

**THE EXTENT AND CAUSES OF  
DECLINE IN CHURCH ATTENDANCE  
IN INGLEWOOD BETWEEN 1960 AND  
2010**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF MINISTRY AT OTAGO**

**UNIVERSITY, DUNEDIN, NEW ZEALAND**

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## **ABSTRACT.**

The main focus of this research is the unrelenting decline in both membership and attendance that began to affect the church in Inglewood in the 1960s. The central argument is that after a very strong Christian influence in its establishment, growth and development, the town of Inglewood started to experience overwhelming changes which became a big challenge for the church. The overall impact of these, social, cultural, economic, technological and demographic changes which came in a discontinuous and unpredictable pattern was to alienate and fracture the long standing mutually symbiotic relationship between the community and the church.

The town became a victim of progress as businesses and industry restructured and moved to the more affluent towns of New Plymouth and Hawera. Population shifts occurred as employment opportunities and business prospects became limited in Inglewood. At the same time more and more young people left the town in search of tertiary education and employment opportunities elsewhere. The church became a victim of these continuous demographic shifts. A non growing community is an aging community and an aging community creates an aging church. This has been a major challenge for the church in Inglewood.

Further to the transient nature of the town after 1960, this research identifies a number of conflicts, too many churches in a small town, and the decision made by the churches to close down preaching places outside of the town as some of the causative factors unique to Inglewood.

The data used in the research is obtained through a triangulation of archival documentary analysis, individual interviews and a questionnaire survey that are brought together in a trilogy.

The research recommends a merger of churches to leave three churches and a change of approach from a spectator model to a more conversation based model.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.**

Grateful thanks to Dr Kevin Ward of the Department of Theology and Religion at Otago University who supervised my research. It is Kevin who first aroused my interest in the area of Church and Change when he was my lecturer in the course in 2010. Thank you.

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## **CHAPTER 1.**

### **INTRODUCTION.**

**TOPIC:** The Extent and Causes of Decline in Church Attendance in Inglewood between 1960 and 2010.

This chapter will address:

- The statement of the problem
- The background of the study and its context
- The hypothesis of the study and research
- The motivation for choosing this topic
- The research problem and objectives and finally
- The research outline.

#### **1.1 Statement of the problem.**

This research study seeks to construct the membership story of the church in Inglewood during the fifty year period 1960-2010. This membership story is defined in terms of attendance at church services, affiliation to a congregation and baptism. The participation of the community in the life of the church and the value placed on the church's great rituals of the rites of passage such as burials, marriages solemnizations and dissolutions as well as visits paid to the church over the course of this period are the major parameters used to define church attendance. They indicate belonging and value placed on the church. Having noted the fluctuating trends and direction of fluctuation in the membership story, an attempt is then made towards constructing and where possible pinpointing the possible causes of decline in church attendance in Inglewood.

#### **1.2 Background and context of the research.**

Originally named Milton, the area now known as Inglewood in Taranaki New Zealand was a block of land referred to as the Moa Block. It was purchased from the Maori people by the Government during 1873 to 1874. It was christened Inglewood in 1875 and developed as a consequence of Julius Vogel's Immigration and public works schemes of the 1870s. The history of Inglewood is basically also the history of the church in Inglewood. Churches have always been major landmarks of the development of the town and surrounding areas.

According to I.J Ireland religion and the church played a very significant role in shaping its culture and community during the first 50-75 years of its life<sup>1</sup>. This background to Inglewood's formation is given because it reflects on the culture and development of settlement of the town, the beginnings of business and societal organisations' expansion and other events which later had a role in the shaping of the future religious life of the town.

Vogel roused finance mainly by overseas loans to open up and settle the interior of the country and to promote the economy<sup>2</sup>. Government's agencies encouraged people to immigrate to New Zealand by offering assisted or free passages, the promise of employment and the chance to own their own land<sup>3</sup>. They were to work on public work schemes developing roads, rail bridges, posts and communication while buying land by deferred payment. Emphasis was placed on the characters of the immigrants: they were to be hard working, upright citizens and farm workers where possible<sup>4</sup>. Each province was encouraged to advance this policy. Consequentially Taranaki Provincial Council planned the settlement of Inglewood.

The location was very important and was carefully and successfully chosen. Inglewood was to be the service town in the area known as the Moa block and was to be sited on the proposed railway line between the bigger town of Hawera and the city of New Plymouth. No Maori people lived in the Inglewood town area perhaps because of the dense bush or maybe because of the legend where Mount Taranaki/ Egmont which fled to Taranaki after a fight over a female mountain would one day return to the centre of the island (near Mt Ruapehu) crushing everything in its path<sup>5</sup>. According to the National census there were still no Maori people living in Inglewood by 1926<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> It has not been possible to get details of I. J. Ireland but he wrote an essay entitled, "What role did religion play in the shaping of urban culture and its community with special reference to Inglewood". This essay is deposited together with many other historical articles in the church archives of the United Church in Inglewood. I. J Ireland Essay. Unpublished 2.

<sup>2</sup> Raewyn Dalziel, "The Politics of Settlement", in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Geoffrey W. Rice, Ed. (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992) 103.

<sup>3</sup> Erik Olssen and Marcia Stenson, *A Century of Change: New Zealand 1800-1900* (Auckland: Longman Paul Limited, 1989) 235.

<sup>4</sup> Judith Bassett, "A Paradise for working Men", in *The People and the Land: Te Tangata me Te Whenua*, Judith Binney, Judith Bassett and Erik Olssen, eds. (Wellington: Allen and Unwin, 1990) 167.

<sup>5</sup> R.W Brown, *Te Moa: 100 Years History of Inglewood 1875-1975* (New Plymouth: Masterprint Press Ltd, 1976) 17.

<sup>6</sup> *Census of New Zealand: Results of a Census of the Dominion of New Zealand General Report* (Wellington: Government Printer 1926) 15.

As earlier stated, young agricultural labourers were needed to develop Inglewood and hard working, principled people were preferred, characteristics which religious people in general and Christians in particular embody. According to Judith Bassett, who wrote “A paradise for working man” Inglewood was a fortunate settlement. Its immigrants were carefully chosen<sup>7</sup>. The people of New Plymouth selected the immigrants to Inglewood. The Taranaki provincial council even sent their own agent to South England to recruit such people and as a result the original immigrants to New Plymouth in 1841 were predominantly from South England, a farming area where Methodism was prevalent. It is therefore not a surprise that the Methodist church has commanded a strong following in the town, both Primitive and Wesleyan prior to 1960.

The second wave of immigrants that came in the 1870s direct to New Plymouth had many Methodist farm labourers. Other immigrants were recruited by government agencies from Sussex, Kent, Lincolnshire and other parts of the British Isles, many of them were Anglicans and also from Germany and Scandinavian countries<sup>8</sup>. Many of the Germans were actually Polish as part of Poland was a part to the German Empire. This later group imported Catholicism to Inglewood. In effect the majority of the Polish people were farm labourers from the same area and were said to ‘have been strongly religious’<sup>9</sup>. Overall the agencies seem to have been very successful in selecting people of good character with the required skills for Inglewood. Some New Plymouth residents also moved to Inglewood including several middle class people who were to have a profound effect on the town. Henry Brown was one such person.

The church played an important part during this time although there were no ministers among the settlers. Soon after the surveyors and first group of immigrants arrived, Mr. Cheal the surveyor in charge of the group gave a sermon and then held services each Sunday<sup>10</sup>. As stated by I. J Ireland in an essay preserved in the Methodist archives entitled, “The Role played by Religion in the Shaping of Urban Culture and Community in Inglewood”, there were ministers travelling regularly to the area from New Plymouth and Waitara and giving sermons in the open using stumps as pulpits and logs as seats. One Methodist

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<sup>7</sup> Judith Bassett, *A Paradise of Working Men*, 165.

<sup>8</sup> The Bank of New Zealand, *Inglewood 1878-1978*. Pamphlet.

<sup>9</sup> J. W. Pobog-Jaworowski, *Polish Settlers in Taranaki 1876-1976* (Stratford: Ron Woods Printing Company) 42.

<sup>10</sup> R. W Brown, *A Collection of papers on the History of the Brown Family: The Reverend Henry Hadley Brown and the Saw Milling Firm of Henry Brown and Co. Ltd.* (New Plymouth: Masterprint Press Ltd, ca 1976) 90.

minister is reported to have written his sermons on horseback while making his journey. The ministers preached to all regardless of denominations and by all accounts were well received.

Churches were among the first public buildings to be erected and two churches were established before the school. Unsurprisingly these two churches were the Wesleyan and the Primitive Methodists. They opened in January and in March 1876 respectively<sup>11</sup>. Unlike many earlier settlements that had problems in raising money to build churches, Inglewood soon erected many churches, though they did not have any resident minister for years. For a small population of only about 300 people, Inglewood gained the Primitive Methodist, Wesleyan Methodist, Catholic and Anglican churches within three years of the settlement<sup>12</sup>. These were followed by the Salvation Army, Free Thought Association and the Presbyterian Church. The churches were of reasonable sizes seating up to 200 people and the ministers were travelling to several surrounding districts talking to people from all kinds of persuasions. By the 1890s these areas also had churches and the original Inglewood churches were being replaced because they had become too small.

The number of churches, the swiftness of their establishment and the variety of denominations in such a small town indicate that from its inception Inglewood had the church as an important institution in its life and most people proudly attended services.

It is worthwhile to note that as Inglewood began to establish governing bodies, interest groups, sports clubs and social clubs, churches were not directly associated with the administration of the town, yet the men on the town's councils and boards were very involved with the churches especially the Methodist and Anglicans. For example following the abolition of the Provincial Governments in 1876, the Inglewood town board was established. Colonel Trimble, a devout Methodist was the town chairman for two years followed by Henry Brown an Anglican lay preacher and then in 1896 Mr Peach a Methodist Sunday school superintendent became chairman.

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<sup>11</sup> Florinda Lambert, *All About Inglewood*, Volume 1. (Inglewood: F. Lambert (self published), no date) 15.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 10.



An astounding number of other chairmen and board members were also on church committees, like William Carter who was a local Methodist preacher and Dr. Valentine a devout Anglican. A core of these Christian men was on other committees, boards and community organisations that were established at the time. Thus the Moa road board, the horticultural society and sports boards like the Rugby Union and Athletics<sup>13</sup> were all manned by men who had positions of responsibility in churches as well. The church was the community and the community was the church. When the Inglewood Borough Council was established in 1903 this relationship and trend was continued as George Young, the mayor of the town was also chairman of the Presbyterian Church committee. There were few Catholics on these boards because of cultural barriers as many of them were Polish or German. These prominent Christian community leaders were later described as very “public spirited<sup>14</sup>” and churchmen. It is this public spiritedness, this massive willingness and involvement with community that were a very powerful driving force in giving the church status and contributed to its growth.

Businesses were quickly established in Inglewood and the church and its members, especially leaders, were prominent among business owners. As mentioned, the site of the town was very important and soon became a prime location for farming, timber and transport, both rail and road. As the land was cleared, the roads completed and metalled, timber milling, dairy farming and cattle became the backbone of the economy. Colonel Trimble established the first timber mill and Henry Brown founded H. Brown Limited a main employer of men, and became the largest mill in New Zealand<sup>15</sup>. Both of these men were very influential on church committees and encouraged people to come to church.

Two private dairy companies had operated prior to the Moa Dairy Cooperation which was established in 1895. It soon became the fourth largest in New Zealand<sup>16</sup>. The Inglewood Bacon and Curing Company was established in 1899 and became important to the Inglewood economy. It was not easy to establish whether the directors of either company were involved with church leadership but it is clear that Henry Brown who was the chairman of the Inglewood Electric

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<sup>13</sup>R. W Brown, *Te Moa*. 99, 214-235, 244.

<sup>14</sup> *Inglewood. A Progressive*. No page numbers or printing date.

<sup>15</sup> R. W Brown, *A Short History of the Parochial District of St' Andrews Inglewood* (New Plymouth: Taranaki Newspapers Ltd, 1969) 7.

<sup>16</sup> “75<sup>th</sup> Jubilee: A History of the Moa Dairy Company Ltd 1895-1978,” in *Te Moa*, R. W Brown. 124.

Light Company established in 1903 was a staunch churchman. Lots of other church luminaries established small businesses. Mr Peach ran the Boot Making Shop and Mr. Carter had a Fancy Goods shop. To sum up the civic leaders were also church leaders and church was very relevant and visible to the people. Because of the protestant ethic of “morally correct behaviour<sup>17</sup>”, respectability, cooperation and fairness, Inglewood became synonymous with these virtues so much that Dr. Gibbs, a coroner wrote that Inglewood was a model settlement with independent, upright, industrious, temperate and healthy people<sup>18</sup>. He attributed this to its strong Christian roots.

Ireland says that the church had a strong voice in the public square and pioneered so many meetings concerning matters of public importance. There were so many social gatherings including entertainment evenings, Shakespearian acting and musical concerts<sup>19</sup>. Churches were very active in these areas and held bazaars, musical evenings, picnics and harvest festivals primarily to raise money, but these were attended by the general public. The church was an integral part of the community and the community an integral part of the church. The Reverend H. Blamires of the Methodist church Inglewood 1896-1907 wrote, “The church in those days was the very centre and chief interest in people’s lives. There were no cars, radios, movies or telephones<sup>20</sup>”. The church was a meeting place and ministers often called on people regardless of their denominations. They visited the sick in hospital and at home. This involvement in social events and with the public at large would have kept the churches and their ministers in a fairly high profile in such a small settlement.

The temperance movement was promoted by the Protestant churches (Wesleyan Methodist August 1877, Salvation Army 1886) and had a profound effect on the citizenry. Several churches held meetings and a women’s temperance group remained in action until 1944. The Salvation Army was the strongest advocate for temperance and a newspaper article states that they nearly ruined the trade of the hotels in Inglewood<sup>21</sup>. The idea of the nuclear family and the domesticated wife, keenly promoted by the protestant churches, seems to have been very prevalent as shown by most churches and community records. There were no

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<sup>17</sup> Erik Olssen, *Towards a New Society*, 271.

<sup>18</sup> R. W Brown, *Te Moa*, 287.

<sup>19</sup> I. R. Ireland, *Inglewood and Religion*, An Essay. Unpublished.

<sup>20</sup> Reverend H. Blamire’s letter to Methodist Church Committee re: Jubilee, 19 April 1946.

<sup>21</sup> R.W Brown, *Te Moa*, 287.

women on the councils and only a few on organisations that involved women such as Plunket and horticultural societies<sup>22</sup>. Women are referred to by their husbands' names such as Mrs. Thompson Seattle, and women and men had separate responsibilities and roles in the community, family and in the church. Whilst this trend might have been widespread in New Zealand it illuminates the fact that at its zenith the church actually shaped and to an extent determined the society's culture in Inglewood.

With the outbreak of both the Boer war and the First World War the church took a special interest in the war and the men involved in the war. United prayer services were held whilst support for the disabled soldiers was garnered and galvanized. In 1917 the Presbyterian Church committee decided to raise money for gifts for Presbyterians and for those with no church connection at the front<sup>23</sup>. This continued until at least 1919. Records show that church ministers were busy attending to the needs of the bereaved as 136 men<sup>24</sup> were killed. This was further worsened by the Influenza epidemic of 1918 that had 82% of the town's population of 1200 afflicted and 20 lives lost. The church maintained its history of involvement and many people placed their hope and faith not only in God but in the church as well.

After World War Two a new "cult of domesticity"<sup>25</sup> a time of high Victorian celebration of family, hearth and home seemed to pervade New Zealand. Marriages and families mushroomed and the rural lands became nappy-valleys, baby-boom suburbs. A lot of married women left the paid workforce in favour of family. For Inglewood the situation was compounded by big farms being cut up into smaller sizes so as to accommodate the returning servicemen. This resulted in a lot of small farms, 'producing a lot of children'. Churches started to have large Sunday Schools just as enrolment in schools increased. During this period churches grew and by the late 1950s the Methodist, Anglicans and Presbyterians had opened up preaching points in the entire farming community surrounding the town. There were preaching places at Egmont Village, Norfolk, Tarata, Midhurst, Kaimata and others. Lay people were trained as local preachers and Sunday school teachers. This was such a success that Valerie Allen wrote of the

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 240-241, 244.

<sup>23</sup> Inglewood Presbyterian Church Minute Book 1914-1923, 2 August 1917, 12 November 1917.

<sup>24</sup> R. W Brown, *Te Maa*, 46.

<sup>25</sup> Laurie Guy, *Shaping Godzone: Public Issues and Church Voices In New Zealand 1840-2000* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2011) 419.

Methodist church, “There were 14 preaching places. There were two ministers appointed and were assisted by 10 local preachers and 9 auxiliaries, who served 295 church members, 7 Sunday schools, with 43 teachers, 461 scholars and 1521 people were associated with the church<sup>26</sup>”.

Families were stable with nonworking mothers, society was stable and church was stable. This stable society became a fermentation tank for the seeds of a social revolution. Education and affluence created teenagers that came of age in the 1960s and became a direct challenge to the preceding generation. The outcome was an explosion of protests and antiestablishment movements including women liberation which greatly affected social norms and values and the church especially. Although this was a worldwide trend, it was stronger in Inglewood because of the settlement’s strong agricultural background.

It is therefore correct to surmise that from the very inception the church actually had a very overt impact in shaping the culture of Inglewood. Inglewood became a successful town because of its locality and resources as well as the government assistance given to early settlers but the attitude of the town people played an integral role. The settlers were mainly Christians and Church faith was obviously important to them. Their way of life reflected the Protestant ethics of

- Hard work
- Responsibility
- Progress

This did set the standard for the town’s society for years to come but would obviously work against church attendance as work responsibilities and desire for materialistic progress became an obsession much later. Church life interacted with social life in many ways. However these English speaking settlers in a way looked at themselves as victims of social injustice, gross inequality and deep unfairness back home not only in individual acts but in the systemic operation of an entire society. They hoped to build a better community that offered a fair-field. David Fischer said English speaking immigrants to New Zealand always carried “a sense of grievance, a consciousness of rights and a tradition of autonomous action<sup>27</sup>”. Of those who came to Inglewood specifically he says,

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<sup>26</sup> Valerie Allen, *History of Inglewood Methodist Church 1876-1976* (Unpublished, 2009) 1.

<sup>27</sup> David Hackett Fischer, *Fairness and Freedom: A History of Two Open Societies, New Zealand and the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 33.

“These families brought a highly developed idea of fairness and justice that grew from their own oppression in England and even as they were very unjust to Maori, fairness among their own kind was important to these families<sup>28</sup>” They always expected justice and fairness even from the church. Herein lays the first root of future conflict and resentment to the church.

The question that begs for an answer is what then happened? How did the church in Inglewood end up in the present liminal position? It looks like the shift from amelioration to deterioration started around the year 1960. It is for this reason that this research seeks to explore the causative factors that have placed a wedge and a relational shift between the church and the general populace of Inglewood. This is important since it is clear that the formation and development of Inglewood, the type of people, expansion and vision of the town were all steeped with church involvement. The period from start to the end of the great wars was characterised by great community involvement and appreciation by the church and its leadership but this has significantly deteriorated since the 1960s.

### **1.3 The Hypothesis.**

This research proposes that the church in Inglewood has been in a messy decline since the 1960s. This decline has come about because the church has lost contact with the community. The loss of contact with community has been worsened by a protest against perceived tendencies to treat some people unfairly or unjustly on the part of the church. This loss of contact with community is a result of two factors. One is that New Zealand has a thoroughgoing democratic polity, a pluralist culture, an individuated society and an unquestionable respect for human rights. It has a very firm history of obsession with an abiding concern for fairness. Everything the church does has to pass this fairness test. Often times the church in Inglewood has been perceived as failing this test.

The second one is that, whilst the community has changed in leaps and bounds as from 1960, the church has barely changed. In areas where it has changed, it has been at a snail’s pace. The resultant dichotomy between a changing society and an inflexible stagnant church became problematic for many people.

The major assumption of this study is that the church is therefore in a situation in which it operates a two door system of outreach and survival. There is a front

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<sup>28</sup> David Fischer, *Fairness and Freedom*. 55.

door through which people are coming into the church. There is however a wider back door through which the church is leaking members.

The background analysis of the founding of the town and church in Inglewood shows that from the 1870s up to the early late 1950s, the front door had been much wider than the back door. However from the 1960s to today the front door has been getting narrower and the back door wider. This research assumes the existence of both internal and external causal factors responsible for the widening of the back door and aims to explore them in depth. It is assumed that the changing socio-economic and cultural environment coupled with the church's inability, and at times unwillingness, to adjust both theologically and operationally to a tsunami of changes around it has catapulted the church into a nose-diving decline.

