

Keywords

CCAP Nkhoma Synod, teaching elder, Reformed tradition, lay empowerment

About the Author

Rev. Maxwell Banda Chiwoko was born on the 18th of January 1992. He was ordained as a pastor in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Nkhoma Synod in 2016. From 2016 to date, he has been teaching Biblical Hebrew language, Old Testament Studies, and Research Methods at Nkhoma University, Malawi. He has a Licentiate in Theology from Zomba Theological College, Malawi (2014); a Bachelor of Divinity Degree from the University of Malawi (2016), Postgraduate Certificate in the Translation of the Hebrew Bible from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel (2018); Master of Theology majoring in Biblical Hebrew Linguistics from South African Theological Seminary (2021). He is currently completing his Ph.D. at SATS. From 2013–2017 he served as Biblical Languages Reviewer and Editor of the *Mau a Mulungu mu Chichewa cha Lero* Bible translation project with the Biblica International. He is married to Alice and has two children: Hillel Theophilus and La'el Maralise.

maxwellchiwoko@yahoo.com

Reimagining the Role of the Pastor as a Teaching Elder in the Twenty-First-Century Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Nkhoma Synod Context: A Situational Audit of Lilongwe City Congregations

Maxwell Banda Chiwoko

Nkhoma University

Abstract

In the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Nkhoma Synod, a pastor has various responsibilities. Crucial to the pastoral calling is the ministry of teaching. They therefore define the pastor as a teaching elder. One important way a pastor fulfills the teaching responsibility is through preaching, but this study found that, because of various factors, most of the preaching is done by laypeople. In this research, I argue that there is a need to reimagine how pastors can fulfill their teaching responsibilities in the twenty-first-century context.

1. Introduction

One of the principal duties of a pastor in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Nkhoma Synod (CCAP NS, from hereon) is preaching the Word. The pastor is considered to be a teaching elder. While the common understanding has been that a pastor must do all the preaching himself, the situational audit of the current practices in the church reveals that laypeople preach the most. Yet the laity is not empowered to effectively carry out the responsibility of preaching. This research paper calls for the role of the pastor as a teaching elder

© South African Theological Seminary 2022
Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)
<https://www.sats.ac.za/conspectus/>

This article: <https://www.sats.ac.za/conspectus/reimagining-role-pastor-teaching>
<https://doi.org/10.54725/conspectus.2023.1.5>



Bible-based. Christ-centred. Spirit-led.

to be reimagined in the twenty-first century. The main question that this research paper attempts to answer is “how can a CCAP NS pastor fulfill their role as a teaching elder through the ministry of preaching in the twenty-first-century context?” The main argument of this paper is that this important duty can be effectively executed through laity empowerment.

To arrive at the above argument, this study surveys different scholarly works focusing on the teaching role of a pastor. Thereafter, the biblical material is also reviewed to establish the biblical foundation of the office of a pastor and the centrality of a pastor’s teaching ministry. Having laid both scholarly and biblical bases for the main argument, the study presents the data from the situational analysis that was done in the congregations of CCAP NS in Lilongwe City on the current practices regarding the involvement of pastors in preaching. Preaching was singled out as it is one of the most effective ways a pastor fulfills the teaching responsibility. After discussing the findings, the study finishes with some recommendations focusing on how CCAP NS pastors may fulfill their teaching responsibility in the twenty-first century.

2. Survey of Scholarship

Numerous scholars have commented on the role of the pastor as a teacher in a congregation. In this section, a survey of scholarly views will be done. In the liturgy for the ordination of a pastor in the CCAP NS reference is made from Ephesians 4:11 as the biblical basis for the office of a pastor. Commenting on this verse, the liturgy says:

The word pastor or shepherd defines a person who has been set apart to do the work of a shepherd. As a shepherd of the sheep looks after, protects, and keeps his sheep, in the same way, the shepherd or pastor in the church of God, should look after, protect and keep the sheep of the Lord—who are his own people. Feeding the flock of the Lord means

instructing them in the Word and administering the Holy Sacraments. The instruments to protect them as well as to keep them are found in the Bible. Hence a pastor must teach the people. (Nkhoma Synod 2009, 37)¹

The above quotation points to the dual roles of a pastor—teaching the Scriptures and administering the sacraments. This is in line with the Reformed tradition which describes a pastor as a “minister of the Word and sacraments” whose function is that of “proclaiming, explaining, and applying Holy Scripture [or, someone] who shall preach the Word” (DeRidder and Hofman 1994, 99–102). As a minister of the Word, a pastor in the CCAP NS is described as a “teaching elder” (Msangaambe 2011, 234; Zeze 2012, 78).

In discussing the teaching role of a pastor, Akin (2004, 49) argues that, the noun pastor, from the Greek word ποιμήν poimen, in English ‘shepherd,’ does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament as a reference to a leader in the church, though the derivate verb and the noun ‘flock’ are found. The pastor is also given the title ‘teacher,’ which together with pastor, denote one office of ministry [whose daily ministry is] providing instruction in the Word of God.

Due to the crucial nature of the role of teaching for a pastor, White (2004, 278) contends that it is impossible to be a pastor without teaching. John Calvin also said that pastors have the responsibility of proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, apart from the administration of sacraments and discipline. By doing this, pastors uphold the correct doctrine and correct false teachings. Calvin equated the preaching responsibility of pastors to that of apostles who were appointed by God to preach to the whole world.

¹ The citation is my own translation of the Chichewa version of the Nkhoma Synod Liturgy called “Malongosoledwe a za mu Mpingo” (Church Liturgy).

Thus, just as the apostles were entrusted with the responsibility of preaching the gospel, pastors are supposed to preach the gospel to the flock entrusted to them by God (Calvin 1961, 1057–1059).

