



Multitudes and Solitude: The Idiosyncratic Response of the Qodesh Family Church (QFC)

Godibert Kelly Gharbin ¹ 

¹ Research Associate, Department of New Testament and Related Literature, University of Pretoria – Pretoria;
Lecturer, Maranatha University College - Accra.

ABSTRACT

Social media is inundated with grievances lodged by some members of Ghanaian megachurches who express feelings of neglect. In numerous instances, however, an analysis of the issues indicates that the complainants were either entirely oblivious to the internal mechanisms the church employs to prevent such incidents or did not utilise them. Therefore, using both empirical and secondary data, the research investigated how the Qodesh (QFC), a microcosm of Ghanaian megachurches, addresses the issue. The findings revealed that the megachurch is aware of this problem and uses its membership process and subgroups, such as the various ministries in the church and the cell system, to address it. Consequently, the study recommended that members must cooperate with the church when going through the membership process, choose active participation in the various subgroups in the church over self-isolation, and educate themselves on the QFC's megachurch concept by reading books published by their leaders on the topic. The study contributes to the discourse on how Ghanaian megachurches address depersonalisation.

Correspondence

Godibert Kelly Gharbin

Email:

kelly.godibert@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Occasionally, certain individuals who belong to Ghanaian megachurches voice sentiments of being ignored on social and traditional media platforms.¹ In 2015, while researching the sources of such complaints, the researcher discovered that some issues stemmed from systemic failure while others were a result of members' ignorance or failure to utilise preventive measures set by the megachurches. However, in 2020, the conversation was rekindled during the lockdowns when some churches donated money to support the COVID-19 fund, culminating in accusations from a section of the public and netizens. Some of the concerns raised demonstrate a lack of knowledge about the *modus operandi* of Ghanaian megachurches.

Consequently, to educate the general public about the megachurches' knowledge of the risk that members may feel abandoned by them and the proactive measures that they have taken, the article examines the idiosyncratic approach of the Qodesh, the headquarters of the QFC, to solving this problem. The church is significant to the study because it fits the organisational, demographic, and

¹ Godibert K. Gharbin and Ernest van Eck, "Solitude in the Multitude: A Christological Response to Loneliness in the Akan Community of God," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 44, no. 1 (May 25, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v44i1.2771>.

leadership criteria that characterise megachurches.² Furthermore, the founder, Bishop Dag Heward-Mills, is the main proponent of the megachurch concept in Ghana.³ He identifies himself as a megachurch pastor, and his church as the megachurch.⁴ Additionally, other ministries are trying to duplicate some aspects of his ministerial system. For instance, Action Chapel International, which now follows Heward Mills's church concept, has rebranded as United Denominations of Action Chapel International, just like Heward-Mills changed the name of his church from Lighthouse Chapel International to the United Denominations Originating from Lighthouse Group of Churches (UD-OLGC).⁵ The Charismatic Evangelistic Ministries (CEM) headed by Rev. Steve Mensah has also embraced some critical components of Heward Mills's concept.⁶ Moreover, many churches send their leaders there for training.⁷ Heward Mills also operates a global itinerant pastoral training conference where he shares his concept of ministry by teaching from his books.⁸ With his "elaborate bookshop and publishing empire,"⁹ he is arguably one of the megachurch pastors whose books have been sold across Ghana and different continents of the world. Finally, he has churches in 94 countries,¹⁰ increasing his national and global influence, one of the distinguishing traits of megachurch pastors identified by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research.¹¹ Thus, the QFC and its founder are essential components in any scholarly examination of the Ghanaian megachurch phenomenon and its concomitant challenges.

Therefore, the study derives the Qodesh's approach using a combination of empirical and secondary data. The secondary sources comprise publications authored by scholars, the leaders of the church, online multimedia, and data obtained from their official websites. Conversely, the empirical data comes from observation.¹² The two are examined qualitatively to construct the megachurch concept of the Qodesh, their appreciation of the problem, and their response.

THE MEGACHURCH CONCEPT OF DAG HEWARD-MILLS

The Megachurch Concept of Dag Heward-Mills

While the megachurch concept originated in the United States of America, Heward-Mills's church adheres to its organisational, demographic, and leadership character.¹³ This is not surprising given that his ministry has been influenced by some of the prominent American televangelists, such as Kenneth Hagin and Benny Hinn.¹⁴

² Generally, megachurches have charismatic, authoritative senior pastors, a very active seven-day-a-week congregational community, a multitude of social and outreach ministries, a complex, differentiated organisational structure, 2000 or more persons in attendance at weekly services, an intentionally small group system or other structures of intimacy and accountability, and innovative and contemporary worship formats. Hartford Institute for Religion Research, "Megachurches," 2024, <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/megachurches.html>; Kendra King, *African American Politics* (Cambridge-Malden: Polity Press, 2010).