#### **1.4 Motivation.**

This research has been selected for three main reasons. First it is intended to be a humble contribution, a way of helping the Inglewood Christian community to identify, reflect on and may be realistically face their position and challenges. It is intended to provide a balcony view of the faith journey of the church from which the church can identify its weaknesses and hopefully act on them in a guided search for solutions.

Secondly it has been noted that there are no public documents that specifically target the declining situation of the church in Inglewood. Despite the large amount of research making available considerable literature on the decline of the church as well as the changing socio-cultural trends in the western world including New Zealand, there is little specifically on small rural based towns like Inglewood. Therefore deep and informing as these researches may be, they are too general and urban based. What is offered in this research is therefore a glimpse of what might be the situation in other small rural communities such as Inglewood. I argue that global trends in large urban centres may not have the same effect and may not require the same solutions as do specific and small semi urban or rural based towns like Inglewood.

Thirdly it has been noted that according to the results of the 2006 National Census, Inglewood has a population of 3090 representing a 4.9% increase or 144 people from the 2001 census (2946)<sup>29</sup>. These people reside in 1209 dwellings in the town. An almost similar number now lives in the surrounding district. Church has virtually disappeared in the surrounding farming areas<sup>30</sup> while an average of between 280-320 people now attend the church services weekly in the township<sup>31</sup>: a far cry from an average attendance of between 1000-1200 that attended church services in the 1960s and 600-800 in the 1980s.

The widely accepted explanation for this decline is that, “rural areas and agricultural service support towns have experienced significant depopulation as farms have amalgamated and people have moved to major towns and cities in search of employment and tertiary education<sup>32</sup>”. However my reflection and observations show that this argument is not fully supported by the demographic picture in Inglewood. National census figures and the enrolment trends<sup>33</sup> in Primary and Secondary schools in the town show that despite the transient nature of the town, the net effect is a population increase but an attendance decrease for the church. The number of dwellings has also been on the increase in the last two decades. There has to be more to it than demographics.

### **1.5 The Research problem and objectives.**

This study generates new information to help understand why the church in Inglewood has suffered significant decline. Subsequent chapters will build an understanding of this decline process. The overarching objective is to establish the degree of this decline using the numbers of people coming through the front doors of the church as visitors, the numbers of baptisms, marriages solemnized in

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.stats.govt.nz/census/2006> 25/07/2012.

<sup>30</sup> Before 1960 there were Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches at Tarata, Egmont Village, Midhurst, Norfolk, Kaimata, Tariki and Kaimiro. At present all these have closed and no new worship centres have been opened in the whole countryside surrounding Inglewood.

<sup>31</sup> End of year report presented by the chairperson of the Inglewood Pastors Fellowship (Mark Jones) on statistics for the year 2011 to the end of year Ministers get together at St Andrews Anglican Church, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2011. It is noteworthy that six of the seven congregations presented the statistics which added up to 230 members. The Liberty Baptist church was not represented but at the time commanded an average of 50-80 attendances per week.

<sup>32</sup> Guy Pilkington, Taranaki Rural House Church Network (Micro Church Project). Draft Paper presented to the Taranaki Presbytery as a new church initiative for rural areas. Unpublished 2012.

<sup>33</sup> National census results for the years 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2006. <http://www.stats.govt.nz/1991-2006>. 25/07/2012. Diane Richardson, *A Brief History of Inglewood Primary School: 125th Jubilee-Easter 2000* (Inglewood: Selby printers, 2000).

the church and burials conducted as well as Bible classes and Sunday school enrolments. Worship centres that opened up and then closed as the back-door effect cascades in is also another tracked indicator of the downward trend of the church over time. In pursuit of this objective, four smaller objectives will be pursued.

- An exploration of the demographic picture of Inglewood between 1960 and 2010.
- An exploration of the demographic pattern of church attendance in the town during the same period.
- An examination of the attitudes of the people towards the church during the period under review
- Recommendations as to some tangible actions the church may need to take within its means to redress the situation.

### **1.6 Research outline.**

This research presentation has five chapters. Chapter one presented the rationale for exploring the changing trends in church attendance in Inglewood and its significance to the life and ministry of the church. The hypothesis and motivation for carrying out such a study as well as the statement of the problem is discussed.

The second chapter will focus on the methods used to collect and gather data for this research as well as the theoretical framework employed. The challenges faced in this endeavour with particular regard to the suitability of each method will be discussed. The third chapter will focus especially on findings of the research. This chapter will particularly focus on the findings from the archival materials and interviews conducted. This chapter reflects on and exposes all the changing numerical trends as well as relationships between the church and community.

The fourth chapter is a continued narrative of the decline of the church as per the findings of the survey. This is the chapter that brings into focus the external and internal factors to which the church has failed to respond to effectively. Chief amongst those factors are the changing socio-cultural dynamics of a technological world come of age. These will be analysed in the light of the hypothesis. The last chapter will summarise the causes of the decline, as well as make recommendations.



## CHAPTER 2.

### METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

The concern of this research is to establish the extent as well as the causes of decline in church attendance in Inglewood during the last fifty years. In pursuit of this herculean task use was made of both written and oral sources. The written sources included both archival and published materials. A qualitative socio-historical approach and analysis of the data is used to bring meaning to the gathered information. The oral sources included a series of semi-structured interviews that followed a thorough-going fifty question survey questionnaire answered by a total of 307 participants chosen using both heterogeneous and strategic sampling (10% of the town of Inglewood population as per the national census results 2006) to obtain the sample population.

The massive quantities of data that had to be accessed to adequately get a full construction of both the membership and the attitudes of the community members to the church necessitated the incorporation of this wide ranging questionnaire. Within a socio-historical framework, a qualitative method based on different hermeneutic approaches was used to understand the different types of data: interviews, documentary analysis and questionnaire survey. The various sources of evidence were triangulated to strengthen the validity and reliability of the study.

In this chapter, the three methods of collecting data employed are described. These are:

- Archival exploration
- Questionnaire survey and
- Semi-structured individual interviews.

The specific challenges faced in the implementation and utilisation of these methods of data collection forms a major part of this chapter. The second part of this chapter will focus on the theoretical framework which informs and gives direction to the research. A number of published and unpublished works will be reviewed in the light of the theoretical approaches contributed to the research.

## 2.1 Historical Documents- Archives.

By archival source, we simply refer to written documents found in the archives. Following the advice of Scott Thumma, that “archival documents may include videotapes, sermon transcript and church directories<sup>34</sup>” this research visited letters, diaries, and minutes of meetings, financial statements, Sunday school registers and reports, baptism and marriage registers as well as burial registers. A number of churches also had visitors’ registers which yielded a lot of information on the trend of new arrivals at the congregation over the years. This task was made easier by the fact that following the union between the Methodist church of Inglewood and Knox Presbyterian Church in 1970, all the documents relating to the two churches as of 1910 were centralised and deposited with the United Church archives. These are replete with information relating to the dwindling membership of the church. The United Church in Inglewood, a joint venture between the Methodist and Presbyterian churches in the area was formed in 1970, and became operational in January 1971 as a result of membership and financial down-turns.

What is more the Anglican Church’s diocese of Taranaki archives provided a lot of information about the process leading to the removal of the Vicar from Inglewood, “as the Parish had become too small<sup>35</sup>” and how it replaced him with an itinerant dean in charge of three other smaller parishes in the vicinity, Waitara, Bell Block and Lepperton from January 2009. Apart from these there are minutes covering such issues as the changing cultural environment, debates and schisms over the place, acceptability and non acceptability of gays and lesbians in the church with particular hostility centred on their ordination to the ministry of word and sacrament.

There are letters and correspondences reflecting heated exchanges between the churches in Inglewood and the mother church bodies reflecting serious hostilities over differences pertaining to South Africa’s apartheid rugby team. The team was allowed to tour New Zealand even after Maori players had been refused entry into that racist country, a controversy which exploded into angry violence described by Tom Brooking as, “the greatest civil unrest in New Zealand since the

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<sup>34</sup> Scott L. Thumma, “Methods for Congregational Study” in *Studying Congregations: A New handbook* Eds. Nancy T. Ammerman, etal. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988) 209-217.

<sup>35</sup> Joyce Callaghan, “St’ Andrews Anglican Church, Inglewood Parish” in *Stories of this Church, this Christmas Season*. Ed. Joyce Callaghan, December 2009. Unpublished.

wars of the 1860s<sup>36</sup>". There are a lot of discussions at local parish level highlighting the cost of paying for full time clergy, unnecessary and bureaucratic meetings and travel at a time when the church is faced with an ageing congregation, inability to attract able bodied and available manpower to fill up all the duties required to keep ministry going. There is unison of voices in these documents that this is creating a serious human resource vacuum in critical areas and is responsible for the dropping of key missional arms of the congregations such as the choirs and the women's fellowships, youth and the catechical classes.

Minutes are replete with information exposing the conflicts relating to the rise of the prophetic movement, the masonry and the Masonic lodge, the murder case during an exorcism in which the church was highly fingered, the alienation of non-belonging members of community and relatives of church members from the church of their birth by inexperienced and over enthusiastic conservatives in leadership.

In addition there are baptism and cradle rolls, marriage and burial as well as membership registers. There are visitors' registers, prayer directories, circulars and memos. It was possible to construct information on the changing pattern of church belonging, the plummeting numbers of people getting baptised, the massive rate of divorces and the nosedive in the numbers of people whose marriages are solemnized in church. A graphical representation of the number of people visiting the church over ten year discrete periods reflected the alarming rate at which the church was failing to attract new people.

Theoretically this method was utilized because of a belief that more information about a congregation exists than just what is enacted or spoken. Each of these artefacts that were examined provided a tangible record of a particular slice of the church's story and history, processes and resources as it progressed in time. A lot of information was generated on the implicit life of the congregation as told through dozens of newsletters, commentaries and by major power players in church who were identified through an analysis of the cycles of leadership over the years. This data is all presented in tabular and graphical forms in the third chapter.

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<sup>36</sup> Tom Brooking, *The History of New Zealand* (Westport: CT, 2004) 148.

Analysis of this data enabled this researcher to look at the more overt aspects of the congregation from its weekly bulletins and recorded sermons from which I was able to grasp an impression of the hymns sung over time, budget allocations and the variation in service attendances on a weekly basis. It was also possible to exhume the place of young people and children from these bulletins and video clips and to discover how much time was allocated to the sub-groups during the services of worship and during meetings.

Tosh and Lang say that, “archives are very good for construction of dates and enable the construction of the history of a by-gone society<sup>37</sup>”. In this research the archives proved to be first hand documents showing points at which issues of church decline became topical in Inglewood. Such information was often in agreement with Scott Thumma’s view that, “among other methods archival research and data analysis may yield considerable information otherwise hidden from all other methods<sup>38</sup>”. The greatest advantage for this method of research was that these archival materials were available at a minimal cost.

There were a number of challenges encountered with this method of collecting data. I will only look at three that proved more challenging here. First, there were a lot of gaps in the available information and recording of critical data. For instance all the Pentecostal/Evangelical churches in Inglewood did not record visitors coming to church and did not have membership details covering long periods of time. There are a number of years for which no baptisms are recorded whilst current members are well aware and even managed to give names of individuals who were baptised during the same years. So this research is not exhaustive at all. There are ministers who are simply not gifted, serious enough or unwilling to record information.

The second challenge proved to be the purposes for which some of this archival information was produced. In some cases, it was produced to serve the purpose of minimizing or masking the embarrassing reality of failure and so exuded a protectionist mindset. As such a lot of information on the church relates to institutional aspects of Christian life such as buildings, insurances and payment of clergy as well as conference preparation and resolutions. They are silent on the

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<sup>37</sup> J. Josh, and S. Lang, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History* (London: Pearson Longman, 1984) 335.

<sup>38</sup> Scott Thumma, *Methods for Congregational Study*. 213.

views of disgruntled church leavers, the victims of neglect and on complaints directed at local church leadership. It is apparent that the available documents gloss over the closure of many small worship centres in the surrounding small centres. One could only discern the reality from inconspicuous minute references like, “The minister complained that small congregations were embarrassing”. Archival documents therefore do not tell the whole story. In the words of P. Denis, “congregational documents are produced for a particular and distinct agenda<sup>39</sup>”.

In most of the cases encountered it was largely to promote denominational identity, gloss over troubles and to make a point to dissenting factions. When splinter factions became a permanent occurrence in the late 1970/early 1980s the dissenting voices are silenced in documents and where they are referred to, they are portrayed as power hungry and trouble makers promoting unorthodoxy. On more than half a dozen cases, I discovered that people who cried for change of worship styles were dismissed on assumed grounds that, “The Holy Spirit’s purpose is unity not division<sup>40</sup>” Further to these, it was a challenge to realise that most worship, attendance and ministry activity reports meant for higher church offices were crafted in such a way as to gain favours or respect.

The greatest challenge proved to be that the archival sources available proved very difficult to make use of because the information looked for was either not available in full, or was available in an unhelpful form for this research and often it was never possible to be sure that all the information available was interpreted correctly due to the age of some documents.

In order to go round these obstacles a thorough and critical analysis of the data was undertaken. Where a congregation did not have sufficient information, it was left out of the results table in which an emerging trend was sought and unrealistic results likely to mislead the research. Oral history was also employed. The results of this archival research in this presentation are made to dialogue with the results of a questionnaire survey and semi structured individual interviews in an effort to construct a balanced story of the church.

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<sup>39</sup> P. Denis, “The Use of Oral Sources in African History”, in *Bulletin for Contextual Theology*, vol 2. (Pietermaritzburg, SA: University of Natal, (April, 1995) 32.

<sup>40</sup> Although this is a direct quotation from the minutes of the Inglewood United church Parish Council held on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1974, it is repeated to the point of being a slogan for silencing dissenting voices on many other instances.

## **2.2 Interviews.**

The interview method of collecting data in this research was inspired by the work of Helen Cameron who defined an interview as “a data gathering conversation guided by the research<sup>41</sup>”. The purpose of this oral interactive study was to uncover what might otherwise be hidden. Denis’ argues that, “whilst in social sciences and other disciplines recordings will be kept secure in a locked environment and be destroyed once data capture and analysis is complete, interviews are held for the purposes of posterity<sup>42</sup>”. As most of the informants in this study consented to their identities being made public their voices will be heard throughout this research. The interviews conducted proved helpful and suggestive towards closing gaps left out by the archival study information.

Semi-structured interviews were preferred over against the highly structured equivalent on the assumption that the latter tends to discourage subjects from raising other relevant issues. All the interviews took the form of interactive conversation narrative. Open ended questions were asked and then follow ups to the questions made. The last question to be asked to every interviewee was always, “In your view what has been responsible for people not attending church services in Inglewood?” Each informant was interviewed on two separate occasions. Each interview lasted for one hour. The interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim by the interviewer.

### **2.2.1 Sample selection.**

Heterogeneous and strategic sampling was used to obtain the sample population in order to get a variation of views both in terms of depth, orthodoxy, and orthopraxis, simplicity and community closeness. The sampling criteria included gender, age, background, and faith affiliation with particular emphasis on three categories of regular church attendance,

- The de-churched
- Regular church attendance
- Church attendance outside Inglewood

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<sup>41</sup> Helen Cameron, etal, eds. *Studying Local Congregations* (London: SCM Press, 2005) 19-42.

<sup>42</sup> P. Denis, *Use of Oral Sources in African History*. 38.

Obviously there was selective bias towards fulfilling the informed advice of both Earl Babbie and Nancy Jean Vyhmeister who working independently concluded that, “interviews enable the researcher to carefully select respondents who can give an informed perspective to critical issues in the study<sup>43</sup>”.

With these in focus, a total of thirty people were interviewed twice over a period of six months (January-June 2012). They included three senior clergy persons both active and retired with an appreciation of Inglewood, two youth leaders including a youth pastor who was born and grew up in Inglewood eventually rising through the ranks to become a youth pastor of a new charismatic church and the principals of Inglewood Primary and Inglewood High school. Interestingly the principal of Inglewood High School is an active Christian and the principal of the primary school is in her own view “a post -institutional -church Christian<sup>44</sup>”.

The sample also included two former church lay leaders of congregations who are witnesses to the life of the church over the fifty year period under study and two historians who are members and article writers in the Anglican and Catholic churches. In the former case Allen and Margaret Stevenson proved to be such honeycombs of knowledge and critical analysis having been with three different churches in Inglewood since the 1930s and having been teachers with the High school for a long time. Allan was Sunday school superintendent with the Presbyterian Church and the United Church for a period of more than twenty years. He was also the chairperson of the committee which oversaw the Presbyterian/Methodist Union, a process that ran from 1967 to implementation in January 1971. Four current lay leaders, two deacons and three Parish council portfolio holders were also interviewed.

The final group of people to be interviewed included four secretaries of key voluntary organisations in the town. These are the critical figures at the helm of the Red Cross Society, the Rotary Club in Inglewood, the Lions Club and the Girl Guides. Key personnel at the driving seats of critical arms of the town, the Community Centre, the Food Bank and the Information Centre were also interviewed.

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<sup>43</sup> Earl Babbie, *The Basics of Social Research* (Belmont: Thompson Wadsworth, 2008) 270.

<sup>44</sup> From an Interview with Karen Patterson, Principal, Inglewood Primary School. School Office, 25/06/2012.

These interviews generated a lot of discussion and insight. Some obvious weaknesses were also encountered. For a start, it is a method that depends too much on human memory. We all know that memory can easily lapse and when this happens, the tendency for most people is to fill in gaps with lies. J Vansina explains these lies as “explanatory interpolations<sup>45</sup>”. This is collaborated by J. Josh and S. Lang who says that, “memory itself has to be treated with caution. It can be remarkably clear even after a very long time: on the other hand it can play tricks and what seems to be firm and detailed memories can be disapproved by other evidence”.

In our case it was clear that the conflict resolution “*indaba*” (gathering) over the prophetic declaration for the expulsion of all members of the free masonry initially from all church leadership positions and eventually out of town was described as having been attended by “a full house”, “the whole town”, “a big crowd” and “including all the Jack and Jills of no church affiliation at all<sup>46</sup>” by the interviewed respondents. Yet the minutes of the meeting records that there were 25 people voted against the motion, 13 voted in favour of the motion<sup>47</sup>. There were three neutrals giving a total of 41 people a far cry from the “whole town” suggested by most interviewees. One is left wondering whether to go by the minutes of meetings or to go by the live human document.

The second challenge obviously came from the natural factor of life. Human beings are mortal and once they die, the library has been burnt. One of the key sources of information who was at the centre point of the Masonic conflict (the Masonic conflict is discussed in chapter 4) died after giving only one part interview on the role played by internal conflicts in the loss of both integrity and credibility by the church. We could not verify his facts using the double interviewing method.

For the purpose this research, these setbacks were minimized by conducting the interviews twice over a six months period especially where people above the age of seventy were involved to see if their stories and views were maintained. When the same line of thought and story was maintained, chances are that the story

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<sup>45</sup> J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* (Chicago: Aldine Publishers, 1965) 40.

<sup>46</sup> These were some of the descriptions of the meeting held at Inglewood United Church on 05/07/1999 by current church members.

<sup>47</sup> Minutes of the General Meeting, Inglewood United Church, held on 05/07/1999.



could be true. If the story and view changed then the possibility is that it was just a passing feeling.

In addition, all the evidence and views from the interviews is made to triangulate and dialogue with information from the archives and from the survey responses. Undoubtedly interviews were better at unveiling what written sources failed to capture just as Denis says, “that oral sources concern what tends to be hidden: the spoken message which is fugitive by nature<sup>48</sup>”. Not all information can be made available in writing. These interviews made the issues of church much more vivid and brought the past closer as together with the interviewees we entered into, and relived the past as we learned from it.

### **2.2.2 Analysis of the interview information.**

The analysis of the individual interviews was premised on the principles of content analysis. The information was sorted into categories of dates, themes and shared understandings between the researcher and the participants. Emerging patterns were identified. It is these bits of information that constituted what is representative of the shared understanding and stood the challenge of pre-understanding that are adopted as part of the findings of this research and in a triangulation with other methods of data capture gave insight to the phenomenon of church decline under investigation.

### **2.3 Survey Questionnaire.**

One very critical component of this research is to try and get to the very views and attitudes of people in church, people that have left church and those that have never been part of the church in their lives, the never churched. Helen Cameron says of surveys, “they collect data about people’s characteristics, behaviours, attitudes and opinions<sup>49</sup>”. Along very similar lines research expert Judith Bell suggests that surveys, “investigate cause- effect-relationships and throws fresh light on sociological theories<sup>50</sup>” As this report is all about establishing causal links between people’s socio-cultural attitudes and demographic patterns to church attendance in Inglewood over the set period of time, a questionnaire survey was incorporated to provide the final links to the

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<sup>48</sup> P. Denis, *The Use of Oral Sources in History*. 39.

<sup>49</sup> Helen Cameron, *Studying Local Congregations* (London: SCM Press, 2005) 68.

