

Holistic ministry approach to migration: Towards a practical theological and integrated ecclesiological model



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The design of church migrant ministries remains suppressed by the limitation of churches that include limited resources and ability to conceptualise ministerial designs. The situation is compounded by compassion global fatigue. Thus, as a holistic ministry, approach, the application and practice of a migrant ministry remain a conceptual challenge despite the Christian position that integrating word and deed is the most appropriate Christian ministry approach. To contribute towards conceptualising the design of a holistic ministry by using migrant practical ministry, this article proposes a public, practical theology and operative ecclesiological model. The proposed model or approach is called a public operative ecclesiological model (POEM), which entails churches understanding their public practical theological position and responsive role within their communities and social settings.

Contribution: The model advocates and leverages church resources to respond to people's needs by ensuring that a church practically contributes to public issues such as migration.

Keywords: migrant ministry; migrant public operative ecclesiological model; holistic ministry; holistic ministry and practical theology; church migrant ministry; church practical ministry.

Introduction

This article seeks to answer the question: how can a migrant ministry be developed in such a manner that it is theological, but at the same time practically relevant? In answering this question, the article proposes a conceptual model for a practical migrant ministry with the following dimensions: theological reflection, public theology, practical theology and ecclesiology. Firstly, the article problematises the issue by locating migrant ministry within a holistic ministry framework. Secondly, it outlines some presuppositions that should inform the model design. Thirdly, it presents the proposed model. The article aims to conceptualise the design of a holistic migrant ministry by employing a public practical theology and operative ecclesiological approach. The approach entails churches understanding their public practical theological position and responsive role within their communities and social settings, resulting in advocating and leveraging church resources to respond to people's needs.

Practical theological approach to a holistic migration ministry¹

The expectation of churches to provide practical assistance to migrant people is expected to increase despite compassion fatigue due to burn out and the enormity of the task (Louw 2015:1–2; Schjonberg 2017:1):

[T]he number of international migrants worldwide has continued to grow rapidly over the past 15 years reaching 244 million in 2015, up from 222 million in 2010 and 173 million in 2000. (UNHCR 2015:1)

Theologically, churches' practical interventions to migrants are understood from the perspective of holistic mission. Holistic ministry or mission is denoted by terms such as *integral mission*, *compassionate ministry*, *Christian development*, *transformation*, and many others (Chester 2004:62–64; Magezi & Mutowa 2018:124). A holistic ministerial approach entails helping people both materially and spiritually. Holistic ministry is traced back to God as a God of holistic mission. The argument for holistic mission is that the theme of missions begins in the book of Genesis and is seen throughout the entire Old Testament and the New Testament (Timothy n.d). Holistic mission

1.The proposed practical theology approaches will be defined and discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

scholars maintain that mission begins with the creation of the world in perfect harmony under the Lordship of God (Gn 1–2) and humans in relationship with their creator as stewards of the creation (Gn 1:27–30). The Bible presents the story of God’s mission through God’s people in their engagement with God’s world for the sake of the whole of God’s creation, which was distorted by sin. In view of this, the Bible should be understood messianically and missionally. Therefore, it is important to view the churches’ participation in reaching out to the world from a holistic ministry stance (Andrews 2017; Bosch 1991; Chester 2004; Padilla 2004; Timothy n.d; Tizon 2010; Wright 2017).

Bosch (1991:512) maintains that Christian mission should integrate word and deed (integrated) in order to be holistic in its approach. ‘Christians across the divide agree that integral mission is the appropriate way of doing Christian ministry’ (Magezi & Mutowa 2018:124). Therefore, it is imperative for churches to be involved in holistic ministry (Samuel 2010:128–136). The involvement of churches in practical ministry defines their ‘being’. Christianity changes peoples’ hearts. Faith inspires good works (Woolnough 2010). Local churches and denominations are the bedrock of community transformations (Miles & De Villiers 2010:149–159; Raistrick 2010:138–148). Despite the clearly agreed position by most Christians that Christian ministry should be holistic, appropriate and relevant, there is lack of clarity on how such holistic mission should be done in practice (Magezi & Mutowa 2018). Holistic mission is characterised superficially with little in-depth reflection (Myers 2010:121). Notably, the concept of holistic ministry is influenced by the ministry context. However, there is a gap on specific ministry practice guidelines. While this study focuses on ministry to migrants as a ministerial approach, it falls under holistic ministry. Thus, the holistic ministry guides should be applied.

