



Preaching in occasional services:
A tool for changes in Church and society; A case of ELCT
Northern Diocese.

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Abstract

This study deals with the preaching in occasional services as a tool for changes in church and society in Northern Diocese of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. Its research question is “what is the impact of preaching in occasional services to the church and society?”

Within this question, the study surveyed different occasional services which are mostly practiced in Northern Diocese and the effects of its preaching to the church and society. In doing so, face to face interviews, observations and existing data from different documents have been used to help in answering the research question and accomplish the aim of this study.

The study revealed that preaching in occasional services is an important tool which can be used to help in bringing changes to the Church and society. It is highly needed due to the nature of the world especially in this era of globalization. Generally, the study showed that there are achievements realized through preaching in occasional services which are social and spiritual changes. These achievements can be termed as the impact or changes which can be observed behind the preaching in occasional services.

Nevertheless, there is still a great possibility of making more changes in the church and society through preaching in occasional services by putting a clear emphasis on the principles of effective preaching which follows the bible teachings and considers the context.

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Abbreviations.

COVID: Corona Virus Disease.

ELCT: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.

ND: Northern Diocese

NHIF: National Health Insurance Fund.

NSD: Norsk Senter for forskningsdata (Norwegian Center for research Data).

OJT: On job Training.

Rom: Romans.

SIC: Stavanger International Church

STD'S: Sexual Transmitted Diseases.

TUMA: Tumaini University Makumira.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The introduction chapter presents the background and motivation of the study, statement of the problem, aim and limitation of the study, literature review, theoretical perspective, and the outline of the thesis.

1.1 Background and motivation of the study

Northern Diocese is one of the 26 Dioceses of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT). The Diocese have five Districts which are Karatu, Siha, Hai, Central Kilimanjaro, and Eastern Kilimanjaro. In all these Districts we find Parishes which are led by Pastors. The study is conducted in the Eastern Kilimanjaro District which have 44 parishes.

The Diocese has different services which are conducted . Together with Sunday services which are conducted according to the church year, there are also occasional services. The occasional services are funerals, wedding, and other kinds of services except normal Sunday services and services according to the church year.

In this area, many people do not attend the Sunday services, hence minimize a chance for them to hear a sermon preached in Sunday services. However, there are some occasions which oblige them to attend some of the services, thus they hear the preaching. These services are referred to as “occasional services”. Occasional Services are attended by different people, even those who are not congregants of that church / congregation. In that sense, the Church leaders use those services to preach different sermons regarding to the event but also in relation to the mixed audience which is present in the event. The occasional services which are selected to be discussed in this study are funerals, weddings, and baptisms.

The Northern Diocese of ELCT has its vision and mission which is based under the key focus in the preaching of the word of God. In this circumstance it can be noted that the occasional services should be arranged in a way that preaching of the word of God is the main key of that service. In this aspect, occasional services are planned to be done in the weekdays except Sundays, where the congregants attend the Sunday services. It is explained that “preaching at these times allows the

preacher to speak the word of God to those gathered, to round out the worship and to bring focus to the occasion”.¹

The questions: what are the Occasional services which include congregants and non-congregants? How can the preaching in occasional services be a tool of change to the church and society? What should be done in the preaching to bring more positive changes in the church and society? arise from the background.

The occasional services stand outside the liturgical Church cycle. These services happen rarely comparing to the normal Sunday services which occurs every week. Some of these services occur with the support from the cultural background of that community. This means that those events which lead to the presence of that service, sometimes include some cultural activities, depending on the nature and culture of that society. In this perception the occasional services give the preacher an opportunity to offer theological and ritualized definitions of what life can be.² My study is an effort to find out the impact of preaching in occasional services to the church and society in general. The society point of view intends to examine the changes which are observed in the society and which can also be witnessed by people who are non-congregants. Through this, the study will also suggest more motives which can be used so as preaching in occasional services will bring more positive changes in the church and society.

The personal motivation behind the study is to see how people’s life in the church and society has changed through the influence of preaching in occasional services. Due to those effects, the researcher is motivated to find out those changes, in line with people’s views about what to be done so as the preaching in occasional services becomes a more effective tool for change in the church and society.

1.2 Statement of the problem

There are many sermons given by the church in occasional services. The question is, do this preaching have any significance in relation to change in the church and in the society in general? In other words, can it be asked whether the presence of preaching in different occasions bring impact to the church and society?

¹ Scott M Gibson, *Preaching for Special Services* (Baker Books, 2001), 3.

² Mark Schuler, "Preaching from the Fourth Gospel for Occasional Services," *Word & World* 21, no. 4 (2001).

The main idea which the researcher wants to find out is the identified impact brought by preaching in occasional services. It should be noted that, occasional services include listeners from different backgrounds, not necessarily the members of that denomination but since they are members of that society, they become part and parcel of that service and sermons may impact them as well. Therefore, the study will focus on the impact of preaching which cause changes to the people who are the listeners and to describe the changes that the interviewees see and experience in the life of the church and society. This is the reason behind the research question which asks: What is the impact of preaching in occasional services in bringing changes in church life and in the society? The impact is assessed in relation to church life and its development. On the other hand, the impact is evaluated through the observable improvements in the society in general.

Preaching in this thesis is understood as sermon, but I have used these two words (preaching and sermon) interchangeably because in Swahili language the word “*mahubiri*” can be translated both ways, as preaching and sermon. Therefore, when talking about preaching or sermon the word which is used in swahili language is “*mahubiri*”.

1.3 Aim and Limitation of the study

The aim of this study is to find out the outcome of preaching in occasional services in relation to the changes it brings in the Church and society, in Eastern Kilimanjaro District of Northern Diocese. Ten parishes in the Eastern Kilimanjaro District in the Northern Diocese of ELCT are selected due to scarcity of time and resources. I have done this sampling because it reduces time and cost of my study. However, I consider this sampling to have sufficient quality and expectantly it will assist me in obtaining a good result.³ According to the nature of this study, the information given by pastors, congregants, and other non-congregant citizens is important. I have chosen to interview three people in the ten congregations. This means, in every congregation, one pastor, one lay Christian and one lay Christian who is a local government leader were interviewed. In other places the local government leaders were not the members of that congregation but since they live in that community, their responses were important. It can be commented that, the views of the Local Government leaders are important because all the congregants and non-congregants are available in the scope of their administration system, hence this can help in the assessment of

³ OR Krishnaswami, "Ranganathan,(2007) Methodology of Research in Social Science," *Himalaya Publishing house, Mumbai, India*: 120.

the changes brought as the impact of preaching in occasional services. However, it should be noted that, the congregants' and the pastor's views are also important because they are the ones who are present most of the time in those services. For example, pastors who are preachers, they are the ones who prepare the focus of the whole sermon, hence through evaluating the impact they can be helpful in the discussion of how those preaching has been beneficial to the church and society. The same as to the pastors, the lay Christians are also helpful in identification of the impact of preaching in occasional services because, they are always the intended audience in these occasional services.

As limitations, it can be observed that the researcher chose to deal with the preaching only in occasional services and not in Sunday services. In those sermons, the researcher has not evaluated the preaching; rather he has looked on the impact of the preaching on the church and society. Together with that, the researcher has not dealt with all occasional services, rather he has limited himself to the funerals, weddings, and baptism services although there are other occasional services which have been mentioned by the respondents like "send-off" and "house opening" services. The three selected occasional services are the ones which occur frequently in the researcher's area of study. Likewise, the researcher has not interviewed all people present, but he has just interviewed some people through the sampling technique he has explained in the methodology chapter.

1.4 Literature Review and theoretical perspective

Literature review is an establishment of what is already known about the topic and to frame the review in such a way that it can act as a background and justification of my investigation.⁴ The main purpose of literature review is to sharpen the preliminary considerations regarding my topic of study, method, and data source.⁵

The researcher has reviewed different literature focusing on his research question: how can preaching be a tool for change in church and society? of which the purpose was to see how literature can shed light on the research question. In doing that, literature with the relevance to the research question was considered. The literature review went together with the consideration of

⁴ Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford university press, 2016), 90.

⁵ Robert K Yin, *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* (Guilford publications, 2015), 62.

the theoretical perspective. In this part, the researcher focused on the meaning of preaching, preaching in occasional services, and finally the impact of preaching to listeners.

1.4.1 Preaching in occasional services

In Tanzania, especially the Northern Diocese of ELCT, there are some occasional services which can be done either at home or in the Church. Funerals for example, are among the services which can be conducted at home, although other families decide the funeral services to be conducted in the Church. Other occasional services like baptism are conducted in the church. According to the order of all these services, there must be a sermon. The texts preached in all these occasional services are freely chosen by the preacher depending on the nature of the occasion. The liturgy of these occasional services is in the book known as “*Tumwabudu Mungu Wetu*” (Let us praise our God).⁶ It is the hymn and liturgical book of ELCT.

Preaching can be defined differently by different authors. John Piper defines preaching as the proclamation of Good News, preaching is the heralding of the good news by a messenger sent by God.⁷ Jana Childers emphasizes that preaching is a contextual act, responsive to the needs, longing, joys and concerns of particular communities.⁸ Paul S. Wilson is also explaining that, preaching is an event of encounter with God that leaves the congregation with stronger faith and deeper commitment to doing God’s work.⁹

Occasional service is defined by Scott Gibson as the worship services which are outside the ordinary schedule, and in these occasional services the word is to be preached. Most of these occasional services have a liturgy, a series of readings, sermon, and prayers.¹⁰ Mark Schuler has defined it as the services stand outside the church liturgical cycle and are rarely timely. Such occasions are pre-eminently erected by culture.¹¹ As the term occasional refers, it means these events occurs infrequently. Therefore, in this part, the researcher has reviewed the literature with the concept of preaching in occasional services. The occasional services which the researcher dealt

⁶ *Tumwabudu Mungu Wetu* (2017): Funeral service (p.456-462), Wedding service (p.420-427), Baptism service (p.359-368).

⁷ John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Baker Books, 2015).

⁸ Jana Childers, *Purposes of Preaching* (Chalice Press, 2004), 91.

⁹ Paul Scott Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching* (Abingdon Press, 2007).

¹⁰ Gibson, *Preaching for Special Services*.⁹

¹¹ Schuler, "Preaching from the Fourth Gospel for Occasional Services." 56

with are funerals, weddings, and baptisms. I have arranged those services in that order (funerals, weddings, and baptisms) due to its frequency in the Diocese where the fieldwork is done.

1.4.1.1 Preaching in Funeral services

Funeral service is one among the occasional services, which are conducted after the death of a person, including the person's burial. Within the funeral service, preaching is one among the important elements. Funeral preaching is an opportunity for the pastors to share hope for the grieving through the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a time to share the Christian hope that death is defeated through the resurrection of Jesus.¹² John Melloh is emphasizing that the readings not only proclaim the Paschal mystery, but also convey the hope of being gathered in God's reign.¹³ This literature has introduced the primary role of preaching in the funeral services.

It is explained in the features of funeral preaching that it must reflect the bright future to the hearers. Charles Hoffacker writes that the preacher present death not as an irksome problem or an embarrassment, but as the dark door leading to the fulfilment of a welcome promise.¹⁴ Melloh is emphasizing that, in the funeral sermon, consolation and strength are to be offered especially through the proclamation of the mystery of God's love and Jesus's victory, present in the life and in the death of the deceased as in the lives of family and friends.¹⁵ Funeral preaching ought to meet the spiritual and psychological needs of the assembly.¹⁶

The understanding of death in a biblical, theological, and historical view is one of the good ways to help the preacher select relevant texts and provide the best preaching. Joshua Duckworth has written that, to develop a homiletical framework for Christian funeral sermons, it is important to first understand death from a biblical, theological, and historical point of view.¹⁷ John Melloh explains that a careful selection and use of readings from the Scripture for the funeral rites will provide the family and the community an opportunity to hear God speaking to them in their needs, sorrows, fears and hopes.¹⁸ Duckworth and Melloh both show that biblical preaching which is

¹² Joshua L Duckworth, "The Best of All, God Is with Us: A Wesleyan Approach to Funeral Preaching" (Asbury Theological Seminary, 2020), Abstract page.

¹³ J. A. Melloh, "Homily or Eulogy? The Dilemma of Funeral Preaching," *Worship* 67, no. 6 (1993): 506.

¹⁴ Charles Hoffacker, *A Matter of Life and Death: Preaching at Funerals* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 3.

¹⁵ Melloh, "Homily or Eulogy? The Dilemma of Funeral Preaching," 507.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 508.

¹⁷ Duckworth, "The Best of All, God Is with Us: A Wesleyan Approach to Funeral Preaching," 10.

¹⁸ Melloh, "Homily or Eulogy? The Dilemma of Funeral Preaching," 508-09.

directed to the community, will lead to consolation and strength to the people who are present in that service. Although these two authors show that the preaching should be directed to the community, Hoffacker adds that it should be directed to the preacher as well. He writes that sermons generally need to be directed to the homilist as well as to others. Similarly, every funeral sermon must have something to say to the preacher about his or her own death.¹⁹ This reflects the ideas of the researcher that the impact of preaching not only concerns the congregants but also the preachers, who are obviously part and parcel of church and society.

1.4.1.2 Preaching in Wedding services

A Christian wedding is a public declaration before the church, society, and the state of the couples' commitment to each other in marriage. A church wedding also proclaims that the couple are making permanent commitment to be man and wife to each other because they shall live together.²⁰ Within this service, preaching is a very important aspect.

In preaching in the wedding, the preacher has different kinds of principles which he/she must follow so that the preaching brings effects to the congregants who are also members of the society. Ian Bunting explains that for the wedding preaching to have an impact, the preacher should refer the following: to identify his congregation, to assess the mood of the congregation, to decide upon the position of the sermon, to arrange the details of the service, and to determine the style of the sermon.²¹ In the same sense, Timone Davis is emphasizing on the tips to ponder so that the wedding preaching can be in a way that it brings impact. The tips are to be aware of time, allow the narrative to flow through Scripture reading, know the "landmines" and avoid them, stay up to date, and think that it is not about you.²² Both these two authors have explained ways in which preachers can prepare their wedding sermons in a successful way.

The preacher can interpret to the couple about being married and the meaning of their life together as a holy vocation. This means, God calls those who are given the gift of marriage to be signs of Christ's love and show in the way they live together the power of the gospel to redeem and set

¹⁹ Hoffacker, *A Matter of Life and Death: Preaching at Funerals*, 8.