<sup>50</sup> Judith Bell, *Doing Your Research Project* (Maidehead: Open University Press, 2005) 13.

research by involving as many people as possible and listening to their stories in the religious aspects of their community and personal lives. The questionnaire comprised a total of fifty questions designed to capture demographic information, church attendance and spirituality patterns as well as theological views, biblical consideration and literacy as well as other views on church and society.

As a way of guiding the research a multiplicity of responses were suggested for the fifty questions and each respondent was guided towards personal identity in terms of church. The main identities were.

- Regular church attendee in Inglewood
- De-churched
- Never-churched and
- Church attendance outside of Inglewood.

A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed throughout all the strategic wings of the town: the High School, Industry, Private homes, Churches and Businesses Premises. It was clearly stated that respondents should be exclusively people who live in Inglewood and are at least fifteen years of age. As part of the research ethical considerations, most questionnaires were distributed in person and the purpose of research, confidentiality issues as well as other questions and concerns of the potential respondents addressed.

From the original 600 forms distributed, almost 100 were returned blank with recipients arguing that, “this is an intrusion into our private lives. Faith and religious matters are to me just like my financial accounts. Simply not for public consumption<sup>51</sup>” or some such related comments. Eighty six were basically spoiled and often with some insulting remarks on the church and church people scribbled on them. About 120 questionnaires did not return even after two months of follow up and persuasion. A total of 307 questionnaires were returned and analysed. This research considers this to be a very high return since it is just about 10% of the population of Inglewood town and slightly above 5% of the population of Inglewood and surrounding district.

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<sup>51</sup> Two ladies whose names cannot be published for ethical reasons and who are both Employees with the TSB Bank in Inglewood, 13/07/2012.

The success was however achieved with a lot of accompanying hardships and limitations. The limitations certainly have some bearing on the results and may need to be borne in mind in the interpretations and subsequent conclusions. For a start, the process was very slow and demanded a lot of patience. It was also quite expensive with so much stationery and the computer processing required.

The biggest challenge however was that the very people most targeted by the researcher, the de-churched, very often proved the most hostile and uncooperative participants. The Christians were easier to contact, follow-up on and proved a lot more cooperative. In terms of numbers this may give a lop-sided impression of how many people are still viewing the church as relevant. The heterogeneous nature of the sample was therefore compromised in favour of church attendees in this case. The views expressed in this research are therefore likely to favour the views of church-going Christians.

Those who attend church outside of Inglewood were also not easy to locate and depended entirely on being randomly picked from homes and work places. They constituted no identifiable grouping. In an effort to minimize these determinant issues, about 400 questionnaires were distributed in randomly picked homes. The distribution was done mostly at night when people are generally home from work. This enabled the researcher to meet with potential respondents, clarify the ethical issues, and persuade them to participate and to arrange the means and times of collecting the completed surveys. This effectively improved the chances of retention. The other two hundred were then distributed through groupings and work areas. The data was analysed using computer software to categorise and produce various charts and graphical extrapolations of how many people and of what demographic category take particular views about the church, its leadership and religion.

#### **2.4 Other Limitations.**

Apart from the methodological limitations expressed for each data gathering method discussed, the other challenge faced was one of compromised objectivity. The fact is that this researcher as one of the current ministers in Inglewood is an insider and in as much as this is an advantage, there is a way in which this became a challenge and a disadvantage. There is a danger of having preconceived ideas influencing judgement. I have tried and endeavoured to

alleviate this by forming judgements based on evidence but there is always the possibility of objectivity being compromised by these preconceived ideas.

## **2.5 Theoretical Framework and Literature review.**

It is a fact that theoretical framework is the *conditio sine qua non* of any modern research. An initial literature review was carried out as a way of sensitizing the researcher to the phenomenon of interest, church decline, without biasing or blinding the researcher to emerging concepts. Upon analysis of the research data and the emergence of some relevant concepts, a more in-depth literature was then conducted so as to facilitate researcher openness to emerging concepts, as revealed by the gathered data. This was because there are scholars like B. Glaser who argue that “an initial literature review may bias the researcher and blind them to emerging concepts<sup>52</sup>”. We felt that the way to go was to keep an open and fair view of all facts even though we tended to favour recent publications.

The theoretical framework employed in this researched was the product of literature relating to church and change in the western world in general and New Zealand in particular. For the purpose of this research an initial sampling of the literature related to the topic of church decline was undertaken to provide an overview of the current state of knowledge. The literature available as both published and unpublished but focusing on issues of church decline in the post-modern and post-Christendom era was employed and matters raised are cited and made to dialogue with the findings of the survey, interviews and archival sources available for Inglewood.

Particular interest rested on the material published between 1990 and 2010. There is consistent evidence throughout the literature that churches in New Zealand have generally experienced decline as from 1960 onwards, that there is a common human experience of “losing touch with God<sup>53</sup>” and finding that faith is ebbing away. The major causes of this decline and subsequent loss of contact with God are many and complex. They however seem to revolve around rapid and discontinuous social changes, cultural changes, scientific and technological advancement as well as information communication and a rising wave of disavowal for voluntarism and institutional control of the attitudes, behaviours

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<sup>52</sup> B. Glaser, *Theoretical Sensitivity* (San Francisco, CA: Sociology Press, 1978)

<sup>53</sup> John Pritchard, *God Lost and Found* (London: SPCK, 2011) ix.

and morality of individuals. The later is coupled to the rise and growing awareness of religious pluralism.

There is general consensus among a plethora of scholars that the church has not changed both theologically and operationally in line with the changes in its operating environment: at best the church has only changed fractionally, and not in leaps and bounds as should have been the case for an institution that is supposed to be “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14).

These views of scholars form the springboard for our argument in this research that church attendances has been affected by a host of internal and external factors. For Inglewood it has been: cultural changes, social changes, the changing demographic picture, the changing role and status of leadership, conflicts, schisms and competition. Literature identified the following concepts as being of particular concern in the decline of church:

1. *Socio-cultural and demographic changes.* Kevin Ward’s, *Church and change 2010* is an unpublished article in which he argues that three major changes have caused decline in church interest in New Zealand since the 1960s. These are social changes, cultural changes and demographic changes in society<sup>54</sup>. Culturally Ward pin points five main value changes that have promoted an accelerated retreat in church influence. They are the rise in individualism, privatism, faith or religious pluralism and a rising spirit of anti-institutionalism. Socially the document cites loss of community, the changing patterns of marriage and family life as well as the fluctuating patterns of work place. With an eagle’s eye on the national census results for the years, 2001 and 2006 Ward pays special regards to the increasing number of immigrants representing a multiplicity of religious persuasions arriving and staying permanently in New Zealand. This research has borrowed from Ward’s research and examines the impact of these factors to the church in Inglewood.

2. *The expired role and model of leadership:* Loren B Mead, in *The Once and Future Church: Reinventing Congregations for a New Mission* locates the roots of the demise of the church in the *expired role and model of leadership* of the church. In his view influential church leaders have all come from a Christendom paradigm and their thinking have been modelled according to and for this now

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<sup>54</sup> Kevin Ward, “The Changing nature of post 60s New Zealand”, *Church and Change*. 2010. pp1-11. Unpublished.

expired paradigm. Consequently all the structures, infrastructure and way of thinking in church today are built on the presuppositions of a Christendom paradigm which has now ceased to exist. Mead suggests that New Zealand society was very Christian and conducive to church attendance until 1963 when, “the Fox theatre opened (for business) on Sunday<sup>55</sup>”. Since then the church has gradually lost its privileged position and can no longer bank on Sunday as a day for church. The problem is that the church has continued to operate as if this privilege has not been taken away. This research incorporates an investigation of the views and availability of the people of Inglewood to worship on a Sunday

3. *Need for a totally new framework for doing church: Brian McLaren, Church on the other side: exploring the radical future of the local congregation.* The last 20 years has seen McLaren produce a number of publications consistently on the need for holistic changes to the framework for doing church in the post modern world. His basic contribution to this research has been the bold assertion, “If you have a new world, you need a new church. We have a new world<sup>56</sup>”. McLaren points out that for this new church for a new world we need new ways of preaching, teaching, programming, structuring and theologizing. In this research we examined church documents for any hint of change or adjustments in these areas as the flood of change came in.

4. *Quest for spirituality: Martyn Atkins, Resource Renewal: Shaping churches for the Emerging Future,* suggests the church is *no longer spiritual enough* for a people whose spiritual needs are increasing. He offers what he calls, “challenging clues and hope filled hints<sup>57</sup>” old churches need to be aware of. Unlike most other writers that worry about depleting numbers in churches, his thesis is that churches need not worry about depleting numbers but with the depletion focus on better motifs of, “health and depth<sup>58</sup>”. He suggests there is a need to investigate a viral infection in the way churches worship, their lack of authentic spirituality and inability to handle the language, attitudes and tastes of the young people than the ‘mathematic’ themes of addition and multiplication which belong to older church growth theories. Consequently recovery is very unlikely if churches fail to:

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<sup>55</sup> Loren B. Mead, *The Once and Future Church* (New York: Alban Institute, 1991) 8-21.

<sup>56</sup> Brian McLaren, *Church on the other side* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006) 15.

<sup>57</sup> Martyn Atkins, *Resourcing Renewal: shaping churches for the emerging future* (Eden: Methodist Publishing House, 2007) 83.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* 84.

- Stop doing the things that have made them unhealthy
- Do basic things of older churches better and
- Actively reshape paying particular attention to mission.

5. *The death of the Christian story.* Writing from a United Kingdom perspective (but all of them are not British), Alan Roxburgh and Scott Boren in *Introducing the Missional Church* suggests that, in effect, Christianity has expired in the United Kingdom and elsewhere<sup>59</sup>. Because of this expiration of the Christian story the majority of emerging generations have no memory of the Christian narrative. This has thrown the church off balance by nullifying its hitherto privileged position and opening societal space to a highly liberal and pluralistic mixture of values, beliefs and choices competing on an even playing field. Further to that is the question of church leadership. Could it be that that the decline in church has been compounded by a clergy facing a new environment they have not been adequately prepared for?

6. *Negative contribution of church leavers.* Alan Jamieson is a New Zealand Baptist pastor and sociologist. He has expanded his doctoral thesis into a book, *A Churchless Faith* in which he takes a look at why people in New Zealand are walking out of church and why the drift is unhealthy for the church. Jamieson has informed and contributed to this research in two ways. First he has shown that people who leave the church “do not leave their church suddenly<sup>60</sup>”. They do so in a gradual process of reflection, questioning and withdrawal which may last for months or even years. In other words people who leave church are not ignorant backsliders. Some of them actually make an intentional and informed decision to leave. Inevitably most of these “leavers” follow a four stage process namely:

- First doubts
- Seeking and weighing alternatives
- Negotiating turning points and
- Developing a new sense of identity<sup>61</sup>

Secondly, Jamieson emphasises the fact that the church needs these leavers and allowing them to go without a fight is often lethal because of the cascading

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<sup>59</sup> Alan Roxburgh and Scott Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker publishers, 2009).

<sup>60</sup> Alan Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith* (Wellington: Philip Garside Publishing, 2001) 38.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 39.

downstream effects the leavers have on the church. These downstream effects are:

- Leavers take their time, skills, efforts and wallets with them
- Leavers tell their stories and experiences of church to others. Now these stories can be very powerful disincentives to the Christian faith. Leavers are a negative marketing force
- Leavers take their children with them<sup>62</sup>

Research therefore behoves us to re-examine our ability and willingness to help people in moments of doubt to feel dignified and able to explore their faith questions and to freely express doubt. But we must ask to what extent has the church been able to provide models for an honest Christian life rather than reduce Christianity to a catalogue of “shoulds” and “shouldn’ts”.

7. *Alienation from the community and an outdated belonging process.* Nigel Dixon is another New Zealand church leader who also views the church from both a theological and sociological balcony. In his thin paperback *Village without Walls* Nigel Dixon says that the church has lost its sense and touch of community, has isolated itself into a walled village. This is a strategic move to dive for cover, as it runs away from a world of constant exposure to “otherness<sup>63</sup>”. What the church needs to do is to face this otherness head-on and restructure its own frame work of worship belonging and beliefs so as to be tenable to this powerful hurricane of change. He proposes that a change has to be made to the process of “how to belong to church”. The traditional pathway of belonging to church, which is rather exclusive, has to give way to a more fluid and flexible inclusive post modern model as shown below.

Traditional model

Believe  
Behave  
Belong

Post modern model

Belong  
Believe  
Behave<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Alan Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith*. 154-157.

<sup>63</sup> Nigel Dixon, *Village Without Walls: An Exploration of the Necessity of Building Christian Community in a Post-Christian World* (Palmerston North, NZ: Vox Humana, 2010) 19.

<sup>64</sup> Nigel Dixon, *Village Without Walls*. 72.



8. *Bad experiences with church. God Lost and Found* is the second of two books released by the Bishop of Oxford, John Pritchard in the last three years. He explores factors that are driving people out of church. Top of the list is the damaging experiences in church. He writes:

People get damaged by the church, sometimes they are overworked, and sometimes they are undervalued, sometimes bullied. Sometimes their good will is abused, sometimes they are manipulated and made to feel guilty, sometimes they are taught in damaging ways. Sometimes they are let down by the leadership. It is all very wounding and it is not surprising that the victims do not want to return to the scene of the crime<sup>65</sup>.

In addition to the adverse effect of the damage causal and effect interaction Pritchard argues that other factors driving people from church are, the boring nature of church services and programmes (Plain black boring), reactionary nature of the church, the sea of grey hair that confronts any visitor to church in New Zealand today, a church which is no longer spiritual enough and the tragic facts of life at both personal, global or communal levels. In the views of Bishop Pritchard the worst has been the stagnancy of the church which is however operating in a “grown up world<sup>66</sup>”. He calls for “morphing<sup>67</sup>” or reimagining of the church faith into being, “relational rather than regulation” and a quest as opposed to arrival, faith as direction not success<sup>68</sup>.

9. *An Immature religion*. In his book *Living Jesus* we have had to borrow, his reflection on the work of Jonathan Swift who says of the church, “we have enough religion to make us hate but not enough religion to make us love one another<sup>69</sup>”. He pretty well pointed to the key trouble. The church has failed to: “Face the world with compassion, to confront the power structures and to offer a contrast to the greedy consumerist culture of our day<sup>70</sup>”.

In addition to many other sources consulted, these laid the theoretical framework employed in this research. It is a view that Inglewood is part of the western

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<sup>65</sup> John Pritchard, *God Lost and Found* (London: SPCK, 2011) 14.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* 41.

<sup>67</sup> The concept of morphing was originally introduced by Eddie Gibbs, *Churchmorph: how megatrends are reshaping Christian communities* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009) 16. It refers to the transitioning of the church to a new identity as a missional presence in the western world.

<sup>68</sup> John Pritchard, *God Lost and Found*. 67-85.

<sup>69</sup> Jonathan Swift, cited in, John Pritchard, *Living Jesus* (London: SPCK, 2010) 41.

<sup>70</sup> John Pritchard, *Living Jesus*. 45-54.

world. It is part of a matured world in which society's cultural values and demographic forces are changing rapidly and discretely. The clergy and church leadership are ill-equipped to cope with this milieu of changes. On the one hand people in Inglewood are frustrated by a church that no longer meets their needs, views, questions and doubts. While on the other, there are the stresses of a world in which life is lived in the inner lane (fast and busy) yet church programming has not been readjusted to meet new work schedules, new definitions of family and other issues. These have facilitated the widening of the back door through which people are silently walking out of church.

## **CHAPTER 3.**

### **AN UNCOMMON TRAIL OF CLOSURES AND NUMERICAL DECLINES.**

In this chapter we show that from the beginning of the 1960s, the church in Inglewood went into a relentless retreat and into decline. This argument is sustained by tabulations and diagrammatic informational representation of facts and figures. The facts and figures show that in six areas that measure the vibrancy, potency and relevancy of the church in a community there has been marked losses pointing to an unhealthy dispersion of members and influence during the last fifty years. The church-life indicators showing the extent of this declivitous direction are:

- After 1960 preaching places hitherto opened up as the church grew started to close down and several church groupings and denominations pulled out.
- The number of visitors entering through the front doors of the church waned drastically.
- The number of baptisms, the official and traditional rite of passage whereby individuals commit to the faith and church publicly plummeted markedly.
- Marriages solemnized in church decreased significantly.
- Funerals and burials conducted through the church took a tumble and most importantly,
- Church membership both in terms of belonging and affiliation retreated by around 70% for adults and 90% for children and youth in a fifty year period.

#### **3.1 General reductions and closure of worship communities and preaching points.**

In chapter1, we saw that as the town and surrounding areas of Inglewood grew, so did the church with the various denominations opening several preaching points to help bring the church closer to the people and to create smaller relational sub-communities. After 1960 the trend was reversed. We will examine the new trend starting with the Methodist Church.

##### **3.1.1. The Methodists.**

In 1965 one of the mainstays of Methodism in the Inglewood community, a thriving preaching point called Tariki closed with “12 pews being donated to the

Inglewood United church<sup>71</sup>". The reason given was, "continued dwindling of numbers<sup>72</sup>". In 1966 Tarata church just a short distance south of the town was reported to be lacking support. In the same year Waitoriki preaching point was so poorly attended that services were discontinued.

In July 1966 Inglewood membership dropped from 107 to 96, the first time it had been below 100 in a long time. The quarterly meeting minutes of 1966 reflects the frustrations of the minister due to the deteriorating situation noting, "The Minister's report highlighted that, 'small congregations were embarrassing<sup>73</sup>'. In 1967 the time for morning services was changed to 10:30 am from 11:00 am in a move described by Pat Julian as 'an attempt to handle the threat posed by the opening of the golf course on Lepper Road<sup>74</sup>'. Golf always started at 11:30 am. In 1968 we see efforts to promote the spirit of unity and to boost numbers at evening services. The Methodist and Presbyterian churches started holding evening services together. At this juncture both Allen Stevenson and Valerie Allen agree that, "neither church was an economic unity<sup>75</sup>". The Methodist funds were already being 'topped up' by the Home Mission Department. Membership dropped to 93.

The rest of the other preaching places closed. Midhirst on 16 Bilk Terrace was sold due to poor membership and attendance at services; Egmont Village was closed in 1977. This closure effectively ended any church activity at this village about five kilometres north of Inglewood. According to the minutes of Inglewood Methodist church, 11<sup>th</sup> March 1966, the well used little church of Waipuku had services cancelled because of the church's state of disrepair. The land was given to a Mr. McElroy whose property joined the church. The dwindling number of attendees could not shoulder the costs of maintaining the building.

At the beginning of 1960 Mrs. Pollard was in charge of the Sunday school. She died in 1963 having been Sunday school superintendent for 30 years. It proved hard to find a replacement superintendent. There were 38 children on the Sunday

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<sup>71</sup> Valerie Allen, *History of Inglewood Methodist Church: 1876-1976*. Research Document 2009. Unpublished 5.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Pat Julian, Inglewood, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Allen and Margaret Stevenson, Inglewood, 13<sup>th</sup>, June 2012. According to Allen the Union of the Methodist/Presbyterian was inevitable because of three reasons: 1. Both were dropping in numbers, 2. Both were experiencing financial problems and 3. Maintaining buildings was becoming difficult. The idea was to maintain fewer buildings better.

school roll and 6 teachers meeting in the Masonic lodge next to the church. Tariki had 65 children and 5 teachers. The numbers soon started to go down such that by 1964 Anglicans and Methodists combined Sunday schools with a presence of 55 and an average attendance of above 30. By 1966 the membership had dropped to 20<sup>76</sup>.

Norfolk preaching point's available records indicate that there were 23 pupils on the Sunday school roll prior to 1960. In 1965 the services were terminated and the Sunday school closed. Families were asked to bring their children to Inglewood. A number of families did not like this move. Waitoriki had 12 children on the roll. At the end of 1960 records show that the falling numbers at Waitoriki led to the Methodists, Presbyterian and Anglican churches pulling together to form a combined district Sunday school with an enrolment of 26 children and 7 teachers. Sadly in 1966, services were discontinued and the combined Sunday school disbanded. The same trend in the Sunday school is also repeated in what was the Bible Class which later changed its name to Youth Group in 1960.

### 3.1.2. The Anglican Church.

The Anglican Church entered the 1960s on a high with His Lordship the Bishop of Waikato the Rt. Rev. C. A. Cherington officially opening and dedicating a new parish hall adjacent to the church as well as a new vicarage on the corner of Rata and Miro streets on 13<sup>th</sup> February 1960 and 25<sup>th</sup> May 1968 respectively. Whereas at the consecration of the Inglewood Church, 13 candidates were presented to the Bishop for confirmation<sup>77</sup>, there has been no confirmation to full membership reported or recorded at the church in the last ten years.