³ Dag Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 2nd ed. (Accra: Parchment House Publishers, 2011).

⁴ Dag Heward-Mills, "First Love Church," 2024, <https://www.firstlovecenter.com/>; "History of Lighthouse Chapel International 1988-2011," YouTube Video, 2:22, posted by "A Son of Prophet Dag Heward-Mills," September 2022, https://youtu.be/g4n_qNrNago?si=JsHGB0PD92BzzHPE.

⁵ UDACI, "United Denominations of Action Chapel International," accessed February 10, 2024, <https://actionchapel.net/>.

⁶ Emmanuel Louis Nterful, "Church Expansion through Church Planting in Ghana: A Case Study of the Lighthouse Chapel International Model" (North-West University and Greenwich School of Theology, 2013), <http://hdl.handle.net/10394/11924>.

⁷ Emmanuel Louis Nterful, "The Lighthouse Chapel International, Its Growth from 1988-2013," *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies* 5, no. 1 (2019): 44.

⁸ Emmanuel Louis Nterful, "Early History of Dag Heward-Mills, Founder of Lighthouse Chapel International, a Charismatic Denomination in Ghana.," *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies* 4, no. 1 (2018): 173-82.

⁹ Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy* (London: C. Hurst and Co.Ltd, 2004), 76.

¹⁰ Bishop Dag Heward-Mills, "Apostle, Prophet, Healing Evangelist, Pastor, and Author," 2024, <https://www.daghewardmills.org/about-dag-heward-mills/>.

¹¹ Hartford Institute for Religion Research, "Megachurches."

¹² The researcher interviewed some of their leaders for the original work. The publications, however, have taken the place of the interview content in this revised version because they provide more in-depth information on the subject.

¹³ Charity Rakestraw, "Seeking Souls, Selling Salvation: A History of the Modern Megachurch," in *Handbook of Megachurches*, ed. Stephen Hunt (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2020), 23-42.

¹⁴ Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*, vol. 1 (CPCS, 2001), 307-311; Dag Heward-Mills, *Catch the Anointing* (Accra: Parchment House, 2000), 92-93.

However, Heward-Mills's expression of the megachurch concept has some idiosyncratic features, making an understanding of his views necessary. This can be gleaned from the theological justifications he presents to support the indispensability of megachurches. In his view, a megachurch is a church that begins with a few people and works towards exponential growth, reaching thousands of members by employing biblical church growth principles.¹⁵

Thus, he opines that while two or three people are enough for the commencement of a church, it must increase with time.¹⁶ Some of the reasons he gives as the theological underpinning of this concept are that the megachurch is God's will because God wants his house to be filled (Lk 14:23).¹⁷ He argues further that its fulfilment is in pursuance of the NT pattern, where churches "had thousands of members" (Acts 2:42; 4:4).¹⁸ He adds that the prophetic destiny of every church built by God is to have a greater end than the beginning (Jb 8:7).¹⁹ This "greatness" is further described as the 'greater glory' of the end-time church (Hg 2:9),²⁰ suggesting that the "greater end" and "greater glory" are synonymous with the astronomical growth of the last-day church, the megachurch.²¹

While Heward-Mills acknowledges God as the architect of the megachurch, he makes room for human participation in his conceptual scheme of church growth, emphasising the criticality of the church's adherence to specific principles of growth in order to effectively fulfil its collaborative role. Thus, the Ghanaian megachurch proponent presents a set of fourteen principles that are essential for achieving and maintaining church growth. These principles are integrated into the various aspects of the church, including the roles of pastors and leaders, the church's system, and its services.²²

The pastoral roles targeted at ensuring church growth are enshrined in the following principles: the principles of a multiplied senior pastor, pastoral individuality, and the scholarly pastor. The first principle advocates for the need for assistant pastors to replicate the work of the senior pastor to multiply the overall impact.²³ Additionally, Heward-Mills recognises that all pastors have idiosyncratic calls to fulfil and must endeavour to do so. This is the "principle of pastoral individuality."²⁴ The third principle teaches that pastors must enhance their academic growth through formal and self-education.²⁵

