



Forms of Communication used by the Cell Church post - Covid-19

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Abstract

In the past, the church was a place of comfort and healing. However, COVID-19 brought about a profound change that saw life as we knew it come to an abrupt halt. Services that were not considered essential, including that of the church, were forced to close their doors. Religious bodies and critical leaders of society did not recognise churches as an integral, life-giving part of the community and world at large. Secular organisations offering essential services could be operated under strict conditions. However, the church remained closed. Despite lockdown restrictions being eased, churches still ensued an uphill battle to open their doors. Strict limits were imposed when the church was eventually allowed to resume fellowship. This was imposed by the government to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Pastors had to look to other mediums to propagate the gospel to ensure the church's survival. Social media have become the most common medium used by the church during COVID-19 to propagate the gospel. This paper aims to describe the forms of communication used by the cell church post-COVID-19 to ensure its survival. The early church gathered in homes as there were no designated buildings where they could worship. COVID-19 forced Christians to have fellowship in their homes and connect with their pastors via social media. The cell church is built around the Jethro Model. It was a form of leadership suggested to Moses by his father-in-law when he noticed how he handled the issues of the Hebrew people. The cell group provides spiritual nourishment for each other and encourages fellowship between family and friends. With cell groups being closed as a result of the restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, this has hindered the spiritual growth of believers. This paper proposes that cell churches use all forms of communication until cell groups become functional again. Secondary sources are used as part of the research methodology for this study.

Keywords: Cell Church, metaphor, Jethro Model, social media, COVID-19.

Introduction

The early church adherents visited homes of families, having fellowship with one another on a regular basis. Over time, churches accrued real estate in the form of buildings, and the house church concept continues to live on. The author remembers that in the 1980s, as a member of an Indian Pentecostal church, the home services were referred to as cottage meetings and then evolved to home cells and cell groups, the terms used today. However, western churches are currently referred to as 'connect groups'. Regardless of the name or reference attributed to this meeting, the focus remains on having fellowship within the home of the congregant and their family. On 11 March 2020 World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic (Chow & Kurlberg, 2020:5). "Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a rapid increase in the use of digital technology by Christian communities worldwide" (Chow & Kurlberg et al., 2020: 1). The pastors' home became the venue from



where services were being transmitted to the congregants (Bryson et al., 2020:361). However, the author believes that many pastors gained significant exposure during this time when they shared the gospel online. This meant that more believers had an option to watch the preacher they preferred at any time. People were not limited to attending a church service at a particular time since most of the services and teachings were made readily available on the various social media platforms to view at any time.

During COVID-19, “Homes and spaces within homes are transformed into temporary sacred spaces” (Bryson et al., 2020:361). After two years of being unable to congregate and fellowship freely, getting the majority or all believers back to church is a mountainous task for pastors. One of the challenges hindering the return of church cell groups is that believers are reluctant to open their homes as COVID-19 has not been entirely eradicated. During COVID-19, social media was seen as a lifeline for the church to propagate the message, but post-COVID-19, it would be seen as the barrier that hinders people from coming back to church. This paper aims to describe the forms of communication used by the cell church post-covid-19 to ensure its survival. The researcher looked at the definition of the cell church, the cell church metaphor and forms of communication used by the cell church, and the use of social media during COVID-19 and in the current post-COVID-19 era.

The Cell Church

A cell group is a group of between five and fifteen people that form part of a unit of Christian believers who follow the New Testament Model (Byun, 2016:89). The function of the cell group is for its members to gather weekly in the presence of Christ, and also to support each other as a family, to also reach out to a hurting world and mentor and release new leaders ultimately seeing the multiplication of groups and thus the spreading of the faith (Boren, 2007:120). Metaphors were always used throughout history, from Christ to the cell church. Christ referred to Himself as “the way, truth, and life” (Matthew 14: 6). These are metaphors used by the early Christians, as the early Christians referred to themselves as the people of “the Way” (Acts 9:2). Throughout church history members of the church identified themselves with metaphors. For the early Christian to “believe” is to act; for the Protestant Reformationists to “believe” is to reform yourself; for the Seventh-day Adventist to “believe” is to move, and presently, the cell church accepts that to “believe” is to multiply.