There were many groups contributing to the life and ministry of the church at this time. According to Lorraine Wilson<sup>78</sup>, the Young wives started in 1960 when the church was very well attended. Meetings were held monthly. Shirley Marsh was the first leader with Jean Hurlstone overseeing the project of sending cards to all baptized children birthday cards until the age of five. This was a way of keeping a relationship with the child and family. In 1965 it combined with the Mothers' Union to form the Christian Family Fellowship a movement that specialized in

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<sup>76</sup> Knox Inglewood Presbyterian Roll, 1960-1970.

<sup>77</sup> Florinda Lambert, *All About St Andrew's Anglican Church* (Inglewood: 1995) 25.

<sup>78</sup> Lorraine Wilson, "Young Wives" in *St Andrew's Anglican Church Inglewood Historical Notes*, 2009. Eds. Diane Moverly and Malcolm Polts. Unpublished. 9.

providing dinners for the elderly living alone. It was such an impact in the community but soon suffered from fatigue as young mothers stopped joining and in 2005 went into recess.

Audrey Klenner<sup>79</sup> records that between the 60s and 70s, the Anglican Church had the strongest church choir in living memory. It was led by a wonderful organist and choir mistress Floss Lambert. Photographs taken in 1970 show a large choir immaculately dressed in choir robes consisting of dark blue gowns with white trimmings. As the participation in church activities took a tumble, the choir was not spared.

According to Audrey Klenner, “the choir disbanded several years before Floss passed away in 2007<sup>80</sup>”. Its membership had fluctuated between 16 and 12 for some time before plummeting to an all time low of two in 1990, and then the inevitable happened.

There were so many other organizations that thrived and bloomed such as the Youth Club which ran until 1987, the Bethel Series Bible Group which ran out of steam when a difficult two year course covering the Old and New Testament was introduced. It was so challenging that a lot of people could not stick with it.

### 3.1.2 (a).The church at Tariki.

According to the Taranaki Budget of June 19, 1897, a service described as, “a very large gathering of residents as the Anglican Tariki church was opened amidst, ‘great kindness and hospitality’ of the Inglewood Tariki residents which will be long remembered by the visitors who did ample justice to the excellent luncheon and afternoon tea provided for them<sup>81</sup>”. However on June 18, 1969 the same paper carried an article, “The Rev. E. Brown, Vicar of the parochial district of St’ Andrews Inglewood is preparing a special service to mark the closing of Tariki’s 71 year old St. Phillips Anglican church at Tariki”. The reason given for the closure was that,

The decline in attendance has forced the decision to close the church. The cost of putting the church into decent order is not considered warranted,

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<sup>79</sup> Audrey Klenner and Jean Hurlstone, “St Andrew’s Choir” in St Andrew’s Anglican Church Inglewood Historical Notes 2009. Eds. Diane Moverly and Malcolm Polts Unpublished. 11.

<sup>80</sup> Audrey Klenner and Jean Hurlstone, *Inglewood Historical Notes*. 12.

<sup>81</sup> Florinda Lambert, All About St’ Andrew’s Anglican Church Inglewood. 23.

with the dropping off of attendance, there has been little more than a handful of people attending services recently<sup>82</sup>.

This closure of Tariki by the Anglicans marked a fundamental departure from a rural based ministry to an urban based ministry. It brought with it new challenges to Christian ministry hitherto unknown. The church was getting isolated from a rural life style of community, togetherness and relatedness. It was shifting towards the individualistic and private life styles of urban areas. A key ally in mission was being left out: the warmth and friendship of rural communities.

### 3.1.2 (b). St. John's at Kaimata.

This preaching point seating about 60 people was opened on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> March 1921. The daily News of May 5, 1980 advertised a service to commemorate the pioneers of the district which was held with more than 100 people in attendance. By 1990 this once thriving worship centre that had remained as the only Anglican rural based gospel point in Inglewood had services closed. Two services are now held annually (during Easter and Christmas) as an attempt to keep a heritage alive and to check on the possibilities of a revival, albeit with minimal encouragement. The reason cited for the closure was, "dwindling numbers<sup>83</sup>".

### 3.1.3. The Catholic Church.

Although most Catholics interviewed in this study preferred to look at Inglewood as basically a Catholic settlement, the truth is that the Catholic Church never really established itself much outside of Sacred Heart Parish in Inglewood town. Its catchment area for parishioners has always been the farming community even today, a possible reason why it has remained the strongest church numerically in the town. However as of 2010 there was already no Sunday school and no youth group at the Catholic Church. The future is not bright.

The Sacred Heart was dedicated in 1899<sup>84</sup>. A report of the Parish of Inglewood gives an exceptionally bright picture of the parish and its community influence. The Parish area is described as being from Waiongana to Tariki, Kent road to Purangi and Inglewood suburbs. The town of Inglewood is noted as having 2000

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<sup>82</sup> The Taranaki Budget News Paper. 18<sup>th</sup> June 1969.

<sup>83</sup> The Taranaki Daily News, 5th May, 1980.

<sup>84</sup> Pat Julian, *Parish of the Sacred Heart Inglewood Centennial 1899-1999* (Property of Forrestal House Management Committee, 2000) 11.

people at the time and these included only four Catholic families and six of mixed marriages. This shows that the majority of Catholics were from the rural areas around Inglewood as this report shows a total Catholic community of around 400 parishioners.

In March of 1919, 200 Catholics participated in the sacrament during a wide reaching mission. In 1926 a new school St Patrick was opened in the area. In 1926 Father McGlyn of the Inglewood Parish conducted a census that reflected a total of 800 good, bad and indifferent Catholics. The question of a good and bad Catholic is in the words of Pat Julian “a matter of conjecture<sup>85</sup>” but the picture is one of a large Catholic church as early as 1926. This is supported by the fact that as early as 1906 two decades before the opening of the school the church had already opened its convent in Inglewood. The convent celebrated its golden Jubilee in 1956<sup>86</sup> and obviously it epitomized the fall from grace and favour that has been the fate of the Inglewood church since the 1960s. Here is why.

A report in 1967 stated that, “due to the reduced number of resident sisters, the end- bedroom at the Nunnery had to be converted into a combined shower, toilet and laundry<sup>87</sup>”. In 1971 a sign of the times came with the announcement that the Inglewood convent was to become part of New Plymouth city’s community the next year. No doubt due to the falling numbers in Inglewood. Two years later, the writing was really on the wall as a decision was made to finally close the Inglewood convent, for long a pride of the town as the sisters were reputable for their spirit of community, love and charity in addition to their thorough approach to education.

The property was to be sold at a price of \$36000 to the Archdiocese of Wellington. So on the 11<sup>th</sup> December 1973 the parish gathered at a mass to celebrate in thanksgiving for all the graces and blessings of 67 years of service to the community by the Sisters in Inglewood. According to Pat Julian the closing of the convent was a sad event.

It was sad for the community of Inglewood who for nearly 79 years had supported, loved and cherished and been so generous to the sisters. It was sad for those who valued holistic and disciplined education of the children

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>86</sup> Pat Julian, *Parish of the Sacred Heart Inglewood*. 29.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.



provided by the sister with such thorough, dedication and courage even the most professional of modern day teachers would envy. The sisters were a link between orthodoxy and practice. They represented to the people of Inglewood the reality of a simple Christian ethic of care, total concern and selflessness<sup>88</sup>.

According to Allan Stevenson,

The church has really never been able to represent that simple ethic afterwards in ways people really adored. They were used to seeing simplicity, commitment and fairness lived out on a daily basis. They were a symbol of Christianity as owned by the people and for the people not owning and demanding from the people as they see today<sup>89</sup>.

The downward spiral continued to tear into the life and ministry of the Catholic Church until finally at the end of 1979 the sisters handed over the running of St Patrick's Catholic school to lay teachers and a wonderful era of selfless dedicated service to God, the community and church came to an end. The nunnery is presently occupied by a spiritualist who charges for spiritual services rendered and whose beliefs, values and practices can hardly be aligned to those who profess the Bible as the supreme rule of faith and practice.

#### 3.1.4. The Salvation Army.

The Salvation Army was established in Inglewood in June 1886 under Captain Johnnie Newbold. According to R.W Brown, "For many years they had a large following<sup>90</sup>". The Arthur, Burkitts, Bancroft and Mackinder families were some household Salvation Army names in Inglewood for a very long time. They built an Army Hall in Standish Street. The general populace of Inglewood interviewed agreed with the question posed by Brown that, "who can ever forget old Ensign Buick plodding his way around the roads of Inglewood selling the "War Cry<sup>91</sup>".

It has not been possible to establish the exact date the Salvation Army pulled out of Inglewood but it is certainly between 1971 and 1975 since the Parish Council of the Inglewood United Church discussed an article of the agenda, "That for

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Allen Stevenson, Inglewood 13<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

<sup>90</sup> R. W. Brown, *Te Mōa: 100 Years History of Inglewood* (New Plymouth: Master Print Press, 1975) 166.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

negotiations with the Salvation Army a price of \$5,000.00 be placed on the Cutfield Street property including floor covering, main seating, smaller furniture and other articles subject to further negotiations<sup>92</sup>". A subsequent meeting held on 1st March 1971 considered, "a letter of decline to the offer of Knox Church property". The same discussion gives a hint to the fact that the Salvation Army ranks in Inglewood had thinned considerably and the Army was mulling over the possibility of pulling out. Mark Jones said that "they pulled out around 1972/73 because they simply ran out of steam<sup>93</sup>".

### 3.1.5. The Brethren.

The Brethren church came into Inglewood late. They took advantage of the bumper period when the church was prospering from the benefits of the post war baby boom. They built the gospel Chapel in 1954. It made such an impression on the community that the chapel was constructed entirely on community voluntary labour led by the local Brethren. In 1956 the same year the Catholic Church were celebrating the golden jubilee for the Nunnery, a Mr. R. Laidlaw of Auckland and national leader for the Brethren in New Zealand teamed up with the mayor Mr. R. W Brown and another Mr. James Burt, church leader and reputable preacher from Auckland to officially open the chapel. Hope was high and expectations abounded. But not for long.

By 1980 the Brethren had pulled out and the chapel sold to a local children's play centre. Available documents show that they could not sustain the costs of running the chapel due to an unforeseen reduction in membership in the 1970s. The list of closures is long but maybe suffice it to say that the very first Pentecostal church in Inglewood Christian Life Centre, a very extreme type of a Pentecostal church preaching a thoroughgoing realized eschatology set up church in a closed factory building around 1976. They were such an extremist movement they did not believe in disease and sickness amongst the faithful. They could not sustain the membership of those who first flocked to them especially with the arrival of Life Gate Apostolic Church and the new born Inglewood Christian Fellowship proving a more orthodox and somewhat milder form of

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<sup>92</sup> Minutes of the Parish Council of Inglewood United Church, 4<sup>th</sup> February 1971.

<sup>93</sup> Interview with Mark Jones at Mamaku Centre, Inglewood on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2012. Mark was a member of the Parish Council of the United Church. He was part of the breakaway group that formed the Christian Fellowship. He has lived in Inglewood for close to sixty years. He was factory manager, missionary and Pastor for many years.

Pentecostalism. They were forced to close down selling the mortgage on the building to the Christian Fellowship.

We see that after a long period of boom, the churches in Inglewood started to close soon after 1960. The Salvation Army pulled out just as did the Brethren. Both of these went into New Plymouth. The Catholic church closed the nunnery at what is today the Forrestal lodge and handed over St' Patrick's Catholic school to secular teachers. The nunnery moved into New Plymouth. The Anglican Church closed out all preaching points outside of the receding St Andrews church in Inglewood. Between 1960 and 1970, the Methodist closed all its preaching points in the surrounding rural areas. The main church in Inglewood closed out and entered into a cooperating venture with Knox Presbyterian church. The reason for this Union is best understood from what Valerie Allen recorded in the Methodist Centennial Celebrations report,

In the 1960s TV had come to New Zealand and in 1965 to Inglewood. As people acquired TVs they wanted to watch television and so services at night became less attended. Those from the farming areas were disillusioned as they attended these services more. At this time television programmes were only screened in the evenings. With the minister stating that the small congregations were an embarrassment and more people dropping out of church finances were becoming tight. There was a big push for Union from the Methodist Synod and the Presbytery<sup>94</sup>.

The Presbyterian closed its preaching point at Tarata selling the building for \$1-00 to the community. All straight Presbyterian churches are now in New Plymouth. The preaching point continued to struggle holding services once a month until it finally closed down in 2010 with attendance down to less than five people per month.

Initially these closures looked like a positive deliberate and intentional move towards centralization of worship and a pooling together of the human resources available for ministry. It was looked at as a way of reenergizing and giving the zest that comes with numbers to the church.

In effect it created an alienation of the church from the farming communities. It had the lulling effect on the church which never developed a culture of deep

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<sup>94</sup> Valerie Allen, History of Inglewood Methodist Church 1876-1976. 18.

research so as to dig into the cultural, sociological and theological forces of change that were in effect interacting beneath the façade of simple rural to urban migrations in the area. The somewhat big congregations that resulted from the union as well as from the mopping up of members previously worshipping elsewhere pacified and anaesthetized the church. It was able to painlessly sever its long standing bond with the people outside urban areas. It initially created large pools of people who unfortunately worshiped together and shared in the comfort of numbers. Unfortunately they no longer shared genuine personal relationship with one another as they had been used to during the time the major catchment area for the church was the rural agriculturally based communities. The new group alienated lots of people from the formative demands of leadership development. So many people were able to filter easily out of responsibilities and eventually out of notice and even out of church.

Although initially a lot of effort was put into the pastoral care needs of the de-churched areas, with more and more people acquiring cars and the road network system improving vastly it was thought that centralization of worship would not prove such a challenge. It did. People were becoming not only geographically separated and distant from one another but also relationally distant. Urban based people are often relationally distant from those in geographical proximity to them. The bloom was off the roses and soon declines reflected in other and even more critical spheres of ministry. Let us look at a few that we flushed out during the course of this study.

### **3.2. The number of visitors to church.**

First, the number of visitors coming through the doors of the church started to drop. Table 1 :( i) and Fig 1: (i) shows the trend in the number of visitors to the churches. This study appreciates the fact that not all visitors to the church take the trouble to sign visitors registers and that some churches did not provide records of visitors for long periods but those available were enough to form an informed opinion. Those visitors who did not sign in the visitors registers similarly affect all the recorded ten-year epochs and so has no effect on the trends. The numbers of people entering the doors of the church for the first time have been falling. Available records showed a high of 292 visitors per ten year period 1980-1989 representing an encouraging figure of 29 visitors per year excluding those who did not sign in. However the following decade 1990-1999 the number of

visitors fell to 136 visitors, a big deep to around 14 visitors a year. This represent a more than 50% fall in church visits.

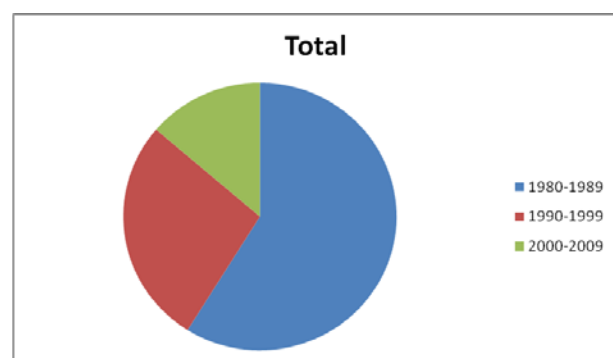
The national census figures show the population of Inglewood also falling from 3204 in 1991 to 3192 five years later, subsequently plummeting further to 2946 by 2001. The drop in population attributed to the closure of the dairy factory, Moa Nui, in 1992, the toy manufacturing company, the Fun Ho Toys, and others such as the Glass Blowing Furnace during the same period can hardly explain the drop in visitor numbers. The minimal effect of population change is further supported by the results of the last recorded decade, 2000-2010 in which the number of visitor tumbled to 68, whose average of 7 visitors per year is exactly a 50% drop from the previous epoch despite the population increasing to 3090 and the number of dwellings reaching an all time high of 1209 in 2006.

What we have here is an indication of about 76% decline in the number of new visitors to the church over a thirty year period 1980-2010. Given the huge volume of traffic to church in the early 60s this decline is obviously greater over the fifty year period 1960-2010. It reflects the reality of a model of evangelism that no longer works. It means that any church that expects people to come to it risks dying out. It means that congregations have to discover new and creative ways to indwell and to engage communities and neighbourhoods in whom people are now located and unwilling to come to church on their own volition.

Table 1: (i) **Church visitors per decade**

	Total	Average per year
<b>1980-1989</b>	292	29
<b>1990-1999</b>	136	14
<b>2000-2009</b>	68	7

Figure 1: (i)



The fact that visitors are no longer coming means two things: (1) that a change has occurred from forces outside of the church itself and may be in areas church has no control over and (2) since 'newcomers somehow make a decision to cross

a boundary from not-in-congregation to in-the-congregation<sup>95</sup>, it may be that this boundary has become too pronounced and insurmountable. The church that seeks to grow into the future has to pay attention to boundaries developing. This change/boundary phenomenon may have distanced the church from the community it once had a very close contact with. Most people interviewed and those who participated in the survey, especially the de-churched shed some light on the nature and identity of these boundaries. In the fourth chapter we will examine some of these boundaries.

### **3.3. The number of Marriages solemnized in church.**

As the number of people visiting the church took a tumble, the number of marriages solemnized in and through the church similarly suffered greatly over the years in Inglewood.

A study of Table 1: (ii) on page 44 and Fig 1: (ii) on page 45 depicts an astonishing retardation in the number of marriages being solemnized in the church after 1960 despite the population increasing into the 3000 mark. The results show that 376 marriages conducted during the ten year period 1960-1970. This number then tumbled to 310 between 1971 and 1980 representing 31 marriages per year. The rot continued until a staggering 90% decrease is reached during the worst affected ten year period running from 2000 to 2010.

These results are compounded by our finding that for every ten year period studied as from 1960 the numbers of cancelled marriages have been on the increase as the increase in divorce takes its toll. There is no doubt that the decline in the number of marriages exacerbated the rate of decline in church attendance. The white protestant bourgeois protestant family has always been the normative nuclear family with religious and family symbolism being always closely intertwined<sup>96</sup>. One might say that it is families that create religious space and the more religious and Christian grounded families are the more sure footed and anchored a foundation they provide for the church. To use the words of Roof, "the family is the extension of the church, the place where faith and practice are lived out"<sup>97</sup>. The main-line churches have always relied heavily on intact families

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<sup>95</sup> Loren Mead, *The Once and Future Church: Reinventing the Congregation for a New Mission Frontier* (New York: Alban Institute, 1991) 76.

<sup>96</sup> Wade Clark Roof, Cited by Kevin Ward, *Church and change*, 2010. Unpublished. 5.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

with children to replenish them. Clearly amongst all demographic changes at play, decline in nuclear family units has contributed most to the decline in protestant church membership since 1960.

The findings from this study on what is happening to marriages do not paint a different picture for Inglewood. We can certainly derive similar conclusions to that drawn by Penny Long Marler in a research entitled *“Lost in the Fifties”* that *“as the family goes, so goes the church<sup>98</sup>”*. Margaret Stevenson said that marriage has always been the guarantor of families. It was useful in ensuring the return to the church of their roots for parents who obviously wanted to get their children into Sunday school even if they themselves had left church at some point especially as teenagers. *“During our days most people dropping out of church (instinctive drop outs) in teenage years would normally return as the time to marry come along<sup>99</sup>”*. The church has lost this previously guaranteed inheritance, a factor compounded by the fact of delayed marriages as reflected in Table 1: (iii) below and Fig 1: (iii) on page 44.