Stott’s (1996) *Historic mission documents from the Lausanne Movement 1974–1989 exposition* is instructive regarding holistic missions’ developments. Stott (1996) has been involved in holistic mission for about five decades starting from the 1960’s until the 1974 Lausanne conference consensus with other theologians like Padilla, Samuel, Sugden and many others.

Having been involved in holistic mission for many decades, Stott (1996) observes that from the 1960’s until 1974, holistic mission was characterised by thorough theological thinking, which is not the case in recent years (Myers 2010:120–122). Therefore, Stott (1996) warns that, as time has passed since the Lausanne covenant (1974) and the Manila Manifesto (1989), there is a younger generation of Christian leaders who are unfamiliar with the important theological and missiological thinking incorporated in these important documents. Thus, different to the theological debates on holistic mission in the 1970s and 1980s, Myers (2010:121) observes that the current holistic mission situation is characterised by two aspects. Firstly, ‘holistic mission (evangelism and social action) is now

a historical footnote’ (Myers 2010). Secondly, ‘people and organisations are just getting on with transformational development (holistic mission) with little or no reflection’. The idea that the holistic mission debate is now a historical footnote and theologians are simply getting on with holistic mission, suggests a simplistic assumption that the theological underpinnings are well understood and exhausted. Therefore, it is important to note that ‘at the current moment in holistic mission, Stott’s warning in 1996 of uninformed young Christians was expressed as a reality in a lamenting manner by ... Myers (2010) who states that:

There is very little new theological reflection; we are resting on the excellent work done in the 1980s. There is no new ecclesiology, and yet the question of the relationship between the Christian relief and development agency and local churches remains unclear. The bottom line is this: for the last twenty years, evangelical holistic mission activists have acted. They’ve gone out and done transformational development. Doing is good. But there is more to doing than just acting. (p. 121)

Theological reflection is one side of the holistic mission gap, while actual practice is the other. It seems unclear how Christian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and churches should do integral mission in real life. It is difficult to clearly distinguish the activities of churches deemed integral (i.e. integrating word and deed) from those of Christian organisations and secular organisations. Magezi and Mutowa (2018:126) rightly question: ‘should the programmes be different? How? Why? This lack of clarity on the practicality of integral mission makes it operationally questionable and suspicious as a concept.’ Therefore, it is critical to theologially reflect and conceptualise integral ministry in practice. Such a theological and practical ministry design conceptualisation contributes to addressing Myers’ ... question (2010:121): What ... in the world does it mean to say, ‘get on with holistic mission’, both conceptually and operationally? The ‘get on with holistic mission’-approach attitude resulted in Christians having ‘agreed on the gospel validity of both evangelism and social action, stopping to work conceptually and theologially’ (Myers 2010).

In view of the above discussion, migration is our holistic intervention issue in consideration. Notably, in implementing migrant holistic interventions, churches should be understood as different to other organisations. At stake is the question: How should church driven migrant interventions look like? How should such a holistic ministry or intervention differ from a non-church ministry? These questions are at the heart of the integral mission vacuum. There is need for clarity on what church, or Christian driven migrant practical ministry interventions should look like. For instance, is there a difference between a church that provides a shelter to migrants or NGOs also providing the same service? If there is a difference, how should it look like? In this light, Magezi and Mutowa (2018:126) ask the following question: How does a church driven children ministry differs from a similar intervention being done by Plan international, World Vision or any other NGO?