Dr Yonggi Cho is regarded as the father of the modern-day cell church because the church he pastored in Seoul, South Korea, had over 750 000 believers. He started the church in 1964 and created the cell group system within Yoido Full Gospel Church. This is the largest single church in the history of Christianity. Dr Cho has made the cell group system world-famous (Reddy, 2002). One could thus conclude that Dr Cho is the father of the present-day cell church.

What would one consider to be a cell church? It is a church that is made of small groups, in which people in these groups will meet at various people’s homes during the week. However, these groups will come together and meet in their local church on a Sunday. Cho (1981:50) states that the Cell Church Model operates as follows, “Each week these members gather in their neighbourhood cell meetings, where they have an opportunity to worship the Lord, pray together, to learn from the Word, to experience the working of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, to see miracles and healing and to enjoy a loving relationship with their fellow Christians.”

Reddy (2001:14) states, “The Cell Church Model is based on the fact and assurance that our heavenly Father molded us to live in a community. The Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have a sense of community. Another notable community is Jesus and his 12 disciples. Compton’s Encyclopedia (1982:482) writes, “The close connection between communication and community is seen in the words themselves. Both come from the Latin word ‘communis’,



which means in common or shared.” Reddy (2002:03) further states, “In the New Testament, there are many scriptures, which are used by the cell churches, to substantiate why they believe the cell church to be biblically based. Among the many references there are Acts 2:42-47, 5:42, 16:34, 16:40, 20:7-8, 20:20; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philippians 1:2. However, I will quote only two portions of scripture, Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 5:42.”

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer. Everyone was awed, and the apostles did many wonders and miraculous signs. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possession and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42-47). Luke further states in Acts (5:42), “Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.”

Christianity changed the way it conducted itself in 313 CE when Constantine the Great issued the famous and important Edict of Milan, making it a state religion. “He (Constantine) may have had good intentions by allowing Christians to practice their religion. However, it became a detriment to the church. A pompous ritualistic religious form replaced the supernatural church” (Reddy, 2001:39). From then on, the church is regarded as going through what is known as the ‘dark ages’. Simson (1998), as quoted by Reddy (2001:40), states, “During this time, the church was heavily professionalized, with approved and licensed priests conducting weddings and other functions in a professional public manner. The church experienced the doubtful blessing of being equipped with a mediational Carte between itself and God.” For many centuries, small groups were slowly coming back into existence. Reddy posits (2002: 2), “When Philip Jacob Spener became chief pastor in Frankfort in 1666 CE, he made improvements in catechetical instruction. He gathered small groups of people in his home who were dissatisfied with the formal religion.” The Bible was read, scriptures were studied, and prayers were conducted. During these gatherings, the members discussed the sermon preached by their pastor the previous Sunday. Reddy (2002:2) states, “The name *collegia pietatis* were given to these meetings or gatherings to foster piety” (Reddy, 2002:01). Kuiper (1982:272) says that Philip Spener proposed the establishment of *ecclesiae* in *ecclesia*, little churches within the church.

According to The Methodist Church of Southern Africa (2021:n.p.), “John Wesley encouraged different kinds of small groups to develop so that both leaders and members of the societies could receive support and challenge in their faith. These groups, called ‘classes’ and ‘bands,’ met regularly, and the idea was to be accountable to each other for how each person lived the Christian life. People had to be very open and willing to be changed by the experience.” These types of small groups have given the Methodist Church great success. Reddy (2002) states, “However, these classes (cell groups) had a two-fold purpose. To raise finances and to deal with the challenge regarding the believers who were backsliding.” John Wesley, as quoted by Fitts (1995:18), “Said ‘give’ me twelve men who love Jesus with all their heart and who do not fear men or devils. I care not one whit, whether they are clergy or laity; with these men, I will change the world.”

Reddy (2002:140) states, “Small groups are a gathering of several people who have a common purpose.” Forest and Olson (1996) expand, stating that it is the coming together of people who contribute to a communication goal through communication. Such a group needs a minimum of three members’ the ideal size will be seven to nine, but the maximum number will be 15. However, in the cell group, the perfect number will be 12 members; as the group



grows, it must divide in multiplication. “The common goals in the small groups are accomplished through group involvement” (Reddy, 2002:140).