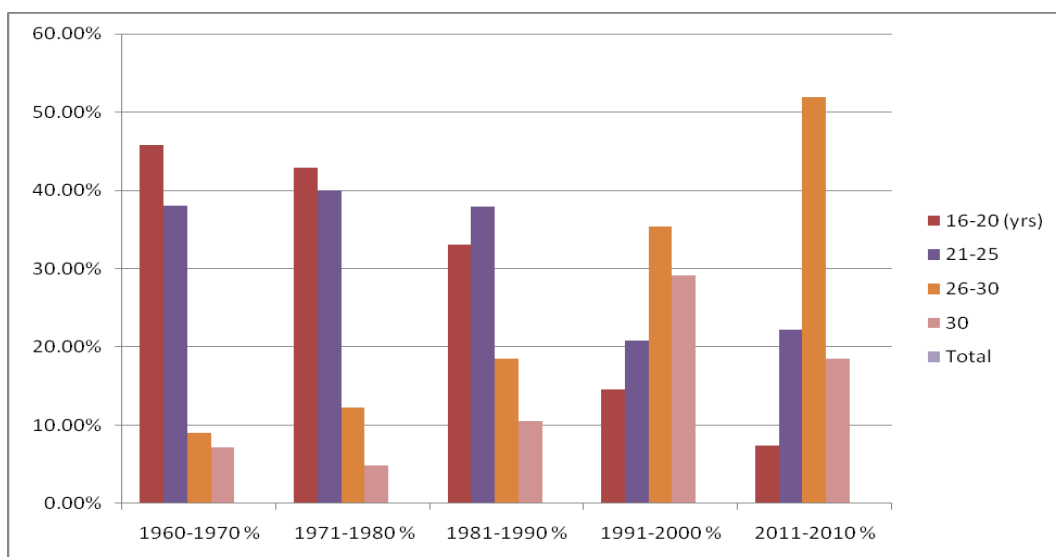
**Table 1: (iii) Change in marriage ages as per the Churches’ Marriage Registers.**

Age	1960-1970	1960-1970 %	1971-1980	1971-1980 %	1981-1990	1981-1990 %	1991-2000	1991-2000 %	2001-2010	2001-2010 %
16-20	172	45.74%	133	42.90%	75	33.04%	7	14.58%	2	7.41%
21/25	143	38.03%	124	40.00%	86	37.89%	10	20.83%	6	22.22%
26-30	34	9.04%	38	12.26%	42	18.50%	17	35.42%	14	51.85%
30	27	7.18%	15	4.84%	24	10.57%	14	29.17%	5	18.52%
<b>Total</b>	376		310		227		48		27	

<sup>98</sup> Cited by Kevin Ward, *Church and Change*, 2010. 5.

<sup>99</sup> Interview, Inglewood. 13<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

Figure 1: (iii) **The 26-30 year age became more common age of marriage.**



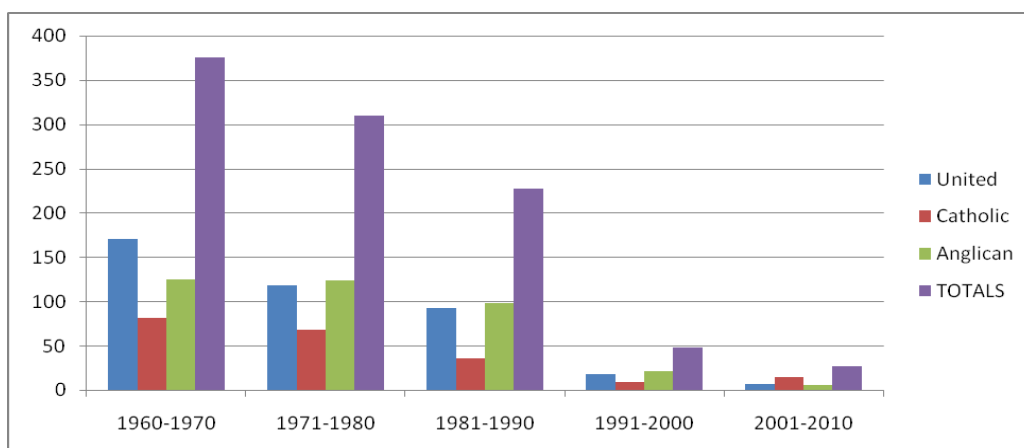
The preferred age of marriage for brides has shifted from the 16-20 years to the 26-30 year age group between 1960 and 2010. During the period 190-1970, 45.8% of the brides were in the 16-20 age groups while the 26-30 year olds contributed only 7.2%. By the period 2000-2010 the later had risen to the preferred age of marriage contributing 51.9% and the former virtually ceasing to be a marriageable age at only 7.2%. More noticeably those getting married past the age of 30 years increased from a mere 7.2% prior to 1970 to a considerable 18.5%. The middle class group of 21-25 showed a significant but gradual drop from 38% to 22.2% of all marriages solemnized during the fifty year period. As marriages weaken, so does the church.

Table 1: (ii) **Decline in marriages According to the Churches' Marriage Registers.**

	1960-1970	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-2000	2001-2010
<b>United</b>	170	118	93	18	7
<b>Catholic</b>	81	68	36	9	14
<b>Anglican</b>	125	124	98	21	6
<b>TOTALS</b>	376	310	227	48	27



Figure 1: (ii) Total number of solemnized marriages dropped over time.



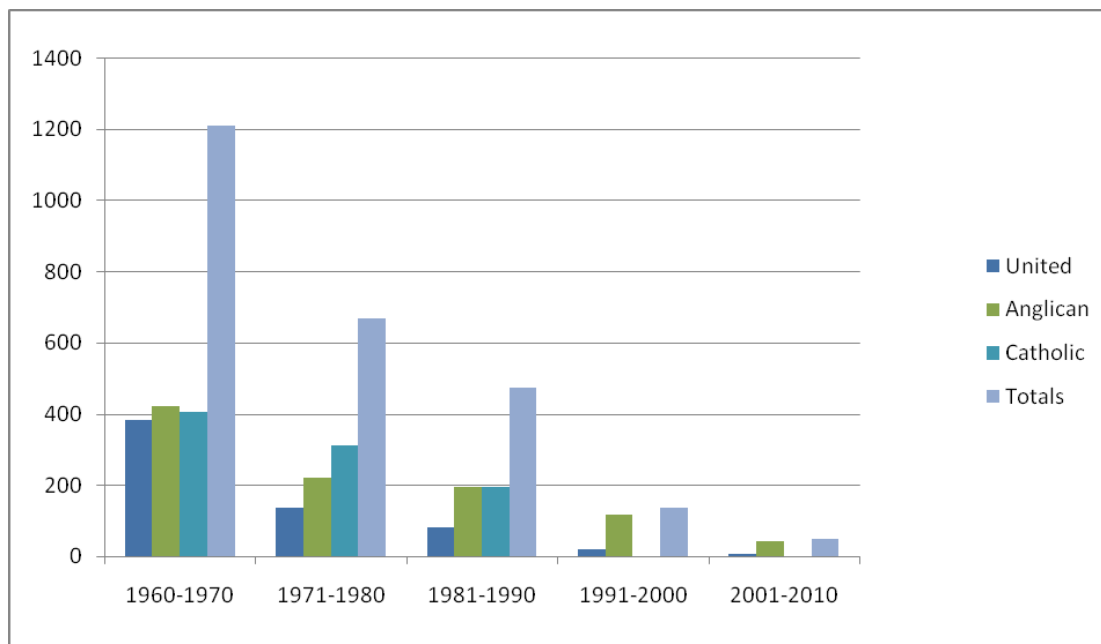
### 3.4. The number of baptisms conducted.

Thirdly, we are clearly able to identify a dramatic decrease in baptisms over the fifty year period for all the churches. Clearly for churches there is a clear correlation between weddings conducted in church and the number of baptisms conducted. What is of concern is that baptism is the public commitment sacrament and measure of reception prior to socialization into the Christian faith and therefore church family for all individuals. The more baptisms that are conducted the more the converts or new family members attend church. The table and diagrammatic representation given in Table 2 and Fig 2 paints a very bleak picture of the future of the church in the area. Put in short, the number of people making commitments to the faith has been on the wane for a long time. Baptisms have decreased for all churches to a point where it can safely be said no one is joining the church.

**Table 2: Baptisms conducted during successive decades as recorded in Churches' Baptism Registers.**

	United	Average per year	Anglican	Average per year	Catholic	Average per year	Totals
<b>1960-1970</b>	382	35	422	38	404	37	1208
<b>1971-1980</b>	137	14	219	22	310	31	666
<b>1981-1990</b>	81	8	196	20	196	20	473
<b>1991-2000</b>	20	2	116	12	0	0	136
<b>2001-2010</b>	6	1	41	4	0	0	47

**Figure 2: Baptism per decade According to the Churches' Baptism Registers.**



### **3.5 Number of burials conducted.**

The seeping trend has not spared the most solemn of life's occasions. There has been a sustained drop in the number of burials conducted through the churches. Between 1980 and 1989, a total of 92 burials were conducted by the clergy through the churches as per the Burial registers (The black book) representing about 9 burials per year. The number rose to 112 for the decade 1990-1999 (11 deaths per year) before cascading to a low of 40, amounting to a lean 4 burials per year for the period 1990-2000. This indicates 44% fallout in a period of 30 years. As we have noted earlier the population of the town has not moved

significantly during this period. What are significantly changing are therefore the preferences of the community. They are showing a general inclination towards secular funeral celebrants to conduct burials and/or cremations for their relatives and loved ones rather than the church. The figures can also be viewed as exposing a gradual marginalization of the church from the centre of the community which it previously occupied. Church and community are no longer together and other groupings have become preferable consolers in times of need.

**Table 2.1: Number of funerals conducted in church as recorded in the Churches Burial Registers.**

	<b>Total</b>
<b>1980-1989</b>	92
<b>1990-1999</b>	112
<b>2000-2009</b>	40
<b>2010-present</b>	11

### **3.6. Church Membership.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1965</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>Attendance</b>	89	97	79	121	79	77	62	53	40	40	45	35
<b>On Roll</b>	199	160	109	192	179	160	114	98	82	74	82	54
<b>Youth</b>	31	29	20	25	14	23	38	14	12	11	9	5
<b>Sunday School</b>	60	59	92	98	89	72	30	14	6	7	8	6
<b>Not interested</b>	2	3	7	10	18	15	5	5	-	-	-	-

This study is about the causes of decline in church. It is also about exploring the extent of this decline. We have already noted a massive reduction in the worship life and community engagements of the church as several indicators of church life

took a tumble. We use the Presbyterian Church statistics as they are the most complete available and reflect a trend similar to all the other surviving churches before 1971 and thereafter as the Inglewood United church after the 1971 union with the Methodist church. Table 3 indicates the trend in membership. The membership falls into two categories. The first category is the actively participating, also known as regular or attending members. The second is a category called roll members. These people confess their faith and allegiance to the church but hardly attend worship services. They however make contributions when called or pressed to do so in the form of either financial, material or labour support.

**Table 3. Membership trend, Presbyterian Church 1960-2010.**

Clearly the Presbyterian Church was sliding significantly before the Union with the Methodist sin 1971. Membership dropped from 89 active participants to 79 between the years 1960 and 1970 an appreciable 12% drop. This decrease however pales into insignificance compared to the collapse from 121 to 35 between the years 1971 and 2010, a staggering 71% drop in church attendance. In similar fashion the membership roll plummeted from 192 to a mere 54 (a 72% slide).

The Sunday school was the most affected declining from 98 scholars to just 6 at present. This represents a collapse in Christian education over the 50 year period as it is a 92% loss of members. Youth work also delved into the same old story coming down to only 5 by the year 2010 while for the Presbyterian Church alone, membership stood at 31 in 1960. Available statistics show that the Methodist youth (then known as the Bible Class) stood at 17 in 1960. The climb down to 5 therefore in essence represents a 90% loss.

It appears the only figures going up were the number of those in the last row, the disinterested leavers. These are the people entered on the membership rolls as having been cancelled after indicating that they were simply not interested in attending church or its activities. These increased steadily until the late 80s when obviously the falling numbers in church membership also forced them to slow down. It was not easy to detect the real causes of the seepage but a few hints were clear.

First it can be noted that between 1980 and 1985, the United Church lost 12 families representing 37 individuals in total through official requests to the newly formed splinter group the Inglewood Christian Fellowship. These included very senior and charismatic personalities and leaders like Allen and Margaret Stevenson. Allan, was a school teacher and Sunday school superintendant for more than 30 years - and was the chairperson of the committee that oversaw the process leading up to and the implementation of the union between the Methodist church and the Presbyterian church. For him to turn his back on the church reflects a real conflict and crisis in the life and ministry of the church. In his own words he said, "We left dissatisfied with the lack of spirituality, the dryness of traditionalism and the frustrations of a church so rigid and change proof one wonders if Christ equals rigidity". Other senior leaders like Mark and Joy Jones were to become the pastors of the breakaway faction for almost more than 20 years. Spirituality and traditionalism became a factor.

Some very radical and pragmatic members such as Dan Penwarden and the influential and highly talented veterinary doctor Neil Chesterton left with their families, giftings and finances. Schism driven by the new American ideologies and influence of global Pentecostalism was a factor at play.

Secondly, over the period 1960-1990 we could trace a total of 52 families that transferred from Inglewood and as a result were officially transferred from the roll. Of these, 10 families joined the Baptist churches in Bell Block and in New Plymouth. These are big churches with modern technological equipments and large Sunday schools and Youth groups engaging in contemporary genres of music and seeker based forms of contemporary worship. There were 13 families that joined other churches in New Plymouth as a result of changing residence. There were 7 families that transferred to different churches in New Plymouth even though they continued to live in Inglewood. The remaining 20 families left for other parts of the country with significant numbers joining neighbouring towns especially Hawera.

There were a lot of other families and/or individuals who left without official blessings and so were just crossed out/cancelled from the communicant roll. The rolls showed a total of 39 such cases between 1960 and 2010. It seems the influence of the larger and more affluent urban areas particularly New Plymouth and Hawera were a factor in this decline.

Thirdly and most interestingly 36 members initially requested to be placed on a supplementary roll. Generally these people ended up off the supplementary roll and untraceable because by 1990 the supplementary roll became known as affiliate members before being dropped as a church document altogether around 1995. It means that the process of filtering out of the church was often a well-thought out one taking a period of reflection before ultimate decision. It is not well recorded what pastoral role if any the church played during the time members were on the supplementary role. Personal examination, critiques and doubts about the faith and life of the church, or theological reflection became factors in church decline.

Fourthly 43 members are recorded and cancelled out as having died while 23 families are specifically noted as having moved because of the nature of their professions and 13 in search of higher education outside the province. The numbers of those whose faith may have simply ebbed away over time and are recorded as lost interest are indicated in Table 3. Obviously there would be many others who got lost with their opinions not getting recorded. I acknowledge that statistical data is always open to distortion but certainly these figures point to a decline in church life in the town. The trends need to be set in the context of the challenges and changes which faced the church during this period.

Some of the challenges were purely the result of external and internal polarization as will be discussed in the next chapter and others were a result of broad based secularization. Yet what is all too clear is that the church in Inglewood, just like the church nationwide, had entered a post-Christian era and could no longer claim its privileged status as of right. The “dramatic rise in secular alternatives to what has been the church’s special ministries, weddings and funerals conducted by marriage and funeral celebrants is an indication of that<sup>100</sup>”.

We can see that the back door effect was fuelled by a combination of forces acting in tandem to one another. Obviously the growing influence of New Plymouth and Hawera was huge. I will pursue this issue in more detail in chapter four. The changing theological perception became a force to reckon, the search for education and employment opportunities unavailable in a small agricultural support town like Inglewood became great while the quest for bigger and better

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<sup>100</sup> Allan Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa: A History of Church and Society in New Zealand* (Wellington: Education for Ministry, 2004) 178.

contemporary churches magnified the confusion brought about by the Pentecostal influence that hit Inglewood in the 1970s especially. The general lack of interest in voluntary service in the whole town obviously affecting all voluntary groups like the Red Cross, Rotary clubs, Lions club, Churches and others is the result among other things of Legislative demands as volunteers, particularly those working with young people are expected to undergo police vetting and to complete large volumes of paper work as safety precautions. Many people are just not prepared to take risks or to do all the paper work demanded. This is the reason why Sunday schools have no more children or teachers. Those with children are forced to go to New Plymouth in search of Sunday schools.

Yet it is clear that the loss of contact with the agriculturally based rural communities as the church shifted attention to the comfort and safety in numbers accorded by the Inglewood urban set-up in the final analysis played havoc with church membership. It is clear from the calibre of people who left frustrated by both the reluctance to change and the continued conflicts in the church harangued and devastated the sense of identity and pride of association with church for most people leading to a massive exodus and withdrawal. We will examine the changing theological and ecclesiological perceptions and role of conflict in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4.

### POSSIBLE CAUSES OF DECLINE.

In the last chapter I looked at decline in both church attendance and other indicators of church health in Inglewood in the last fifty years. In this chapter I am going to look at the possible causes of that relentless slide. From the thirty people I interviewed during the course of this study, a few areas of general agreement and insight emerged with 29 identifying social changes as the major factor. All of the 29 identified three social changes that have taken place since the 1960s.

These three were: (a) the changing work patterns (b) changing marriage and family patterns and (c) the advent of advanced communication systems with particular reference to the television (TV), the internet and mobile telephone communication. 26 interviewees identified the emergence of a consumer culture. The key problem identified in this regard was the need for instant gratification. Rosey Mabin, Principal of Inglewood High School noted that:

The world we live in is one of instant results, products and answers. Answers are available from everywhere or you can buy your way. This kind of a culture cannot dovetail with the Christian notion of faith and things taking time. The concept of eternity is contrary to an instantaneous society<sup>101</sup>.

22 people singled out the transient nature of Inglewood as a community.

All of the de-churched and/ or post institutional church Christians vouched for, “too many conflicts” often driven by traditionalism, theological and ideological differences as responsible for the demise of the institutional church.

Other issues that were raised included the failure on the part of the church to attract men, and young people (the under 40s) to church, lack of human resources with the requisite skills to speak to, attract and relevantly articulate the Christian faith and message to the young people of today who have no prior knowledge of the greater Christian narratives, lack of tertiary education in surrounding cities and too many churches serving a small populace. A few (eight)

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<sup>101</sup> Interview with Rosey Mabin, Principal of Inglewood High School and a committed Christian. Inglewood High School, 26th June 2012.



identified the rise of a new atheism and religious irrelevancy as the cause of decline in church.

There were eleven interviewees, who argued that,

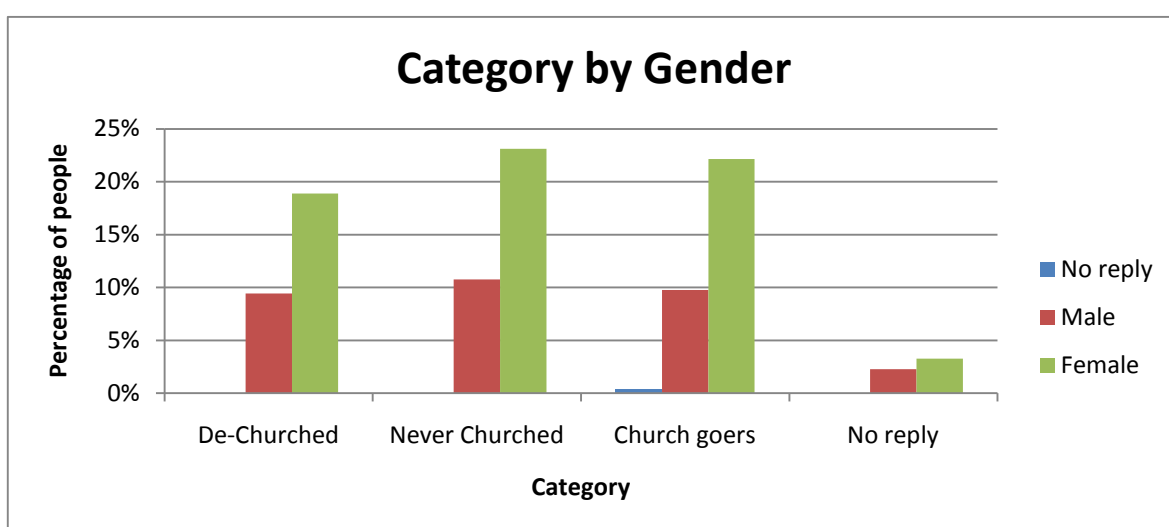
It is the somewhat neurotic and parochial preoccupation with minor issues, especially the pelvic issues of abortion, homosexuality, adultery and so forth at the expense of substantial social issues such as child abuse, global poverty, unemployment, global warming and environmental safety. It appears the church majors in minors<sup>102</sup>.

Others said there is no space for honest dialogue in church or safe exploration of faith, doubts and alternatives. Clearly these views fall into two categories as I have already surmised earlier, the external and the internal factors. They also fall into two subcategories of those that apply broadly to the church nationwide and even the whole of the western world, and those that are specific to Inglewood.

Whilst mention will be made here of some general factors, detailed discussion will be limited to those factors that are more particular to Inglewood. Some of the interesting results from the survey are as follows:

First Fig 4.1 shows, the church belonging pattern of the Inglewood community according to the research survey.

Figure 4.1: **The Gender Distribution of Respondents.**



<sup>102</sup> This statement was originally said by, John Smith, former Principal of Inglewood High School, Member of the Freemasonry and a De-churched person. Ten other interviewees felt it was the best way to express some outdated views of the church especially in Inglewood. John left the church over the Masonic lodge conflict with the church.