Further to being, a holistic mission's issue that is the design of migrant interventions entails a practical ministerial approach. As such it is a practical theological approach. Practical theology focuses on developing theories of praxis (Hermans & Schweitzer 2013; Louw 2014; Osmer 2008). Accordingly, it is critical to reflect and explore praxis theories of migrant ministry intervention approaches. It should be underlined that for a practical theological approach such as migration intervention driven by churches to be located within practical church ministry, it should be considered a theological endeavour. Ganzevoort (2009) notes that, despite the differences that practical theologians have, they all agree that practical theology is a theological enterprise. What does it mean to say a practical theological approach should be theological? A sociologist engaging in migrant ministry or an NGO practitioner may be involved in migrant ministry using the same methodologies as a theologian, but a theologian focuses on the divine (Ganzevoort 2009). Thus, migrant ministry as a practical theological approach, probes how the interventions intentionally relate to the divine in terms of its goals and motivation.

Theory formation in migrant ministry as a practical theological ministry, should maintain clarity between church, its mission, goal and society. On the one hand, the ministry should be clearly theological, but at the same time practically relevant and applicable to address people's practical challenges. This dichotomy is inevitable. Louw (1998), writing within the context of pastoral care, indicates that practical theologians call this tension 'principle of bipolarity'. In locating bipolarity directly in practical theological thinking, Louw (2014) advises that:

[W]hen one wants to render practical theology as a scientific endeavour in theory formation, the following five principles should be taken into consideration. The five principles are: Bipolarity, paradox, discernment, hermeneutical networking and complexity. Due to mutual interplay they constitute an epistemological framework for scientific reflection and research in practical theology. (p. 112)

The principle of bipolarity indicates that knowledge is embedded in different polarities influencing the process of knowing and responding to life situations. Osmer (2008) clarifies and applies the interplay of these polarities by explaining that practical theology has a descriptive task (What is going on?) and an interpretive task (Why is this going on?), which draws from social sciences and other theories. Furthermore, to these tasks is the third task called a normative task (i.e. What ought to be going on?). The knowledge generated from social sciences (polarity 1) and the ideal knowledge from God's perspective drawn from the biblical text (polarity 2) are integrated to develop practical strategic ministry interventions, which is a pragmatic task (How might we respond?).

Thus, in theory formation, the ongoing interaction of theory and praxis should be observed. Regrettably, the weakness in some practical approaches is that responses are pragmatic

(praxis), but with little theological reflection (theory), while the other responses focus on theological reflection (theory) with little practical application (praxis). Therefore, theory and practice should cooperate and integrate to practically inform, shape and respond to real life issues. When practical theology results in shaping real life interventions and issues, it becomes a life science (Louw 2017:1). Theoretical formulations should be embedded in intentional practical implications.

Migrant ministry praxis should be underpinned by a clear theological theory. At stake is ... the following question: How can a migrant ministry be thoroughly theological, but at the same time practically relevant? Formulated differently: What migrant practical ministerial approach can be conceptualised to maintain clarity on the uniqueness of the church and social ministry?

This article proposes a conceptual model for a practical migrant ministry with the following dimensions: theological reflection, public theology, practical theology and ecclesiology. The proposed conceptual approach is public, practical theology and operative ecclesiology.

Presuppositions for a migrant public practical theology and ministry approach

Several presuppositions that undergird a migrant practical ministry to make it theological and practical should be identified. The presuppositions highlight the critical aspects in the interface between practical theology, public theology, congregational ministry and the practical service to society. Kamp (2001) rightly advises that presuppositions are important to guide our understanding of a ministerial approach. Thus, these presuppositions inform the model and guide our understanding of the proposed approach as well as provide a point of departure for the ministerial approach. Hence, it is important to understand how they arise. The presuppositions will serve as guiding principles for our model design:

- Firstly, migrant issues are complex. Hence, churches should understand 'complexities of the interrelated factors that make the understanding of migration situation "a complex web"' (Louw 2016:1; cf. Faulconbridge & Young 2015:1). For instance, a terrorist may co-mingle with vulnerable women and children, or a robber with ulterior motives can be part of a refugee group. Hospitality could easily be abused. Previous hurting experiences may cause host countries to be resistant, while other host people may just hold prejudicial perspectives of other people. This implies that there is no linear approach or simple causation approach. Therefore, a systemic approach should be adopted. This entails a hermeneutical approach where the focus should be on understanding the contextual dynamics and co-influencing factors from an interdisciplinary perspective.