Furthermore, Heward-Mills proposes the use of more lay people in complementary roles to augment the work of the pastorates. It is pertinent to highlight that this is one of the distinguishing features of megachurches.²⁶ His opinion on the matter, however, is that it serves as the crucial element for maintaining a harmonious and steady church atmosphere by preventing potential financial problems that are inimical to church growth.²⁷

Given the significant roles of pastors and leaders, he asserts that the 80-20 principle must be utilised to ensure productivity. Named after the Italian economist, Vilfredo Pareto, the principle states that 20% of the input or causes account for 80% of the output.²⁸ Thus, Heward-Mills opines that twenty percent of church members, specifically leaders, teachers, and pastors, are responsible for eighty percent of church growth. Therefore, pastors must identify this group, spend time with them, have personal interactions with them, and pray together with them to generate the needed growth.²⁹

¹⁵ Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 76.

¹⁶ Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 76.

¹⁷ Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 3.

¹⁸ Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 4.

¹⁹ Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 2.

²⁰ Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 16.

²¹ The interpretations of the OT passages are interesting since they are not related to having multitudinous congregations.

²² Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 125-141.

²³ Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 125.

²⁴ Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 135.

²⁵ Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 135.

²⁶ Scott Thumma, "Exploring the Megachurch Phenomena: Their Characteristics and Cultural Context," Hartford Institute for Religion Research, accessed February 16, 2024, http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/thumma_article2.html.

²⁷ Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 140.

²⁸ Richard Koch, *The 80/20 Principle: The Secret to Achieving More with Less* (Doubleday, New York: Currency, 2011).

²⁹ Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 134.

He also emphasises the importance of systems such as congregational care in supporting church leaders, in addition to their crucial role in the megachurch concept. Hence, some of his tenets focus on developing appropriate systems that promote church growth. One of these is the principle of establishing smaller subgroups within the church to make the delivery of proper pastoral care easier and help deal with the problem of feeling lonely.³⁰ Similarly, his principle of catering for group A (more reliable members) and group B (less reliable members) teaches the need to accept less reliable members as part of the family and devise appropriate pastoral care strategies to meet their needs, trusting God to work on them.³¹ Moreover, the principle of a person-oriented church deals with the appropriate congregational care for visitors and new converts. Finally, he advocates for the use of technology and research to gather accurate data on church members to serve them better through a pastoral care monitoring system known as “pastoshep.”³²

In a similar vein, rules exist dictating how church services must be conducted to facilitate the growth of the church. The principles of numerous and dynamic services, for example, emphasise the importance of offering a diverse range of services with distinct objectives to cater to the needs of multifarious groups of church attendees.³³ He also challenges his church to conduct services that allow pastors to “minister God’s power” to their congregants in the form of “miracles, healings, and deliverance,” what he calls “power ministry.”³⁴ Additionally, due to the centrality of prayer in his ecclesiology, he emphasises the need to organise massive prayer meetings on different levels.³⁵ Finally, one of the most important church service principles for Heward-Mills is the rule of maximised Sunday usage, which advocates the need for pastors and leaders to optimise the day by spending almost the entire day at church for ministry-related activities.³⁶

The Motivation of Heward-Mills for the Megachurch

A thorough examination of Heward-Mills’s justifications for having a megachurch reveals that his ecclesiological concept hinges on three things: fulfilling the missional and social implications of the gospel and building a powerful and influential ministry.³⁷ According to him, the multitudinous character of megachurches makes them effective in serving missional aims because they are able to provide a substantial workforce and generate more income, which is crucial for evangelism or the work of the ministry.³⁸

Moreover, he views the megachurch concept as helpful for fulfilling the social dimension of the gospel. He opines that in a megachurch setting, different needs, such as taking care of the poor and the physically challenged, are addressed through the development of special ministries.³⁹ Members can also develop valuable relationships that may lead to opportunities such as jobs and many more, making the concept very important and socially beneficial.⁴⁰

Finally, the legitimacy of describing one of Heward-Mills’s motivations for building megachurches as a quest for influence stems from his viewpoint that a megachurch is a force to be reckoned with.⁴¹ According to him, governments and politicians are prohibited from despising a church in the same way as they do smaller congregations when the church experiences massive

³⁰ Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 128-130.

³¹ Being trustworthy in this context entails consistently attending church and participating in other church-related activities or ministries.

³² Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 133-134.

³³ Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 130-132.; This is part of the *modus operandi* of megachurches. Thumma, “Exploring the Megachurch Phenomena: Their Characteristics and Cultural Context,”

³⁴ Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 137.