The purpose of the cell church is to have the members who belong to the cell groups nurtured, edified, and equipped spiritually to ensure longevity in the ministry. This can also be regarded as mentoring believers. From within these groups, various churches can spring forth. “The cell group is a support centre that gives individuals special care. Members have the opportunity to exercise the ministerial gifts through the implementation of the ‘five-fold ministry’”.

According to Ephesians 5:11-13, “¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the Body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” This five-fold ministry is made of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The ultimate purpose of the five-fold ministry is for the works of service so that the Body of Christ may be built up. Their task is to build the Body of Christ, which consists largely of the laity.

Every member of the cell group is seen as a potential leader. During the cell group meetings understanding the word plays a vital role among the members” (Reddy, 2002:140). Within the context of the local cell church, every individual who attends their Sunday morning service must be a member of their midweek cell group. The Sunday morning service continues into the cell group service, which is held during the week. “The cell churches places much emphasis on the cell group meetings. The pastor’s Sunday sermon is discussed in the cell group meeting. The pastor needs to meet with their leaders at least once a week to mentor them. At the same time, the communication lines are opened between the leader and their pastor” (Reddy, 2021:140).

Much emphasis is placed on evangelism within the cell church, which is one of the basic needs of a vibrant and growing church life (Cho, 1981). “Members first introduce their faith to their family and then move on to friends, classmates and trusted colleagues with the idea that these are safe recruits” (Koesel, 2013:576). Churches without evangelism will eventually become stagnant and may, in time, cease to exist. Matthew 28:1 states as follows, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit.” Therefore, this call is the responsibility of every member of the cell group. Reddy (2002:141) posits, “Evangelism is the lifeblood of the cell group, and the cell group is the lifeblood of the cell church.” In 1994 Ralph Neighbour pioneered the cell church model in South Africa. Cell Church International, based in South Africa, had many cell churches affiliated with the organisation; their leader was Pastor Harold F. Weitsz. This organisation was affiliated with the Global Cell Church Missions Network (CCMN). The church still follows the cell church principles; however, the organisation in South Africa is no longer operating, and the website for cell church international is no longer in existence.

“In 1964, David Cho collapsed of exhaustion, trying to do the work of Moses. On this deathbed, God showed him the Biblical model for running the church, thus becoming the forerunner of the modern cell church movement” (Comiskey, 2020). Cell groups or most known now as connect groups are held midweek. David Cho could be regarded as the father of the present-day cell church. “Cho has had rapid growth with the cell church concept at his church; many pastors from throughout the world have visited his church to date” (Reddy, 2001, 2002). A cell group is a group of believers who gather for a common goal, whose goal is to build one another and to fulfil the great commission of the Lord. The cell group is an excellent support structure for believers. Cell groups support structures include: spiritual, physical, financial and emotional support in the event of the death of a loved one. These include hospital visitations, counselling support for family issues, etc. The cell groups include other support systems such as hospital



visitations, funeral services, food hampers, marriage counselling, drug and alcohol counselling, youth empowerment, training and teaching.

The Ten Largest Cell Churches

1. Yoido Full Gospel, Korea 250,000 in worship attendance; 25,000 cell groups.	2. Grace & Truth, Korea 105,000 in worship attendance; Over 1,000 cell groups.
3. Kum Ran Methodist, Korea 50,000 in worship attendance; 2,700 cells.	4. Nambu Full Gospel, Korea 47,000 in worship attendance; Number of cell groups unavailable.
5. Elim Christian, El Salvador 35,000+ in worship attendance; 11,000 cell groups; 120,000 cell attendance.	6. The International Charismatic Mission, Colombia 35,000+ in worship attendance; 14,000 cell groups; 100,000+ cell attendance (G12 model).
7. Showers of Grace, Guatemala 25,000 in worship attendance; 1,000+ cell groups; 15,000 cell attendance.	8. Word of Faith, Kyiv, Ukraine 20,000 worshippers; Number of cell groups unavailable.
9. Family of God, Indonesia 12,000 in worship attendance; 1000+ cell groups.	10. Faith Community Baptist, Singapore 11,000 in worship attendance; 700 cell groups.