²⁰ Cosgrave Bill, "Preaching at a Wedding," *Furrow* 58, no. 7/8 (2007): 433.

²¹ Ian Bunting, "Preaching at Weddings," *Grove worship series* (1980): 5-12.

²² Timone Davis and Edward Foley, "Preaching at Weddings," *Catholic Marriage: A Pastoral and Liturgical Commentary* (2019): 129-30.

right, to reconcile and heal.²³ In relation to this, Davis is also coming with the same emphasis about the love of God as a center of wedding preaching, though he has added something which is the consideration of the special needs of listeners which is an act of pastoral care. He writes that preaching is to be pertinent to the mystery being celebrated. And the heart of the event is the mystery of love. The preacher should collate the preaching with the special needs of the listeners. A wedding homily is considered as an act of evangelization and as an act of pastoral care.²⁴

Preaching at weddings might then include a sensitive process of relationship building between the engaged couple and the pastor in the pre-marriage session, such communal emphasis on marriage and preparations for the ritualizing of the marriage covenant shows the graceful fidelity of God, a fidelity which is the heartbeat of marriage and the center piece of Christian proclamation at the marriage service.²⁵ This idea is also explained by Rice in a way that, wedding preaching has to proclaim the gospel of grace together with a community life. Here Rice writes that when the preacher stands up to speak to the bride and groom and to those who have come to wish them well, she or he has a unique opportunity to proclaim the gospel of grace and to call this couple to a life of honest acceptance of their humanity. Also, the preacher can use the occasion to remind everyone present that the life we have in Christ is a life in community, in the church.²⁶

1.4.1.3 Preaching in Baptism services

Christian Baptism is among the two major sacraments of the Lutheran Church. It signifies purification or rebirth and admission to the Christian Church. In the ELCT where the field work is done, baptism is performed to young children and is accompanied by name giving. However, the adult baptism is also performed to those who missed it when they were young and those who join the church coming from other religions. Baptism services also include preaching as it is arranged in the order of the service.²⁷

Preaching in baptism is a command of Christ to make people aware of the action and its significance. Gordon Ogivilie emphasizes that the command of Jesus in Mathew 28:19-20 contains

²³ Rice Charles, "Preaching at Weddings," *Sewanee theological review* 41, no. 3 (1998): 232.

²⁴ Davis and Foley, "Preaching at Weddings," 124.

²⁵ Jerald W Pipping, "Preaching at Weddings and Funerals," (1991): 67.

²⁶ Rice, "Preaching at Weddings," 234-37; *ibid.*

²⁷ Tumwabudu Mungu Wetu (2017) : 359-368.

an imperative (make disciples) and two participles which appear to be parallel (baptizing and teaching). This passage should warn us against merely performing the action without teaching its significance.²⁸ The same idea about preaching in baptism to make people aware of the action and its significance is also emphasized by Guerric DeBona. He says that after reading, the celebrant gives a short homily, explaining to those present the significance of what has been read. His purpose will be to lead them to a deeper understanding of the mystery of baptism and to encourage parents and godparents to a ready acceptance of the responsibilities which arise from the sacrament.²⁹

William Willimon is explaining that preaching in baptism brings a double consciousness to the people, namely a theological reality and Christian faith from the understanding of the world-age in which we live. In his book *Peculiar Speech, preaching to the Baptized* he writes:

Preaching will have to speak to a double consciousness. Theological reality is primary; thus, preaching will be explication. At the same time, because awareness of being-saved involves a distinguishing of Christian faith from understandings of the world-age in which we live, the language of preaching will wrestle with ideas, assumptions, social attitude which we bring to church. In a worldly language, preaching shapes the faith consciousness of the Church.³⁰

Due to that, the baptismal preaching is explained to always recognize the canonical text as norm. Listening to the preaching is also described as an act of faith.

For the preaching in baptism to bring changes, the preacher should have good preparations. It is explained that the habit of good preparations can result in suitable preaching which impacts the congregants. De Bona has suggested some tips to follow so as a preacher may come up with a good baptism homily which at the end will bring impact to the church and society. He writes that it should start with understanding through studying biblical readings, then begin to make connections between the biblical and liturgical text, and finally, develop a preaching tactic from these conversation partners. Together with that he adds that the baptism homily should be catechetical, honor the Biblical text, be image dominated, liturgical and diverse in its reach.³¹

²⁸ Gordon Ogilvie, *Preaching at Baptisms*, 2nd ed. ed., vol. no. 70, Grove Booklet on Ministry and Worship (Nottingham: Grove Books, 1985), 3.

²⁹ OSB Guerric DeBona, David Scotchie, and Francis Agnoli, "Rites of Passage: Preaching Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals."

³⁰ William H Willimon, *Peculiar Speech: Preaching to the Baptized* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 3.

³¹ Guerric DeBona, Scotchie, and Agnoli, "Rites of Passage: Preaching Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals."

Therefore, preaching in baptism should be well prepared and always to remind the congregants that baptism is God's action in community and not a personal circumstance of the parties primarily involved.³²

1.4.2 Effects of preaching in occasional services

When investigating the effects of sermons, it is important to be aware that listeners' responses are shaped by different factors.³³ The concept of the impact of preaching to the congregants have been discussed by different authors due to the presence of various factors.

Preaching in occasional services acts as a communication tool between different generations present in the world today. This is explained by John Stott who wrote that preachers are supposed to be in the business of communication. We should be praying that God will raise up a new generation of Christian communicators who are determined to bridge the "chasm"; who struggle to relate God's unchanging word to our ever-changing world.³⁴ Moreover, Fred Craddock is emphasizing that, preaching is not only communication, but it is oral communication.³⁵

Preaching helps to improve ethical issues to the listeners. It is explained that the gospel has ethical implications. Although good behavior is an inevitable consequence of the good news, it is not "automatic" in the sense that it does not need to be taught. The apostles who proclaimed the gospel gave clear and concrete ethical instructions as well.³⁶ To teach moral conduct is a plain apostolic Christianity. Stott explained that thoroughly teaching ethics is urgently needed today, although too few pulpits attempt to do that. Walter is explaining that, preaching is used to settle ethical matters because the Scripture itself is a guide, guard, compass, and a principle.³⁷ Also, Campbell is explaining what is expected to be the understanding of ethics through a Christian perspective. He writes: "ethics deals with a question; "what sort of person should we be, and what ought we to do

³² David J Schlafer, *What Makes This Day Different?: Preaching Grace on Special Occasions* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 48.

³³ Hans Austnaberg, *Improving Preaching by Listening to Listeners: Sunday Service Preaching in the Malagasy Lutheran Church* (Peter Lang, 2012), 122.

³⁴ John Stott, *I Believe in Preaching* (Hachette UK, 2014), 145.

³⁵ Fred B Craddock, *Preaching* (Abingdon press, 2010).

³⁶ Stott, *I Believe in Preaching*, 159.

³⁷ C Walter Jr, *What Does the Lord Require?: A Guide for Preaching and Teaching Biblical Ethics* (Baker Academic, 2009), 10.

to serve our various neighbors?" Ethics is concerned with the Christians' response to God's will in the context of finite, earthly life."³⁸

The social, political, and economical factors are improved due to the presence of preaching. It is explained that if preaching covers the scope of the social, economic, spiritual, and political dimensions of society, we would be able to reconcile people both with God and their fellow humans. The preaching must be able to change the situation in which people live, as well as change people themselves.³⁹ Stott explains that what is certain is that the pulpit has political influence, even if nothing remotely connected with politics is ever uttered from it. The preaching also deals with social-political conditions, which helps to change the society and make it more pleasing to God.⁴⁰ In this aspect the preaching acts as a mirror which reflects what is going on in the society. This marks the notion that, the neutrality of pulpit is impossible. However, RyuWon-ryul adds that, "Christian preaching is a highly contextual act of constructing and proclaiming a local theology in response to the social-political needs of the congregation within, and on behalf of a local community".⁴¹ Due to that, preaching is explained to be a model of the society and the cultural life of people. Ogunbanwo is suggesting that "contextual preaching is a model for effective impact on the social-economic and cultural living of people. Thus, it is important for preachers to plan and prepare their sermons in a way that the Bible and its core doctrines will be taught in a contextual way."⁴²

Preaching brings the Scripture forward as a living voice in the congregation.⁴³ Craddock shows that biblical text has a future as well as past and preaching seeks to accomplish that upcoming by the ongoing discussion of the text into the contemporary era. This is the same as what is explained by Piper, that preaching stays with people because it is the word of God reflected in the glad submission of the human heart.⁴⁴ These two authors show that preaching as a heralding of good

³⁸ Charles L Campbell, "Living Faith: Luther, Preaching, and Ethics," *Word & World* 10 (1990): 375.

³⁹ Gerhard Von Rad and John E Steely, "Biblical Interpretations in Preaching," (1977): 18.

⁴⁰ Stott, *I Believe in Preaching*, 168.

⁴¹ Ryu Won-ryul, "Thinking the Correlation between Preaching and a Local Theology," *Korean Society of Theology*, no. 37 (2013): (Abstract).

⁴² Babatunde Fadefoluwa Rotimi Ogunbanwo, "Contextual Preaching: A Model for Effective Impact on the Socio-Cultural Living of Christians in the Anglican Diocese of Ijebu South-West, Nigeria," (2020): (Abstract).

⁴³ Craddock, *Preaching*.

⁴⁴ Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 29.

news by a messenger of God, helps in retaining the scriptures to the ears and lives of the congregants.

Preaching takes place in a pastoral context.⁴⁵ Craddock explains that, preaching not only occurs in a pastoral context but is itself a pastoral activity. Roger Alling and David J. Schlafer, the editors of the book *Preaching as Pastoral Caring*, have come out with the reasons behind preaching to be one of the tools of pastoral care, hence referred to as the impact of preaching to the congregants.

Bringing comfort, assurance, and hope in the midst of struggle, sorrow, confusion, and tragedy. Giving voice to community celebration and praise on occasions of joy and thanksgiving. Offering strategic words of encouragement and inspiration for faithful work and witness. Providing challenging stimulus to spiritual growth through effective teaching and setting issues of communal, social, economic, and political life in theologically informed perspective.⁴⁶

These referred texts explain preaching as an activity which helps the congregants to receive some sort of pastoral care in one way or another. Therefore, this is taken as an outcome of preaching to the listeners. In addition to that, Oden is explaining how it is expected for the preacher to consider the pastoral care needs of the congregants in delivering his/her sermon in those occasional services. He writes: “for in preaching, the pastor must deal simultaneously with persons of widely different needs, plays and passions. Preachers must be aware of the diversity of persons in their congregation, yet try to speak so that the spirit, through the Scripture, addresses many hearts in ways that will be fitting to each, as different as these hearers are known to be from one another”.⁴⁷ It is also explained that preaching contributes to pastoral care by creating a foundational framework. Pastors must be aware of what members are wrestling with in their lives, and must also address the question, what resources do our people have that enable them to deal with difficult issues?⁴⁸ Tisdale is also showing that preaching will help people grow in their capacity to cope with crises that arises in life, exemplified with the developmental and situational crises.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Craddock, *Preaching*.

⁴⁶ Roger Alling and David J. Schlafer, *Preaching as Pastoral Caring*, vol. 13, Sermons That Work (Harrisburg, Pa: Morehouse Pub., 2005), ix.

⁴⁷ Thomas C Oden and Don S Browning, *Care of Souls in the Classic Tradition* (Fortress Press Philadelphia, 1984), 69.

⁴⁸ John Neufeld, "Preaching and Pastoral Care," *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* 10, no. 1 (2009): 70-73.

⁴⁹ Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Prophetic Preaching: A Pastoral Approach* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 12-13.

1.4.3 Theoretical perspective

I have above presented preaching in funeral, wedding, and baptismal services, with a special emphasis on the effect of preaching to the listeners. I have chosen to focus on what I find especially important from the presentation above when investigating the impact of preaching in occasional services that can bring changes in church life and in the society. The preaching that may have an impact can be characterized by the following:

- Preaching should facilitate an encounter with God, that deepens the faith and the commitment to God.
- It should be contextual and responsive to the needs and concerns of particular communities.
- It ought to speak to the listeners' needs, fears, and hopes, contributing to pastoral care.
- The preaching should connect to life in the community and have a purpose of improving ethical issues and making society more pleasant to God.

These elements will guide the discussion of my findings.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

I have structured the thesis into five main chapters. In the first chapter I give the background and motivation of the study, statement of the problem, aim and limitation of the study, literature review and theoretical perspective. In the second chapter I present the methodology of the thesis, the collection and analysis of the data, together with ethical considerations that have guided the research. The third chapter presents the field material, mostly drawn from the interviews but also my personal observation. In the fourth chapter I discuss my findings based on my theoretical perspective. The conclusion answers the research question and I give some recommendations to the leadership of the church, based on my findings.

Chapter 2: Methodology

The term methodology refers to the way in which we approach problems and seek answers. Kothari says that methodology is "... a way to systematically solve the research problem."⁵⁰ The methodology chapter clarifies what I did and how I did it, letting readers be able to evaluate the consistency and validity of the research. The methodology chapter includes the information like, the type of research conducted, the method of data collection, the method used in analyzing data together with tools and materials used in the research.

2.1 Methodological Approach

In this research, the research question investigated was: what is the impact of preaching in occasional services in bringing changes in church life and in the society? The researcher aimed to describe systematically the impact to the church life and society of the sermons which are provided in occasional services.

In achieving this, the researcher needed qualitative data. These are the source of well grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts. It is explained that, with qualitative data, one can preserve a chronological flow, see which events led to consequence, and derive fruitful explanations. Then too, qualitative data are more likely to lead to serendipitous findings and to new integrations; they help researchers to get beyond initial conceptions and to generate or revise a conceptual framework.⁵¹ Also it is explained that, qualitative data aims to capture lived experiences of the social world and the meanings people give these experiences from their own perspective.⁵² In this perspective, the researcher engaged in qualitative data so as to focus on observing, describing, interpreting and analyzing the way that people experience, act on or think about themselves and the world around them. The researcher collected primary data through receiving answers from people of different strata in the church and society. Together with that, with the help of secondary data the researcher used information from other current research concerning or close to the conducted study.