³⁵ Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 139.

³⁶ Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 126.

³⁷ According to the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, one of the attributes of megachurches is that they have leaders who are nationally and globally influential. See Hartford Institute for Religion, “Megachurches.”

³⁸ Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 4-5, 5-6.

³⁹ Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 10-11.; Social initiatives are part of the characteristics of megachurches. See Hartford Institute for Religion, “Megachurches.”

⁴⁰ Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 13.

⁴¹ Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church: How to Make Your Church Grow*, 15-16.

expansion. On the contrary, it impels fear in them as a result of its multitudinous nature, which might be described as “a nation within a nation,” making the leader a very powerful and influential figure.⁴²

A Brief History of the UD-OLGC

As per the church’s former official website, the origins of the UD-OLGC under which the Qodesh operates may be traced back to Heward-Mills’s time as a student at the University of Ghana. In October 1982, upon his acceptance into the Medical School of the University of Ghana, Heward-Mills established a branch of Calvary Road Incorporated (CRI), an organisation that utilises song and drama to engage with the global community. Subsequently, the group’s activities were suspended due to the government’s decision to temporarily shut down universities for eight months. Nevertheless, promptly upon the school’s reopening in March 1984, it recommenced regular gatherings.

Heward-Mills and his class were relocated to Korle-Bu in September 1985. Intending to optimise the transfer, he initiated the establishment of the Korle-Bu chapter of Calvary Road Incorporated. Regrettably, their sessions were disrupted by assaults perpetrated by drug users and armed individuals. However, by spreading the gospel early in the morning, the organisation increased its membership. At this juncture, Heward-Mills delegated the leadership of the branch to his assistant due to his conviction to initiate a church.

The Korle-Bu branch promptly commenced gathering for Sunday services at the Korle-Bu Christian Centre and later conducted services at the School of Hygiene Lecture Room. Nevertheless, a combination of reasons, including conflicts with students and school authorities, as well as the disapproval of their Sunday services by the CRI Headquarters, resulted in the resignation of both Heward-Mills and his assistant from the CRI.

In 1987, Heward-Mills decided to heed God’s call to become a pastor. Consequently, he made the definitive choice to assume the position of overseeing the remaining members of Korle-Bu Christian Centre (KCC). As a result, CRI Headquarters formally disassociated themselves from him and KCC. In his capacity as their spiritual leader, he promptly renamed KCC to ‘The Lighthouse’ during that very month, clarifying that the vision extends beyond Korle-Bu.

In April 1988, the new church moved to the School of Hygiene Lecture Theatre (downstairs) with an initial membership of 100 individuals, which quickly increased in size. It forced them to conduct services on the upper floor. They later moved to the Medical School Canteen which was more commodious.⁴³ Subsequently, KCC was formally designated as ‘The Lighthouse Chapel,’ and later underwent another alteration to ‘The Lighthouse Chapel International’ on December 23rd, 1989.⁴⁴

In March 1992, the pressure from the school authorities necessitated a search for a new place. The church purchased and renovated the dilapidated Opera Cinema Hall at Korle Gonno as its first cathedral.⁴⁵ As the church grew, it faced opposition from some members and traditional leaders of the community, leading to the movement of the headquarters from Korle Gonno to The Qodesh, Kaneshie.⁴⁶

The Jesus Cathedral of The Qodesh was consecrated in April 2008 as the new global centre of operations for the LCI.⁴⁷ This location functioned as the headquarters until the church underwent

⁴² The church’s history of facing attacks at Korle Gonno may have prompted the desire to establish a strong and influential organisation, as the church alleged that these attacks were coordinated by traditional leaders, youths, and political figures. Nterful, “The Lighthouse Chapel International,” 45; “History of Lighthouse Chapel International 1988 2011,” YouTube Video, 20:43, posted by “A Son of Prophet Dag Heward-Mills,” September 2022, https://youtu.be/g4n_qNrNago?si=JsHGB0PD92BzzHPE.

⁴³ “History of Lighthouse Chapel International 1988 2011,” YouTube Video, 7:22, posted by “A Son of Prophet Dag Heward-Mills,” September 2022, https://youtu.be/g4n_qNrNago?si=JsHGB0PD92BzzHPE.

⁴⁴ “Our History,” Lighthouse Chapel International, accessed November 09, 2015, <http://www.Lighthousechapel.org /lci2/ index. Php/about-us/ history>.