- Secondly, a theology of migration should be innovative and imaginative. Drawing from art, Louw (2001:327) advises that theological imagination 'describes a dynamic relation between form and content, celebration and faith, and belief, experience and transcendence. These dynamics are established through imagination and creative hope.' Thus, imagination is about thinking afresh in an innovative way to address pressing challenges. In so doing, one should embrace contextual, liberative, reformatory and empowering theologies that make theology a life science (Louw 2017:1). Our God talk and reflection should result in practical helping actions to improve people's quality of life. A theology of migration should avoid what Anderson (2001:12) calls a theology 'that could talk but that could not walk'. To that end, Nicholls and Wood (1996:7) advise 'that a strong biblical foundation and a Christ-centred motivation are critical for a sound Christian ministry'. Nicholls and Wood (1996:7) rightly guide that 'theological reflection on the dialogical relationship between God's word and the demands of a complex world, should be prioritised'. Thus, church migrant ministries should be informed by imaginative, versatile and contextual theological approaches in response to lived realities. Migrant ministry as a practical theological endeavour should be imaginative (Cahalan & Mikoski 2014:3; Magezi 2019:118). Theology should imagine and dream new ways of living the shalom of God in the world. Louw (2014:11) advises that both practical theology and Christian spirituality should include anticipatory imagination (*fides quaerens imaginem*: faith-seeking imaginative deciphering).
- Thirdly, churches should be understood as spiritual spaces within communities. Churches are subsystems of societies (Magezi 2007) and yet they must function within the order and laws of the country. The identity of a church is such that she is in the world, but not of the world (Jn 17:13–17). Hence, ministry design should maintain this tension.
- Fourthly, effective practical ministry requires church leaders who are versatile to function both at spiritual and social scientific levels. Church leadership is critical to lead, guide and drive practical ministries. Osmer (2008) and Hendriks (2004) rightly identify leadership as important in implementing strategic ministry approaches. This includes ministry planning, monitoring, evaluating and learning in their environments. Church leaders should think conceptually to understand and determine the convergencies and divergencies of the spiritual and social tasks (Myers 2010).
- Fifthly, churches are constrained by limited resources to offer certain services. Resource limitation is a reality in many churches. Hence, churches need to form partnerships with other agencies to address the comprehensive needs of migrants. Located within a theological framework, the tension of needs versus limited resources should be

understood from the perspective of the desired ideal versus the prevailing reality in the world. Therefore, Magezi (2018:324) indicates that the churches should be 'conscious of the reality of unresolved tensions such as the bipolarity of God's Word and his Laws during this in-between (kingdom now but not yet) period'. In Magezi's view (2018:324), this 'tension' reinforces the notion that churches will not completely address all the challenges of migrants, because Jesus himself said 'the poor you will always have ... among you' (cf. Jn 12:8; Mt 26:11). This understanding tasks the churches to recognise the reality of the ever-expanding needs and to make strategic choices on where to intervene. Greider (2008:54) questions the ever-expanding scope of pastoral ministry and the expectation to address different needs such as migration in our case. To address this dilemma, the suggestion is to make strategic decisions about where to focus, depending on one's social context and demand. She (Greider 2008:54) suggests that Christian ministry should be articulative about their limits and how they triage.