⁵⁰ Chakravanti Rajagopalachari Kothari, *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques* (New Age International, 2004), 120.

⁵¹ Patricia Bazeley, *Qualitative Data Analysis: Practical Strategies* (Sage, 2013), 4.

⁵² Clive Seale et al., *Qualitative Research Practice* (Sage, 2003), 297.

The approach proved useful because it produced contextual real-world knowledge about the behaviors, social structures, and shared beliefs of the specific group of people I investigated. Since this methodology is less controlled and more interpretive, it helped the researcher to be attentive to the opinions, views, and suggestions which people have in their minds through their own perspectives and experiences of preaching in occasional services.

2.2 Data collection methods

Data collection can be referred to as a systematic process of gathering observations or measurements. In performing research, data collection allowed the researcher to gain first-hand knowledge and original insights into the research problem. Therefore, the researcher has used various methods in exploring the impact of preaching in occasional services as a tool for changes in the church and society.

2.2.1 Face to face Interviews

Interview is a method of data collection that involves two or more people exchanging information through a series of questions and answers.⁵³ The researcher designed the questions to get the information from the interview participants on the specific topic to be studied.

In this study the interviews were done to three groups of people. The first group was the group of lay Christians, the second was the group of local government leaders, while the last group was the group of pastors who are also referred to as the preachers. In this study, the researcher met with the interviewees in different places by appointments. The participants were selected due to the need of the study, and that is the reason behind the choice of those three groups. The total number of thirty (30) people were interviewed. Due to the nature of the questions and the mode of answering them, this type of interview was semi-structured. The semi structured interview refers to a verbal interchange where one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions. Although the interviewer prepares a list of predetermined questions, semi-structured interviews unfold in a conversational manner offering participants the

⁵³ Rajat Acharyya and Nandan Bhattacharya, *Research Methodology for Social Sciences* (Taylor & Francis, 2019).

chance to explore issues they feel are important.⁵⁴ The researcher was noting down by writing in his notebook the answers from the respondents

The researcher found the interview method of data collection useful because respondents were free in expressing their views in their own words. Together with that, this method reduced confusions as the researcher was able to explain and clarify the question when required. For example, in answering the interview questions, some respondents were asking for more elaborations concerning the concept of change brought by preaching in occasional services. The researcher helped them to understand by putting more elaborations hence this is considered as one of the advantages of the interview method.

2.2.2 Observation

Observation refers to active monitoring of something or someone. It is explained that observation is one of the few methods that can yield direct data in different situations. The researchers can observe different interactions and their written records are described as field notes.⁵⁵ In participant observation the researcher joins a group and their activities, becomes a part of the group and the phenomena being studied, while at the same time taking care to observe and describe all events, behaviors, and artefacts of the social setting.⁵⁶

In this study the researcher has also used observation as one of the methods of data collection. He did the observation through the attendance in some occasional services. During the research time, the researcher attended 10 funerals, 4 weddings and 3 baptism services. The observation enabled the researcher to hear different sermons in those occasional services and being able to think about and understand the modes of preaching which have been used by different preachers. In this method, the researcher used to note down by writing in his notebook what he has observed by considering his main research question, which intends to find the impact of preaching in occasional services to the church and society. Also, the researcher got an opportunity of walking around the villages in the society and saw some people together with different programs which were taking place in the society. All the important observed information in relation to the research question

⁵⁴ Robyn Longhurst, "Semi-Structured Interviews and Focus Groups," *Key methods in geography* 3, no. 2 (2003): 143.

⁵⁵ Julia M Addington-Hall et al., *Research Methods in Palliative Care* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 148.

⁵⁶ D Silverman, TS Eberle, and C Maeder, "Qualitative Research. Edited by David Silverman," (London Sage, 2016), 105.

were noted in Swahili language, which is the language used by the people in Tanzania where the study is conducted. Observations were of help to enrich the discussion in the study as it has been done in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

2.2.3 Existing data from different documents

Many documents can be useful simply by nature of the details they contain.⁵⁷ Documents are regarded as passive and inert sources of information and evidence.⁵⁸

The researcher used the existing data from different documents including unpublished theses from the library at Tumauni University Makumira (TUMA) in Tanzania. Also, the researcher has used the material from the church magazine and different diocese's reports as one among the existing data. The material used as the existing data had some preferred criteria. One of the criteria was the relevance of the existing data in relation to the research topic. Another criteria used by the researcher in this method of data collection was the considering of time when those documents were written. This was done purposely to make sure that the researcher was dealing with the current materials which will help him to come up with up-to-date results.

2.3 Sample and sampling techniques

Well-selected sampling may reflect the characteristics of the population. Sample signifies general individuals or participants in research as primary sources of data. Kombo and Tromp refer to sampling as the procedure a researcher uses to gather people, places, or things to study.⁵⁹ The sampling technique/method used by the researcher was purposive sampling. The goal or purpose for selecting the specific study units was to have those that will yield the most relevant and plentiful data, given the topic of study.⁶⁰ Therefore, the researcher used this sampling technique because it is helpful in meeting the specific research objectives through answering specific research questions. In this sampling, the respondents were men and women of different ages. The men who were interviewed were eighteen (18) and their age ranged from 20-80 years. There were twelve (12) women, and their age ranged also from 20-80 years. The sampling also considered the

⁵⁷ Robert K Yin, *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* (Guilford publications, 2015), 149.

⁵⁸ Silverman, Eberle, and Maeder, "Qualitative Research. Edited by David Silverman."

⁵⁹ Donald Kisilu Kombo and Delno LA Tromp, "Proposal and Thesis Writing: An Introduction," *Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa* 5, no. 1 (2006): 70.

⁶⁰ Yin, *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*, 88.

intellectual level of the respondents. This means, it was a mixture of the people who are highly educated and those people who are having ordinary education level.

The researcher chose the respondents according to their participation in the church and society. For example, the pastors and local government leaders were chosen as a sample due to their leadership positions. The lay Christians used as samples were chosen for the fact of their activeness in church matters. All these respondents were found in 10 congregations of the district. The interviews were framed and arranged in accordance with the categories of status, profession, and experience, and findings were analyzed descriptively.

2.4 Data analysis

Data analysis refers to the process of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding of the information gathered in the whole research process.⁶¹ The researcher used the method of data analysis based on the answers provided from the interviews, observation, together with the existing data through different texts. One of the tasks done by the researcher was to analyze the material with the consideration of content, themes, and discourse. As the material were in Swahili language, which was the native language of the respondents, the researcher summarized them and translated some of the answers into English so as it can be easier for him to analyze the materials by using the required language of instruction in his academic field. The interviews were noted down, and a thematic analysis was conducted. This involved coding all the data before identifying and reviewing key themes. Each theme was examined to gain understanding of participants' perceptions and motivation.

2.5 Research ethics

Ethics in research refers to a matter of principled sensitivity to the right of others.⁶² According to professional guidelines, the researcher is responsible for informed consent, for trust and protection, and for protecting their privacy by confidentiality.⁶³ The researcher has followed the guidelines

⁶¹ Ibid., 176.

⁶² Alan Bryman and Robert G Burgess, *Qualitative Research*, vol. 2 (Sage, 1999), 1.

⁶³ Silverman, Eberle, and Maeder, "Qualitative Research. Edited by David Silverman," 38.

for research ethics in the social sciences, humanities, law, and theology.⁶⁴ I will emphasize the following research ethical themes:

Human dignity: in making sure that the human dignity is well maintained, the researcher made sure that the informant's individual freedom is respected. This aspect includes all issues including the respect in the family matters of the respondent.

The duty to inform and the consent of the respondents: The research subjects were informed that they were researched, and they were also informed about the nature of the research. The researcher provided the participants with adequate information about the field of the research and the purpose of the research. The informants were explained about the subject of the research so as they can be able to give their consent.

Confidentiality and privacy: The researcher take care of confidentiality by making sure that all personal identifiers are anonymized. Due to the rules under Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD), the researcher has chosen the principle of anonymity whereby the names of people participated as informants and specific names of places where the study is conducted are not mentioned in this thesis.

2.6 Summary

This chapter surveyed the methodological approach, sample and sampling techniques, and methods of data collection. Likewise, the chapter surveyed the methods of data analysis and lastly the ethical issues. I have used interviews and participant observation to gather data in this study. Some existing data from unpublished theses, church magazines and other diocese's documents have been used, too, in the collection of data.

⁶⁴ <https://www.forskningsetikk.no/en/guidelines/social-sciences-humanities-law-and-theology/guidelines-for-research-ethics-in-the-social-sciences-humanities-law-and-theology/> Respect for individuals; part 5-9.

Chapter 3: Data presentation

The third chapter is a presentation of the field material. The presented material consists of feedback from interviewees and observations done by the researcher. The interview was conducted to three different groups which are lay Christians, pastors, and local government leaders. The material from the field work is presented through the guidance of interview questions in a thematic way and, at the end, there is some input from my observation. The presentation includes some of the direct quotations from the informants, although they are translated by the researcher from Swahili language, the native language of the researcher and the informants, to English.

3.1 Occasional services reported by the informers

The researcher started by asking the informants about their awareness on different occasional services which take place frequently. This part was led by a question from the interview guide which states: *“which occasional service is mostly taking the lead to gather as many people as possible in your community?”* The same question was posed to the three groups. A majority of the respondents from all the three groups answered that the occasional services which gather people in their societies despite of their religious background, are funerals, weddings, and baptisms. A few respondents added some more occasional services which occur in their societies and gather different people. The additional occasional services explained by the respondents were send-off services. This is a service which is conducted to the bride before she leaves for wedding. It is conducted as a farewell and a day to bless the bride before going to start her marriage life. One of the respondents said that “because a wedding service is among the events which occur frequently in our societies; hence we cannot avoid considering send-off service because it always comes before the wedding day.”⁶⁵ In responding to the same question, some respondents answered that the confirmation services gather a lot of people, but it happens just once a year. However, one of the interviewees mention the “house-opening” service⁶⁶ to be among the services which gather different people in the society, although it also happens rarely.⁶⁷ In my observation, I have seen that, in the area of study, most of the occasional services are funerals, weddings and baptism.

⁶⁵ The interview with one of the lay Christians in one of the selected congregations.

⁶⁶ “House opening” service: A service which is conducted in the peoples places purposely for the official opening of the house so as family members can start to use it.

⁶⁷ Introduction chapter part 1:3 (Aim and limitation of the study)

During my field work in January and February 2021 I attended 10 funerals, 4 weddings and 3 baptism services.⁶⁸

3.2 Social and spiritual change as the impact of preaching in occasional services

The researcher wanted to find out the impact of preaching in occasional services as it has been perceived by lay Christians, pastors, and local government leaders. The question which was posed to the respondents was: *“how does preaching in those occasional services bring social and spiritual change?”* The question was posed to all three groups of respondents. This was also close to the main research question of the study. In responding to the question, several answers were given.

3.2.1 An opportunity to hear the Good News (Gospel), which results in the good attendance of Sunday services

One of the ways in which preaching in those occasional services looked so advantageous to the church and society is the way it gives people an opportunity to hear the Good News (Gospel) and acts as an assisting factor for the people to attend Sunday services. This is the answer which have been responded by all groups. A majority of the respondents showed that, preaching in occasional services causes people to attend Sunday services. One of the respondents explained that:

...because not all people are coming for Sunday services to hear the good news, the only place we can use to provide a sermon for them is in the occasional services. As a result, in the coming Sundays we can see new faces at the Sunday service, and I always consider it as the impact of the sermon I gave in that last occasional service.⁶⁹

In my observation, when I attended one Sunday service in one of the parishes of my study, I met a lot of people and even there were addition of chairs because people were many. In my discussing with the pastor in that congregation he said that it is because of the sermon he preached the day before in a funeral. That funeral sermon emphasized that people ought to be active in worship.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Researcher's observation

⁶⁹ The interview with one of the pastors in one of the selected congregations.

⁷⁰ Researcher's observation

3.2.2 Provision of knowledge, unity, and improving of ethical matters in the society

In this part the respondents explained how preaching in occasional services have brought impact through its provision of knowledge, unity, and the way it helps in improving ethical matters. This is how the respondents explained:

Preaching in an occasional service helps in improving the ethical situations in the society. A majority of the respondents in all those three groups have answered that in the occasional services, preaching has been very important because it leads to the improvement of ethical conditions in the society. Examples of those ethical issues are theft, drunkenness, and fighting as mentioned by one of the local government leaders during the interview session. The preaching helps people to know and follow good and desirable behavior.

Since I started my leadership in this village, the preaching in occasional services, especially funerals, helped the citizens to change their behavior. Examples of the behaviors which have changed are theft, drunkenness, and fighting.⁷¹

Together with that, some of the respondents answered the same question with almost the same answer, explaining that preaching in occasional services has been a source for the decreasing of social evils.

Preaching in occasional services causes unity and solidarity in the society. This kind of response was given by all those three groups. One among the lay Christian respondents explained that “preaching in occasional services results in unity and solidarity among the citizens; the emphasis on unity and love in the sermons make strong Christians and citizens.”⁷² Also, the local government leaders showed that preaching in occasional services have been of a good advantage because it helps in bringing unity and a peaceful atmosphere in the society.

Also, among the impact brought by preaching in occasional services was reported that it brings education about life skills in the society. This response occurred in all three groups. A majority of the respondents explained that, due to the presence of different themes in those sermons, the hearers are educated in different life skills: “the preaching which is delivered to us in those occasional services, are coming with concrete teachings which touch social, economic and political

⁷¹ Response from one of the local government leaders.

⁷² Response from one of the lay Christians.

affairs”.⁷³ A majority of the local government leaders explained that the church preaching in occasional services has helped the citizens in understanding the different life structures in the economic and political arena. Together with that, some of the pastors who responded to this question, said that “the congregants get an understanding on how to achieve economically by working hard and also be good citizens by abiding to the rules and laws of the government.”⁷⁴ All the given responses by three groups showed that preaching in occasional services educates the listeners about different life skills which help them to live in a good way. Together with that, the idea of entrepreneurship is also explained as one of the life skills which is among the effects of the preached themes in occasional services.

The researcher saw some groups in the society which meet once a week and discuss different economic programs. Some of those groups have received different loans from donors and they do different production activities like agriculture, livestock keeping, and business.⁷⁵ The information from some members explains that these groups originated from the pastor’s emphasis through their sermons in different occasional services.