⁴⁵ “History of Lighthouse Chapel International 1988 2011,” YouTube Video, 10:23, posted by “A Son of Prophet Dag Heward-Mills,” September 2022, https://youtu.be/g4n_qNrNago?si=JsHGB0PD92BzzHPE.

⁴⁶ Nterful, “The Lighthouse Chapel International,” 45; “History of Lighthouse Chapel International 1988 2011,” YouTube Video, 20:43, posted by “A Son of Prophet Dag Heward-Mills,” September 2022, https://youtu.be/g4n_qNrNago?si=JsHGB0PD92BzzHPE.

⁴⁷ “History of Lighthouse Chapel International 1988 2011,” YouTube Video, 26:20, posted by “A Son of Prophet Dag Heward-Mills,” September 2022, https://youtu.be/g4n_qNrNago?si=JsHGB0PD92BzzHPE.

restructuring, resulting in the establishment of 42 denominations. Consequently, it became the headquarters of the Qodesh Family Church.

Numerical Growth: The Associated Maladies and Remedies

Megachurches in Ghana usually start with a few people and put together strategies that can help them grow numerically. Heward-Mills, a well-known advocate of the megachurch concept in Ghana, extrapolates from some biblical verses his theological foundation for megachurches.⁴⁸ Based on these passages, he explains that even though a church may begin ‘small,’ it should end ‘large,’ because God wants his house to be filled. He writes: “Through the story, God is showing His will for the church. His will is more people! His will is filled with rooms! His will is overflowing churches! His will is the Mega Church!”⁴⁹

This picture accurately represents the Qodesh. The church, which once had a congregation of one hundred individuals, has now increased greatly. The Qodesh, which is a ten thousand seater auditorium, gathers people in thousands on Sundays. It is pertinent to note that the significant numerical growth started in the 1990s, resulting in the establishment of numerous branches of the church throughout Ghana.⁵⁰

The expansion in numbers occasionally has an adverse effect on megachurches’ interactions with their congregants because it disrupts some of their established customs. For instance, forming connections and getting to know individuals is simpler when the group is not large. However, growth makes it difficult for a group that regards the church as a fellowship of members of the body of Christ to perpetuate these practices.⁵¹ Recognising this danger, numerical growth compels megachurches to cultivate traits such as “predictability of visible benefits, consumerism, systematization, and ritual and order; efficiency and bureaucratization, standardization of procedure, and concern for status, role, and differentiation of functions using committees and cell groups.”⁵²

Similarly, the Qodesh recognised that numerical growth is a recipe for depersonalisation and feelings of isolation, redolent of any multitudinous church.⁵³ Accordingly, the church devised a plan to address the specific needs of individuals.⁵⁴ Just like other megachurches, the church initially employs the membership process to foster a feeling of belonging among individuals. This process begins with the act of familiarisation through interactions, which can be achieved either by invitation or “deep-sea fishing.”

The invitational method begins by extending an invitation to first-time visitors during Sunday services to self-identify and proceed to traverse the aisles toward the person giving the invitation. The Akwaaba Ladies then warmly welcome anyone who answers this call and promptly direct them to a specific room where some members of the First Timers Ministry are available to help and support them. The visitors are provided with beverages and handed forms to complete while they are being attended to. Individuals who express their desire to join the church are promptly enrolled as members. This preliminary procedure enables the church to familiarise itself with the individuals, as the data collected and collated forms the substratum of the provision of pastoral care and relevant programmes.⁵⁵

Conversely, the latter refers to the act of breaking the penchant for gravitating towards people you are familiar with to identify and interact with strangers after service.⁵⁶ Heward-Mills opines that this produces church growth. The implication is that these strangers are potential members who can be

⁴⁸ He references Job 8:7, which states, “Though your beginning was insignificant, yet your end will increase greatly.” In addition, he references Luke 14:23 as a corroborating passage. The passage states, And the lord said unto the servant, “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”

⁴⁹ For further reading, refer to Heward-Mills, *The Mega Church*, 1–23.

⁵⁰ Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity*, 25.

⁵¹ Veli-Matti. Kärkkäinen, “The Pentecostal Understanding of Mission,” in *Pentecostalism and World Mission*, ed. Wonsuk Ma, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (Oxford: Regnum, 2014), 39.

⁵² Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 128.

⁵³ Nterful, *The Cell System*, 80.

⁵⁴ For an elaborate discussion on the history of the church, see Nterful, “Early History of Dag Heward-Mills,” 177–181.