- Sixthly, in line with Juma (2015) and Koppel (2015), Magezi (2018:325) indicates that the public role of the church must be understood from the perspective of public practical theology. That is, 'Public theology is the quest by churches and theologians to redefine and contextualise the calling and role of Christian faith and churches in public life' (Magezi 2018:325; cf. Juma 2015:2; Koppel 2015:151). Public theology is not institutionalised theology, but a theology that seeks discourse with social situations and human contexts (Dreyer & Pieterse 2010:6; Dreyer 2011; Garner 2015:23; Juma 2015:1; Koppel 2015:151; Vanhoozer & Strachan 2015:17). In this way, 'Public theology is not a replacement or rebranding of practical theology, but rather practical theology finds its expression in public theology' (Magezi 2018:325; cf. Juma 2015:2). Practical theology takes a public dimension when its focus is on non-ecclesial structures and context like the wider public and global issues such as migration (Dreyer 2004:919–920). Osmer and Schweitzer (2003:218) elucidate public practical theology as entailing the following: (1) 'ensuring that the public is one of the audiences of practical theology'; (2) 'ensuring that practical theology includes everyday concerns and issues in its reflection'; and (3) 'practical theology should facilitate a dialogue between theology and contemporary culture'. Further to the above, another mark of practical theology is the development of strategic ministry interventions (Osmer 2008:4). Hence, public practical theology entails public reflections, discussions and debates, but it should eventually develop intervention models. Churches thus should be guided accordingly.

In view of the above presuppositions and the previous discussion, what conceptualisation of a public, practical theology and operative ecclesiological migrant ministry approach should be proposed?

Towards a conceptual framework for a practical migrant ministry

The proposed migrants' ministry model or approach is called a public operative ecclesiological model (POEM). POEM is about a church that understands its public practical theological position and responsive role within the community and its social setting. It is about a church that leverages its resources to respond to people's needs by ensuring that a church becomes operative and functional in response to pressing social issues (operative ecclesiology) such as migration. This entails that a church develops 'an ecosystem of care for spiritual and physical needs of migrants' (Magezi 2018:325). Such a church can be deemed a public church. The church is aware of the current situation of migration and the challenges associated with both migrants and host communities. The model can be systemically presented as a diagrammatic web of interrelated responses represented by arrows indicating pathways on interventions (Figure 1).

Ministry design approach

In explaining the diagram of Figure 1, Magezi (2018:326) notes that 'Arrows 1 and 2 indicate migrant arrival spaces, which could be in church spaces (arrow 1) or non-church social spaces (arrow 2) like streets, refugee centres and community halls. For migrants arriving in churches, the churches may have respective internal migrant ministry

(arrow 6), which includes providing spiritual nurturing, physical support such as practical and logistical support (13), 'assisting with legal documents (arrow 12) and physical or material support such as food (arrow 11)' (Magezi 2018:325). Further Magezi (2018:325) notes that 'Arrow 3 shows the church as understanding itself as a spiritual space within communities and existing as a subsystem of the community or society.' The churches partner with other community players to identify migrants requiring support such as logistical, legal documents and material support. The church's involvement in 'non-church migrant arrival spaces results in churches designing intentional non-Christian (external) migrant ministries that offer practical and logistical support (arrows 11–13)' (Magezi 2018:325). The missional aspect of the POEM-model is that the church's involvement in non-Christian spaces (arrows 3 & 4) results in identification of Christian migrants in the non-church spaces. The identified Christian migrants who may not be aware of places of worship are directed to the relevant places. Thus, the identified Christian migrants in non-Christian spaces (arrow 3) are brought into churches where they will have a sense of family and spiritually nurtured.

Furthermore, Magezi (2018) expounds that:

... [N]on-Christian migrants (arrow 3) who are converted during the external migrant ministry outreaches are also brought to the church for spiritual nurturing. This means that while legal, material and logistical support are provided to both Christian and non-Christian migrants, spiritual nurturing is largely