3.2.3 Increasing the number of church members and more demanding of pastoral care services

The preaching in occasional services results in getting new church members. A majority of the respondents explained that some people want to join Christianity after hearing the preaching in one of those occasional services. This concerns not only joining Christianity, but also changing denomination and making their marriages official. One of the pastors said that: “after preaching some people come to my office asking for baptism, others come from other denominations demanding to join the Lutheran Church, while other people come and officiate their marriages in the church”. Together with that, it is explained that those preaching has been one of the factors which influences the congregants to come for the pastoral care and counseling to the pastors, even for those who were not used to be close to the church. One of the lay Christians testify that:

I was a Muslim, but one day I attended the funeral and heard the sermon from the pastor. He preached about the love of Christ. From that time, I was interested to become a

⁷³ Response from one of the lay Christians.

⁷⁴ Interview with one of the pastors.

⁷⁵ Researcher’s observation in one of the villages in the area of study.

Christian. I asked for baptism and since then I became a Christian. I am always happy, and I don't regret that !”⁷⁶

Therefore, the responses from most of the respondents showed that preaching in those occasional services leads to an increasing of the number of people who want to join Christianity and increasing of those who need pastoral care and counselling.

When I had a meeting with pastors, sometimes it was hard to start on time because there was a queue of people who wanted to see and talk to the pastor. Sometimes there were many people who needed pastoral care and counselling. What I observed shows preaching as a tool which leads to a need of pastoral care service.⁷⁷

3.2.4 Discouragement of different forms of discrimination in the church and society

Preaching in occasional services has been a tool for discouraging different forms of discrimination in the society. This response is given by many lay Christians and local government leaders. It is explained that “this kind of preaching has been a helpful tool for discouraging different forms of discrimination in the society regarding gender, religion, and ethnicities.”⁷⁸ Also, one of the lay Christians explained that, due to the sermons we used to hear in the weddings and funerals, I can see it helps the society to treat us fairly despite of our differences in gender, religions, age, and ethnicities.⁷⁹ Also, some of the respondents explained that the preaching discourages all forms of discrimination because, many times the preachers emphasized the love of Christ which calls people to love each other. In one of the wedding services which I attended, the pastor in his sermon explained the impact of good relationship between the couples. Also, he warned the men to stop the habit of beating their wives, rather they must treat them fairly with great love. I also heard the preaching in one baptism service where the preacher emphasized about children's rights. He told the people that they must be firm in securing the children from all forms of discrimination and help them to live a happy and secure life.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ A testimony from one of the lay Christians who at the beginning was a Muslim

⁷⁷ Researcher's observation in different congregations.

⁷⁸ Response from one of the local government leaders.

⁷⁹ Response from one of the lay Christians.

⁸⁰ Researcher's observation in one of the weddings and baptism services.

3.2.5 Establishment and improvement of different social services

Improvement in matters pertaining to the health sector is one of the impacts of occasional services preaching in the society. Most of the lay Christians and local government leaders responded that the preaching, especially in funerals, emphasized on taking care of sick people. Therefore, many families have registered their members on NHIF,⁸¹ so as they can get health service in a good and systematic way. Also, the pastors have testified that the government has improved more in the health sector because most of the government officials attend these services and hence, they listen to the preaching and they understand the emphasis of the preachers concerning the improving in health sector.

The introduction of different social development projects is also one of the results of preaching in occasional services. Many pastors explained that, due to their preaching in different occasional services, the congregants have started and joined different development projects which help them in an economic perspective and to fight against poverty:

When I preach in weddings and in funerals, I usually insist people to work hard and to overcome poverty. I have seen good results of that because many congregants nowadays have engaged in different economic projects which help them to get different loans and many assistances in their agricultural and small business programs.⁸²

Together with that, the same impact is commented on by the lay Christians and local government leaders. They explained that many active development projects in the society are originated through the influence of the church. The church influence is stated to be originated in the sermons which involves listeners from different backgrounds. These sermons are mostly heard in weddings and funerals. One of the local government leaders is explaining: “we have a number of development projects which are originated from the church strategies. The pastors have been used to emphasize for people through their preaching and when we as the government see those efforts, we collaborate with those people and give them support in running those projects.”⁸³

⁸¹ NHIF= National Health insurance Fund

⁸² Response from one of the pastors.

⁸³ Response from some of the local government leaders.

3.2.6 An increase in church volunteers and ministers

The preaching in occasional services is explained to have impact on the increasing of the people who volunteer in the church and it has been helpful in getting church ministers. A majority of the lay Christian respondents showed that the Christian education teachers who volunteer in the church, got that call through preaching in occasional services, whereby the preachers insisted on volunteering programs to spread the Kingdom of God. Example, one of the respondents who is ,now teaching Christian education in a certain primary school, explained that she decided to volunteer in teaching Christian education after hearing the sermon in one of the baptism services, where by the preacher invited some people to help in teaching the children the word of God when they are at school.⁸⁴ Through my personal observation in one of the baptism services, the preacher also insisted that people volunteer in teaching children so as the help them grow wisely. In that sermon he said: “I encourage you to volunteer in teaching these children so as we can get the best (*kanisa la kesho*) future church.”⁸⁵ Also, through my observation in different parishes, this preaching has been of great importance because many people have become church volunteers through those preaching. Examples of other volunteering groups are those who teach Sunday schools and those who lead “house to house fellowships”.

In addition to that, some of the church ministers have received the call through the preaching in different occasions. One of the pastors testified that by saying: “I remember I was in one baptism service and the preacher preached the text in Luke 10:2: “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few (*mavuno ni mengi lakini watenda kazi ni wachache*).” From there, I decided to join the Bible School, after that I became an evangelist. Two years later I joined the theological seminary and now I am a pastor of the ELCT.”⁸⁶

3.3 Preaching techniques in occasional services as a tool for impact and changes

This part was introduced to understand how different preachers use to preach in those occasional services to come out with impact. The leading question was: “*How do you preach for preaching to have an impact to the hearers/listeners?*” This question was posed to the preachers and they came out with different explanations of those techniques.

⁸⁴ Response from a lay Christian who is a volunteer in teaching Christian Education in primary schools.

⁸⁵ The quotation of the one of the pastor’s preaching in baptism service.

⁸⁶ Response from one of the pastors.

3.3.1 Being contextual and insisting on the importance of worship

Most of the pastors responded that, when they preach, they try to be contextual. The contextual analysis and application help the sermons to have good impact on the listeners. It is explained by one of the pastors that: “when I prepare the sermon for these occasional services I try to analyze my context which is my audience, then I try to be contextual in order to fit the audience and the environment of the occasion.”⁸⁷ Also, another pastor explained that “because the occasional services include people from different backgrounds, most of the time when preparing the sermon for these occasional services I always learn the context of the event, which helps me to be more contextual.”⁸⁸ Generally, many pastors have shown that, in order for their preaching to have impact to the listeners, they make sure that they understand the environment of the event and audience so that, when they come to preach, the listeners feel that the sermon given is purposely for them.

Preaching which insists on the importance of worship, brings impact to the listeners. Some pastors explained that when they preach in occasional services, they also insist on the importance of worship: “these occasions bring a lot of people, some of them are not church participants but when they hear the gospel, we can see the number of people attending the Sunday service increasing.”⁸⁹ Also, some pastors explained that, in those occasional services, through preaching on the importance of worship, they even see changes in the way people contribute to the income of the church. They meant that insisting on the importance of worship leads to active participation in Sunday services and increases the church income through offerings.

3.3.2 The use of illustrations, making applications, and relevance to the audience

Preaching by using illustrations is explained to be an important technique used by the preachers in occasional services. A majority of pastors responded that they are using illustrations in their preaching to make it clear to the listeners. One of the pastors responded that: “I always include illustrations in my preaching in occasional services to make it concrete, interesting, impressive and persuasive”.⁹⁰ Many pastors also showed that they use different illustrations from different sources. Another pastor who was interviewed, explained that: “for my preaching to bring impact

⁸⁷ Interview with one of the pastors

⁸⁸ Response from one of the pastors interviewed.

⁸⁹ Interview with one of the pastors.

⁹⁰ Interview with one of the pastors.

to the listeners, most of the time I use illustrations from true stories, fictional stories, facts, images, and experiences.⁹¹ Many pastors in this study have shown that they make their sermons effective by using illustrations, which at the end has an impact on the listeners.

Further, application of the relevance of society life in relation to the biblical text is one of the ways used by the pastors in occasional services preaching; hence it causes the preaching to bring impact. Some preachers have explained that one of the techniques they use in preaching is to find the relevance which reflects the real situation of the society in relation to the Holy Scriptures. One pastor said: “when I prepare my sermon, I always figure out the society life situation and then I find the biblical text with the relevant circumstance, then I make the application.”⁹² This response shows that many preachers in occasional services try to make the situation in life relevant and make applications through an included biblical text.

3.4 The challenges of preaching in occasional services: The preachers’ point of view

Together with the presence of impact of preaching in occasional services, I assumed that there are some challenges these preachers are passing through. The leading question was: “*what challenges do you face when preaching in occasional services?*” This question was posed to the pastors to know some of the setbacks they face in preaching in occasional services.

3.4.1 Hard time to find a fitting preaching text and lack of attention from the listeners

Some pastors responded by showing that one of the challenges they face is to find an appropriate biblical text to preach. One of the informants explained that:

I find it difficult to choose the appropriate text for the sermon, especially in funerals. This is because some of the causes for those deaths are complicated. Hence, it is difficult for me to choose the suitable text which can accommodate everyone in that service.⁹³

Also, some pastors explained that it is a challenge when they find a biblical text for preaching because some congregants can take it as a direct attack, which is not good. One informant explains: “it is hard because, sometimes I can pick a certain biblical text for preaching but at the end those people who attended the service, think that I just used the text to attack them directly, which is not

⁹¹ Interview with one of the pastors.

⁹² Interview with one of the pastors.

⁹³ Response from one of the pastors.

true.”⁹⁴ A majority of the pastors who responded to this question showed that preaching in occasional service is hard for them when it comes to finding the appropriate biblical text for the sermon.

About the lack of attention from the people who attended the service, many pastors responded by showing that one of the challenges which they face in these services, is lack of attention during the sermon. The informant says: “because these services involve people from different backgrounds, some of them are not even Christians, hence they tend to make noise and not paying attention in listening to the preaching.”⁹⁵ Some of the informants explained that this lack of attention happens most in wedding services, whereby people are excited about the party and celebration. So, during the preaching there is lack of attentiveness. In responding to this question, one of the pastors says: “in wedding services, most of the people who attend, are not attentive listeners; rather they think much about the party. Sometimes, even the bride and groom are just there physically but their mind and attention are in the celebration.”⁹⁶ However, some pastors explained that, the reason behind that inattention is because some of these services are conducted at home environments. In explaining this, the respondent mentioned the funeral service as an example. When the service is conducted at home, it means that the structure is not originally made for services as it has been in churches, therefore it led to lack of attentiveness.

3.4.2 Abrupt situations lead to lack of enough time for preparation

Due to the presence of diverse audience, it is hard to deliver the message to all people who are present. This response is given by some of the pastors who answered the question about challenges they face. They explain that in many of these services, they do not know the participants, compared to those in the normal Sunday service congregation. Sometimes, when they prepare the sermon it is hard for them to know what kind of people are going to attend the service. In other words, it can be said that the audience in these occasional services is always different so in preparing the sermon it is difficult to touch all the groups of people who are there. One of the pastors says:

⁹⁴ Response from one of the pastors.

⁹⁵ Interview with one of the pastors.

⁹⁶ Interview with one of the pastors.

Most of these services occurs abruptly, (ghafla), and when you prepare the sermon sometimes you are blind on the kind of audience you have, therefore it is sometimes difficult to deliver a message which covers the whole audience.⁹⁷

Many pastors in this interview have explained that due to the presence of a diverse audience in occasional services, it is hard for them to prepare a message which can reach all the people who attend there.

Many of the pastor who responded to this interview showed that they don't have enough time for the preparation of preaching. One of the respondents explained that: "because this preaching happens outside the normal liturgical schedule, it is difficult to get enough time for preparations as far as we pastors have a lot of activities."⁹⁸ In their responses many pastors explained that preparing the preaching in occasional services needs a lot of time to come up with an effective sermon. But due to the presence of many pastoral and administrative activities, it is hard for them to get enough time for preparing an occasional service sermon effectively.

However, lack of enough time in the sermon session is also a challenge presented by the pastors in preaching in occasional services. A majority of the pastors explained that, sometimes the preaching time is supposed to be too short because some listeners are coming from far and they are supposed to go back home. Due to that, it is difficult for the preacher to include enough themes which covers that large audience. One of the pastors who works in the congregation explains: "the time for preaching in those services is so limited. Sometimes the service schedule is so long with a number of events and people are in a hurry because some of the participants will have to travel back to their homes."⁹⁹ Therefore, to this question many pastors responded by showing that the time for preaching in many occasional services is too short just because of the very long timetable of the event and that some participants need to turn back to their homes which sometimes is far, and they need to travel.

3.4.3 Weather Challenges

Weather issues are presented as one of the obstacles which faces the preaching in occasional services. Some preachers explained that because some of these services are done at home, weather

⁹⁷ Interview with one of the pastors.

⁹⁸ Interview with one of the pastors.

⁹⁹ Interview with one of the pastors.

situations can be a challenge. In responding to that, the weather situations which are explained are like rain, warm weather, cold weather, and wind.

Because the weather changes every time, it is difficult to plan the event; this is because sometimes the area for service can be arranged in an open space but immediately it comes rain and cause the distraction in the whole service including distracting the attentiveness in following the preaching.¹⁰⁰

Also, some pastors have explained that funeral services during the rainy season are very difficult as far as most of those services are conducted at home; hence, a big crowd is very hard to be accommodated. However, some other respondent pastors have commented that, even when it is so sunny and hot weather it is a challenge to those services. Some areas do not have tents which can help in bringing shade against the sun rays. Therefore, when it is too hot, it distracts the attention of the listeners and therefore this is explained as a challenge the pastors get in preaching in the occasional services. In my observation in one of the funeral services, which was conducted at the home of the deceased, there was a lot of rain that day. Because the home area was so small and the people were many, it was hard to accommodate the participants in a small tent. Due to that, people were moving to find a place to hide themselves; hence, caused distraction in hearing the sermon.¹⁰¹

3.5 The challenges of preaching in occasional services: Listeners' point of view

The question “*What are the challenges which can be observed concerning preaching in those occasional services?*” was posed to the lay Christian informants to get an understanding of the challenges they go through in receiving the preaching in occasional services. As it is known, lay Christians are among the main listeners of the preaching in those occasional services. Lay Christians came up with different challenges they go through. The following is a presentation of the answers as have been given by the lay Christians respondents.