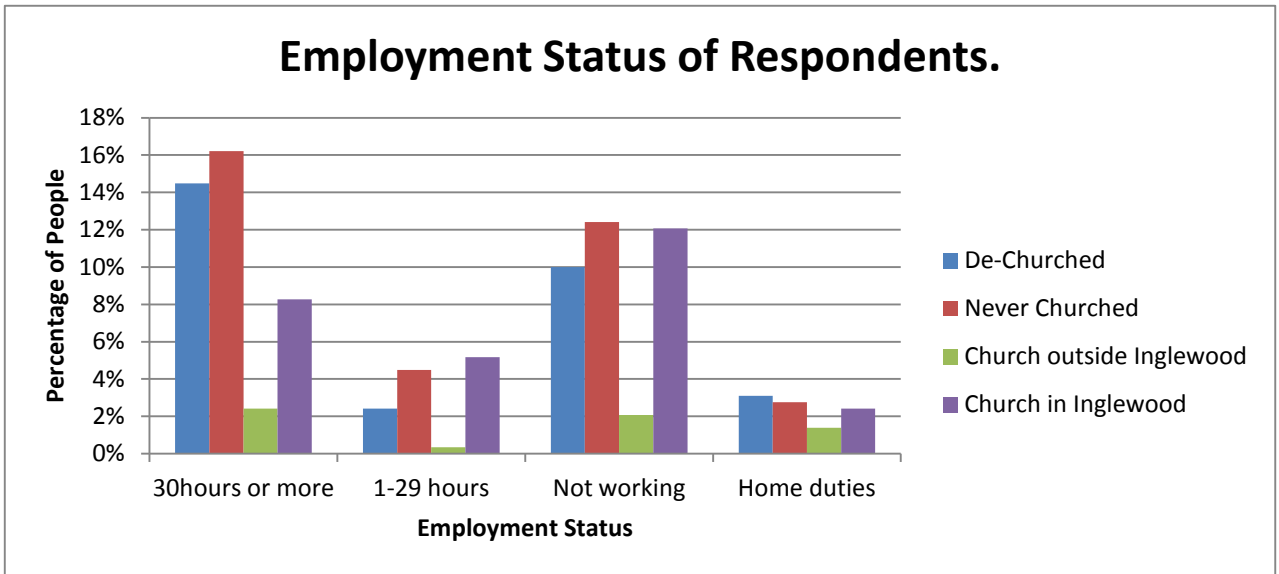
Clearly more women than men participated in the survey. This may be due to two reasons. The first is that there were obviously more women than men at the churches and more people from churches responded than those sampled from elsewhere. The other was that most men refused to participate in a religion based study arguing that they were “too busy” to attend to private issues of religion. Of all who responded about 28% are de-churched, 33% are never churched and 32% attend church at least four times in a year. The remaining 7% considered themselves not necessarily de-churched but post institutional church Christians. Adding these to the de-churched for the sake of this study shows about 35% of the respondents sampled from the Inglewood community are de-churched people. This is a very high proportion for the health of the church in a community considering that most of them are disillusioned by perceived irrelevancy of church already and “leave me alone is already their battle cry<sup>103</sup>”. I argue that one of the major problems faced by the church in Inglewood is that of too many de-churched people in the community.

A further trend is also shown in Fig 4.2 in which it is clear that among the respondents only about 8% of those working at least 30 hours in a week attend church regularly in Inglewood.

**Fig 4.2: The employment status among Respondents.**

<b>Employment Status</b>	<b>De-Churched</b>	<b>Never Churched</b>	<b>Church outside Inglewood</b>	<b>Church in Inglewood</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
<b>30hours or more</b>	14%	16%	2%	8%	41%
<b>1-29 hours</b>	2%	4%	0%	5%	12%
<b>Not working</b>	10%	12%	2%	12%	37%
<b>Home duties</b>	3%	3%	1%	2%	10%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>103</sup> Mary Tuomi. Hammond, *The Church and the De-churched: Mending a Damaged Faith* (St' Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2001) 94.



A further 2% of those in full time employment attend church outside of Inglewood. The most represented category of those who attend church regularly is the unemployed whilst more than 30% of workers are either de-churched or never churched.

When the de-churched were asked the question, at what point did you stop attending church? 11% said when they started working. This is shown in chart 4.1.A significant proportion of those not working is also de-churched or never churched (22%). This clearly shows that apart from time constraints and the responsibility that comes with travelling back and forth during a working week, there are other factors at play in determining whether or not one goes to church. The question of work demands obviously affects church attendance as the working week now encompasses Sunday. For dormitory towns like Inglewood where workers have to travel considerable distances to go to either New Plymouth or Hawera the work factors become even more significant.

Secondly Table 4.1 shows the transient nature of Inglewood. Church systems favour stability but clearly most people in the Town have not lived there long.

<b>Table 4.1</b>		
<b>How long Respondents have lived in Inglewood.</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>20 years+</b>	98	32%
<b>10-20 years</b>	66	21%
<b>5-10 years</b>	44	14%
<b>Less than 5 years</b>	78	25%
<b>No reply</b>	21	7%
<b>Grand Total</b>	307	100%

About 45% of people have lived in Inglewood for less than ten years and only 32% have lived in Inglewood for more than 20 years. Considering that Inglewood is a town experiencing the problems of an aging population, it is clear that the church suffers also from the “sea of grey hair effect<sup>104</sup>”. The middle aged members are most unlikely to be there long enough to provide stable leadership. The problem with such a community is that the new people often have no sense of belonging, ownership of projects and programmes or group progress. The people with no sense and history of belonging to a community do not have a sense of ownership of the church. Their commitment levels are low and participation limited to their personal expectations and needs. This was not the case with the original settlers who worked hard, owned land and belonged to the community.

These figures are further reinforced by an analysis of Table 4.2 which shows the personal faith descriptions of people in Inglewood.

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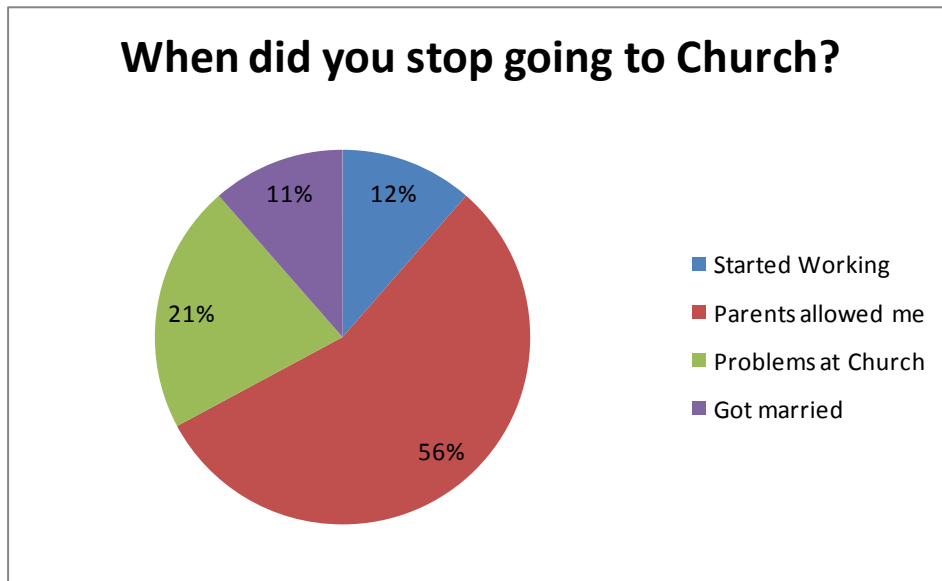
<sup>104</sup> John Pritchard, *God Lost and Found* (London: SPCK, 2011) 20.

<b>Description of Respondents' Personal Faith Life</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Attend Church</b>	97	32%
<b>Atheist</b>	39	13%
<b>Don't go to Church</b>	159	52%
<b>Another Faith</b>	11	4%
<b>Grand Total</b>	306	100%

According to the survey 32 % of the respondents go to church, only 13% described themselves as atheists. About 4% belong to other religions while a massive chunk of 52% of the respondents described themselves as Christians but do not go to church. Only 4% said they would prefer their children to avoid going to church. 51% indicated a preference for their children to make their own choices, but of these 50% of those between the ages of 21-35 said that given a choice they would prefer their children to go to church even if they themselves as parents do not go to church. They are de-churched or never churched. If we factor in our estimation of the degree of bias in this study in favour of church going Christians this figure would rise to about 65% of de-churched people. Again this is a very high percentage and there is need to explore the question of how the de-churched can believe again.

Thirdly the results in Chart 4.1 show that, going by the respondents 56% of people who left church did so as soon as parental demand to attend was relaxed. The problem for church is that with so many de-churched people around not enforcing Sunday school attendance and most people in our research preferring their children to make their own choices about church, the number of children coming to church will continue to decrease.

**Chart 4.1**



At the same time about 21% of the people left church as a result of conflicts at church. This figure goes up to 47% if only adults above the age of 35 years are considered. Obviously this presents a case for a closer look at the way in which disagreements have been resolved in church.

Fourthly Table 4.3 shows that whilst the number of people who participated in the survey and attends church regularly is just about 28%, a figure which comes down to our estimate of between 10-12% given the sample in this survey’s bias in favour of church goers as explained in chapter 2, the number of people who do not attend church because of their hostile or different beliefs is reasonably low (31%).

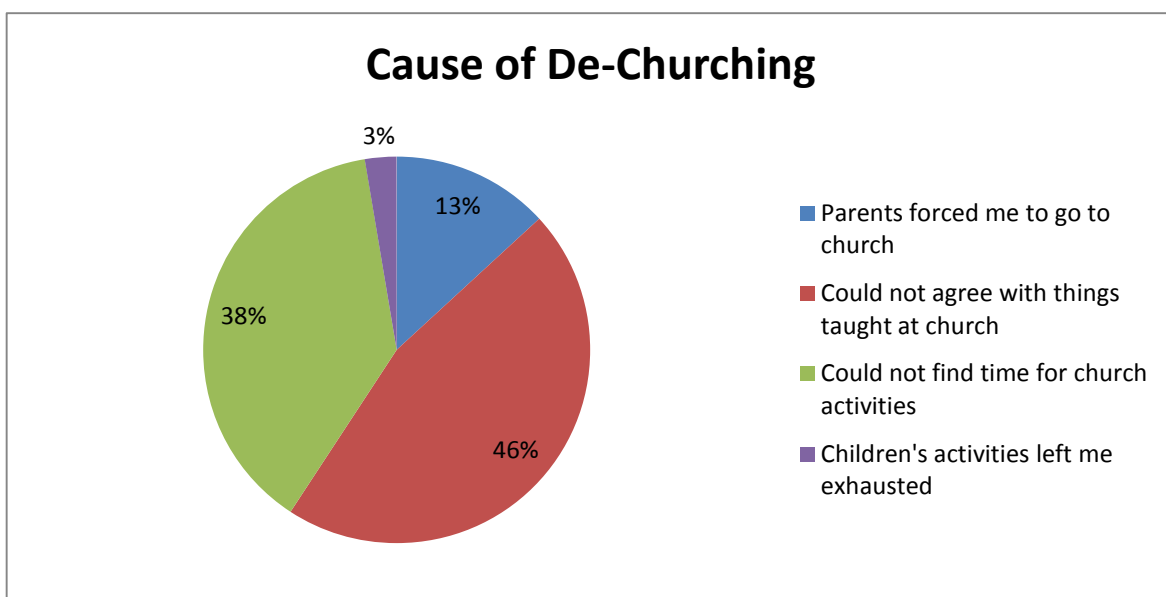
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Every week</b>	88	28%
<b>Once a month</b>	14	5%
<b>Special occasions</b>	107	36%
<b>Never</b>	97	31%
<b>No reply</b>	1	0%
<b>Grand Total</b>	307	100%

We can see that there is a real variation between attending church (belonging) and believing in the church. We can assume that one of the reasons why church attendance is decreasing is the increasing gap between belonging and believing. This view is supported further by Table 4.5 which shows that 32% of the survey respondents in Inglewood believe but do not want to belong. We can assume that the reasons for not wanting to belong are many and varied but from the responses it is clear that conflicts, disillusionment with lack of relevancy fear of time constraints and the biblical hermeneutical differences are some of the issues.

Lastly Table 4.4 and Chart 4.2 represent what participants felt were the direct causes of their withdrawal from church.

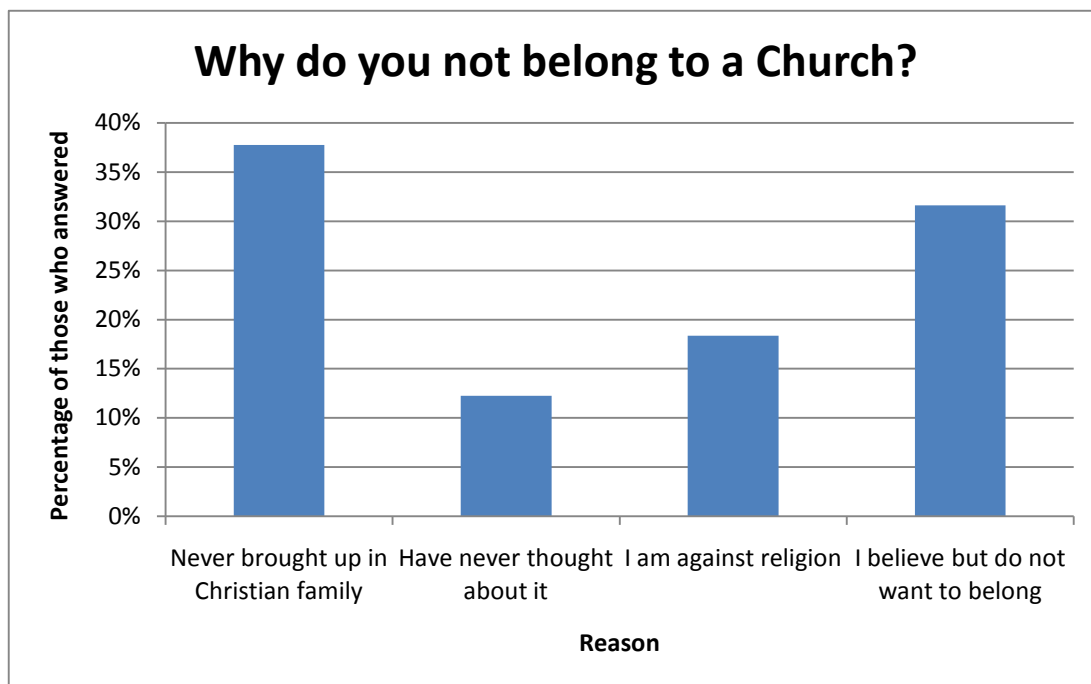
Table 4.4 and Chart 4.2: **Causes of de-churching amongst the Respondents.**

	Percentage
Parents forced me to go to church	13%
Could not agree with things taught at church	46%
Could not find time for church activities	38%
Children's activities left me exhausted	3%
<b>Grand Total</b>	100%



The fact that time for church activities has become limited is probably related to the changing work patterns as seen earlier. What is of theological significance is that 46% of the de-churched left church because they could not agree with the church's teachings any more. When the same question was extended to both the de-churched and the never-churched with the option of relevancy of the church's teaching left out a new pattern emerged. This pattern is shown in Table 4.5 and Fig 4.3.

<b>Table 4.5</b>	
<b>Why Respondents do not belong to a church.</b>	
<b>Suggestions</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Never brought up in Christian family	38%
Have never thought about it	12%
I am against religion	18%
I believe but do not want to belong	32%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100%</b>





The majority of people (38%) said it has to do with the way they were brought up. They did not have a Christian family. Again it is very significant that a very small percentage is against religion (15%). 32% are clear that they believe in God but they do not want to belong to the church.

There were a number of other interesting areas highlighted by the survey but clearly what the interviews, survey and information gathered from the historical documents as shown in chapter three is that the church is in decline mostly because of:

- Social changes.
- Cultural changes.
- Preference for New Plymouth.
- Too many conflicts.
- The transient nature of Inglewood.
- Leadership

To these I can also add one more from my own observation and experience during the course of the study: the presence of too many churches in a small town. I will start by examining this last one as it can easily slip under the radar and is obviously one factor very unique to the town of Inglewood.

Inglewood has too many churches serving a very small populace. The town has a population of about 3000 people and seven churches. The statistical returns as reported by Mark Jones, leader of the Inglewood pastors fellowship showed that church attendances in Inglewood was down to 280-320 per week. This is about 9.1-10.4% of the town's population. The average of between 40 and 45 members per congregation attending church each week will obviously differ from congregation to congregation with others being bigger and others smaller. A study by A.C Webster and P. E Perry on the values and beliefs on New Zealanders in the mid 1980s indicated that only about 12-15% would meet more truly religious criteria with those attending church far less than this<sup>105</sup>. Kevin Ward suggested that by the year 2000 weekly church attendance in New Zealand had fallen to 10% of the population<sup>106</sup>. My own estimate is that by 2010 it was between 9-10%.

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<sup>105</sup> Cited by Allan Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa: A History of Church and Society in New Zealand* (Wellington: Education for Ministry, 2004) 181.

<sup>106</sup> Kevin Ward, "Will We Find Church in Future New Zealand," in *Christianity in the Post Secular West*, ed.J. Stenhouse and B. Knowles (Hindmarsh, ATF Press, 2007) 209.

These figures helped by the number of migrant Pacific Islanders, a benefit Inglewood does not have as only about 2% of the population is neither Pakeha nor Maori. It is not that percentage is higher or therefore the town is more churched. What it means is that the percentage of European New Zealanders who live in Inglewood and attend church is probably higher than the average for that ethnic group nationally.

It is my view and submission view that the burden and responsibility of doing church is increased by having too many churches. With the average age of church attendees pegged at about 60, what the church needs is fewer roles per individual. Too many churches mean too many roles and responsibilities for individuals. Church becomes a burden (to be avoided) rather than a joy of serving God and others. Amalgamation of some of these churches is likely to generate momentum, enthusiasm and confidence. The recovery of confidence generates hope and hope “pours people back into life<sup>107</sup>”. The church in Inglewood needs to free people from the captivity of busyness with programmes and routine, release the few available and committed lay leaders from administrative duties and roles to concentrate on ministry and re-engagement with the community.

The second problem is conflict. There have been too many conflicts in the church between 1960 and 2010. In a small town people always have a greater sense of intimacy and oneness? Crisis and conflicts in church inevitably spill over into the community and the politics of kith and kin quickly takes precedence. Subjectivity overshadows objectivity, faith, beliefs and principles. People make conclusions, perceptions and relate to church based on what they hear, experience and imagine from the way conflicts are handled and resolved.

In the survey I glimpsed some of these perceptions. Thus 80% of the de-churched thought that the church needed to be fair and less judgmental on people. 76% of the de-churched people between the ages of 16-35 years said they avoided church because, “Christians can make you feel guilty<sup>108</sup>” while about 70% of all the de-

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<sup>107</sup> Peter L. Steinke, *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach* (Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 2006) 111.

<sup>108</sup> Whilst this view was widespread amongst the youth groups it was also a frequently expressed view of all the people including regular church attendees.

churched and the never churched said they would prefer a church that, “emphasize community care and social justice<sup>109</sup>”.

Most notable was the fact that 176 people added free comments to the questionnaire. Out of these 109 (63%) included the word “fairness” or “fair” as a missing but desirable attitude in the way church was being done these days. There was a chorus of voices demanding that the church be seen to be not only “righteous, holy and some other religious descriptions<sup>110</sup>” but also kind and fair. I was able to dig out a few areas of conflict which over the years have contributed to the existence of a wedge between church and community.

There have been six areas of conflict that were never resolved adequately resulting in a lot of people leaving or changing church with each conflict. For reasons of space I am able to look at only four of these. The Anglican Church has also had a conflict and bad relationships stemming from a number of ministers but these were dealt with locally and did not affect most churches. They however affected the Anglican Church in Inglewood significantly with a number of people leaving and the church left with a precarious number of people to sustain and replenish a faith community for the future.

First there was the controversial subject of the union between the Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church in 1970. After a year of the union a trial vote was taken to determine the possibility of complete amalgamation. 50% of Presbyterians (81 communicants) voted against the union and out of 47 Methodist members 22 voted for union and 25 against. According to Allan Stevenson, “The Methodist and Presbyterian churches were two of the biggest churches in Inglewood. The union did not proceed with the support of the members. It was a leaders’ thing based on financial considerations and pressure from the national church bodies but argued on membership decline principle<sup>111</sup>”. This view is supported by Don Reeve a Methodist lay preacher who has lived in Inglewood for 85years, attended church in Inglewood for 69 years and was secretary of the Parish Council of the United Church for more than ten years. He commented:

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<sup>109</sup> This is yet another view that found expression amongst both the Churched and the Churchless across all age groups, educational and employment status. It was however largely chorused amongst the Churchless residents.

<sup>110</sup> Exact words expressed on three questionnaires. The responses could have been put up in a discussion with colleagues or family but the same views were also expressed by other people on different questionnaires in different words.