Table 1: Ten Largest Cell Churches in the world as of 2020. [Adapted from Comiskey (2020:n.d.)]

From Table 1, it is interesting to note that the top four churches are from South Korea. They were followed by the next three coming from South America. This shows that South Korea and South America have been able to maximise the use of the cell church ministry.

Regarding the statistics in South Africa, Comiskey (2020) states that “some 3,000 churches are making the cell church transition, and in some cases, they are quite advanced. My visit to South Africa brought me into contact with the Lighthouse Christian Centre in Cape Town (600 cells, 7,000 worshippers); the Christian Family Church in Johannesburg (690 cells, 6,000 worshippers), Christian Revival Centre in Bloemfontein (500 cells, 5,000 worshippers) and Little Falls Christian Centre (400 cells, 4,000 worshippers).” From the previous sentence, it can be concluded that the cell church ministry is the fastest growing and developing organisation in South Africa. Their church needs to have an online experience available to its members 24 hours a day and seven days a week (Alex, 2018).

The Cell Church Metaphor

What is a metaphor? According to Watson and Hill (1989:108), a metaphor is “a figure of speech or a visual device, which transports qualities from one plane of reality to another: ‘the camel is the ship of the desert’; ‘life for Mary was a bed of roses.’ Without metaphor, there would be no scope for development of either visual or verbal language; it would remain clinical and colorless.” Ridout and Witting, as quoted by Watson and Hill (1989:108-109), assert that “the metaphor is the lifeblood of our language, for without it no new idea could be expressed, no new thing named, without the intervention of a completely fresh word.”

To fully understand the cell church as a recently established organisation, it will be profitable to see how Christians within the organisation perceive themselves. To unpack this, the



researcher will analyse 'the church is a cell', which underpins the name referred to as the 'cell church' (Reddy, 2002).

Reddy (2002:142) shows that the term 'cell refers to one of the following types, which forms part of a much larger structure:

- A cell is a small room for one person (especially in prison or a monastery).
- It is a compartment in a larger structure (especially in a honeycomb).
- A cell is a unit of apparatus for producing electric current by chemical action (example: metal plates in acid, often part of a battery).
- A cell is a microscopic unit of living matter enclosing a nucleus with self-producing genes.
- A cell is a group acting as the nucleus of covert revolutionary political activities, including hidden forms of communication.

The church uses the fourth type from the five types above for the 'cell'. The fourth type is "4. A cell is a microscopic unit of living matter enclosing a nucleus with self-producing genes." Robert Hooke was the first person to use the word cell in 1665. "The smallest unit of living matter that can exist by itself is the cell" (Comptons Encyclopedia and Fact Finder, 1984:180). "A cell is the basic unit of life as we know it. It is the smallest unit capable of independent reproduction" (British Society for Cell Biology, nd:n.p.).

Comiskey (1998:19) posits that "one drop of blood, for instance, has about 300 million red cells! Just as individual cells join the body of human beings, cells in a church form the Body of Christ. Further, each biological cell grows and reproduces its parts until it divides into two cells. The total genetic package received partly from the parent is re-established in each daughter cell." "This also occurs in healthy cell churches" (Comiskey, 1998:19). The nucleus controls the growth and division of the cell. However, it is the DNA that determines the features of the cell. Comiskey (1998:19) states, "Just as human cells pass through specific stages, so should small groups." The stages are learning, loving, linking, launching and leaving.

Learning stage: "All cells consist of protoplasm, the 'living jelly.' The protoplasm of a typical cell forms three vital parts - the cell membrane, the cytoplasm, and the nucleus" (Comptons Encyclopedia and Fact Finder, 1984:180). Comiskey (1998:19) writes, "Although the cell possesses the genetic code for multiplication, it must grow and develop first. Small groups follow a similar pattern. Members initially gaze at each other with an unknowing expectancy, and the members getting to know each other characterizes the first stage of cell-group life." This stage takes about a month or a little longer than a month.