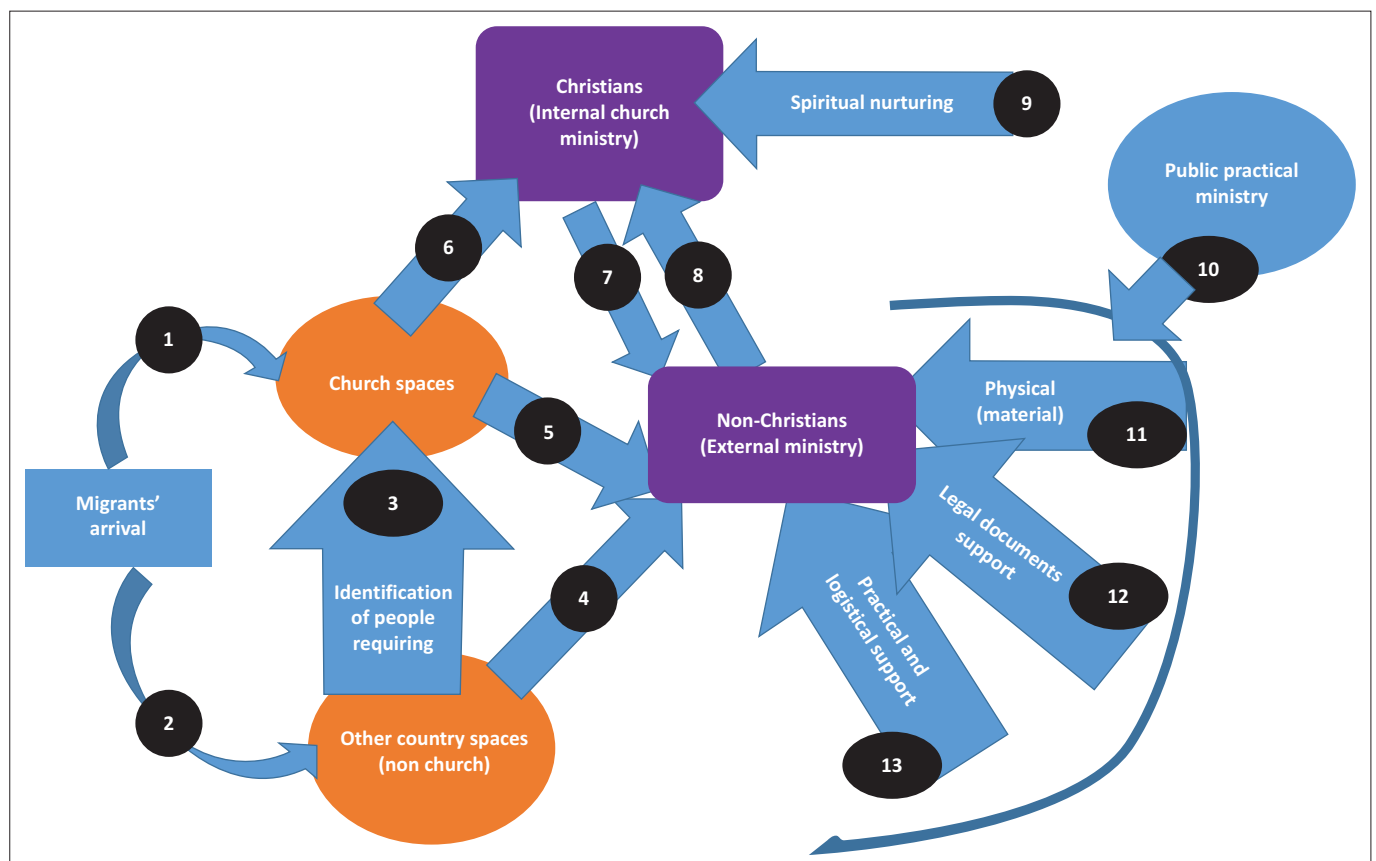


FIGURE 1: Public operative ecclesiological model (POEM) systemic responses, indicating intervention pathways.

provided to Christians (arrow 9) because some migrants may belong to other religions and do not require particular Christian spiritual support. (p. 326)

Therefore, the spiritual support should be limited to Christians in order to avoid religious conflicts or proselytising people through the help being provided. Arrow 10 indicates that a ministry to migrants has both internal church members and external public people dimensions. 'The involvement of the church in non-church spaces is highlighted by arrows 8 and 9, which shows that the church should address the challenges of migrants within the church and outside the church' (Magezi 2018:326). Arrow 5 indicates the intentional movement of churches to assist migrants outside church spaces. Arrow 4 indicates intentional strategies for churches' involvement in the non-church spaces to address migrants' needs.