<sup>111</sup> Allan and Margaret Stevenson. Interview at home, Inglewood 12<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

There has always been tension between the Presbyterians and the Methodists. A lot of Presbyterians were opposed to the union and did not join. Immediately after the union they left church or went into New Plymouth for a straight Presbyterian church. They were proud of their Scottish and Presbyterian heritage: by the way during this time Scottish Presbyterians were very strong<sup>112</sup>.

Some Methodists also did not join the union and so pioneered a new culture of driving into New Plymouth for church refusing, to be made sacrificial lambs of a trial scheme. Records show that 23 people opted not to join the union citing unfair treatment by the leadership and the national church. They left with their families and talents. There were obviously others missed by the records.

The second was a great conflict and discontentment over the church's handling of the, "Homosexual Reform Bill which sought to decriminalize male homosexuality, give homosexuals equality with heterosexuals with the age of consent set at sixteen<sup>113</sup>" Following a press release to Radio New Zealand by Rev. Frank Hanson President of the Methodist Church of New Zealand in support of the Homosexual Reform, the churches in Inglewood were incensed. After a long time of bitter exchange of words Don Reeves the secretary of the United Church wrote on behalf of the churches in Inglewood on April 23, 1985:

After thorough consultations with other churches, our own Parish and the community of Inglewood we unanimously resolved to, write to the president of the MCNZ expressing utter disgust that leaders of the church are offering support and encouragement to acts which the scriptures proclaim to be abominations and sins. All your suggestions are at best naïve<sup>114</sup>.

In yet another move that showed a widening rift and growing discontentment with the leadership of the national church, Don wrote:

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<sup>112</sup> Don Reeves, Interview, 10 Konini Street Inglewood, 08th July 2012.

<sup>113</sup> Laurie Guy, *Shaping Godzone: Public Issues and Church Voices in New Zealand 1840-2000* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2011) 449.

<sup>114</sup> Minutes of Inglewood The Press statement release on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1985 is apparently well supported by Methodist conference reports of 1974, page 151 and conference response page 154 Number 18 and also Conference report 1975 pages 114-120.

Sir you say that for 25years the MCNZ Conference has supported Homosexual Law Reform? We in Inglewood here suggest for you that such support by conference help reinforce the belief that because of a lop-sided voting entitlement in favour of the clergy, conference frequently makes decisions which do not truly reflect the mind of its lay people, let alone what can be said to be the mind of the Methodist people. For your own information attached is a petition circulated from the church in Inglewood indicating opposition to the homosexual law reform Bill has attracted more than four hundred signatures. We have no doubt that we speak for the majority of our people not just Christians.....If our criticism seems harsh, it is meant to be so<sup>115</sup>.

The frustration of the local church leadership was justifiable given the hostility and general discontentment with church that was gripping the town at this time. Even large organisations hitherto key allies of the church in the community were taking measures to distance themselves from some of the conflictual issues gripping the church. This is evidenced by a letter written to the Inglewood United church by the site manager of Moa- Nui Cooperative dairies Limited, Mr. G. L. Chitty on 15 October 1985 entitled: Lawn Mowing Agreement. It reads:

Because the company sees need to rationalise some of its operations at the Inglewood site, it is necessary to give notice that we will be terminating our agreement to mow the church lawn, effective 30<sup>th</sup> November1985. Regretfully this action is necessary because our employee will be asked to carry out different duties as part of his normal working responsibilities.

It is generally agreed that this was a move on the part of the company to protect its brand name from tarnish arising from its association with a church that was chronically in conflict with its members, the community and its national leaders.

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<sup>115</sup> Letter to the Methodist Church President, dated 24<sup>th</sup> May 1985.

Sadly this is an issue in which the church in Inglewood's stance was supported by the community. However the pleas were ignored and the net result was a community dissatisfied with church. There are many other letters showing confrontation between the Inglewood church and the National church bodies. One such case involved the notice of intent to disaffiliate any Inglewood church forthwith from both the Methodist Church of New Zealand (MCNZ) and the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand over, "the denial of the truth of scripture and disregard of the wishes of the majority of their members<sup>116</sup>". This followed debates over ordination of gay/lesbian ministers in 1998. The other one shows what the local church felt was the result of its conflict with the National church bodies.

On 18th October 1986 Don wrote to the Methodist and Presbyterian Head Offices,

On talking to ordinary people from our district, they see the church as wrong by not being consistent and by using selective morality. I cannot defend the church when I agree with them. These people may never go to church or support the church. I don't know but I do know that if the church continues on this path support for the church will keep falling. Christ would condemn all oppression and all infringements. One reason why the church is losing members is in our opinion the blatant inconsistency shown by the national church leadership of our denominations. Parent churches seem to be getting involved with too many secular bodies and domestic parties some of which are violent and lawless<sup>117</sup>.

There was serious exchange of harsh views between the local church leadership and the national leadership over the South African Rugby team's tour of New Zealand and other issues. The effect of these conflicts was twofold. It took the energy and effort of the church away from ministry and mission for a long time. Needless to say, "when two elephants fight" a Swahili proverb goes, "It is the grass that gets crushed". It also created bad relationships between the church and its leadership hierarchy at the same time

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<sup>116</sup> Minutes of the Inglewood United Church Parish Council. 09/08/1998.

<sup>117</sup> Part of a letter written to the President and the national Moderator of the MCNZ and PCANZ respectively by Don Reeve, the Parish Council Secretary Inglewood United Church on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1986.

lowering the confidence and self belief of the local leadership. It created a culture of mistrust and an “us versus them” relationship. There is a noticeable lack of a “we are in this together” sense of ministry up till now. Jesus spoke of “a house divided against itself”, it falls (Matt 12:25).

The third conflict, the influence of the prophetic movement, was kicked into motion on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1999 when the minister of the United Church and then Leader of the Pastors Fellowship explained what he called the, “reality of spiritual warfare<sup>118</sup>”. He and all the other ministers had come to believe that, “God is seeking a revival in Inglewood and this will not happen until the real agenda of the Freemasonry is recognized for what it is by the people and removed from any influence within the Christian church<sup>119</sup>”. There were so many other prophecies flying around the town by this time. However the ministers and pastors had all attested to the prophecy as from God. There were very influential and reputable citizens who were church leaders and belonged to the Freemasonry. The majority of influential lay leaders objected to the prophecy. Removal from leadership roles of those implicated became very divisive and difficult.

For some time it was chaos and confusion in both church and community characterized by conflict, rivalry and relationship tension. People were bitter and no one could resolve the case until external third party assistance was sought to help resolve the case and the church had to vote on whether to accept the prophecy as from God or not. According to many witnesses, the whole town descended on Inglewood United Church that night to vote. Minutes of the meeting however gives results of the vote as 25 to 13 against the prophecy. The prophecy was rejected. It was time to mend the broken relationships.

Things are not clear here as to exactly what happened with recorded information being contested by a number of eye witnesses. But two things are clear: - the most important of these is that after the rejection of the prophecy,

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<sup>118</sup> Minutes of the United Church Parish Council. 17/03/1999.

<sup>119</sup> The prophecy was given by a charismatic Christian resident, Ken Hutchinson to the Churches of Inglewood. Its full reading says, “There are among you those who tolerate Freemasonry, I am a jealous God. You are to stir up the hornets attacking my people, freemasonry- witchcraft. You are to drive them out of this town, for this is my temple. My temple is to be cleansed, I am the living God. I will then move in a way not seen by men or women. The Spirit of the living God will fall upon this town. You must work together”. The Ministers Association accepted the prophecy as from God.

irreparable damage had been done to the church, the ministers had lost the respect of the community, and the church members had lost the personal friendship and family environment of old. This prophetic crisis did more harm than good to the status and image of the church in Inglewood. The place and integrity of the clergy suffered greatly and the use of the Bible began to be questioned more than ever before. Respectable Christians lost the confidence of the majority and a number of people left church citing a violation of the principle of “fairness and justice for the decent bloke”.

The second is more explicit and particular to the United Church. A total of five Parish council members resigned with two of them joining the great trek into New Plymouth. All the records and minutes of meetings available show that the United Church has struggled to have enough elders on the Parish Council from this time to today.

The fourth conflict was most damaging to the church as it involved loss of life. In a bizarre development a young boy Dane Gibson was stone bashed to death by his mother and member of Life Gate Apostolic Church on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1994 in an act of exorcism. The idea was to “beat the devil out of him<sup>120</sup>”. The family was devastated, the community was shocked, and the church was plunged into chaos. The hostile press took the church to the cleaners for a long time distorting facts and effectively throwing the principles of impartiality through the window. A lot of people left the church over this incident. Although it involved one denomination the others churches became collateral damage.

According to the testimonies of all witnesses it is generally agreed that the woman was mentally unstable. The Taranaki Daily News of 21<sup>st</sup> May reported her as admitted in the psychiatric ward but the community of Inglewood never really accepted that view. The blame, anger and bitterness were directed at the church. It was such a difficult period that two ladies who left the church at that time said, “the minister survived only because of the support of the national church and for a long time it looked like the church was pulling out<sup>121</sup>”

The daughter of the minister later wrote to the national church leadership that they had, “stationed my father at the most difficult congregation in the

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<sup>120</sup>Taranaki Daily News article. 20<sup>th</sup> May 1994.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Kitty Gilbert former member of Life Gate Apostolic who changed church after the murder incident. Corner Kelly/Brown Streets Inglewood 27<sup>th</sup> July 2012.



country<sup>122</sup>”. Although the churches later teamed to alleviate this tragedy by initiating the community centre project, the image of the church and religion itself was tainted. The community still views the church in general with suspicion. Many people reinforced a hitherto minority view of church as the principal cause of violence and evil in our world and communities.

Self proclaimed atheists interviewed refused to place blame on Janice Wilson or her mental condition. To them she was simply the victim of an ideology, Christianity and a religion whose vehicle was the church and whose product subversion of reason, a fostering of fanaticism, widespread cruelty and abuse. These accusations have found fertile ground in what professor Murray Rae of the department of Theology at the University of Otago has called “biblical illiteracy and historical amnesia<sup>123</sup>”. These atheists make outrageous claims about the church, its faith, beliefs and practices as well as what the scriptures say, “With no apparent appreciation of the context or theological nuances of the proof texts they adduce<sup>124</sup>”. Very sadly there are only a few people in the community with sufficient biblical understanding to see the flaws of these claims.

This research discovered that only about 30% of the regular church goers read their bibles, often very infrequently. The majority of people no longer read their bibles. Critics of the church and the Christian faith have utilized this biblical illiteracy to spread falsehoods such as the view that in the matter of virtue religious believers especially Christians fall well below the average moral person. Obviously this is not factual but it tends to get accepted as fact because of a new culture of forgetfulness of much of what the church and church men and women have contributed to the founding, establishment, development and well being of Inglewood over the years. The generality of Christians cannot offer the correct position because they are not sure of it themselves.

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<sup>122</sup> This research could not get a copy of this letter, but all the eye witnesses to the event agreed. It was clear that as of today most of the members of Life Gate Apostolic do not live in Inglewood town. They are people from nearby surrounding areas who have a long standing tradition of Apostolic Churches from elsewhere.

<sup>123</sup> Murray Rae, “The New Atheist: A Christian Response,” in *The Auckland Methodist: Auckland Synod News*, Vol 15, Number 1. April 2012. 1.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

Whatever the merits and demerits of these conflicts, historical amnesia and biblical illiteracy are now rampant in society. Consequently one cannot ignore the fact that they have cumulatively contributed to the tally of de-churched people in the community. The frustration with a church that seems to be at war and at odds with someone at every point and the frustrations with a Christian community that is not sure of what they teach or stand for is responsible for a large number of people who believe but do not want to belong. There are many people who simply do not enjoy being part of conflict at all.

Church is in decline because the children of the de-churched are now completely un-churched. Their parents carry past hurts and misgivings. They avoid church, Christians, Christianity and anything that reminds them of their own unresolved faith issues. It is a question of victims not wanting to return to the scene of the crime. Their de-churched state characterized by alienation from church activities they pass on to their children.

Mary Hammond has defined de-churched people as, “Those who once participated actively in the Christian faith. They have inside information. They bring a full slate to their lack of engagement, negative experience of church and Christianity to the exploration of faith<sup>125</sup>”.

What I am trying to bring out is that the de-churched represent a potent challenge to the church. They are among the church’s strongest critics because they are outsiders who were once insiders. As Mary Hammond has pointed out, their criticism is “often strident, rooted in honest pain about the nurture and witness of the contemporary church<sup>126</sup>”. It is their passionate vision of what Christianity ought to be, that drives them away from what they see practiced. It is these people who hold the key to the possibility of a renewed vision of the church even though they are not aware of it and sadly the church is equally as unaware. Outreach to the de-churched is a huge ministry for which the church in Inglewood is not trained, resourced or courageous enough to undertake. The de-churched are a negative testimony to the community and there are too many of them in Inglewood.

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<sup>125</sup> Mary Hammond, *The Church and the De-churched*. 7.

<sup>126</sup> Mary Hammond, *The Church and the De-churched*. 16.

Factor three is the transient nature of Inglewood. We have noted from Table 4.1 that 68% of the populace of Inglewood have only lived in Inglewood for less than 20 years. What that means is that even though the population is not getting depleted the church membership, discipleship and lay leadership initiative is never stable. This transient nature is a direct result of working patterns and student movements. In effect in the last twenty years three Banks, Bank of NSW, BNZ and POSB have moved out of Inglewood (POSB merged with ANZ and moved into New Plymouth while the BNSW became Westpac and moved to New Plymouth and Stratford), three major employment factories amongst them employing around 200-250 people have moved into New Plymouth and Hawera. This has relegated Inglewood to a dormitory town. People do business and work in the major towns and come home at night just because houses and rentals are cheaper than in the big towns but for all other things and needs they belong to New Plymouth. They are used to travelling into New Plymouth and so do the same on Sunday.

This is the second largest single threat to the church's survival after the large pool of de-churched people. Obviously the ease of transport means people can now easily drive to church and back as they wish.

Factor four is leadership. We are not going to repeat the failed role of leadership during the conflicts. We have noted that instead of the clergy being the "Resident Theologians<sup>127</sup>" and "a non-anxious presence providing the calming effect of a calm leader<sup>128</sup>", when the congregation's anxiety rises there have been many conflict cases in which the ministers were propellers of anxiety and gullible to unorthodox spiritual claims. In effect Inglewood's pastors over the years have tended to emphasize collegiality at the expense of theological reflection.

They have failed to lead a campaign for peace, inclusivity and outreach to the de-churched. Surely we cannot do less but accept people who may not be like us, as they are. God loved us first and by his grace only are we accepted. I am inclined to consider that theologically, Jesus three years public ministry revolved around the outreach to the de-synagogued, that the religious

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<sup>127</sup> Israel Galindo, *The Hidden Lives of Congregations: Discerning Church Dynamics* (Herndon, Virginia: the Alban Institute, 2004) 152.

<sup>128</sup> Jim Herrington, *The Leaders Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2003) 37.

authorities never liked Jesus' choice of friends (Luke 15:2). Jesus allowed a sinful woman to anoint him at a public gathering (Luke 7: 39) and invited himself to the house of crooked Zacchaeus the tax collector considered a traitor by many (Luke 19:1-10). In contrast the pastors in Inglewood are conspicuous by always taking the safe way of supporting the status quo.

Another area has been a reluctance to change the existing structures of services and committees. I feel that with the exception of the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, the others have no need for the two services they hold. This is premised on the small number of people attending (generally less than 40). One service is enough with the possibility of a combined communion service for the elderly led by a Chaplain or ministers on a rotational basis. Committees are too heavy for very small and aging congregations like most congregations in Inglewood. A Parish council with elders tasked to look after specific areas such as Finance, property or Pastoral care would go a long way towards lessening the burden of an aging leadership.

The second area of leadership ineffectiveness has been a complete failure to attract men and the under forties to church. Most of the leaders interviewed were clueless as to what can be done to attract men and young people to church yet they were in unanimous agreement that it was the obvious ministry direction.

I have not found much evidence that for the assumption that theology is the problem driving men away from church. The major problem is ecclesiology (How we do church). Church programmes are tailor-made for women more than men. One needs to look at such passive activities as preaching, teaching and such esteemed virtues and values as patience, love, gentleness as all promoting female attributes more than the male attributes of aggressiveness. Even when churches go out to socialise, the activities are still passive ones like picnic in the park and not the risky games like "church motor racing camps" or "vehicle service outreach". One man complained that aggressive mentality as captured in such songs as "Onward Christian soldiers" are now being rejected as promoting violence and passive one like "How Deep the Father's Love for us" favoured. Obviously this was more a problem of how masculinity is imaged in New Zealand culture. Men would not need to embrace images of soldiers and war in order to be truly masculine. It is obviously an area in which the

gospel need to be counter cultural but church leadership has to come up with alternative ways of doing church which takes into consideration this cultural aspect of New Zealand otherwise churches will continue to draw programmes for females and children.

Further to that, we can look at the food that is served at most Christian functions and fellowships. It is women's food. Generally you have tea, coffee, sushi and muffins. When there is a departure from these you may have mild wine and punch. Rarely if ever do you get roast beef, BBQ and strong alcoholic beverages. My suggestion is that the churches need the kind of aggressive leadership that can ask such questions as. "What do Kiwis like to do when they get together or what do non-Christian men do? We need to ask, "What is liked by young people"? and then utilize the knowledge generated from the answers to think about church programmes. This researcher buys into Brian McLaren's view that, "for a new world you need a new church"<sup>129</sup>. Leadership has to learn and adopt a culture of research because a new world is with us.

Lastly the leadership has not been sensitive to the musical and social interests of young people. The music used in most of the churches is no longer meaningful to young people. Young people like music and food. They enjoy fast music which demands very little reflection because for young people the rhythm is more important than the message of the song. They like participatory worship styles. The old theologically well thought-out long hymns no longer appeal to them. Without "good music" and lots of food everything else is a big yawn. The task of leadership is to work out a balance between sound theology and the ability to create interest. Theology is only good and sound if it is taught to "someone" and you can only teach someone if he/she is willing and available to learn. Churches need the young people to belong and then help them believe over time.

We can conclude that cultural changes have impacted the church in Inglewood. People now live in their own private space like home or work. They have lost a sense of commitment to the wider community. Moving houses, suburbs and town have undermined the sense of belonging and community. The search for jobs and education has left an aging community which can no longer grow. This

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<sup>129</sup> Brian McLaren, *Church on the Other Side: Exploring the Radical Future of the Local Congregation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006) 6.

coupled to a host of other social and communication technology changes have deeply affected the church. These have also affected the church nationwide. For Inglewood the key factors acting in tandem to one another has been too many churches in a small area, too many conflicts that has created a large pool of de-churched people who are opposed if not hostile to the church and a leadership keen on maintaining hierarchical structures and has little idea as to how to reach out to men and the under forties in general.

## **CHAPTER 5.**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**

#### **5.1 CONCLUSIONS.**

This research is all about the extent and the causes of church decline in the town of Inglewood between 1960 and 2010. So far all the information I have gathered points to one word as the cause of church decline: change. Change has created a situation in which the church as it has been done in the last fifty years does not fit most people. It does not fit the people because there is a geographical separation between the community and also a social, cultural and theological chasm. It seems people no longer believe, accept (listen to) or access what the church is teaching.

There have been a lot of cultural, social and demographic changes. The socio-cultural changes are clearly seen in the dramatic rise in secular alternatives to what had been the church's special ministries. The taste for secular alternatives manifests itself most clearly in the increasing number of marriages and funerals conducted by secular marriage and funeral celebrants. This has resulted in fewer marriages and funerals being conducted through the church. It is an indicator of huge changes. Life has become all about pragmatism (what works for me), life styles and personal perspectives. The church with its values of love, care and concern for others has become a dwindling self containing little community which has increasingly lost touch and favour with the world and the common man. It has moved from being the hub and haven in the life of the town and surrounding areas to becoming more of an irritant and foreign body in the social organism. This is seen in the large number of people who refused to participate in a church related survey and the many bitter comments scribbled on the survey forms.

This study has established that the church has physically and influentially disappeared from all the town's surrounding villages and farming communities which formed its prime catchment area before 1960. Within the parishes throughout the agricultural based communities, there was a richness of life and ministry that is difficult to summarize here because of its sheer diversity. The variety of congregations, styles of worship, and small group meetings like choirs, women's groupings, youth activities, Sunday schools, social dimensions

and involvement in caring for the community were all part of the church's life and witness. These have since fizzled out.

The contributions of ministers not only within their own denominational parishes, but also the community at large were significant in the founding development and progress of the whole town and its community networks. These have now disappeared or reduced to a very small scale. Sunday schools have declined from an average of 30 children per congregation to between two and five. Youth has disappeared from three of the seven congregations with the others struggling to put up a group of five in a year. Bible study groups and women activities have vanished with a corresponding death in the spirit of voluntary service in the community. The number of people attending church every week has dropped from around 1000-1200 to around 300, a significant 70-80% in about fifty years despite small increases in population.

