leadership roles. While women in SPC have not named their limitations assertively it is evident that the church needs to re-examine its structural formation in relation to women and the leadership roles. Much is also to be done in empowering women to be vocal and assertive in their articulation of their experiences and expression of how they perceive their identity in relation to their response to the calling of God.

6.3 Suggestions

Women in the ministry continues to be an area of contest. This is because when we explore the issues raised in the paper there is adequate evidence that the changes that are taking place in the church are very slow and yet many of them are half-baked. For instance in the area of patriarchalisation of the church the issues of sexism, patriarchy androcentrism and church institution have been areas of articulation for many decades now but continue to be key source of adverse implications for the status and place of women in the church.

Patriarchalisation of the church which entails the above mentioned aspects has continued to shape and direct the societal valuation of women, the images of women in the church also determines their destiny. Below are the suggestions on what the church need to do to face the challenges of the new millenium:

- The church should practically recognize women as full human beings created in the image of God who are able to respond to God's calling. Therefore women should be let free to fully participate in all the spheres of the church.
- The church ought to be a community of believers who are directly responsible for their relationship with God. Therefore women should not be barred by the church structures and hierarchies from offering their talents and gifts in the service of the church of which they are part and parcel.
- Women should not be permitted or allowed by men to take part in the church leadership but should do so by right. Women and men should be working together as equals in recognition of each other's dignity and integrity in the household of God.
- While women participate in the church today in almost all capacities, the church need to face the challenge of numerical disparities between women and men. This great difference has led many to think that women are just put in some places in the church as a token to silence anyone who dares raise questions about equal participation of women and men.
- Over the years women have worked to liberate themselves from male domination. However they should continue working hard in understanding that the liberative potential lies in their persistent pressure on the structures and institutions that maintain discriminatory and oppressive measures against women.

-The church should embark on educative programmes that includes women and men and which should be strategically geared towards instilling positive images of women and men in the church.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Names of women who returned their questionnaires

1. Colleen Lombard
2. Jeannette Dillon
3. Cindy Easterday
4. Karen Dennice Sleen
5. Pam Botha
6. A. Khanyone
7. Alison Macintosh
8. Janet Wirth
9. Fiona Matheson
10. Mairi Matheson
11. Loureen True
12. Noell Obiri
13. Joanmary Nyuqki Nsahlai
14. Florence Musyoka
15. Gail Ferhsen
16. Brenda Lombard
17. Marie Claire Frousou
18. Chirsty Matheson
19. Margaret Waithera
20. Kirsten Ferhsen
21. Judy Githui
22. Esther Ng'endo Matu
23. Roselyne Nyamato
24. Maureen Njagani
25. Alice Wangui Muraguri

Appendix 2: Table of age range, number and percentage of the women who returned the questionnaires.

Age-range	Number	Percentage (%)
13-19	2	8
20-29	5	20
30-39	7	28
40-49	2	8
50 and above	9	36
Total	25	100

Appendix 3: Names of men who returned the questionnaires.

1. Rev Siphon Mtetwa
2. Rev Rob Calder
3. Don Macintosh
4. Cavyn Wirth
5. John Obiri
6. Francis Muriithi
7. Ignatius Nsahlai
8. Offi Fehrsen
9. David True
10. Christian Tham

Appendix 4: Table of age range, number and percentage of men who returned the questionnaires.

Age range	Number	Percentage (%)
13-19	-	-
20-29	-	-
30-39	6	60
40-49	2	20
50 above	2	20
Total	10	100

Appendix 5: Women who are members of the prayer group

1. Tsitsidzashe Mtata Zimbabwe
2. Naomi Malua Angola
3. Rev Agnes Mulenga Zambia
4. Marie Claire Frousou Cameroon (Co-ordinator)
5. Joanmary Nyuqki Nsahlai Cameroon
6. Sicily Mbura Muriithi Kenya (Researcher)
7. Noell Obiri Kenya
8. Seconde John Burundi
9. Esther Nge'ndo Matu Kenya
10. Alice Muraguri Kenya

Appendix 6: Women who are members of the SPC outreach mission (Mainly domestic workers)

1. Jeannette Dillon (Co-ordinator)
2. Winnie Ndlovu
3. Getrude Magubane
4. Agnes Dlamini
5. Phillipina Shabane
6. Ezlina Mkhize
7. M. Ndlela
8. Adele Khonyane (Secretary)
9. Albertina Ngcobo
10. Sicily Mbura Muriithi (Researcher)