Manetsch (2013) observes that while preaching was done in the pre-reformation era, what makes the reformers' approach unique is their emphasis on the Word:

For Calvin and the ministers who came after him, Christian preaching was the primary instrument that God employed to bring sinners to faith in Christ and guide them toward spiritual maturity. In their minds, the proclamation of the Scripture was God's dynamic instrument of bringing about personal spiritual regeneration, the reformation of the church, and the transformation of society according to the righteousness of Christ. They viewed the preaching of the word as the minister's primary duty. (Manetsch 2013, 146–147;)

Karrant-Nunn (2003, 194) discusses the vital role preaching played in bringing about reformation for the masses in Germany during the time of the Reformation. She concludes, "no sermon, no reformation." This in a way points to the fact that preaching was the vehicle that was used by the reformers in bringing the Reformation to the masses unfamiliar with the theological discourses of the day.

Barrett (2015) studied the life of John Owen, a Puritan Reformed pastor, to counter a worrisome trend he observes among pastors. He shockingly states that pastors today have very busy schedules which suffocate their primary responsibility as teachers of the Word of God in congregations.

The modern pastor is so busy marketing the church's identity, raising funds for the next building campaign, or overseeing business meetings

that preaching the Scriptures becomes secondary or, even worse, tertiary in its importance. Yet one is hard-pressed to find a pastoral responsibility in the New Testament (NT) that takes priority over the preaching of God's Word. When we compare the NT emphasis on the proclamation of the Word to twenty-first-century priorities in ministry, it must be asked, "Has preaching become just another duty in a long list of ministry chores? (Barrett 2015, 459–460)

Barrett cites John Owen who says "the first and principal duty of a pastor is to feed the flock by diligent preaching of the word ... he is no pastor who does not feed his flock. The main duty of a pastor is to preach God's word to God's people, as a shepherd feeding his sheep" (Barrett 2015, 459–460, 462).

In emphasizing preaching as the top priority of a pastor, Croft (2015, 37) first laments that ministerial duties take up so much time, that "time to study in preparation for preaching often gets squeezed out of a pastor's busy schedule." He then advises pastors that regardless of their tight schedules and no matter how demanding ministerial responsibilities can be "the study and preaching of the Word of God should be the focus of every faithful pastor's ministry."

MacArthur (2005) also agrees with the point that preaching is the top priority of a pastor. Having surveyed the Scriptures and the history of the church, he concludes that preaching must take precedence over a pastor's other duties. He argues that "no man's pastoral ministry will be successful in God's sight who does not give preaching its proper place" (2005, n.p.). Jefferson (1980, 76) uses the image of a shepherd in describing the role of the pastor in a congregation. As the shepherd of a flock is duty-bound to feed his sheep, a pastor is called by God to feed the people of God. He

therefore states that “no part of a minister’s work is more strictly, genuinely pastoral than the work of preaching.”

In his article which seeks to survey the evolution of pastoral ministry in the history of the church, Stitzinger (1995, 149) observes that the Bible presents several duties and responsibilities for a pastor of which one central task is teaching the Scripture through preaching. He notes that the reformers of the church also considered preaching the primary task of a pastor. As such, a pastor is both a teacher and a preacher as the two are inseparable. Hindson and Dobson (1983, 10–12) insist that the biblical responsibility of the role of a pastor has not changed. A pastor must maintain his role as a shepherd, teacher, and evangelist as he is supposed to feed his flock with spiritual food, teach them the biblical truth, and model the example of Christ to them.

From the views of different scholars presented above, two points can be made. First, the primary responsibility of pastors is to teach the Word of God to the members of their congregations. Second, preaching is one of the most effective ways pastors can execute their teaching responsibility. However, the survey of scholarship has sadly shown that in the twenty-first century there are several things that divert the attention of pastors from fulfilling their teaching roles. As we will see below, the CCAP NS is not spared from this sad development. To solidify the claim that pastors are called to teach, in the section that follows, I have provided a survey of what the Bible says concerning the teaching duty of pastors.

3. Survey of Biblical Material

In the New Testament, the word pastor translates a Greek word ποιμήν, which is also translated as *shepherd*. This word occurs 18 times in the New Testament, and mostly in the Gospels. It has its background in the Old Testament from the Hebrew word רֹעֵה, which occurs 173 times and is

commonly translated as *shepherd*. Like in most of the ancient Near East, in Israel shepherds had the duty to care for, feed, protect, and lead their flock (Carnes 2007, 22–23). In the Old Testament, this term was also used metaphorically to refer to different figures such as God (Gen 48:15; 49:24; Ps 23; 77:21; Ezek 34), kings (2 Sam 5:2; 7:7–8; Ps 80:1–3; Ezek 34), priests and prophets (Jer 17:16). This metaphor signified the various responsibilities of the ones it referred to (Gan 2019, 158). For instance, God as the shepherd of his people fulfilled the responsibility of caring for them, leading them, protecting them from danger, and providing for their needs (Ps 23). In the same way, kings and religious leaders had to fulfill the same responsibilities over the people they were leading (Gan 2010, 8–11). Their failure to execute their shepherding role with faithfulness attracted God’s condemnation (Ezek 34).

The metaphorical use of the term shepherd continued in the New Testament. Since in the Old Testament God faults kings and religious leaders for failing to shepherd his people according to his will, the New Testament presents Jesus as the perfect example of a shepherd as he is “the Good Shepherd” who lays down his life for his sheep (John 10:10–14). Gan (2019, 45) cites Fackre who argues that the metaphor of shepherd is applied to Jesus in the New Testament because of the threefold offices he fulfills: the offices of the priest, prophet, and king. But this interpretation does not present the whole truth because in the Old Testament the shepherd metaphor was primarily used to refer to God as he is the chief shepherd. The kings, prophets, and priests were just entrusted with the responsibility, but God remained the chief shepherd. What we see in Jesus in the New Testament is the demonstration of the shepherding responsibility after the human figures had failed.