The town was founded on the unquantifiable involvement of people motivated by their Christian commitment in business, education, public service, the rural sector, industry, social work and the like. The connection between faith, church and work as a Christian contribution to society was a key ingredient in the life of the church. Now Christian commitment is limited to individual salvation, hope for personal entrance into heaven at the *eschaton* and personal holiness based on certain biblically acclaimed moral standards. This was originally a weakness of the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches but has significantly filtered on to the traditional churches as well. Commitment to community development is now considered an extra curriculum activity of the church and its members.

After 1960 there arrived on the scene a host of socio-cultural issues that proved a challenge to the church, society began to change as the whole world was increasingly becoming a global village. There were several events that kick started the 1960s. The television came to New Zealand in 1960 and to Inglewood in 1965 (Pat Julian owned the very first black and white television and his home became a common room for people of the community). The contraceptive pill was introduced in around 1961. As a result sexual activity became safe from the anxiety of unplanned pregnancies. Sex was freed from procreation to a pleasure activity. This led to rapid collapse of traditional moral taboos against sex outside of marriage. Pluralism of values began to replace



standardization and choice replaced conformity. The country as whole and surrounding communities was becoming permissive especially in the area of sexual morality.

The influence of church in society's moral values countrywide began to weaken. In churches country-wide a shift in perspectives started to take place as churches faced a fundamental issue in a fast-changing world: to bless the changes or to oppose them. In the 1960s liberal Christianity came to favour blessing the changes while conservative Christianity persisted in opposing the changes. The outcome of this polarisation was a collapse of the theological middle. Two forms of Christianity liberal and conservative took adverse positions on a range of issues.

For Inglewood the results were significant in that the formal leadership of the church preferred the conservative form of Christianity, strongly opposing the liberal school of thought. However the general populace in the town and its vicinity preferred a more liberal position. Those Christians who preferred the theological middle or the liberal positions on key issues such as the South African Apartheid Rugby team tour of 1970 (Springboks tour<sup>130</sup>), the Homosexual Bill, the Film Censorship, the Legalisation of Prostitution, the Anti Smacking Law and the ordination of Gay/Lesbian ministers and others found themselves stigmatized, alienated and side-lined. These issues became a bad distraction from the gospel. Harry Reeder says churches become ineffective once they lose sight of the centrality of grace<sup>131</sup> and allow something else to become more important.

A series of divisive conflicts became the norm. For the victims of those conflicts (mostly liberals), the only options were to leave the church or go to New Plymouth in search of acceptance, friendship and equality. They went away carrying and spreading inside information of the "horrors", the decline, the mistreatment and lack of resources they had witnessed just as Reeder has commented, "the people who do the most damage to church are often those

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<sup>130</sup> According to Laurie Guy (Godzone p331) the church never had a common ground on this tour. The clergy were generally opposed while ordinary Christians were divided equally. In Inglewood the converse was true. The leaders opposed the tour as a way of antagonizing national church leaders they perceived to be taking a liberal route. The majority of the people were incensed that their own local leaders would support the racially discriminative team's visit.

<sup>131</sup> Harry Reeder, *From Embers to a Flame: How God can revitalize your church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2004) 16.

who have left and went elsewhere<sup>132</sup>”. Unfortunately for the church the community saw most of these conflicts as a travesty of justice and a violation of the *sacrosanct* value, “fairness”. New Zealanders give central attention to values of fairness and natural justice which explicitly appear in its Bill of Rights. The former Prime Minister Robert Muldoon’s (1975-84) favourite slogan was, “a fair go for the ordinary bloke” or “A fair go for the decent bloke” and Prime Minister John Key speaking on Waitangi day celebrated New Zealand’s traditions of justice and fairness. He said, “We share a respect for the rule of law, for property rights and for a basic sense of fairness in which Jack is as good as good as his neighbour<sup>133</sup>”.

At the same time the town of Inglewood was becoming a victim of industrial and socio-economic progress. Major businesses were streamlining, and or amalgamating to form large competitive entities. For entirely business purposes these preferred the bigger towns. Population shifts followed accordingly and church suffered collateral damage.

Yet these changes were also creating not only a new community, but also a new people. They created a new person with a different attitude, theology, cultural expectations and demands on a church of preference. They preferred the privacy and comfort of their own homes than the public life. The people began to seek and to pursue things that benefit their private lives than organisations or social functions. They preferred to marry late, have fewer children, divorce willy-nilly, cohabit or separate and share the custody of children. Marriage relationships became unstable. Families started to disintegrate and to restructure in unprecedented ways. Single parent families became not only acceptable but more of the norm. The two parent families hitherto the standard model started and continued to disintegrate.

With the church continuing to attach focus on marriage, the raising of children in a two parent home and to stigmatize divorce, extra marital sex on the part of adults and children born out of wedlock, belonging to a church for most people became a problem. The church unintentionally became alienating to so many people. This mixture of changes has meant that the church is isolated

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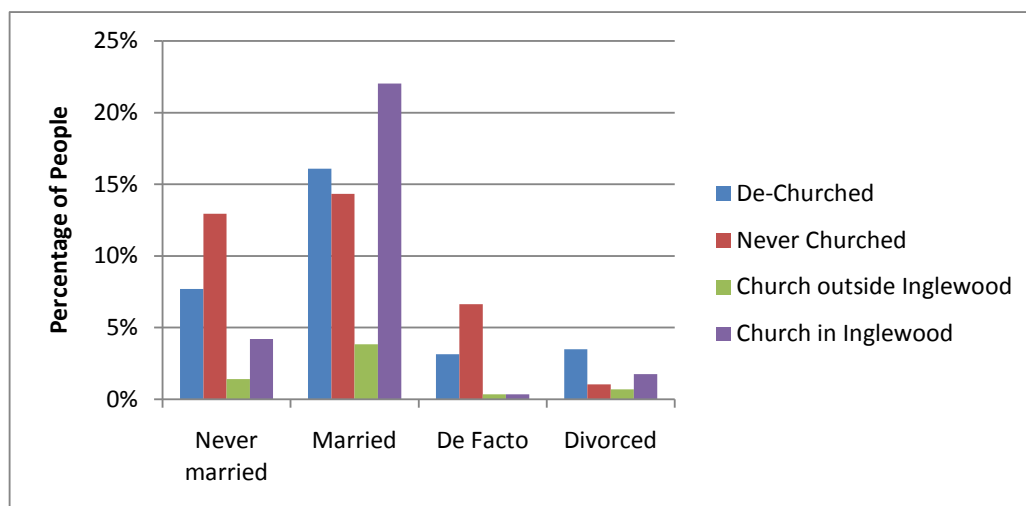
<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Prime Minister’s Waitangi Day Speech, February, 26. 2010.

<http://www.nzherald/multiculturalism/news/people/orbituary-matiu-rata-1253022.html>.

from the majority of the populace ever since the onset of the sexual revolution. It has a problematic and at times nonexistent relationship with the increasing number of those in other forms of partnerships which is increasing as our research showed in Table and Figure 5. This is especially so for cohabiting (de facto marriages) partners.

<b>Table and Figure 5: Representation of Existing Marital Status<sup>134</sup>.</b>					
<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>De-Churched</b>	<b>Never Churched</b>	<b>Church outside Inglewood</b>	<b>Church in Inglewood</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
<b>Never married</b>	8%	13%	1%	4%	26%
<b>Married</b>	16%	14%	4%	22%	56%
<b>De Facto</b>	3%	7%	0%	0%	10%
<b>Divorced</b>	3%	1%	1%	2%	7%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>100%</b>



Further to these changes, there have been changes in the working models as well. Kevin Ward has putting this shift in working models in proper perspective in a paper entitled. “The changing nature of post 60s New Zealand”, “not only do women now spend more time physically absent from home and local community but women have also sharply reduced involvement in local

<sup>134</sup> Clearly about 20% of the respondents are living in a relationship that the church find problematic given that this survey had more church going respondents than those of other categories, it is clear that a lot more people are now either divorced or in de facto marriages. More interesting was that of the 56% in married category about 40% of them were in a second or third marriage. It is significant that only for the married is the number of people attending church the most dominant.

communities<sup>135</sup>". As more and more women disappeared from local community, more and more people disappeared from the local churches. This fact has been hard for the church because it was traditionally modelled and accustomed to minister and work with people that are very predictably at home not at work. The church was wrong-footed and continued to watch in horror as community drifted away from its grasp.

Put in short, the demographic, social and cultural changes have distanced the church from the masses. There have also been several other church-induced or catalysed decline factors such as conflicts, power and ideological in-house fighting that have diluted the integrity and credibility of the church. These were allowed to fester for too long hoping they would die a natural death. Most of them eventually did but taking casualties in the form of de-churched people with them.

There is also the question of ecclesiology: how church is done in Inglewood. My view is that the way church is done makes it unsuitable for most people. It is a good fit for people who appreciate good presentations from the pulpit those who like passive listening. Only problem is that a lot of people no longer have the ability to listen and follow good presentations fifty two times in a year. They prefer participation to spectator activity. They are not keen to be anonymous listeners but want to contribute to conversation. They want to have a relationship. They want to be known.

This is the reason why in my assessment this research survey showed that about 77% of those de-churched people under the age of 35 years said they would go back to church, "If other people started to do so<sup>136</sup>" essentially if their friends, those they can have dialogue with, come back to church. As I have gathered from interviews with youth, youth leaders and heads of schools, the telling of their own stories is just as important as listening to the stories of others. The model of church which encourages the telling of the stories of a few professional individuals is not appealing. This is why a large percentage of

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<sup>135</sup> Kevin Ward. "The changing nature of post 60s New Zealand" in *Church and Change. 2010* (Unpublished) 8.

<sup>136</sup> This was a very common response amongst the 15-25 age groups.

survey respondents (15% overall and 23% of those under the age of 40 years) said they left church, “because church is plain boring that’s all<sup>137</sup>”.

The church no longer fits people because it is structured for a people who respect and desire authority. Those who rely on authority figures for information and inspiration still find the church meeting their needs. They count on the paid clergy to communicate the insights, stimulate them, pray for them and represent them in the community. As more and more people have moved on to the new era of information distribution, accentuated by the internet they find they do not need to rely on authority to deliver needed information and knowledge on the Christian faith, ministry, spirituality or morality. They now have the power, ability and resources to access information and to process it on their own. To this kind of people, the present preacher based pastor/teacher model of church is not for them.

The pastor/teacher model common in Inglewood does not work for most people as it used to do. This is a model in which people come to church once a week to receive biblical instructions and information about life and God. They expect to hear a great teacher, an authority who teaches biblical principles and historical data. The problem is that most people do not fit this academic based type of church anymore. The wisdom of older people was valued then but now relationships are fragmented and we can hardly embrace truths that inspired our forbearers. People prioritise their experiences over what is reasonable. As a result church becomes “just one more thing that whatever its usefulness to past generations is now well and truly past its sell by date<sup>138</sup>”. This is because the world we are living in today is soaked in information. People simply do not have any sense of lacking data at all. What they lack is the simple staff that Thom Schultz has called “the soft stuff of the soul<sup>139</sup>”. They sense that their growth in God comes more from a “give and take” than from a passive consumption of a sermon lecture. The desire to contribute and the church’s failure to provide a platform for it have separated people from the church.

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<sup>137</sup> When asked why you hate church, respondents cancelled the word hate and stated they did not hate church but it was just not them, boring, no fun, for old people or old fashioned. Our view is that it is just boring for them.

<sup>138</sup> John Drane, *After McDonaldization: Mission, Ministry and Christian Discipleship in an age of Uncertainty* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008) 12.

<sup>139</sup> Thom Schultz, Why church does not fit most people. <http://holysoup.com/2012/03/07/why-church-doesnt-fit-most-people/> 0211.2012.

In addition the contemporary church service is primarily an auditory experience. The widespread influence of television and the computer screen have shaped a people motivated and capable of processing information via visual images. They tend to switch off when put in a situation in which they have to endure presentations given where they have to sit and listen. Our own findings were that most men did not like such passivity and would rather walk away altogether than endure it. The church format is simply not a fit for such people. Church format is therefore one factor that has separated some people from the church. They just cannot connect with God via this traditional 'half lecture half singing' format of worship. We concur with what has become the chorus of all the scholars of the missional church philosophy that the church needs to be incarnational, involved in the community, going out to the people, take the love of God in Christ to them and celebrate the results of mission, which may be the church as we have it now or something different. However we would go further and say wherever they are put something in place that will engage them in mission.

## **5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS.**

We are now able to make recommendations based on both our findings and the informed contributions of experts in the field of church and change in the post- modern world. Obviously our very first advice is that the church need not be pessimistic. Our understanding of the people of Inglewood has not been of a hostile but curious people. They are a community that need genuine engagement and interaction with before they can listen to what the church is saying.

Our very first recommendation is the reduction in the number of churches in Inglewood. Our view is that the maximum number of churches that can serve and revive the town by allowing the church to regenerate momentum is three. The centuries old doctrinal divergence means little can be done with the Catholic Church, but the Anglican and the United Church can form a cooperative venture as has happened elsewhere.

The two Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, Life Gate Apostolic and Inglewood Christian Fellowship, could merge with Liberty Baptist Church to form one energetic church with no major doctrinal clashes that we were able to identify

at all. We are convinced that, as it is, the Rock is not essentially a church but a ministry outreach to young people. It can retain the same status of youth ministry but on behalf and with the support of all the churches. It is a big ask but if personal egos are sacrificed for the interest of the Kingdom, it is a possibility. We see this three church arrangement meeting the worship and spiritual tastes of all the people. It can reduce the number of paid ministers from the current seven to just two (excluding the Catholic priest who is in charge of several parishes around Taranaki). It is an arrangement that can release more leaders to focus on reopening new forms of ministry in the surrounding agricultural communities. It releases financial resources to ministry as opposed to the maintenance of clergy.

Our second recommendations stems from the changes that have taken place in the community as outlined in the whole of this study. We think the church has to follow suit and change in five distinctive ways:

1. The church has to start placing emphasis on relationships. Our basis for this suggestion is that Jesus was incredibly relational. The church seems to us to prefer programmes because they are neater to relationships which can be messy at times. Whilst programmes are brilliant tools, for ministry they need to be used in the context of relationships. All the congregations in Inglewood have continued to be 'spectator oriented'. There has to be a monumental shift in prioritizations. Spiritual growth via personal relationships and interaction of ideas and experiences during service of worship has to take centre stage. The current spectator model is responsible for a situation where more than 40% of church going Christians do not even read the bible and about 60% of the population do not even pray before meals. They just don't know how to and expect pastors to do the praying for them.

What we are saying here is that the church must start to make meaningful contact with people. In John 1:14 the Word did not become words, but became flesh. When reading about the woman at the well in John 4 we see that the Word became flesh and went to her, sat with her and talked to her showing great compassion. This was a great surprise to her. Her understanding of religious (church) people like many today was more of wondering what they might want from her. Often there are two reasons why people are separated

from the church: they have not met a Christian community that really cares like Jesus did or many have not met a genuine Christian who has spent enough time to get to know their inner person. The church should start making meaningful contact with people.

2. The church has to reconsider its focus. There is still too much focus on what others have called the ABCs of the declining church, Attendance, Buildings and Cash. A return to Jesus of Nazareth the loving teacher as the major focus of the church's mission can help narrow the gap between the church and people. Jesus was incredibly intentional about making disciples. He knew what the end product was going to look like. He says, "I will make you fishers of men" (Matt 4: 19). That was the end product and he worked towards achieving it. Clearly from our time researching in Inglewood discipleship is dead. There is no *catechical* process any more. There are no more Bible classes and no more people are being confirmed or socialised in any informative way into the polity and commitment of the church.

It is sad that there is not more intentional and deliberate Christian education and discipleship at all in Inglewood. Our research showed that, with so many churches struggling to survive, the process of becoming a member is reduced to a kind of, what Meyers called "an ecclesiastical dating game<sup>140</sup>". It is easy and carries no commitment to a responsibility at all. We agree with a model proposed by Nigel Dixon that the traditional process of believing, behaving and then belonging no longer works for a post-Christian New Zealand. True evangelism is now about helping people belong so that they can believe. Yet Dixon's new conversion process of belonging, believing and then behaving presupposes a strong church with a teaching and mentoring focus. The implementation of this model in Inglewood (we noted that Nigel Dixon himself is a very frequent visiting speaker) without any intentionality on discipleship programmes has created just one of the social clubs out of the church.

Our survey and interviews as well as interaction with Christians showed us many church members are naively eager to be socially distant from other people. There are also those for which christening and Sunday school has done

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<sup>140</sup> Robin Meyers, *Saving Jesus from the Church* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009) 141.



a good job in giving them religious identity. Sadly most of these still carried a Sunday school images of Jesus, nice, but meaningless and powerless. There was nothing of any cultural baggage in those images and experiences of their faith. As a result they could not relate their experiences of community to their faith lives. They could not adjust or make room for the expanding knowledge, experiences and challenges of today. They have not been disciplined beyond Sunday school images. No wonder many left church altogether stating they could not reconcile their common experiences to the things taught at church.

3. There is need in a self centred world to return to the community as the second most important focus of the church. The church needs to engage and to address the needs of the community. Amazingly our findings were that at the moment the church is known more for what it is against than what it stands for. It is against all the pelvic (sex related) issues of life, but what is it for? It would be great if it were to be known for its members' relationships, its acts of compassion outside of its doors and walls and for taking ministry out rather than calling people to , "come to us and sit down to listen".

What we are suggesting here is that the church must learn to see the good in people. This must be an attitude, an intentional goal. In John 3: 16-17 we have some very challenging words reflecting the compassion of Christ, "For God did not send His son into the world to condemn it, but that the world through him might be saved". These words stand in sharp contrast to Nathaniel's words regarding a stranger, Jesus, "can anything good come from Nazareth?" (John1: 46). Yet In spite of Nathaniel twisted mindset Jesus spoke well of him.

Christians in Inglewood are known more for their judgments on peoples' lives and as a response to this most people keep their distance from them and their churches. This was not the case with Jesus. People saw his compassion and came to him. Jesus saw the potential of people and not just their deeds.

4. A church that is dialogue oriented. We feel that the place of conversation has to improve. It was clearly specified to us in many interviews with different people that the church is reliant on a one way messaging system of communication from the preacher/teacher in the pulpit to the listeners. The inherent weakness of preaching is that it is a monologue and monologues are by nature very poor forms of

communication. How about churches trading the pews for conversation tables a set up that naturally encourage the exchange of God's message of love with one another on an equal footing. All the churches in Inglewood have pews except a few that have replaced pews with chairs, but then arranged them just like pews, talk of change that changes nothing.

We feel justified in making this suggestion. The church has to create a platform that enables it to hear what people are saying. In reading the story of Jesus sharing with the Samaritan woman at the well (John4: 7-9) we see a great picture of a two way conversation with insight, compassion and a willingness to listen. We believe the lady at the well came out of her shell and shared with Jesus because she saw how he went out of his way to speak to her about her needs when most people walked by on the other side of the road. And when he heard of her many failures, he was simply understanding and not condemning. He answered her questions and then showed her the way out. She was so moved by his love that she arranged for her friends to meet with Jesus as well. It is the best model for attitude towards the outcasts of society.

5. Lastly we suggest that the church should once more encourage the rise of the laity. At its height of glory the church had many local lay preachers and leaders stationed to travel to different parts of the district Now the clergy have taken over the preaching and lead worship duties completely. We think that the shrinking resources must lead the church to consider reducing the number of paid staff (the clergy) positions and rely more on unpaid ministry work. It is time to resuscitate the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

The church needs all the people to participate in ministry not just a few committee members. Leaders must stir the other members to go out and do things for people so as to recreate community. In reading Acts 2: 44-45 we could ask of the church how far was the early church prepared to go in doing things for people. The Bible says they went as far as selling land, housing and possessions to raise funds so as to help those in need not just to pay the clergy. This level of commitment certainly caught the attention of the community and gave the Christian church great favour in the community. We need church to regain the favour of the community which it has lost.

The data has painted a picture of waning church attendance and activities in Inglewood, the aging of congregational members and the exodus of young people. Churches in Inglewood particularly the traditional ones the Anglicans, Methodist/Presbyterian and to a significant extent the Roman Catholic are bucking the downward trend the most. It seems to us the smaller the congregation the bigger the rate of decline. We are convinced that the five recommendations above to which we might add the need to do away with committees and embracing the concept of church outside of Sunday mornings if properly implemented can go some way towards redress. The bottom line is that the church has lost touch with community physically, socially and culturally. It has lost the favour and the trust of community. The battle is to regain these and Christ will once again have back the crowds that are now separated from him.

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