⁵⁵ Dag Heward-Mills, *Church Growth...It Is Possible* (Accra: Parchment House, 2010), 77–81.

⁵⁶ Dag Heward-Mills, *Transform Your Pastoral Ministry* (Accra: Parchment House, 2001), 171.

converted when members and pastors identify and get to know them. This is critical because it augments the invitational method since not all strangers may respond to the call. Moreover, it helps to uncover people who choose megachurches because their numbers allow worshippers to enjoy anonymity.⁵⁷

After completing the initial process, the church arranges classes to instruct these new members—both the ones who responded positively to the church’s membership invitation through the invitational and deep-sea fishing methods—on fundamental Christian principles and the expectations placed upon every Christian.

The second thing the church does after incorporating new members into the church is to encourage them to actively participate in any of the ministries (small groups) because QFC is a church that holds the belief that every Christian has an obligation to fulfil. One of these pertains to their ecclesiastical obligation. Therefore, members are encouraged to participate actively in one of the ministries at Qodesh.

Participating in a group actively also provides a sense of belonging and support, preventing the individual from feeling overwhelmed by the larger crowd. The smaller group acts as a surrogate family, offering assistance at difficult times. Thus, the purpose of assigning smaller groups is to create a more intimate and nurturing environment within the broader Qodesh family, where love, care, education, and support may be provided.⁵⁸ Hence, actively participating in the church yields greater benefits than passively observing.

While the church encourages members to serve in any of the ministries, it recognises that not all the members are actively involved in these groups. This means that others could be deprived of the benefits of belonging to the above-discussed groups. Thus, one way of eradicating or minimising these challenges is by dividing members into smaller groups that both members and leaders could belong to.⁵⁹ Against this background, the system is designed so that members of this multitudinous church would be known by at least four levels of shepherds: the cell leader, the senior cell leader who supervises the cell leader, the cell pastor who is in charge of the community where the cell member resides, and the bishop or pastor of the church. The levels of leadership designed to ensure that the cell system works effectively and efficiently underscore its significance for the church. They also beg the following questions: What is a cell system in the conceptual scheme of the QFC? How does it solve the problem under investigation?

The Cell System

In QFC, the cell system is known internally as ‘Bussels’ (from bus cells).⁶⁰ Bishop Emmanuel Nterful, a bishop in one of the denominations of the UD-OLGC, who has discussed the cell system in detail in a book foreworded by Heward-Mills, defines the cell as “a small group meeting made up of members (between 6 and 15) of a particular church,” intending to create an environment for fellowship amongst the members, conducting Bible studies, expressing love and care among cell members, and evangelising.⁶¹

Therefore, the QFC considers a cell successful or healthy when it exhibits the following traits: It is a place where the regularity of meetings is ensured to avoid a situation where members abandon the cell. Additionally, it is a cell where leaders teach the appropriate study materials, that is, the messages and doctrines of the pastor, during cell meetings, to aid their unwavering adherence to the ‘apostolic doctrines’ (Acts 2:42).⁶² Moreover, there exists an ambiance of affection, facilitating

⁵⁷ Thumma, “Exploring the Megachurch Phenomena: Their Characteristics and Cultural Context.”

⁵⁸ Nterful, *The Cell System*, 76–109; cf. Yonggi Cho and Hostetler, *Cell Groups*, 52.

⁵⁹ Nterful, *The Cell System*, 78.

⁶⁰ Nterful, “Early History of Dag Heward-Mills,” 177; Nterful, *The Cell System*, 164–168.

⁶¹ Nterful, *The Cell System*, 35–36.

⁶² The term ‘apostle’s doctrine’ pertains to the teachings and instructional materials compiled by the pastor. The leaders are anticipated to instruct it without using their personal verbiage. See Nterful, *The Cell System*, 147, 151. The pastors acquired this knowledge from the teachings of Bishop Dag Heward-Mills. This notion is founded upon Jesus’ instruction that his followers are able to perceive his message (Jn 10:27–28) and Paul’s advice to Timothy to pass on what he had learned from him to trustworthy individuals (2 Tm 2:2). Cf. Heward-Mills, *Mega Church*, 97.

individuals to encounter Christian love. A healthy cell also fosters a sense of fellowship that ensures that members are able to share their joys and sorrows. It is also an environment of care and security, where members show interest in the welfare of one another and protect each other.⁶³

Consequently, the system promises cell members these benefits, aimed at meeting the physical and spiritual needs of the members. The former includes an opportunity to become a known identity, fellowship, companionship, familial bond, overcoming the problem of feeling neglected or lonely, reciprocal love and care, and sharing in the joys and sorrows of others.⁶⁴ The proposed spiritual benefits derived from belonging to any well-functioning cell group encompass spiritual growth, and active participation of the cell members in the church, resulting in integration into the church's workforce.