Loving stage: Though this is referred to as the devoted stage, it is also known as the conflict stage. Conflicting names refer to this phase, either a loving or conflicting stage. Cell members begin to take out their masks during this stage, similar to how chromosomes in a human cell would begin to pair (Comiskey, 1998:20). During this stage, the members become familiar with each other. Within this stage, the cell members become acquainted with one another. This stage takes about a month.

Linking stage: "In a human cell, the once free-floating chromosomes suddenly begin to form a line at mid-cell" (Comiskey, 1998:20). It is during this stage that cell members can establish their purpose. Cell members can recognise their spiritual giftings. Comiskey (1998:20) posits



that this is the ideal time to activate cell evangelism training among the cell members. This stage takes about a month.

Launching Stage: The launching stage usually takes place during the fourth month. Comiskey (1998:21) states that “the chromosome strands begin to line up in east-west positions, getting ready to launch and make an exact duplicate of itself.” During this stage, evangelism is the focus. Reddy (2002:144) states that “evangelism is the lifeblood of the cell group.” The three previous steps take around a month. However, this stage can be less or longer than a month. It would be based on how long the cell group takes to multiply and form another cell group.

Leaving stage: Similar to how a cell prepares to give birth to an identical cell, the chromosome separates and divides similarly into cell groups where upcoming leaders are trained to lead a cell group (Comiskey, 1998). Multiplication only occurs when the cell group is large enough to be divided into two cell groups.

Metaphor used by the Cell Church

The author will highlight the metaphors used by a few Christian groups before he mentions the metaphor used by the cell church. The early Christian could be linked with the metaphor, which will read as follows, to believe is to act. This may seem like the synopsis of the title of the Book of Acts. The Christians acted out what they believed in. Any place travelled by the early Christian was used as an opportunity to propagate and maintain what they believed in. They believed in Christ and wanted others to know about Christ. Where change within you was necessary if you believed in Christ. During the protestant reformation, the transformation within the individual was a priority. To the protestant reformers, to believe is to purify and reform oneself. During the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventists, to ‘believe’ was to ‘move’. They saw the need to move to various parts of the world and maintain and propagate their values and beliefs. During the rise of the Pentecostal church, to believe is to demonstrate. To demonstrate the power of God by speaking in tongues, prophesying, healing the sick, and exorcism. In the Baptist Church, to ‘believe’ is to be ‘transformed’ through the word of God. They place much emphasis on teaching and preaching the word of God. Finally, the cell church can be allocated the metaphor; to “believe” is to multiply. Showing that if a cell church believes in Christ, they ought to be constantly multiplying and forming new cell groups, and the process continues. But more than this, an organisation continually develops new leaders as new groups are created.

Print and Electronic or Broadcast Media

Within the field of media, we have different types of media. People will use the type of media which meets their budget and is accessible to them.

Difference between Print Media and Electronic and Broadcast Media

Print media		Electronic or broadcast media	
Book	Newspaper	Television	Radio
Magazine	Handbill	Film	Electronic billboard
Pamphlet		Internet	Records and videotape

Table 2. Classification of Mass Media [Adapted from Reddy (2012:9)]

Table 2 above separates mass media into print and electronic or broadcast media. Under print media, there is book, newspaper, magazine, handbills, and pamphlets. Electronic and broadcast media include television, film, internet, radio, billboards, and records and videotapes. Social media falls within the scope of the internet.



The use of Social Media

“Social media are considered as innovative ways of organizational communication with its stakeholders and developing online relationships through these media has become an essential part of an organization’s public relations and communication strategies” (Lee, 2018:383). Lee (2018:384) posits, “Religious organisations, just like other non-profit organisations, have realized the growing influence of social media and searched for ways to use these platforms to stay engaged in the community effectively.” Hagee (1974:79) writes, “The New Testament did not begin on Broadway, it started in the home, and it will return to the home. The modern institutional church has become massive and mechanical, but house-group ministry allows for a family atmosphere to prevail as smaller gather for worship.” How ironic is this statement that since COVID-19 and the lockdown that took place worldwide, churches have been closed, and believers have started to have church services in their homes once again? “Social media is a term used to describe a variety of web-based platforms, applications, and technologies that enable people to interact with one another online” (Badmos, 2014:1). Badmos (2014:5) posits, “The popularity of social media means that some churches have started to embrace this technology to expand their church community into the virtual world.” Presently the church can market itself on social media for free (McKinney, 2014:5).