It is interesting that the New Testament establishes the pastoral office on the shepherd metaphor (Eph 4:11). This implies that pastors assume the responsibility of both the Old Testament shepherds and of Jesus. Since Jesus demonstrated what shepherding God's flock means, pastors are called to continue in the footsteps of Jesus as they shepherd God's people—they are to lead, feed, care for, and protect the people of God entrusted to their care.

Through teaching, a pastor fulfills the roles of feeding and protecting God's flock by providing them with spiritual food and protection from false teachings (Gan 2019, 54). At this point let us look at Ephesians 4:11 in its context.

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. (Eph 4:11–14; ESV)

In the above passage, the office of a pastor (shepherd) is listed with the offices of the apostle, the prophet, and the evangelist. In Greek, the terms shepherds (pastors) and teachers are governed by one definite article, which linguistically may imply that they are one office. Some New Testament commentators believe that this signifies that a pastor's duty is teaching (Jeremias 1968, 497; Lincoln 1990, 250; cf. Stone 2006, 53; Jones 2014, 54; Piper and Carson 2011, 61). From verses twelve to fourteen Paul highlights the need for these different offices, including the office of pastors. Focusing

on the office of pastors alone, it is clear in the passage that their duty is to teach their flock the Word of God in order for them to grow and mature spiritually, because spiritual maturity is one of the important cornerstones of unity in the body of Christ. Hebrews 6:1 points out that after repentance, believers are supposed to grow in their faith. But for this growth to take place there must be someone to teach them. This is the responsibility of pastors.

In 1 Corinthians 12:28 Paul also talks about the different offices in the church. The office of pastors is not mentioned, but the office of teachers is mentioned. The use of the term teachers instead of pastors may suggest that the primary responsibility of pastors is teaching the Word of God.

All these biblical references signify that the central tenet of Scripture is that teaching is one of the foremost shepherding responsibilities of a pastor. It is on this premise that this study conducted a situational analysis of the current practice in the involvement of pastors in the preaching programs in the Lilongwe City congregations of the CCAP NS.

4. Conducting the Situational Analysis

In this section, I describe the nature of my situational analysis of the current practice of the involvement of pastors in preaching programs in the CCAP NS. A situational analysis is necessary for research of this kind because it facilitates a comparative analysis between the current situation and the desired situation (Save the Children 2020, 5). Since it is desirable that pastors should faithfully execute their teaching duty, this article uses situational analysis to find out whether this is the case or not.

4.1 Design

This study follows an empirical design. The empirical aspect involves the administration of structured questionnaires to solicit data for the situational

audit of the current practices of the involvement of pastors in preaching in the CCAP NS.

4.2 Targeted population and sampling

The target population of this research paper was CCAP NS congregations in Lilongwe City. The sampling frame comprised forty-six church service committees, of which each committee represented a congregation. The congregations' church service committees that participated in the research were selected using combined Simple and Convenience Sampling Methods. Following Slovin's formula $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)}$,² which requires that a sample frame below one hundred should engage all members of the target population in the research process, the required sample size is all forty-six congregation church service committees (Kaphesi and Kaphesi 2018, 70). However, due to the time factor and willingness of participants to take part in the research, the sample size became twenty-six, representing 56% of the target population.³

4.3 Research methodology

The research used a descriptive approach to survey relevant literature on the role of the pastor as a teacher. To have an understanding of the current practices of the involvement of pastors in teaching programs in congregations the research used a situational analysis methodology. Data

² n = sample size, N = sample frame, and e = margin of error

³ These congregations are: Mwala CCAP, Chiombamwala CCAP, Nsangu CCAP, Kaning'a CCAP, Bwaila CCAP, Katate CCAP, Nsunga CCAP, Kakule CCAP, Mvunguti CCAP, Masintha CCAP, Kalambo CCAP, Mlima CCAP, Kafita CCAP, Katondo CCAP, Kapita CCAP, Chikuluti CCAP, Chikungu CCAP, Mvama CCAP, Likuni CCAP, Chimwala CCAP, Mnkhumbe CCAP, Msonkhamanja CCAP, Mbuka CCAP, Kachere CCAP, Lingadzi CCAP, and Nsungwi CCAP.

for the situational analysis were collected through the administration of a semi-structured questionnaire. Each congregation was given a questionnaire that was filled out by the church service committee. Each committee represented a congregation since they oversee different worship activities that include teaching programs at a congregation level.

4.4 Data analysis

To obtain descriptive statistics, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze data that was collected through the use of a semi-structured questionnaire. The findings of the situational audit are discussed in section 5.

4.5 Ethical clearance

To be within the academic ethical standards, consent to solicit the data to conduct a situational audit was obtained from the pastors in the congregations enlisted above. Those congregations whose pastors expressed unwillingness to participate in the study were not involved.

5. Discussion of Findings

5.1 Size of congregations

As indicated earlier, the study was done on twenty-six congregations. The study sought to determine the size of each congregation in terms of the number of prayer houses.⁴ It was discovered that out of the twenty-six congregations, fourteen congregations have no prayer house (representing

⁴ A prayer house is a place where people gather for prayers. They form part of a congregation and a congregation may have one or more prayer houses depending on the width of the area it covers.

54% of all the congregations), six congregations have one or two prayer houses (representing 23%), three congregations have three prayer houses (representing 11%), and three congregations have more than four prayer houses (representing 11%). From these statistics, it emerges that over half of the congregations that participated in the study have no prayer houses. The figure below illustrates these statistics.