3.5.1 Direct attack and preaching of themes which seem to be unethical to the listeners

Direct attack of other people's faith, religion and denomination is reported as one of the challenges the listeners get when following the preaching in occasional service. This response has been given by almost all the lay Christians who were interviewed. In their explanations they show that many preachers in occasional services, especially funerals, use their sermons to attack other people's

¹⁰⁰ Interview with one of the pastors.

¹⁰¹ Researcher's observation in one of the funeral services.

faith instead of preaching the good news. One among the informants says: “one of the challenges I see is when the preachers use the sermon time to talk in a negative way about other people’s faith. This discourages a lot because in those services there are many people from different backgrounds.”¹⁰² It is explained that many preachers, especially in funerals, use a lot of time to criticize different doctrines of other religions and denominations instead of concentrating on the preaching of good news. Some respondents added that, the behavior of attacking people directly results in decreasing of the number of people who wants to join the funeral service, especially the preaching time.

Some preaching seems to be unethical, especially when the service includes people of different ages. Some of the respondents have explained that the challenges they observe with this preaching is when the sermon seems to be not ethically concerned. The preaching which highly includes this, is the wedding preaching. One among the respondents explains that:

Some of the wedding preaching seems to be too romantic, of which I consider it to be unethical due to the mixed age of the audience. In that service there are children, youths, and old people. So, preaching romantic themes without considering the different age groups in the audience is unethical in my view.¹⁰³

Other respondents explained that, some preaching in weddings were supposed to be a special lesson to those couples during the pre-marital counselling instead of bringing those hints to the sermon with the audience of different people with different ages and status.

3.5.2 Lack of clear focus on contextuality, and lack of connection of the illustrations

Due to the factor above, the emphasis of the preaching to the one who is dead is seen as a challenge by the lay Christians who attend funeral services. Some respondents have explained that the sermon becomes boring when the emphasis of the whole preaching relies to the deceased one. One of the informants says:

I think the main purpose of preaching in funeral services is for those who attended there to hear the gospel (injili). Therefore, using most of the time talking about the deceased one, (marehemu) is the misuse of the objective of preaching in the funerals.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Response from one of lay Christians.

¹⁰³ Response from one of the lay Christians.

¹⁰⁴ Response from one of the lay Christians.

Some respondents said that they dislike this kind of preaching which relate too much to the deceased one because some of those people who died did not have enough exemplary features to take the main part of the preaching as a case study. A majority of the respondents to this question showed that they are not interested in funeral preaching which centered on explaining about the dead; rather they are interested in the kind of preaching which they refer to as gospel preaching (*kuhubiri injili*). Preaching which lacks proper connection is one of the observed challenges in the sermons of occasional services. A majority of the congregants has claimed that some preachers used to preach different themes without any connection to the event. For example, one of the respondents explained: “sometimes the sermons lack connection; when it is funeral service or wedding service, the preacher preaches about giving offerings so as to receive the blessings.”¹⁰⁵ Some respondents also have explained that many preachers use the advantage of the big crowd in those occasional services so as to preach different themes just because not many people who are there use to attend the Sunday services. In this concern, the lay Christians who responded to this question, considered that mixing of different irrelevant themes in the occasional services is one of the challenges to the hearers because they do not get the clear connection between the event and the sermon delivered.

However, in answering the same question, some respondents explained this concept of lacking connection in a sermon because of poor preparations. It is explained that:

The way some of the preachers use to preach, it seems as if they don't have enough preparations. Some of the preached themes show no connection to what is going on in that service. This led to a sermon which do not have a proper focus.¹⁰⁶

Therefore, most of the lay Christians in the interview conducted, have explained the challenge of the preaching in occasional service that, it is caused by the presence of the poor connection of the preaching themes which is obviously caused by the issue of poor preparation.

The preachers failing to contextualize the situation and the environment is one of the challenges of the preaching in occasional services. It has been commented that some preachers fail to read and understand the context of which he/she is going to deliver the sermon. For example, one of the congregants responded that: “some preachers only aim the message to reach their congregants

¹⁰⁵ Response from the lay Christians

¹⁰⁶ Interview with one of the lay Christians

and forget that these services include congregants and non-congregants.”¹⁰⁷ Also, some respondents explained that when a preacher is not able to contextualize or is not aware of the mixed population in the occasional services, it is hard for him/her to deliver a message that can fit all the people in that service. However, other respondents emphasized that, the failing of the preacher to contextualize always lead to the presence of biased sermons which also lack the sense of ecumenism in it.

The presence of awkward illustrations and examples, which sometimes hurt the listeners is also among the challenges reported by the lay Christians in relation to the preaching in occasional services. Some of the respondents explained that there are some of the illustrations which are given by the preachers and they are so irrelevant compared to the context and even the event. One of the informants says:

Sometimes, I am disappointed by some of the illustrations and examples which are given by the preachers in the weddings and in the funerals. Some of these illustrations do not have any colocation with the text and sometimes they hurt me due to the way the preacher uses them with an improper connection.¹⁰⁸

However, some of the informants explained that many preachers use irrelevant illustrations and examples. Some of those illustrations are just used for the purpose of boosting of themselves. Due to this then, the lay Christians see the use of irrelevant illustrations and examples to be one of the challenges observed in the preaching in occasional services.

3.6 Recommendations for making preaching in occasional services more effective

What should be done so as preaching in those occasional services could be more effective? To find out the way in which preaching in occasional services could be improved to be more effective, the researcher posed the mentioned question. The question was directed to the lay Christians together with the local government leaders. The following presentation are the responses and the suggestions which have been given by these two groups. However, some of the answers seem to be similar in both those two groups and they are presented together by the researcher. The answers which are not the same in those two groups are presented separately by mentioning from which group the information come from. Here comes the presented answers from the respondents.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with one of the lay Christians.

¹⁰⁸ Response from one of the lay Christians.

3.6.1 Context consideration

It is explained that preachers should know well the audience and the context in which he/she is going to meet to come out with a relevant approach. This is one of the responses given by the informants in relation to the suggested ways which can be used to make preaching in occasional services more effective. One of the lay Christians explained that:

It is important for the preachers to familiarize themselves with the context where the preaching is going to be conducted and therefore, this can help the preacher to come up with a concrete sermon which reflects the real situation and the environment of the people.¹⁰⁹

A majority of these lay Christian respondents explained that, for the preaching to be effective, preachers need to make some sort of contextual analysis which reflects people, their life, and the nature of the event which caused the presence of that occasional service.

The same suggestion is given by the local government leaders who were among the respondents of this question. They have also suggested that most preachers need to know well the context to provide a preaching which is realistic. One of the informants who is a local government official explains that: “although preaching in these occasions helps much, especially my citizens, I think some preachers need to be more contextual by at least having an idea of our environment and our people; this can make that preaching more effective.”¹¹⁰ Together with that, the local government informants emphasized that in dealing with the contextual analysis the preachers should not forget that these occasional services involve people from different religious backgrounds. In this aspect, one of the local government leaders explains:

The preachers should not forget that in those services there are people from different religious backgrounds and different denominational backgrounds, too. So, in the preparation of the sermon to be preached, whether in funerals ,weddings, baptisms, and other services, this consideration should be taken seriously to avoid the misusing of the preaching in occasional services.¹¹¹

Therefore, a majority of the informants who are lay Christians and local government leaders have suggested a clear contextual analysis to be done by the preachers as one of the ways which can help them to come up with an appropriate preaching approach in occasional services. In this

¹⁰⁹ Response from one of the lay Christians.

¹¹⁰ Interview with one of the local government leaders.

¹¹¹ Response from one of the local government leaders.

contextual consideration they also suggest being aware of the presence of people from different religious and denominational backgrounds.

3.6.2 Equipping preachers with time-to-time preaching skills and techniques

Preachers should use preaching techniques which can make listeners active. Some of the respondents mention that some preaching is sometimes boring, which makes the attentiveness of the listeners to be too low. Some of them suggest that more techniques should be used by those preachers to make listeners actively following the preaching. One of the local government officials explains: “in order to make the preaching effective, the preachers should know and use techniques which make the sermon to come alive. This kind of alive also refers to the mode of presentation used by the preacher.” Some of the lay Christians have also seen that the preachers need to use more techniques so as to make the listeners active. One of the lay Christians says:

Some of the sermons seems to be very boring, referring to the way some of the pastors preach. I think the preachers should also consider ways which can be used to make the preaching active to avoid a boring situation to the listeners.¹¹²

In relation to that, a majority of the respondents have suggested the provision of seminars and training to the preachers to update them with preaching skills, as the world is changing every day. One of the interviewees says: “these preachers are supposed to get refresher courses about preaching. The course will enable them to be aware of the contemporary situations and how to deal with that in preaching.”¹¹³ The same suggestion is given by one of the respondents who is also a local government leader. In his explanations he says: “On Job Training (OJT) are very important because they update and refresh the minds. Within this, I can suggest that preachers should have some time to get seminars and training to make them active in preaching.”¹¹⁴ However, it is also recommended that lay preachers should not be much involved in the preaching in occasional services, because some of them do not have any preaching training, which is dangerous. The informant who responded to this question suggests:

Training in preaching is important. I think the use of lay preachers in occasional services should be minimized. Some lay preachers do not have any preaching training, something which causes them to preach a prosperity gospel (injili za mafanikio) every time.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Interview with one of the lay Christians.

¹¹³ Interview with one of the lay Christians.

¹¹⁴ Interview with one of the local government leaders.

¹¹⁵ Response from one of the lay Christians.

Some respondents explain that the occasional service is one among the sensitive services, hence the preachers in those services should be well trained so that he/she can capture well his/her audience with the right teachings, which can bring impact to the church and society.

Most of the respondents suggested that preachers should take enough time to prepare the preaching to come up with the best preaching, which is also expected to bring changes to the listeners. A respondent in the group of lay Christians is explaining: “I think some preachers do not have enough time to prepare those sermons, that’s why we come across the sermons which are not impressive. Therefore, the preachers should get enough time for the preparation of the sermon.”¹¹⁶ However, it is also responded that some preachers, due to lack of clear preparations, even preach without using any relevant biblical text. In responding to this, one of the informants is explaining that: “sometimes I see preachers preaching their own words without any emphasis or reflection from the Bible. I think they do not take enough time to make the preparations. This leads to poor preaching with heretical (uzushi) symptoms.”¹¹⁷ Most of the respondents have commented on that the advantage of having enough time for preparations will help to avoid the presence of pseudo-teachings in the occasional services.

3.6.3 Emphasis on good citizenship through the adherence to rules and regulations of the country

Preaching in occasional services should focus on and emphasize to people the adherence of rules and laws of the country. Some of the respondents have suggested that the preaching in occasional services should act like a tool to help reminding people about the laws of the country and how to be good citizens. One among the respondents is explaining: “occasional services involve a lot of citizens, I suggest that in the preaching there should be an emphasis on the adherence of rules and laws of the country.”¹¹⁸ Some respondents explained that, because people used to respect church leaders, it is better for those preachers to use the preaching session to insist about the country rules and civic education on how to be good citizens. Some local government leaders showed that, for the benefits of the whole mixed population in those occasional services, the preacher should preach

¹¹⁶ Response from one of the lay Christians.

¹¹⁷ Response from one of the lay Christians.

¹¹⁸ Response from one of the local government leaders

the themes which reminds all the people about their responsibility of being good citizens by the adherence to government laws.

3.6.4 Insisting on the features of good family and health matters

Wedding sermons should insist on the features of a good Christian family and how to make the best family in the society. A majority of the informants suggested that the wedding preaching should be based on showing the features of a good Christian family. One of the informants suggests: “instead of preaching some of the themes which seems to be unethical due to the presence of people with different ages in that service, it is better for the preachers to concentrate on the characteristics of a good Christian family and how to make it.”¹¹⁹ In reference to wedding preaching, some informants have explained that sometimes the preachers do not remember to preach about the Christian family; rather they use most of the time to boost themselves about their marriages. “Sometimes I listen to the wedding preaching but at the end I don’t hear any tip about being a good family in the society, so I think it is so important for the preachers to remember to speak about being a good family in the society when they are preaching.”¹²⁰ Together with that, some of the respondents have suggested that there are themes which should be preached in the service but there are other themes which the couples should be taught themselves in the pre-marital counseling.

I know that preaching is a hard task! But when I follow some wedding preaching sometimes the whole message seems to be purposely for that new couple. I think some of the preaching themes were supposed to be taught to them during the pre-marital counseling sessions. Therefore, I suggest the preachers to preach about Christian families for the benefit of all the listeners who attend.¹²¹

Generally, in responding to this question many informants suggested that wedding preaching should be used to remind all the congregants about the features of the good Christian family and how this looks like in the society. Also, some of the preaching themes are suggested to be taught in the pre-marital counseling sessions instead of bringing them to the wedding sermon.

In funeral services, the preaching should insist on ways leading to good health, e.g., in this time of pandemic, precautions should be insisted on in every preaching. This is the answer which has been

¹¹⁹ Response from one of the lay Christians

¹²⁰ Response from one of the lay Christians

¹²¹ Response from one of the local government leaders.

responded by many informants when they were supposed to give the suggestions on how the preaching should be done so as to make it more effective and for preaching to be able to cause changes in the church and society. One of the respondents who was interviewed says:

It will be good if preachers can remind the listeners about the ways which will lead into good health. Example, in this time of COVID-19 pandemic the preachers should use their time to remind the people about how to take precautions and following all the rules and restrictions so they can be safe.¹²²

Together with the idea of preaching through reflecting the current pandemic issue, some respondents have added more on how the preaching should be done in those occasional services so that it can bring effects and changes to the listeners.