To achieve these goals, the system assigns specific duties to each of the three categories of cell leaders: the cell leader, the senior cell leader, and the cell pastor. Cell leaders have several responsibilities that aid in reducing or eliminating the sensation of abandonment. These include a regular study of the Bible and related resources, as well as a daily personal reflection to internalise the teachings of God's word. This enables them to provide spiritual nourishment to those under their care.⁶⁵ This is critical because some of the needs of the members are not material. Moreover, it helps them accomplish their teaching responsibilities at cell meetings. Leaders are also expected to be knowledgeable about how the cell system operates. They must be involved in every aspect of the lives of their members by attending special events such as funerals, weddings, and so on. In situations where this is not feasible, they must send emissaries.

An additional crucial responsibility they have is the proficient and dedicated execution of PPCI (Prayer, Visitation, Counselling, and Interaction).⁶⁶ This is analogous to the PVTI (Prayer, Visitation, Teaching, and Interaction) outlined in Heward-Mills's book *Transform Your Pastoral Ministry*.⁶⁷ The sole differentiation lies in his proposition that the latter is for pastoral ministry.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the functions are the same. The likeness may be attributed to the notion that a cell leader's role is akin to that of a pastor and hence must fulfil certain pastoral duties. Consequently, it is anticipated that they will engage in prayer on behalf of the members, make visits, provide guidance, and engage in interactions with them.

Understanding this notion is crucial since it is directly linked to the obligations of the three levels of cell leaders. Against this background, Heward-Mills's elucidations on the significance of these activities for congregational care are critical for understanding this role. In his view, "failure to visit the sheep is neglect."⁶⁹ This presupposes that when cell leaders fail to visit cell members, they are neglecting them. Since this is the problem that the cell system is designed to cure, he advocates for different kinds of visits for different purposes as the remedy. They are routine, anticipated, unannounced, and special visits.⁷⁰ According to him, special circumstances in the lives of members, such as bereavement, childbirth, and so on, require urgent pastoral actions and extra visits. Nevertheless, he cautions against excessive visits to members in order to prevent conveying an incorrect perception.⁷¹ Unexpected visits also allow the leaders to know the real circumstances of the cell members since the expected visits allow them to show their best and can obscure the real challenges at home.⁷²

⁶³ Nterful, *The Cell System*, 147–149; Yonggi Cho and Hostetler, *Cell Groups*, 52.

⁶⁴ Nterful, *The Cell System*.

⁶⁵ Nterful, *The Cell System*, 150–151.

⁶⁶ Nterful, *The Cell System*, 152.

⁶⁷ The principles of PVTI and PPCI are the same because Dag employs the letter 'T' (teaching) for counselling and preaching. This resonates with his view that there is counsel in God's word. Heward-Mills, *Transform Your Pastoral Ministry*, 151.

⁶⁸ Heward-Mills, *Transform Your Pastoral Ministry*, 180.

⁶⁹ Heward-Mills, *Transform Your Pastoral Ministry*, 110.

⁷⁰ Heward-Mills, *Transform Your Pastoral Ministry*, 116–119.

⁷¹ Heward-Mills, *Transform Your Pastoral Ministry*, 119.

⁷² Heward-Mills, *Transform Your Pastoral Ministry*, 118.

Concerning the role of visitations on church or cell members, he asserts that it is a manifestation of affection towards the individual being visited.⁷³ Visitation, according to him, can accomplish what preaching may sometimes be unable to: it evokes a sense of love in people because they understand the sacrifices involved in visiting them. Since love impels sacrifices, these sacrificial services are recognised as the expression of love, thereby impacting the individual's understanding or self-consciousness of his or her place in the group. For instance, when individuals experience affection, they develop a feeling of inclusion, which leads to their continued presence inside the church.

Moreover, visits make it possible for other responsibilities to be accomplished; they create an atmosphere for prayer and counselling. This is because "visitation is a powerful mixture of three forces": an expression of love, the ministry of the word, and the ministry of prayer.⁷⁴ Fruitful visitations, he adds, must include a ministration of the word and a "powerful prayer" that releases the power of God.⁷⁵ Consequently, visiting periods allow leaders to pray with their members and share God's word with them as a means of providing guidance or giving bible-based counselling when necessary.