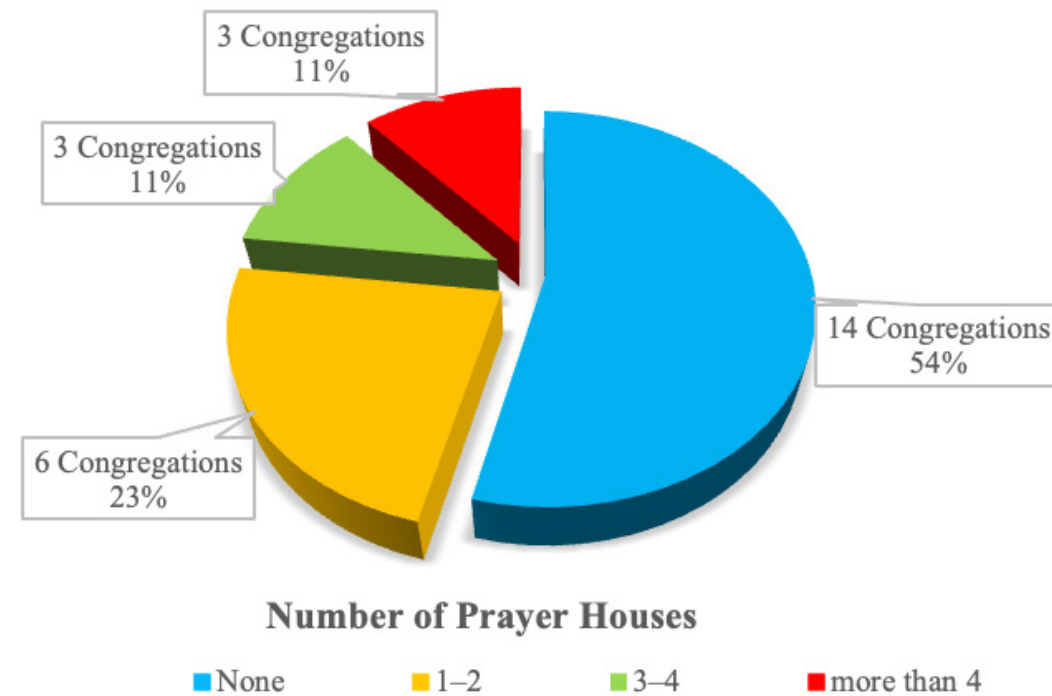


Figure 1. Size of congregations according to the number of prayer houses

If we can generalize these statistics, we can conclude that most of the city congregations have none or few prayer houses.

5.2 How frequently pastors preach in prayer houses

In its attempt to investigate the involvement of pastors in preaching programs in congregations, the study inquired about the frequency with which the pastors preached at the prayer houses. The inquiry was done for each of the twelve congregations with prayer houses. The frequency was measured per term. It was discovered that for congregations with one or two prayer houses, one has a pastor who preaches once a quarter in every

prayer house, four have pastors who preach twice in every quarter, and one preached three times in every quarter. For congregations with three prayer houses, two have pastors who preached twice, and one has a pastor who preached once in every prayer house in every quarter. In all three congregations with more than four prayer houses, pastors preached in each prayer house once quarterly. Two facts emerged from these statistics: The table below illustrates the data.

Size of Congregation	Pastors Preaching Frequency	Number of Congregations
1-2 Prayer houses 3 Prayer houses 4> Prayer houses	Once	1
		2
		3
1-2 Prayer houses 3 Prayer houses 4> Prayer houses	Twice	4
		1
		0
1-2 Prayer houses 3 Prayer houses 4> Prayer houses	Three times	1
		0
		0

Table 1. Pastors' preaching frequency in prayer houses

From the statistics it can be derived that pastors in congregations with one or two prayer houses preached more than once in every prayer house,

compared to pastors in congregations with three and more prayer houses who mostly preach in every prayer house once quarterly.

5.3 How frequently pastors preach at the station⁵

Apart from investigating the frequency with which pastors preach at the prayer houses, the study also inquired about how many times in a quarter pastors preached at the station. The study found that out of the twenty-six congregations that participated in the study, pastors in seventeen congregations (representing 65%) preach more than three times a quarter, pastors in seven congregations (representing 27%) preach three times a quarter, while pastors in two congregations (representing only 8% of congregations) preach at the station twice every three months. Below is a graphic presentation of these statistics.