Some respondents have explained that, the preachers should educate the people on how to handle their health affairs. In this perspective, some informants suggested that funeral services are a right place for the preachers to remind people who attend about their health. “Things like check-up, having health insurance, precautions, and other health tips should be involved in the funeral preaching so as to make the listeners aware of how to be in a good health condition.”¹²³ However, some respondents explained that, the youth who are living far away from their aged parents should be reminded by the preachers about taking care of their parent’s health issues. It is explained that some old people are suffering due to the presence of poor health conditions. The funeral preaching is explained to be one of the reminding tools to help the young generation to be aware of and take the responsibilities of making sure that their old parents are in a good health.

Many respondents who made suggestions for what should be done in preaching in occasional services have suggested that health tips in relation to the contemporary situation should be given briefly by the preachers for the benefits of the huge population which is attending in that funeral service. This goes together with the insisting of people to make sure that they get health insurance for their benefits and for the benefits and safety of their family members.

3.6.5 Discouragement of negative cultural behaviors and living an exemplary life

Negative cultural behavior should be discouraged through preaching in occasional services. Many informants have suggested that the occasional services preaching should be used to help in

¹²² Response from one of the local government leaders.

¹²³ Response from one of the local government leaders.

discouraging negative cultural behavior which are existing in the society. One of the respondents says:

It is better to use the preaching in baptism services to emphasize on taking good care of the children and also to criticize all forms of cultural practices which are very negative, like female genital mutilation (tohara kwa wanawake), early childhood marriages, and other negative cultural actions in the society.¹²⁴

Some of the informants also have responded the same but putting the emphasis on the funeral preaching. It is explained that, in funeral preaching, preachers should teach the audience about the effects which can occur to people through negative cultural behaviors which are practiced in the society. One informant explains:

The preaching in the funeral sometimes can be used to discourage bad cultural behaviors like women inheritance after the death of the husband and other women cleansing practices. The preachers should discourage these practices because they are dangerous to health due to the presence of many diseases especially Sexual Transmitted Diseases (STD).¹²⁵

Together with that, some respondents added that also the wedding sermons should be used to discourage some negative matters which are going on in the society concerning marriage: “it is the right time for the preacher in the wedding services to use that preaching session to discourage some matters like forced marriage, high dowry payments, insisting on polygamy, and many other bad practices.”¹²⁶ Therefore, a majority of the respondents explained that preaching in occasional services can be used as an important tool in discouraging negative cultural behaviors in the society. In explaining this, the informants showed the importance of using baptisms, funerals, and wedding sermons as a tool for facing out the negative cultural issues.

In reference to this kind of the suggestions given by the respondents, there is something raised as a gender sensitivity matter. This goes together with the same idea of discouraging negative cultural behaviors. Some informants suggested that women should be used to preach in those occasional services. It is explained that although the number of women in preaching ministry is low compared to men, still few women preachers are seen in those occasional services. One of the informants explains: “I also suggest having more female preachers in occasional services. This will help the society to understand the issue of equality, and the church has to be an example in that”. Another

¹²⁴ Response from one of the lay Christians.

¹²⁵ Response from one of the local government leaders

¹²⁶ Response from one of the lay Christians.

of the respondents explained why it is important to use women in preaching in different occasional services:

Women are so talented, and many listeners will love to hear from them, too. Men preachers are many and this sometimes is monotonous to the hearers. Also, using women in preaching is one of the ways to show that the church is against women discriminations and at the end will be a sparkling factor for women ordination, especially to those churches who still do not accept women ordination.¹²⁷

In this aspect of preaching in occasional services, it is recommended by many of the respondents that more women involvement in preaching is important to bring more changes in the church and society.

Preachers should live the exemplary life so as the intended message can reach the audience without any obstruction and hesitation. Some respondents have suggested that the preacher should live a life which is exemplary to the church and society. One among the respondents is explaining that:

Preachers should know that they are like a moving pulpit (*miimbara inayotembea*). In their lives they must make sure that nothing is going against their preaching. This is because we congregants would like to follow the preacher's lifestyle. But when the preacher's personal life is immoral, this will cause discouragement to the congregants, hence slow down the effectiveness of preaching in bringing changes.¹²⁸

Together with that, many respondents have added that the preachers should be examples by avoiding preaching which have the sense of direct attack. In this recommendation, one of the respondents says: "for a preacher to live an exemplary life is very important but he/she should also make sure that there is not any kind of direct or personal attack on the listeners during the preaching."¹²⁹ The respondents in the interviews emphasized that the ethical matters from the preachers' side should be well considered so as listeners can receive the preached message without any hesitation. The issue of avoiding personal attack is similar to the issue of avoiding being biased in preaching, as recommended by the respondents.

3.6.6 Having an emphasis on life skills and current issues

Life skills and current issues should be involved in occasional services preaching to make more changes. Many respondents recommended that the preaching in occasional services should be a

¹²⁷ Response from one of the local government leaders.

¹²⁸ Response from one of the lay Christians.

¹²⁹ Response from one of the lay Christians.

way to give knowledge of different life skills. One of the respondents is explaining: “in life we need a lot of skills! Therefore, I think the preachers should structure their sermons on the way that the themes presented can help people to get more knowledge about life.”¹³⁰ Together with that, some informants have recommended that the preaching in occasional services should also involve some of the current issues which are happening in the world. The respondent says: “the preaching should touch some of the current issues which are happening in the world today. There are different issues in social, economic, cultural, and political matters”.¹³¹ A majority of the respondents suggested that the preachers should make sure that their sermons are giving people knowledge in life and the preaching should touch the current issue which are happening in the church and society.

3.7 Summary

The field material presented in this chapter comes from the interviews done by the researcher with pastors, lay Christians, and the local government leaders, together with some personal observations which have been done by the researcher. It is about the impact of preaching in occasional services, especially funerals, weddings, and baptisms. The findings focused on the outcome of preaching in occasional services as described by those three interviewed groups. I have also presented some challenges of preaching in occasional services as presented by the preachers and by the listeners to those sermons. Lastly, I have presented my interviewees’ opinions of how preaching in occasional services could be handled to be more effective.

¹³⁰ Response from one of the lay Christians.

¹³¹ Response from one of the local government leaders.

Chapter 4: Discussion of the findings based on the theoretical framework

This chapter will discuss preaching in occasional services as a tool for changes in church and society in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. The field material is discussed based on the theoretical framework. First, I will discuss my findings in relation to the impact of preaching on the listeners' faith and commitment to God. Second, the contextuality of preaching and its responsiveness to the needs of communities. Then, I will discuss preaching that ought to speak to the listeners needs, fears, and hopes, and its contribution to pastoral care. The last theme to be discussed is the preaching which reflects the life in the community with a purpose of improving ethical issues and making the society more pleasant to God.

4.1 The increasing of faith and encountering with God.

My main purpose is to investigate the impact of preaching in occasional services and one aspect of the theoretical framework is that preaching is a facilitation in encountering with God and deepening of the faith. According to Willimon, preaching shapes the faith consciousness of the church.¹³² Gibson holds that preaching allows the preacher to speak the word of God to those gathered.¹³³ These two aspects taken from Willimon and Gibson show that one of the major advantages of preaching is building the faith of the hearers. This can be seen in the biblical point of view whereby Paul says that faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. (Rom 10:17).¹³⁴ Many respondents in my field material testified that preaching in occasional services is an opportunity for people to hear the Good News (Gospel). This is because there are many people who do not attend the Sunday service, but they get a chance to attend the occasional services due to the relationship they have with the family which hosts the event. The presence of preaching in those services gives them an opportunity to hear the message of Christ.

Likewise, it is explained that preaching provides a challenging stimulus to spiritual growth through effective teaching and settling issues of communal, social, economic, and political life in a theologically informed perspective.¹³⁵ Many respondents have explained that the preaching in

¹³² William H Willimon, *Peculiar Speech: Preaching to the Baptized* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 3.

¹³³ Scott M Gibson, *Preaching for Special Services* (Baker Books, 2001), 3.

¹³⁴ *Holy Bible; New International Version* (International Bible Society, 1991)

¹³⁵ Alling and Schlafer, *Preaching as Pastoral Caring*, 13, ix.

occasional services has been of great help because it has caused spiritual growth. Although spiritual growth cannot be measured by a certain equipment, there are some features which can reflect the spiritual growth. The respondents explained about the good attendance in Sunday services and the high need of pastoral services like baptism, officiating of Christian marriages, and pastoral care and counseling. Occasional services have been one of the ways which has helped the people to get a chance to hear the word of God.

Wilson is explaining that “preaching is an event of encounter with God that leaves the congregation with stronger faith and deeper commitment of doing God’s works”.¹³⁶ Here Wilson is explaining three aspects, which has also been reported by respondents in the field. Those aspects are preaching which helps in encountering with God, preaching which helps in building a stronger faith, and preaching which leads to the active commitment of doing God’s work. Therefore, I will use these three aspects by Wilson to organize my material related to this theme.

4.1.1 Preaching which helps in encountering with God

Many respondents explained that through the preaching in occasional services there is a meeting with God. They explained that the word of God is a communicating tool and one of the ways to hear from God. They hold it for true that, through preaching, the listeners hear what God is saying. One of the respondents said: “We don’t meet God physically in those services, but we meet him through his word preached by his servants.”¹³⁷ Meeting with God in the preaching is by hearing the instructions given by God to his people. An example is when the pastor is preaching about love in one of the occasional services, he/she uses the texts which are the words of God. Therefore, that kind of preaching about love shows that there is an encountering with God through his word of instruction about loving him and loving each other. However, it seems to me that some people who attend the occasional services are not aware of the aspect of encountering with God, rather they just attend the service as a normal activity which they are supposed to attend as one of the responsibilities in the society. This can be seen through the presence of different people who attend those services, especially those who are not Christians. The challenge of lack of attentiveness from some participants of those services may indicate that they don’t have an awareness of the preaching that it is one of the ways to encountering God. Although some people attend those

¹³⁶ Paul Scott Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching* (Abingdon Press, 2007), 56.

¹³⁷ Clarification from one of the Lay Christians

services without any intention rather than participating in the social activity, some of them hear the preaching and feel that God has spoken to them, and this causes the results which have been explained by the respondents like some people decide to join Christianity by asking for baptism. All this can be explained as the ways through which preaching in occasional services is seen as a way of people encountering with God.

4.1.2 Building of stronger faith through preaching

After people having heard the word of God through preaching therefore, they become stronger in faith. Wilson is explaining that preaching leaves the congregation with stronger faith.¹³⁸ In this aspect some respondents argued the same as the ideas of Wilson, showing that they have become stronger in faith due to the presence of preaching in occasional services. One of the respondents said that before joining Christianity, she was a Muslim. Then, she heard the preaching in one of the funeral services. According to her, she was very much impressed by that sermon. Since then, she always used to attend the Christian funeral services. After a certain period, she saw herself to believe more in Christianity than in her original religion. Finally, she decided to join Christianity by asking for baptism.¹³⁹ It is possible that the frequent attending of the services, which gave her an opportunity to hear the preaching, made her faith grow and finally, she decided to join Christianity.

Also, through my observation in some congregations, I saw many people following sermons in funerals attentively, showing that what was going on was an important thing for their lives. That attentiveness, I took as one of the features of a growing and stronger faith in them. However, there are also some people who are not attentive in those services and sometimes they are making noise while the sermon is going on. These are the people who are not aware of the power of the word of God through preaching. Some of these people are not even Christians. Although they don't have that much attention, still a few words can touch them and make the decision of following the Christian preaching. In this aspect, the comments by Craddock and Piper can be seen as useful, when they explain the understanding of preaching in relation to its impact. Preaching has the task of bringing the Scriptures forward as a living voice in the congregation.¹⁴⁰ The outcome of this

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ref. The Interview with a lay Christian who was a Muslim before. (Chapter 3, part 3.2.3)

¹⁴⁰ Fred B Craddock, *Preaching* (Abingdon press, 2010).

living voice leads to changes in the listeners, especially the building of a stronger faith. This is similar to what is presented by Piper, who explained that preaching is the word of God reflected in the glad submission of the human heart.¹⁴¹ The submission of the human heart is reflected as a positive change which has something to do with the presence of a stronger faith. Due to that then, I concur with the idea that preaching in occasional services is a tool in building a stronger faith in the hearers.

4.1.3 Preaching which leads to an active commitment of doing God's work

Lastly, preaching may lead to a deeper commitment of doing God's work. Wilson is showing that, at the end, the preaching is expected to make the hearers to be deeper committed of doing God's work.¹⁴² The same idea has also been presented by some of my respondents. These respondents explained that through the presence of preaching in occasional services, the church benefits by getting people who are committed in doing God's works voluntarily.¹⁴³ Commitment in doing God's work has been observed also by the researcher. Some people joined Bible schools and theological seminaries to get the opportunity and qualification of serving as ministers. Other people joined voluntarily a group of Christian education teachers in different congregations. These people helped in teaching the Sunday schools, religion sessions in schools, and in leading the 'house to house' fellowship sessions. When talking to some of these volunteers, some of them told me that they got a call to doing this kind of job when they were following preaching in some occasional services. An example: One of the respondents who is now teaching Christian education in a certain primary school explained that she decided to volunteer in teaching Christian education after hearing the sermon in one of the baptism services, where the preacher invited people to help in teaching the word of God to the children when they are at school.¹⁴⁴ I interpret the accepting of this respondent to teach Christian education voluntarily as an impact of the preaching which she heard during that baptism service she attended. This also collocates with the idea brought by Wilson that preaching brings a deeper commitment for the people to do God's work. It should be noted that there are much God's works which is done by people as a response of what they have heard in the sermons, yet they are not mentioned above. Some other people are doing God's work through

¹⁴¹ John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Baker Books, 2015), 29.

¹⁴² Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching*, 56.

¹⁴³ Response from some respondents (Ref. Chapter 3)

¹⁴⁴ Response from a lay Christian who is a volunteer in teaching Christian Education in primary schools.

the deacon ministry and others are doing the work through economic support of some church and society programs. All of these and many other can be considered as examples of God's work.