Additionally, interacting with members is important in Heward-Mills's concept of pastoral ministry because he considers this a panacea to depersonalisation in megachurches. The following are some of the reasons why he proposes that this responsibility is important for every megachurch: Interaction makes people feel important; it makes people feel that they are not just a number or statistic; it makes people feel that they are not objects being used to make the pastor famous; it makes people feel special.⁷⁶ From these reasons, it can be deduced that the goal of interacting with members is to address how people feel as individuals when fellowshiping with a multitude of Christians and to rid them of symptoms of feeling neglected. The objective of fostering a sense of familial inclusion is crucial since individuals desire to perceive themselves as integral members of a close-knit kinship, rather than simply statistics. The sense of belongingness provides individuals with a sense of assurance and significance within the broader collective.

The senior cell leaders are at the next level in the hierarchy of the cell system. They oversee a cluster of cells and their leaders and report to their head, the cell pastor. As overseers of a cell group and its leaders, their responsibilities somewhat overlap with those of their subordinates. For instance, they must ensure that cell meetings are held in compliance with the prescribed norms of the church. They are also expected to ensure that cell leaders perform PVCI and report all complicated problems to the cell pastor or the senior pastor. Additionally, they must attend special ceremonies of the shepherds and members of their jurisdictions.⁷⁷

Finally, some of the duties of cell pastors that aim at addressing the problem of feeling neglected are providing pastoral care for all members in their jurisdiction through PVCI. They must also diagnose the challenges of members and address them. Finally, they must report critical issues to their senior pastors.

Unlike the leaders, who have great responsibilities, the members are only supposed to attend. However, it is hoped that their continuous attendance will expose them to teachings that will help them understand their roles in the cell group as a family, the church, and ultimately, becoming part of the workforce. This is the reason why the church makes it a duty for cell leaders to identify potential leaders here and train them.⁷⁸

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consequently, the study recommends that members must cooperate with the church when going through the membership process, choose active participation in the various subgroups within the

⁷³ Heward-Mills, *Transform Your Pastoral Ministry*, 111–112.

⁷⁴ Heward-Mills, *Transform Your Pastoral Ministry*, 111.

⁷⁵ Heward-Mills, *Transform Your Pastoral Ministry*, 113.

⁷⁶ Heward-Mills, *Transform Your Pastoral Ministry*, 168–170.

⁷⁷ Nterful, *The Cell System*, 154–156.

⁷⁸ Nterful, *The Cell System*, 120, 153.

church over self-isolation, and educate themselves on the QFC's megachurch concept by reading books published by their leaders.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to find out how the Qodesh addresses the issue of church members feeling neglected. The findings revealed that the church recognises the problem of solitude in the multitude and employs strategies such as the principle of multiple services, the membership process, encouragement of active participation in the church, and belonging to subgroups such as the small ministries in the church and one of the home cells.

The strategies function collaboratively to address the problem as follows. The multiple services principle creates diversity to meet different needs so that no one feels lost. The membership process triggers a familiarisation process that allows the church to get to know the individuals, break depersonalisation, and develop the appropriate pastoral care for them. Furthermore, participation in small ministries is encouraged because it places individuals in "families" to create a sense of belonging. Finally, the home cell creates a familial environment of love, care, support, and security.

The home cell system deserves special attention because of its criticality to the reduction or eradication of the problem. The strength of Qodesh's approach is in the roles assigned to the leaders to ensure the functionality of the home cell system. It reflects an understanding of the intricate nature of human beings and the necessity for a multifaceted approach to addressing the issue. Furthermore, the inclusion of PVCI, a vital element in Heward-Mills's pastoral ministry concept, for all levels of cell leadership suggests the significance of prayer, visitation, counselling, and interactions in the church's concept of congregational care. It is also an acceptance of the possibility of human failure, something that may inhibit the goal of the system, and the need for proactive measures for such contingencies.

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ABOUT AUTHOR

Godibert Kelly Gharbin, PhD, Research Associate, Department of New Testament and Related Literature, University of Pretoria – Pretoria; Lecturer, Maranatha University College - Accra. This article presents a reworked version of aspects of my MPhil-thesis, titled 'Solitude in the Multitude: An Intercultural Reading of John 5:1–47,' at the Department of the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, with supervisor Prof. Dr. Nicoletta Gatti and co-supervisor, Prof. Dr. George Ossom-Batsa.