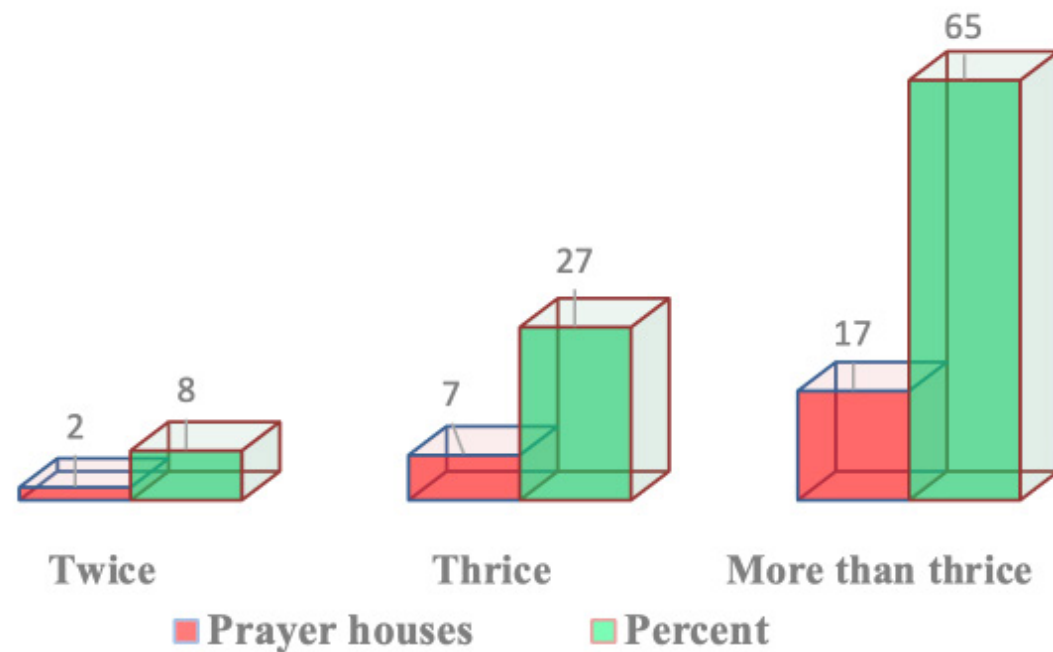


Figure 2. How frequently pastors preach at the station

⁵ For congregations with more than one prayer house or place for worship services, a station is the central place of worship where a pastor resides. This is the administrative center of a congregation.

A cross-tabulation of the size of congregations in terms of the number of prayer houses and the regularity of pastors' involvement in preaching at the station revealed that out of the seventeen congregations whose pastors preach at the station more than three times, ten congregations have no prayer houses, four have one or two prayer houses, two have three prayer houses, and one has more than four prayer houses. Out of the seven congregations whose pastors preach three times quarterly, four have no prayer houses, one indicated they have one or two prayer houses, one has three prayer houses, and one has more than four prayer houses. For the two congregations whose pastors preach twice quarterly at the station, one indicated they have one or two prayer houses while the other one has more than four prayer houses.

5.4 The most regular preachers

The study also sought to compare the regularity with which pastors and laypeople preach cumulatively regardless of the size of the congregations. The graph below reveals the results.

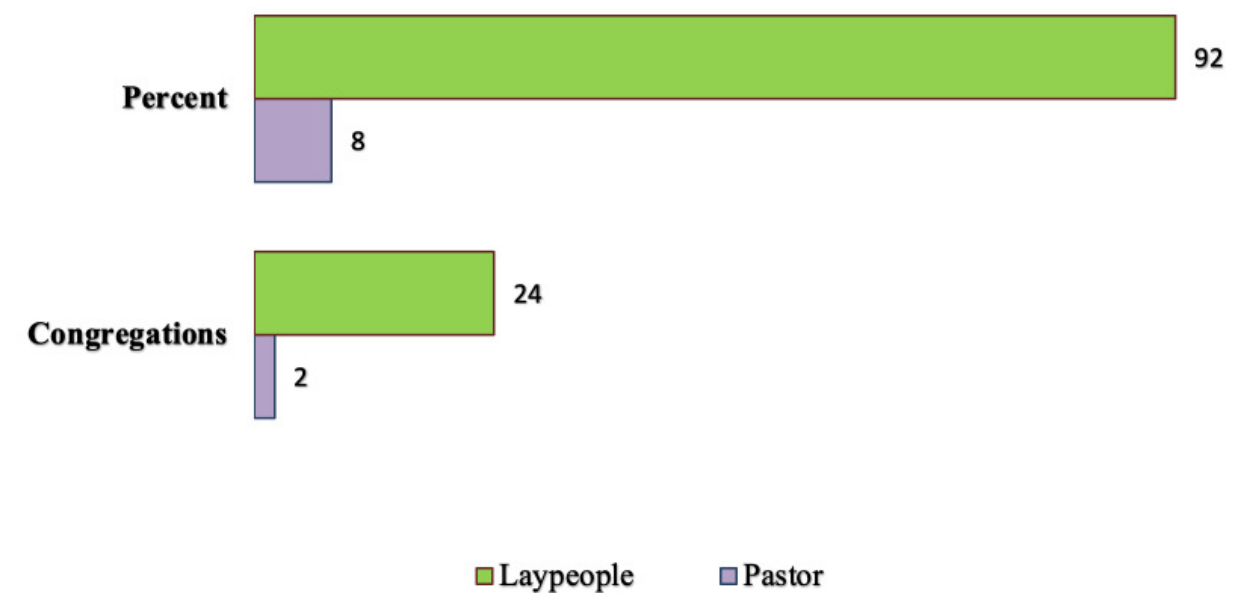


Figure 3. The most regular preachers

The graphic presentation above shows that in twenty-four congregations (representing 92.3%) laypeople preach the most while in only two congregations (representing 7.7%) pastors preach more than laypeople. A correlational analysis was done to see the influence of the size of the congregation on the regularity of pastors' preaching. The data shows that there is a minimal relationship because 86% of congregations without prayer houses (twelve out of fourteen) have laypeople as the most regular preachers while all congregations with prayer houses have laypeople as the most regular preachers. Even if the total number of times that pastors in congregations with prayer houses preach in the prayer houses are combined with the number of times they preach at the station, lay preachers still preach more regularly.