4.2 Contextuality of preaching and its responsiveness to the needs in the community

Preaching in occasional services is a contextual act. This means that it must be oriented to meet the needs which are in the community of the listeners. The preaching in occasional services is expected to help in issues of communal, social, economic, and political life. In the field work it has been reported how the preaching have been effective in settling different issues in the society. Due to this I think that it is very important for the preaching to have a sense of holistic ministry. The preaching which touches the spiritual life of people but also touching other aspects of life is very important. However, it should be done in a careful manner, because if the preacher concentrates on social, economic, and political aspects he or she can ignore the use of the Bible as a book which have legitimacy and authority in preaching.

Reflecting on the context may help in bringing changes, due to the presence of the right message to the right people. Von Rad is explaining that if the preaching covers the scope of the social, economic, spiritual, and political dimensions of society, we would be able to reconcile people both with God and their fellow humans.¹⁴⁵ I am especially interested in how the context of preaching is expected to be tackled so as to come up with responses to the needs of the community. Although von Rad pointed at reconciliation as one of the needs of the community, there are also other community needs which are expected to be solved through the message of preaching in occasional services. I have focused on three aspects of context. These are the social, the political, and the economic, to organize the discussion related to this theme.

4.2.1 Social context

Preaching in occasional services is explained to play an important role in the social context. It has been recommended that the preaching which covers the scopes of life is very important because it helps people in the social arena.¹⁴⁶ The impact of preaching in occasional services has been traced as one of the tools which are used in bringing changes in the social context. Among the important

¹⁴⁵ Gerhard Von Rad and John E Steely, "Biblical Interpretations in Preaching," (1977): 18.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

issues concerning the changes in the society is the improvement of unity and a peaceful atmosphere, and the issue of social services provision.

As it has been explained by some of the respondents, the preaching in occasional services has been a helpful tool in bringing unity and a peaceful atmosphere in the society. This is the same as what is explained by Schlafer that occasional services preaching should focus on the lives of individuals due to the history of the surrounding culture.¹⁴⁷ Through preaching considering the lives of people in the society may bring unity in the society. The unity which can be seen here, is an ecumenical one. This means that, through preaching people come together no matter their differences in religion and their cultures in the society. This is also testified by the local government leaders, explaining that the preaching in occasional services has been helpful in creating and maintaining the unity and peaceful atmosphere in the societies. I have also observed unity and a peaceful atmosphere. Many times, in the sermons people are reminded to be in unity. And here comes the famous Swahili proverb which is always used to emphasize unity in the society. “*Umoja ni nguvu, utengano ni udhaifu*” (Unity is power, but separation is weakness). It is unity but there may also be some issues which cause disunity. When respondents explained that there are some preachers who attack listeners directly because of their religious background, the issue can cause disunity in one way or another. Some people will not like that kind of preaching because it can cause hatred and chaos among the people, the denominations, and the different religions. Also, when people move from their religions and denominations and join the Lutheran Church, it can cause some misunderstandings between the two parts. Although it is allowed for anyone to be free in joining any kind of belief without breaking the laws of the country, sometimes there is a disunity among the two sides. So, preaching in occasional services, when well handled, can result in the presence of unity in the society.

Again, under this social context, the preaching in occasional services is explained to be a good catalyst in speeding up the provision of social services, especially the health services. This has been explained by many respondents who said that most preachers in the funeral services have been emphasizing that people should be sensitive in taking care of their health. The presence of many people who joined different health insurance funds for better medical services is one of the

¹⁴⁷ David J Schlafer, *What Makes This Day Different?: Preaching Grace on Special Occasions* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 22.

successes of these occasional services preaching. Many pastors, when preaching, have been insisting that children take care of their parents by making sure that they get health insurance. The most common health insurance which is used is the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF). Many people have joined it together with other health insurance funds. Although the preaching in occasional services has reminded a lot about health insurance, there is also a challenge among the people themselves. The common challenge is the issue of poverty. Some people are so poor that they cannot afford to get the Health Insurance Fund for themselves or for their relatives. This is an important part which I suppose the church to look into. This means, there should be further measures for the church to think more about health services, especially insurance fund, which can be obtained by the people through the church itself. These kinds of measures can help to see preaching as a practical tool rather than theoretical.

4.2.2 Political context

The preaching in occasional services has a role to play in the political arena. Many lay Christian respondents who are also citizens in that area have explained that the preaching in occasional services has been of great importance from a political point of view. Many preachers have used the preaching in different occasional services to speak about different political situations in the country. They even use those situations to warn the government about different misconducts which are done in the society through the government and the political leaders. It helps in causing the government to be accountable. Stott writes: “The preaching also deals with social-political conditions which helps to change society and make it more pleasant to God. The neutrality of the pulpit is impossible”.¹⁴⁸ According to Stott, preaching has to do with the political conditions in the society. When observing the political environment in Tanzania, the issue of democracy and good governance is concerned. Many preachers have used the occasional services preaching to say something about the political affairs in the country. The reasons for using those services, is due to the presence of the mixed group of people with their different political ideologies. Also, in those services there are political leaders and government officials. Their presence in those services is a benefit because they receive the message directly and this can help them to know how the society

¹⁴⁸ John Stott, *I Believe in Preaching* (Hachette UK, 2014).

is perceiving political affairs and finally can be helpful in making the changes which will be of a great importance to the society.

However, some political and government leaders do not seem to be satisfied with the proclamation of the preachers about political issues. This can be seen through the response which has been given by local government officials who suggested that the preachers should understand well their context before starting to preach, especially talking about the issues of politics and government. This comment is reasonable although it does not mean that the preachers should be quiet about the different political matters which are going on in the society. It is not easy to separate a human being with politics. This is because politics has its ground in the society and people are living in the society. Both politics and people go together and cannot be separated due to the religious point of view. Won-ryul is explaining that Christian preaching is a highly contextual act of constructing and proclaiming a local theology in response to the social-political needs of the congregation within, and on behalf of a local community.¹⁴⁹ In this aspect, preaching on the themes which reflect on political ideologies cannot be avoided just because through that kind of preaching there is an explanation of social-political needs on behalf of the local community. Stott is emphasizing that the neutrality of the pulpit is impossible.¹⁵⁰ It means that the preachers should not be quiet while knowing and seeing that there are misconducts in the society. In many Africans societies there are a lot of political problems which are mainly caused by the government leaders. Examples of these misconducts are the violation of democracy and its pillars like free and fair election and freedom of speech. In this aspect the pulpit should not play a neutral role; rather it should be used as prophetic voice. Although the preachers should speak on behalf of the community through the preaching, they should not be biased in a certain political ideology.

4.2.3 Economic context

The economic context has also been identified as one among the important aspect to be reflected in describing the impact of preaching in occasional services. Many respondents have explained how the preaching in occasional services have played a role in the economic matters. One among the economic benefits which have been found in the area of study is the knowledge of life skills

¹⁴⁹ Ryu Won-ryul, "Thinking the Correlation between Preaching and a Local Theology," *Korean Society of Theology*, no. 37 (2013): (Abstract).

¹⁵⁰ Stott, *I Believe in Preaching*.

which has resulted in the presence of different entrepreneur groups. I got the chance to see some of those groups in different areas because they use to meet once a week and discuss different matters concerning their projects. These groups receive different loans from different financial institutions and donors to facilitate their economic projects. As it has been reported from the field work presentation, many of these entrepreneurship groups originated through the influence of the preachers who always emphasize doing something which will equip them to be stable in economic issues. Although these groups originated in the church, the members are coming from different religious backgrounds, hence make the strong ecumenical standard in the society. It is also explained by Ogunbanwo that contextual preaching is a model for effective impact on the social, economic, and cultural living of people. Thus, it is important for preachers to plan and prepare their sermons in a way that the Bible and its core doctrines will be taught in a contextual way.¹⁵¹ This idea sounds well, and the preachers should make sure that the doctrine is well maintained. The danger of emphasizing much in economic matters through preaching can lead to prosperity gospel preaching. This is why Ogunbanwo is emphasizing much on sticking to the Bible and the core doctrines.

4.3 Preaching in occasional services ought to speak to the listeners needs, fears, and hopes, hence contribute to pastoral care

In assessing the impact of preaching in occasional services, the preaching ought to speak to the listeners needs, fears, and hopes, which marks a contribution in pastoral care. The following discussion will reflect on how preaching in occasional services speak to people's needs and its effects in pastoral care ministry.

4.3.1 Preaching that speaks to listeners needs, fears, and hopes

Alling and Schlafer have explained that preaching brings comfort, assurance, and hope in the midst of struggle, sorrow, confusion, and tragedy. Giving voice to the community, offering strategic word of encouragement and inspiration for faithful work and witness.¹⁵² This means that, through preaching, there are some aspects which should be helping the listeners. Things like listeners' needs, fears, and hopes are expected to be tackled by the preaching. Through the field interviews

¹⁵¹ Babatunde Fadefoluwa Rotimi Ogunbanwo, "Contextual Preaching: A Model for Effective Impact on the Socio-Cultural Living of Christians in the Anglican Diocese of Ijebu South-West, Nigeria," (2020): (Abstract).

¹⁵² Roger Alling and David J. Schlafer, *Preaching as Pastoral Caring*, vol. 13, Sermons That Work (Harrisburg, Pa: Morehouse Pub., 2005).(ix)

many lay Christian respondents have explained that the preaching in occasional services, especially in funerals, has been of great help. Through preaching, they are comforted in different problems and sorrows they face. Although it is expected that preaching in occasional services speaks to listeners needs, in one way this can be a challenge. For the preachers it will not be easy to touch everyone's need in the same sermon. As it is known, in those occasional services there are different people from different contexts with their different needs. So, it is not possible to touch all the people's needs in the same preaching.

Another challenge related to the needs of the listeners is what they want. This touches the issue of the congregants' expectations and requests. Some listeners would like to hear specific themes for their own interests. Sometimes those themes may not have any advantage to the church and society. Examples of themes which are famous nowadays are those which are related to the prosperity perspective. If a listener does not hear that theme, he or she can feel as if there is no preaching at all. The result of this is that some listeners ignore some sermons while other congregants quit their denomination and follow other denominations which provide a preaching of their needs. This challenge is also reported by some of the preachers who were my respondents. One pastor said: "some congregants want to hear what they want".¹⁵³ It is a challenge because when the preacher, who is trained, is supposed to follow the personal needs of the hearers, this means that the authority of the preacher is ignored. Nevertheless, the preachers sometimes follow what the listeners would like to hear to keep them from moving into other denominations. It should be noted that the income of the church in Tanzania mostly depends on the offering given by the congregants in different services. So, moving of the congregants into another denomination is also an economic loss to the church. In this perspective, it can be noted that poverty can cause the preacher to preach to please what his/her congregants want to hear, hence the authority of the preacher is not respected.

4.3.2 Preaching as a pastoral care activity

Craddock writes that preaching takes place in a pastoral context. Preaching not only occurs in a pastoral context but is itself a pastoral activity.¹⁵⁴ For this reason, it is expected that preaching in occasional services should contribute to the field of pastoral care. Oden is explaining that in

¹⁵³ Response from one of the pastors

¹⁵⁴ Craddock, *Preaching*.

preaching, the pastor must deal simultaneously with persons of widely different needs and passions. Preachers must be aware of the diversity of persons in their congregation, yet try to speak so that the Spirit, through the Scripture, addresses many hearts in ways that will be fitting to each, as different as these hearers are known to be from one another.¹⁵⁵ In occasional services there are different people with different backgrounds. The message from the Scripture is expected to heal the hearts of the people and this is what is meant by saying that the preaching is also a pastoral activity. The following is a discussion of how the preaching in occasional services is explained to be a pastoral activity.

4.3.2.1 Preaching brings comfort

One of the impacts of occasional preaching to the church and society is this aspect of bringing comfort to the listeners. Alling and Schlafer write that preaching brings comfort, assurance, and hope in the midst of struggle, sorrow, confusion, and tragedy.¹⁵⁶ There are different problems which face the listeners and the congregants who participate in occasional services. Tisdale is explaining that preaching will help people grow in their capacity to cope with crises that arise in life, for example the developmental and situational crises.¹⁵⁷ The presence of these different problems means that people sometimes lose hope and they need to be comforted.

A majority of the lay Christian respondents explained that the preaching in occasional services help them to get new hope and comfort. The respondents focused on the preaching which is done in the funeral services. The loss of beloved ones makes people to be in a sad mood and sometimes cause people to lose hope. In this aspect, preaching has a vital role to play in preparing and equipping people as they go through the inevitable rough patches of life.

Similarly, a majority of the pastors who responded to the interview explained that, although preaching is a pastoral activity, the preaching in occasional services has caused a high demand of pastoral care service to the listeners. Many people, after having heard the sermons, need more

¹⁵⁵ Thomas C Oden and Don S Browning, *Care of Souls in the Classic Tradition* (Fortress Press Philadelphia, 1984), 69.

¹⁵⁶ Alling and Schlafer, *Preaching as Pastoral Caring*, 13, ix.

¹⁵⁷ Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Prophetic Preaching: A Pastoral Approach* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 12-13.

pastoral care and counselling so they go to the pastor's office to get that service of which there is a need of comfort and hope.

Even though the preaching in occasional services is expected to bring comfort and hope to the listeners, there are some challenges which can be seen as an obstacle or a contradiction. One of these challenges is the act of "direct attack" which is done by some preachers. Many respondents have taken it as a challenge by explaining that some preachers instead of preaching the good news they just attack people's life and behavior. Sometimes, they attack other people's doctrines, denominations, and religions. Those services include different people and some of them are in a need of getting comfort and hope. But when they come across those incidents of direct attacking, they don't see the preaching as valuable. Another thing, which is also taken as a challenge toward looking on the preaching in occasional services as a pastoral activity, is the preaching of irrelevant themes. This is also explained by some of the respondents who said that preaching in occasional services is good but there is a challenge whereby the preachers come up with themes which do not reflect the event which is taking place. For example, in funerals some preachers preach about offering, or in weddings some preachers come up with themes related to politics. All these examples show the presence of irrelevant themes preached in occasional services. Therefore, preaching in occasional services can be a part of pastoral care by giving hope and comfort if the preachers follow the principles of preaching including avoiding direct attacks and to try to find relevant themes which collocate with the event which is taking place.