“Many churches switched to streaming or recording their services during the COVID-19 crisis” (Giese, 2020:347). Due to COVID-19, most churches live to stream their services via various social media platforms. Among them, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok are the most used social media platforms by the church and Christian leaders. WhatsApp is the most common form of communication used by the cell church. WhatsApp enables cell leaders to connect with their leaders instantly. It would also be used to pass messages from senior leaders to their group members. For example, all group members can be in a specific group. Then all the leaders from an area or zone can be in a WhatsApp group; then, a pastor will have so many zones under them on a WhatsApp group. Then all the pastors may be in a WhatsApp group with author pastors or with the senior pastor. WhatsApp is an excellent social media today and has been widely used by the church and more since COVID-19.

The Different Types of Social Media the Church Could Use to Propagate the Gospel

Billions of people are active social media users. The church should look at maximising this area of communication since people are often on social media sites. More than half of the world now uses social media platforms (59%). This means that 4.70 billion people around the world now use social media, and a staggering 227 million new users have come online within the last year.

Social Media Monthly active users

Table 3. Social Media Monthly Active users

1. Facebook	2.936 Billion
2. YouTube	2.476 Billion
3. WhatsApp	2.0 Billion
4. Instagram	1.440 Billion
5. WeChat (Including Weixin 微信)	1.288 Billion



From the above list proposed by Datareportal, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and WeChat are the leading five SNS leading with the most users. Since a majority of society is digitally enabled and using SNS, the church also needs to use this tool to interact with their congregation and not just use it as a medium for cell group meetings. Some churches use SNS to interact with the congregation. However, COVID-19 made the church realise that they needed social media to remain connected to the members of their congregation and to ultimately remain a blessing to those they lead, especially with the insurmountable difficulties experienced by people during the pandemic. At the same time, some pastors were uncomfortable using social media as many only had the Sunday morning services, which were live streamed. The cell group services were instantly stopped, and the midweek prayer meeting became the home cell meeting for many pastors because they were live streaming from their homes. This allowed congregation members to live stream these services from the comfort of their homes.

Forms of Communication Employed by the Cell Church

Cell churches employ various forms of communication to know their purposes, objectives, and aims and to maintain and propagate the gospel of Christ. Reddy (2004:43) "Small group communication consists of; brainstorming, consultation, cross-questioning, judging and conversation; these are just a few. Small group communication is influential in the cell church because much emphasis is placed on small groups." These were brought to an abrupt end when gatherings were stopped during restrictions on religious communities. Reddy (2002:146) states, "The forms of communication most frequently adopted by the cell churches are as follows; downward communication, upward communication, lateral communication. Group communication, intercultural communication, internal communication, mass communication, organisational communication, public communication, verbal communication, internet and written communication." In recent years, they have depended greatly on social media use.

Social media have become the lifeblood of our society. Especially during the lockdown and social distancing due to COVID-19, social media platforms have enabled the church and its members to remain connected. An important observation is that the live streaming of church services via social media has become a powerful medium, especially during COVID-19. Cell churches have maximised the use of the internet to main and propagate themselves as an established organisation. Many cell church websites could be located on the internet if one had to do a google search.

When focusing on the cell church, Dr Joel Comiskey is regarded as one of the leading authors of the cell church. His home page is <http://www.comiskey.org/>. Reddy (2002:148) states, "He encourages individuals viewing his website to comment and make suggestions. He has information on his website about small group material, family news, books/tapes/video, prayer requests, articles, seminar schedules." Dr Comiskey encourages individuals viewing his website to communicate with him or his wife. This conclusion is made from noticing both Comiskey's and his wife's e-mail addresses.