5.5 Reasons for the dominance of lay preachers

Apart from the size of congregations being one of the factors that might contribute to the dominance of laypeople in the preaching program, participants were asked to indicate why they think most of the preaching is done by laypeople. The graph below shows the responses of the participants:

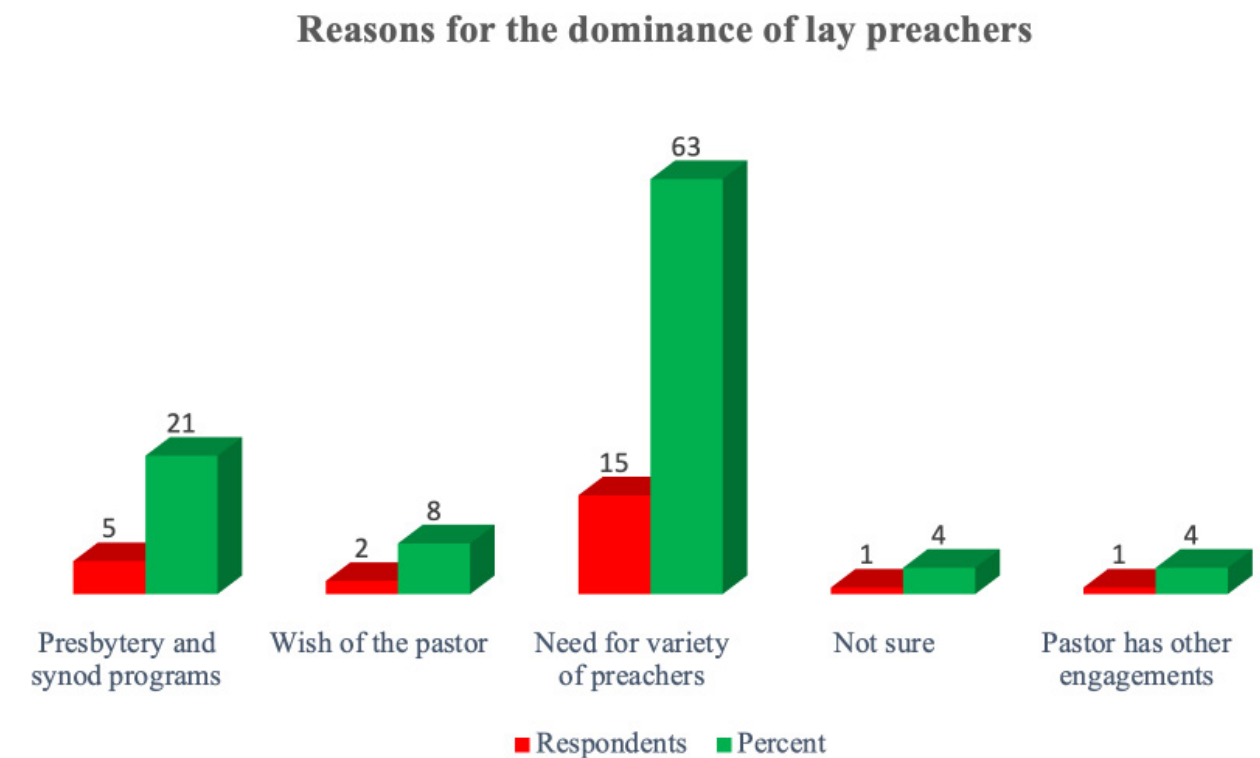


Figure 4. The reasons for the dominance of lay preachers

The data above shows that 63% of the respondents indicated that the main reason why lay preachers preach more regularly than pastors is the congregation's need for a variety of preachers. This was followed by 21% of respondents who said that synod and presbytery functions, such as commissioning and de-commissioning of pastors in congregations, cause some pastors to preach less than laypeople. These respondents believe that if synod and presbytery functions do not happen on Sundays, pastors who skip preaching for such events would be available full-time for preaching in their congregations. The data above further indicates that 8% of the participants believe that lay preachers dominate the preaching program due to the wish of pastors. A total of 4% indicated that the reason lay preachers dominate is because of other commitments the pastor has, such as education. Another 4% was not sure why laypeople preach the most.

A careful consideration of the data above clearly indicates that the majority of the respondents believe that preaching is not a one-man show. This is why there is a desire to have different people featured in the preaching program, not just the pastor of a congregation.

5.6 Training of lay preachers

The study also inquired about the training on Bible interpretation, and sermon preparation and delivery for lay preachers who are featured in the preaching program. The data reveals that pastors in nineteen of the twenty-six congregations (representing 73.1%) do not give any training to the lay preachers who are featured in the preaching program and seven congregations (representing 27%) train lay preachers. The graph below illustrates the data.

Training of lay preachers on Bible interpretation and preaching

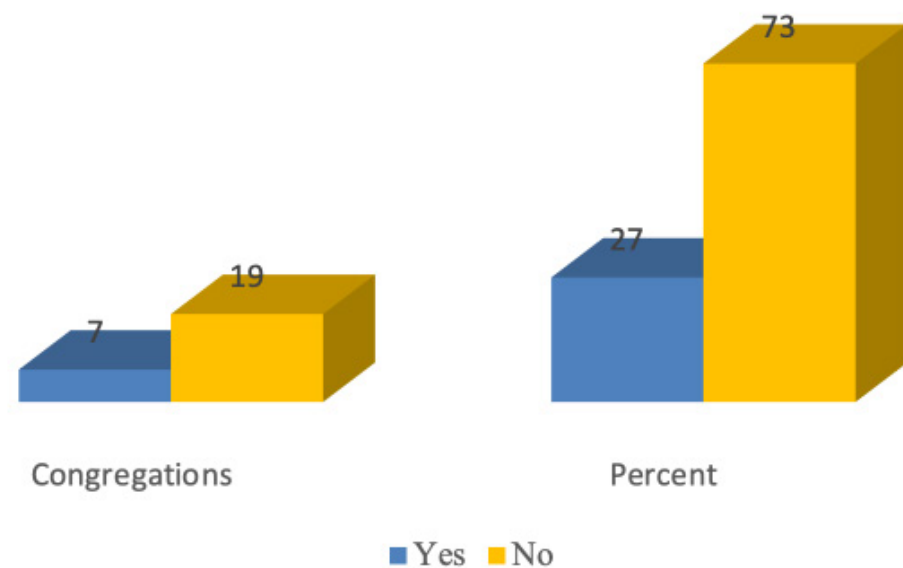


Figure 5. Training of lay preachers

A cross-tabulation of the data on the most regular preachers between laypeople and pastors and the training of lay preachers reveals that seventeen of the nineteen congregations whose pastors never train lay preachers are

congregations with a dominance of lay preachers while only two have pastors as their most regular preachers. From this, one important conclusion can be made: for most congregations, apart from having laypeople preaching more than pastors, these lay preachers never receive any training from their pastors on Bible interpretation, and sermon preparation and presentation.