Notably, 'arrow 10 summarises the diagram by indicating the church as having internal and external migrant ministry focus' (Magezi 2018:327). In Magezi's view (2018:327), this indicates that 'the church should step out into the public sphere (external migrant ministry) where there are many stakeholders and organisations that address the challenges of migrants'. At this public space, the church partners with other players. In so doing, the theological rationale of the church's migrant ministry should be clear and distinguished from other stakeholders, even though they may be joining hands in providing practical help.

Pointers for the public operative ecclesiological (POEM-) model – Consideration of the church as a spiritual organisation (separate), but immersed in society (subsystem of society)

Identification of needy migrants and their care

POEM shows that churches should be cognisant of migrants' multiple arrival spaces including the church spaces and non-church social spaces. Magezi (2018:328) notes that 'migrants who arrive at the churches' doorsteps are easy to identify and assist, because they are often part of the church', or they understand churches as conduits of care. However, 'migrants who arrive at non-church spaces are not easily identifiable by the churches for assistance' (Magezi 2018:328). Hence, churches should develop intentional strategies to identify such people. 'Theologically, POEM urges churches and Christian individuals to be cognisant of God's charge to look after the needs of Christian and non-Christian migrant people' (Magezi 2018:328). When Christians do good acts, they are doing such acts to God (Mt 25:31–46). Both Christians and non-Christians are bearers of the image of God. God loves them all. Magezi (2018:328) substantiates this by arguing that God demonstrates his care and love for all humanity by identifying with all of them (including migrants) in the incarnational mystery of Jesus Christ and saves all people who believe in the redemptive acts of Jesus Christ. This also arises from God's charge of the Israelites to look after the migrants among them (Ex 22:21–27; 23:9; Lv 19:33–37; Dt 24:14–22; 10:12–22), which is intensified by God's sanctioning of the Israelites to leave some of the

produce in their fields to care for the non-Israelites who are among them (Dt 24:14–22). Thus, just like the Israelites, the church as a new community of God or people of God, must be a light to the nations by caring for all vulnerable people.

Awareness of the interlay of diverse factors causing suffering among migrants

POEM 'recognises the existence of a multi-layered and complex web of migrants' challenges' (Magezi 2018:329). 'Migrants experience physical, economic, emotional spiritual, social, environmental, security and legal challenges' (Magezi 2018:325 ff.). Christian and non-Christian migrants encounter 'multifaceted *physical* challenges such as the exclusion by host communities because of language, exploitation, lack of legal documentation, and limited rights' (Magezi 2018:329). In other instances, migrants lack education and skills to enable them to engage in some formal sectors of the economy. Some migrants may feel lonely due to missing their family members and friends. 'Xenophobic situations by high profile people on platforms such as social media also negatively affect migrants' (Magezi 2018:329). For instance in South Africa, migrants are accused of illegally owning 'government-provided Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses while on the job market'; they are also blamed for lowering the South African minimum standard wage per day or month by accepting low wages (Magezi 2018:329).

Magezi (2018:329) indicates that 'migrants also encounter *economic* challenges that include unemployment', lack of financial resources to buy food and clothes, pay for medical costs and descent accommodation. The economic situation is compounded by limited rights. For instance, companies are encouraged not to employ migrants through legislations such as Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE). Migrants 'encounter *legal* challenges because some of them do not have legal documents' (Magezi 2018:329). The problem is exacerbated by a 'myriad of challenges and barriers' to acquire legal documents (Magezi 2018:329). At a spiritual level, migrants experience *spiritual* challenges that include unfamiliar ways of worship. In Magezi's view (2018:329), 'these include language barriers as most church services are conducted in languages of local communities that migrant worshippers do not understand'. In other instances, migrants struggle to find places that are familiar with their worship styles as in their home countries. Migrants also face *social* challenges that include struggle to integrate in new communities, making new friends, and forming new habits that enable them to effectively socialise with host communities. The *environmental* challenges encountered by migrants include exposure to host countries' laws that are different from their home countries of origin.