There are various books which can be viewed on Comiskey's website, known as the Joel Comiskey Group (2021) which are Living in Victory, 2000 Years of Small Groups, Making Disciples in the Twenty-First Century Church, Planting Churches that Reproduce, The Spirit-filled Small Group, Empowered to Lead, Groups that Thrive: 8 Surprising Discoveries About Life Changing Small Groups, Biblical Foundations for the Cell-Based Church, The Church that Multiplies, Facilitate: How to Lead a Life-giving Small Group, Myths and Truths of the Cell Church, You Can Coach: How to Help Leaders Build Healthy Churches Through Coaching, Youth in Cell Ministry, Children in Cell Ministry, An Appointment with the King, Live:



Experience Christ's Life, The Relational Disciple, Live: Experience Christ's Life, Grow: Deepen Your Relationship with Christ, Groups of Twelve,, Encounter: Receive Christ's Freedom, Share: Make Christ Real to Others, Discover: Use Your Gifts and Help Others Find Theirs, Reap the Harvest, From 12 to 3, Coach: Empower Other to Effectively Lead a Small Group and Encounter: Receive Christ's Freedom.

There are twenty-seven books, and his books are translated into Spanish. These various books can be ordered through the internet. Contact details of the multiple publishers that stock these books are also mentioned. Some of these books can be purchased on PDF and Kindle. Comiskey's book *Home Cell Group Explosion* is translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Indonesian, and Hebrew. From this, it can be concluded that Comiskey does not want language to be a barrier. He is determined to communicate with people of different languages. Mass communication is one of the primary forms of communication used by the cell church. This form of communication is used because they need to maintain and propagate themselves. Horton (2018) states that the masses can be informed through social media, which is an excellent tool for the church.

The Theoretical Framework

The Jethro Model would be the model used in this study. Moses's father-in-law noticed that Moses was handling all the people's challenges, and he told him of the impact that dealing with everyone's problems would have on him and that it would ultimately lead to burnout (Exodus 18:13–24). "In Exodus 18, he advised Moses to divide the people into segments of 'thousands, hundreds, the fifties and tens' and appoint leaders for each group to help him judge and administer them. Moses was then governed by the 'referral' principle – only the most difficult cases were referred to him. This approximates the organizational structure of cell groups" (Tucker, 2003:154). Reddy (2002) posits that "This was done to ensure that Moses does not stress himself on dealing with the general issues of the people." He went on further to tell Moses to let only severe cases be presented to him. Moses listened to his father-in-law's advice and adopted his guidance. Breaking the people of Israel into groups would mean the leaders would be in place for each group of people.

By dividing the people of Israel into groups, the chosen leaders would be responsible for the said group of people placed under their care. By adopting this system within the church, the members had someone they had direct access to for leadership and spiritual guidance. As the cell grows, a sub-division takes place, the group is split, and a leader is chosen for the newly formed group. The cell church works on the system of multiplication.

Conclusion

"Though religious services can take place in any vicinity. A religious service brings people together to engage in shared worship, generally including the singing of hymns or psalms, scripture reading and its exposition in sermons, shared and individual prayer, and often participation in the Eucharist or Holy Communion" (Bryson et al., 2020:363). Church attendance has dropped since the government allowed churches to reopen post-COVID-19. The cell church believes in the idea of multiplication. The cell churches are currently facing challenging times since COVID-19, as most cell groups are currently closed. Social media offered the church a lifeline during COVID-19, but keeping cell groups closed longer will make it harder to reopen the cell group. So, in the interim, the cell church needs to continue to use all forms of communication until believers open their homes once again to cell groups. Having said this, what happens if believers do not open their homes? "The widespread use of social media, among the younger generation, in particular, suggests that adopting social media is not a choice anymore for religious congregations" (2018:384).



Recommendation

Since churches do not need to push members to start cell groups, this will make it harder to start them again. In the interim, each home should become a cell group, and a group of eight to 15 individuals should fall under the care of a local elder whom they could interact with during the week when they have cell group meetings. During this meeting, they could interact on Zoom, Teamwork, and WhatsApp, etc. By reviving cell groups, local members will begin to once again engage in fellowship and the exercising of their spiritual abilities and giftings. Since March 2020, which is two and a half years, most members have not been involved in cell group interaction. Social media could be used to revive cell groups again. If social media has been used for Sunday morning service and prayer meetings since COVID-19, why is it not used for the cell group meeting?

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