5.6.1 Types of training given to lay preachers

For the congregations whose pastors teach laypeople featured on the preaching program on Bible interpretation, and sermon preparation and presentation, a further inquiry was made on the type of training given to the lay preachers. The data shows that pastors in four congregations use Veritas Training⁶ while pastors in three congregations organize sermon preparation seminars. This is shown in the figure below.

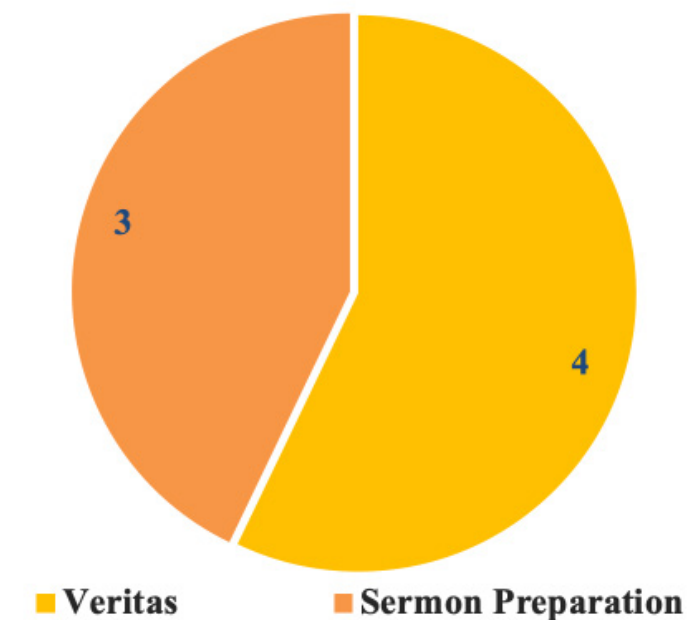


Figure 6. Types of training given to lay preachers

⁶ Veritas is a training program that equips pastors and laypeople in churches in Malawi and other Sub-Saharan regions with basic Bible interpretation skills.

5.6.2 Other teaching programs

The survey also inquired about other teaching programs that pastors conduct in their respective congregations apart from preaching and other official teaching programs of the synod.⁷ The figure below shows the graphic presentation of the data.

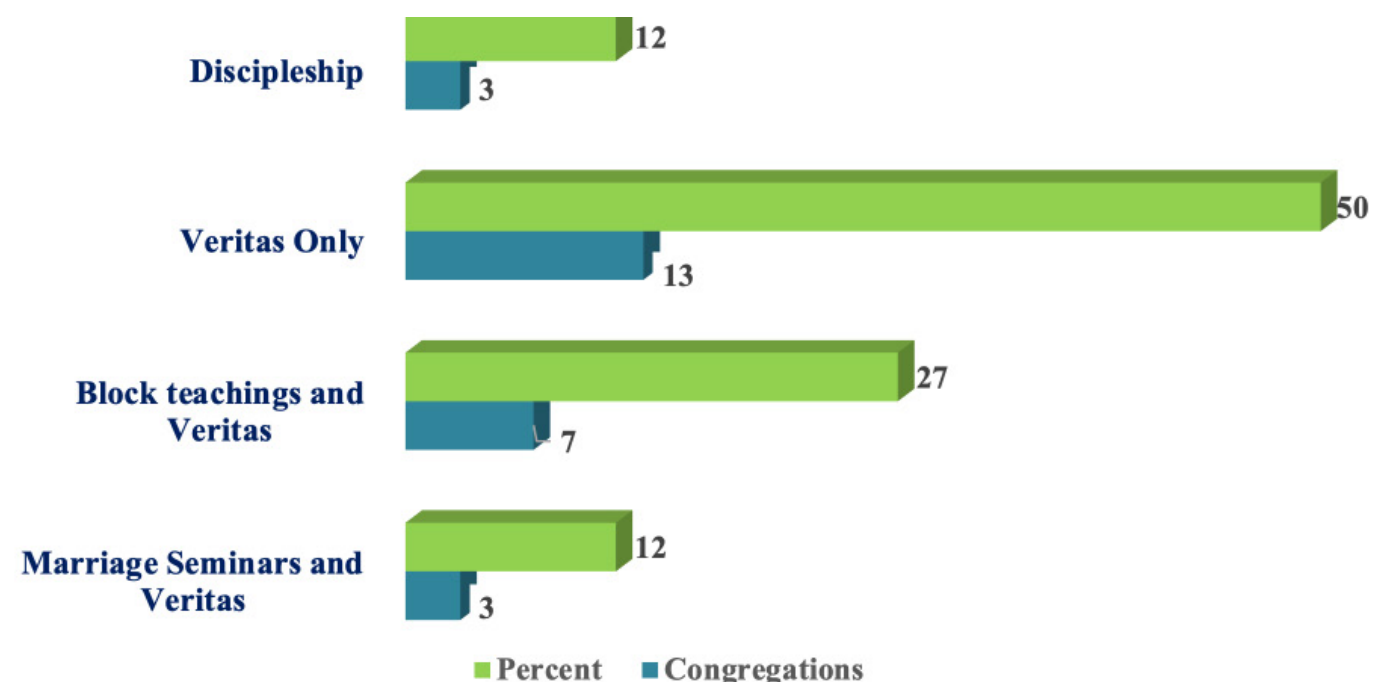


Figure 7. Other teaching programs organized by pastors

The data in the figure above shows that 50% (thirteen congregations) of pastors use Veritas Training only. Pastors in seven congregations conduct block teachings and Veritas, three conduct marriage seminars and Veritas, while three others conduct discipleship sessions. The data clearly shows that Veritas is the most common teaching program that pastors use in their congregations to supplement the official synod teaching programs. This is supported by the fact that 88% of pastors in the congregations that participated in the study use Veritas Training in their congregations.