4.3.2.2 Preaching gives voice to the community

Taking preaching as a way of giving voice to the community means that preaching is used to offer strategic words of encouragement and inspiration for faithful work and witness.¹⁵⁸ In this aspect it is expected that preaching contributes to pastoral care by creating a foundational framework. Pastors must be aware of what members are wrestling with in their lives and must also address the question about what resources the people have that enable them to deal with difficult issues.¹⁵⁹ Preaching contributes to pastoral care by dealing with specific issues from time to time and help to give voice to the community about different life situations. In the field work results, one of the

¹⁵⁸ Alling and Schlafer, *Preaching as Pastoral Caring*, 13, ix.

¹⁵⁹ John Neufeld, "Preaching and Pastoral Care," *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* 10, no. 1 (2009): 70-73.

impacts explained by the respondents was the improvement in social services, especially health, and the increasing in government accountability in helping people. Through preaching in occasional services, preachers sent the message to the responsible parts of the government and to the members of different families. The issue of health insurance has been insisted on and many families have taken the measures to make sure that the members have the health insurance through the National Health Insurance Fund. Also, in those services, because the government officials are sometimes present, it is easier for them to hear what the community want and what is needed from the government as a way of response toward those community needs. The response from the majority of the local government leaders shows that much preaching in occasional services help them understand what is going on in the society and it helps them to act immediately in solving the ongoing problems in the society.

According to Alling and Schlafer and Neufeld there are some important aspects which can be taken to explain this theme. It is true that the preacher is expected to offer a strategic word of encouragement and inspiration.¹⁶⁰ The encouragement is really needed as it is one of the aspects of pastoral care. Also, inspiration is important, but a realistic perspective is highly needed. Preaching to inspire people without a realistic point of view will just lead to an ideal preaching. The preachers of this kind are also seen as motivational speakers. Some preachers use the occasional services sermons just to entertain the listeners and instead of preaching the gospel with a realistic aspect they just come with ideals which are not helpful to the listeners. This type of preaching is a result of adopting some preaching styles from the charismatic and Pentecostal preachers. Some Lutheran pastors has adopted that to get more congregants and prestige in the society. Due to this, it led to one of the challenges which has been presented by the lay Christians that, nowadays, there are some preaching which are “pseudo-preaching”. This means preaching which is not current and is even outside the Bible and the doctrines of the church.

Neufeld is explaining how preaching can be a part of pastoral care through giving voice to the community. His two suggestions are, to be aware of what members are wrestling with in their lives and what resources people have.¹⁶¹ These suggestions will help the preacher to know what to preach and what to suggest to the congregants or to the responsible authorities referring to a certain

¹⁶⁰ Alling and Schlafer, *Preaching as Pastoral Caring*, 13.

¹⁶¹ Neufeld, "Preaching and Pastoral Care."

issue. However, one of the challenges I can see about this concept is how the pastor gets enough time to know the problems of his/her members in their homes, and how a pastor will be able to know the realistic part of the resources owned by his/her congregants. It is expected that the pastor should do home visitations to the members. This method is good, although the job schedules of the congregants are barriers to its successfulness. The Covid-19 restrictions with the order of “stay home” is also an obstacle for the preacher to reach the congregants in their homes and being able to know what they are wrestling in life and also to know the resources they have so as he/she can use the preaching in occasional services to offer a voice to the community through offering a strategic word of encouragement and inspiration.

4.4 Preaching improves ethical issues in the society

Occasional services preaching is explained to be one of the helpful tools used in improving and nurturing ethical matters in the society. By considering the importance of preaching in creating ethical stability in the society, Stott is saying that the gospel has ethical implications. Although good behavior is an inevitable consequence of the good news, it is not automatic in the sense that it does not need to be taught. The apostles who proclaimed the gospel gave clear and concrete ethical instructions as well. Thoroughly teaching ethics is urgently needed today, although too few pulpits attempt to do that.¹⁶² Campbell is showing how ethics can be understood when it is taken as one of the expected impacts in preaching. He writes that ethics deals with the question: “What sort of person should we be, and what ought we to do to serve our various neighbors?” Ethics is concerned with the Christians response to God’s will in the context of finite earthly life.¹⁶³

A majority of the respondents in all the three groups have answered that the preaching in the occasional services has been important because it leads to the improvement of ethical conditions in the society. Examples of those ethical issues are found in the response by one of the local government leaders. The preaching helps people to know and follow the good and desirable behavior. He says: “Since I started my leadership in this village, the preaching in occasional services, especially funerals, helped the citizens to change their behavior. Examples of the behavior which have changed are theft, drunkenness, and fighting.”¹⁶⁴ Together with that, some of

¹⁶² Stott, *I Believe in Preaching*, 159.

¹⁶³ Charles L Campbell, "Living Faith: Luther, Preaching, and Ethics," *Word & World* 10 (1990): 375.

¹⁶⁴ Response from one of the local government leaders.

the respondents answered the same question with almost the same answer, explaining that preaching in occasional services has been a source for the decreasing of social evils.

The idea presented sounds important in relation to the information which has been received from the field work. It is true that good behavior is expected to be the outcome of the preaching. Due to that, behavior need to be taught and one of the platforms which is used is the pulpit. The preacher is expected to connect the preaching themes through reflection on the ethical matters which should be tackled in the society. In this aspect, the consideration of what has been suggested by Campbell is also important in coming up with the preaching which will contribute to solving ethical matters in our societies. The idea that ethics deals with the question of what a person should be and what ought to be done to serve our various neighbors, directly intends to show the Christians' response to God's will. In the society there are some acts which are termed as unethical. Examples in the field work are the issue of drunkenness, theft, and fighting. These are just a few among many types of unethical acts which are described by different societies, especially according to their culture. Through preaching in occasional services, the preachers used different biblical texts and formulated themes which addressed those kinds of unethical matters. It shows that this method helps because there are some changes reported. This is what is said by one of the local government leaders that "there is a decreasing of social evils".¹⁶⁵ I concur with what has been written by Walter saying that preaching is used to settle ethical matters, because the Scripture itself is a guide, guard, compass, and a principle.¹⁶⁶ Due to this, it can be noted that preaching in occasional services can help to raise the ethical standard of people and it is expected to be scriptural oriented. This reflects what has been suggested by respondents that the preacher should come up with relevant biblical texts and themes. The suitable text will help in showing how the preaching is helpful in improving the ethical issues of the listeners.

Improving the ethical matters also includes the possibility of discouraging negative cultural behavior in the society. Among of the negative cultural behavior is the issue of "gender blindness", especially when the role of women in the church is ignored. An example from the field material is when one of the respondents suggested that more women should be involved in preaching, as it

¹⁶⁵ Response from one of the Local government leaders.

¹⁶⁶ C Walter Jr, *What Does the Lord Require?: A Guide for Preaching and Teaching Biblical Ethics* (Baker Academic, 2009), 10.

has been observed that most of the time there were only male preachers.¹⁶⁷ Therefore, to show that the preaching discourages negative cultural behaviors it should allow more women in preaching

Although preaching is important in improving ethical matters, there are two things which I consider as challenges:

The first thing is that which has also been presented by Stott saying “...ethics is urgently needed today, although too few pulpits attempt to do that”.¹⁶⁸ This means there are some preachers who do not dare to speak about ethical matters in their preaching. The sermons about ethical issues are sometimes so rare because the preacher may assume that, he or she is supposed to take position on the issue and the preacher may feel ambivalent about which position to take or worry that their position is contrary to that of many in the congregation and in the society. Also, the preacher may assume that she is supposed to criticize the listeners for moral blindness or moral failure. These reasons can cause some of the preacher to skip preaching the matters in relation to ethics.

The second challenge is the matter of contextuality according to ethical matters. Ethics is not universal. Every society and religion have its own ethical standards. It is difficult for the preacher to talk about ethical matters in an occasional service which is attended by people from different backgrounds. To give an example: in my context it is unethical for a Lutheran Christian to drink alcohol. In the same place the Roman Catholic Christians can drink alcohol. In an occasional service where both Roman Catholics and Lutherans attend, it means there should be a contradiction when trying to preach ethical issues which are related to alcohol. Therefore, although preaching helps in addressing and settling different ethical matters, the issue of context can be traced as one of the obstacles in preaching ethical issues.

¹⁶⁷ Response from one of the Lay Christians. Ref part 3.6.5

¹⁶⁸ Stott, *I Believe in Preaching*, 159.

4.5 Summary

I have in this chapter discussed how preaching in occasional services may be an important tool in increasing faith and encountering with God, be responsive to the needs of the community, helpful in pastoral care and counselling, and assisting in improving ethical matters in the society. Finally, I have also discussed some of the challenges involved in preaching in these occasional services, which are apparent in spite of the positive impact it may have. I have based the discussion on my theoretical perspective, and I have used the literature presented in the literature review.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The title of my research has been “*Preaching in Occasional services: A tool for changes in the Church and society*”. The research surveyed the preaching in occasional services as it is used to be conducted by the ELCT-Northern Diocese. Three main kinds of occasional services, which occur frequently in the area of study and which have been used in the interviews and discussion, are funerals, weddings, and baptism services. In this thesis, preaching in occasional services have been studied from the perspective of how it has been used in making changes to the church and to the society in general. To remain focused, the study was framed within the following major research question: What is the impact of preaching in occasional services in bringing changes in church life and society?

In order to answer the research question, I have presented what different researchers say about preaching in funerals, weddings, and baptismal services, especially what they consider to be possible effects of preaching in these services. Based on this literature review, I have outlined what characterizes preaching that may have an impact on church and society. These characteristic traits constitute my theoretical perspective.

Since there is yet no available literature on the impact of preaching in the ELCT-Northern Diocese I had to gather a comprehensive field material from ten congregations in one of the church districts of the Northern Diocese. Interviews were conducted with lay Christians, pastors, and local government leaders, a total of 30 respondents within 10 congregations. I also did personal observation by being part of the listeners who attended occasional services. I also observed the groups which used to meet once in a week to discuss different economic programs. The selection criteria of informants for this study were gender, age, different levels of formal education and leadership position in the local government administration. Ethical considerations focused on the aspect of human dignity, the duty to inform, and the consent of the respondents, together with issues of confidentiality and privacy.

Based on my theoretical perspective, I can conclude on the impact of preaching in occasional services in bringing changes in church life and in the society by pointing to four areas:

First, I have found that the preaching may increase the faith of the listeners and provide an encountering with God. The main findings here showed that preaching in occasional services have been helpful through causing a good attendance of people in the Sunday services, a high need of pastoral services like baptism, officiating of Christian marriages and pastoral care and counselling. Also, the Lutheran Church has received new members through preaching in occasional services. These new members are moving from other religions and denominations. Together with that, preaching in occasional services helped the church to find new volunteers, who especially assist in supervising and teaching Christian education. Others have received a call to be church ministers and joining theological seminaries and bible schools.

Second, I have also found that preaching in occasional services needs to understand the context in order to be responsive to the needs in the community. The results showed that peace and unity in the society, augmenting in provision of social services, especially health services, warning of misconduct of political systems, and bringing economic awareness to the listeners have been some of the impacts of preaching in occasional services, due to the reflection of the context and the needs in the community. However, the issue of political and economic context should be well handled because, on another side, it has brought some negative results. Examples of these negative results are preachers voicing political ideology in a certain political party, while they are supposed to be objective. Also, the economic context sometimes leads the preacher into the danger of preaching a prosperity gospel.

Third, I have found that preaching in occasional services speak to the listeners needs, fears, hopes, and contribute to pastoral care. The results showed that this has helped to give voice to the community on how the citizens should be treated in all aspects of life. However, there has been a challenge of individual congregants' expectations and requests for some themes to be preached. This makes the preacher's authority to be neglected. And, because some of the congregants have an economic capability, the preacher follows their requests and expectations to avoid losing the economic support from them. Finally, I have found that preaching in occasional services improves ethical issues in the society. Through the preaching, there has been an improvement of people's behavior in the society. This has caused a lower level of social immoralities happening in the society. However, improving of ethical issues also includes the discouragement of negative cultural behavior. In this perspective, the role of women in the Church and society should be

prioritized, and the Church has a task of making sure that more women are included in preaching, especially in the occasional services.

5.2 Recommendations

For the preaching in occasional services to be a more effective and suitable tool for change in the church and society, I will propose some recommendations which are directed to the Church administration. This is so because the church leadership has authority in managing the services and the preaching, and they are supposed to make sure that preaching in occasional services is conducted in a desirable manner.

1. The preacher should understand the context and the nature of the audience to avoid conflicts which may occur through his/her preaching. This context should refer to the place, culture, and nature of the people, gender, age, other denominations, and the event behind that occasional service.
2. The use of the preachers who are well trained to give sermons in occasional service should be considered. The parish pastors should avoid the use of untrained lay preachers in occasional services.
3. Preaching in occasional services should relate to and give biblical advice in relation to the current issues which are taking place in the church and society.
4. Ethical matters should be raised in the preaching focusing on the bible and the rules and regulations of the country.
5. The preaching should discourage negative cultural behaviors existing in the church and society.
6. There is a need of having more women preachers during the occasional services. This is purposely to avoid the issue of gender blindness, and this can teach the society about equality in the participation in the mission of God.

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Appendices

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

A. Lay Christians

NAME.....

GENDER.....

OCCUPATION.....

PLACE.....

1-Mention occasional services which gather different people in your community

2-How often do those occasional services occur in your area?

3-How does the preaching in those occasional services bring social and spiritual change?

4-What are the challenges which can be observed concerning preaching in those occasional services?

5-what should be done so as the preaching in those occasional services could be more effective?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

B. Preachers

NAME.....

GENDER.....

OCCUPATION.....

PLACE.....

1-What are the occasional services held by the church which bring people together regardless of their faiths and ideologies?

2-How often do those occasions occur per month in your area?

3- As a preacher, what changes do you intend to happen to the hearers when preaching in those occasional services?

4- How do you preach in order for preaching to have an impact on the hearers/listeners?

5-What are the challenges you face when preaching in those occasional services?

6- As a preacher, what outcome/impact/changes from your preaching do you see in your congregants and in the community in general?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

C. Society Leaders/ Local Government Leaders

NAME.....

GENDER.....

OCCUPATION.....

PLACE.....

1-As a social leader, how often do the church gathering involve many people in the society?

2-Which occasional service is mostly taking the lead to gather as many people as possible in your community?

3-Do you see any changes in the community that you lead due to the preaching given in those occasional services?

If yes, what are those changes?

4-How is preaching important to the stated changes above?

5-What is your view on the importance of preaching and how ought pastors preach in order to equip people to become good citizens?