Some migrants from African countries struggle with the South African liberal laws on homosexuality and abortion. Magezi (2018:330) notes that 'migrants also face *security* challenges'. In many instances, regardless of their immigration legal statuses, the migrants still experience rough treatment. These challenges result in migrants experiencing *emotional and psychological* problems including low self-esteem, poor self-belief, stress, and many others.

Therefore, the POEM-model is cognisant of the interplay of many factors that exert life challenges on migrants. This implies that ministry approaches should address the diverse challenges including physical, economic, social, cultural, spiritual, environmental, legal and emotional ... Hence, interventions should address these various dimensions.

Migrant spiritual support

The POEM-model indicates that churches should 'provide spiritual support to migrant Christians' (Magezi 2018:337). Spiritual support is provided to migrant Christians, because some migrants are non-Christians, for example Muslims and Hindus. Providing Christian based spiritual support using resources such as the Bible to non-Christians may result in conflicts and proselytising non-Christian migrants. Magezi (2018:337) avows that despite religious diversity among migrants that should be noted, spiritual is a critical coping strategy for migrants. Migrants grapple with spiritual related issues such as 'meaning, anxiety, fear, uncertainty and trauma because of physical, economic, cultural, legal, spiritual and environmental challenges' (Magezi 2018:337). Therefore, churches must give spiritual support. The churches' spiritual support should include sharing comforting biblical texts, Christian hope and God's care during pastoral counselling. This should redirect migrants to the sovereignty of God amidst their desperate situations. At this juncture, 'Pastoral care and counselling should also include marriage counselling and support to balance migrant families through some family strengthening activities of the church' (Magezi 2018:337). There should also be interventions to support migrant parents and children to cope with family life in the context of displacement.

Thus, POEM positions churches to maintain unique Christian care resources and approaches such as prayer, meditation, sacraments and home visitations. The church must always invoke God's presence through the Spirit, but at the same time ministering to migrant materially. Hence ministering to physical and spiritual needs together effectively. As God's agent participating in God's care to the vulnerable on earth, the church should unceasingly seek God's guidance in prayer. Magezi (2018) concludes that the church should consistently do the following:

... [A]sk God to protect and safeguard migrants from physical, emotional and spiritual harm that they may experience in spheres of life. These kinds of prayers indicate that the church recognises God as the primary defender of the vulnerable and it understands that she (the church) is just working hand in hand with God. Thus, the grace and power of the Spirit of God, the very God himself, who indwells the Christians and, consequently, the church is the guide and helper of migrants. (p. 338)

Home visitations can be used by the churches as means of identifying migrant worshippers' needs. That is, through home visitations, 'the church can identify problems that need spiritual support and guidance and provide it' (Magezi 2018:338).

Shifting from victim to service

Embedded in POEM is the conception that migrants who are integrated in the church should mature to a point where they can also engage in diakonia activities as part of the internal and external migrant ministry of the church. That is, migrants who are integrated and helped by the church should mature to a point of serving other migrants.

The POEM-design suggests that migrants should only depend on churches migrant ministry for a limited time and then start to live independent lives. For instance, Magezi (2018) notes that the following:

Professional migrants who have been helped by churches to acquire legal documentation should exit the migrant ministries support as they look for employment and be independent. (p. 336)

POEM challenges 'migrant ministries to empower migrants without professions with some practical skills to help them to be self-reliant', which enables them to exit care ministries (Magezi 2018:337). The assumption is that former beneficiaries become instrumental in identifying other migrants in need to explore relevant care and support.

Conclusion

POEM is an attempt to conceptualise a public, practical theology and operative ecclesiological migrant ministry. Central to the model is the need for the church to maintain its distinction as a spiritual entity amid social challenges affecting her and her members. This distinction should be an explicit assumption. Responding to migrants' needs is part of churches' holistic ministry. The presuppositions driving such a ministry should be public, practical and theological in nature. It has been argued and POEM presented as a model for a church that understands its public practical theological position and responsive role within the community and its social setting. In this context, the church leverages its resources to respond to people's real-life needs.

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Both authors were involved in the conceptualisation, research, analysis and writing of the article.

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