⁷ E.g., orientation of newly-appointed committees, catechumen, Sunday school, and preaching at funerals and Wednesday prayers.

5.7 Setting up of preaching programs

This study also inquired as to whose responsibility it is to set up the preaching programs in each congregation. The data reveals that in most congregations, (twenty-one of the twenty-six congregations, or 80.8%), pastors and church service committees set up preaching programs together. In three congregations (11.5%) pastors set up the preaching programs alone, while in two congregations (7.7%) the church service committees set up the preaching program without the involvement of pastors. This is shown in the figure below.

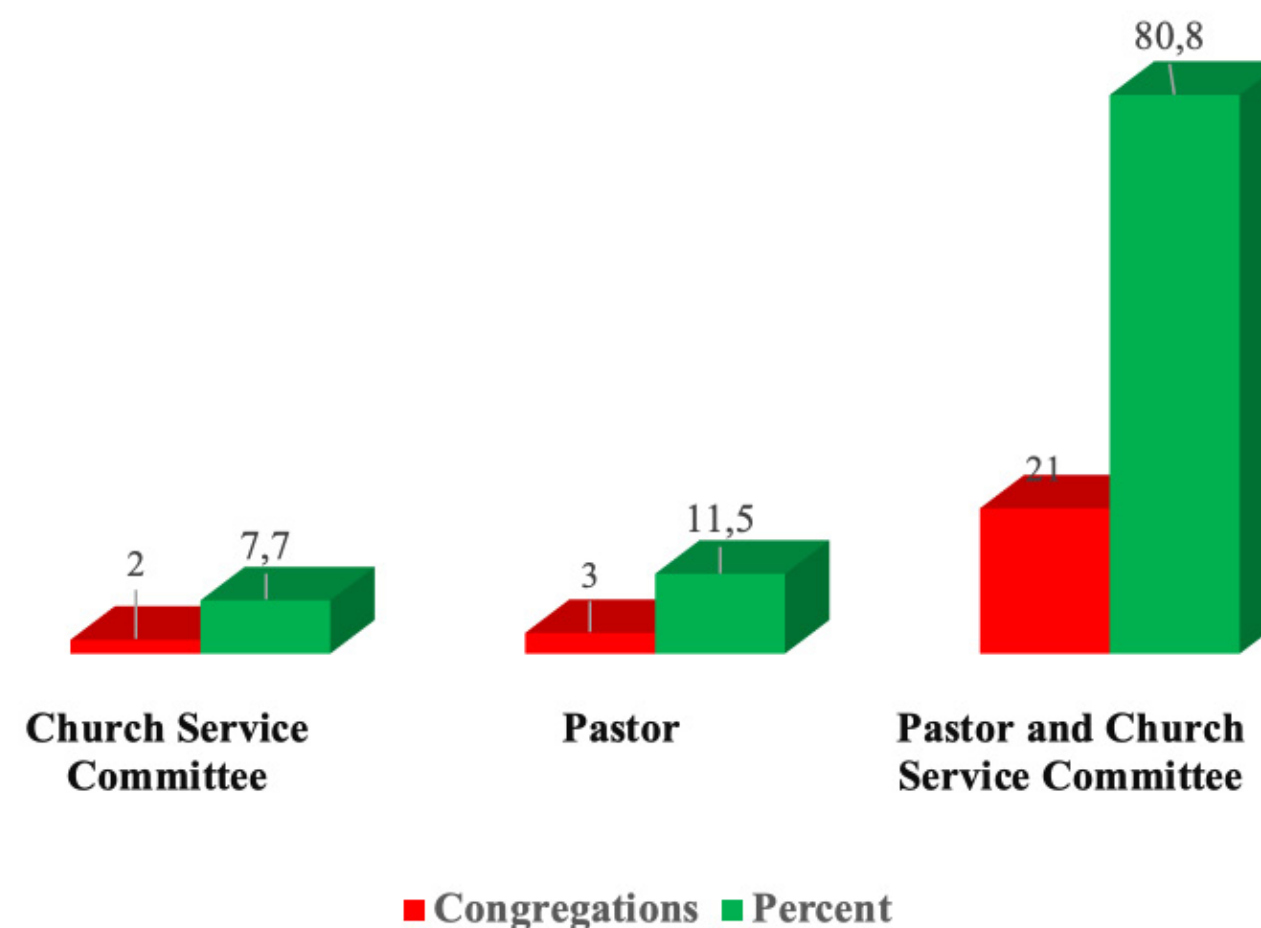


Figure 8. Producers of preaching

5.8 Guidelines for lay preachers

The participants were also asked about the nature of the guidelines that the preachers receive in their respective congregations. The data reveal that different congregations offer different guidelines. In sixteen of the congregations (representing 62%) preachers are given topics with biblical texts to preach from. Considering that in many congregations preaching programs are organized by pastors and church service committees who give preachers topics and texts to preach from, it is easier for preachers to stay within the lanes when they preach. However, it could also be challenging for the preacher if they are not familiar with the topics and texts.

The data further reveals that in six congregations (representing 23%) preachers are neither given topics nor biblical texts to preach from, but are left to choose for themselves. The advantage of this system is that preachers may not have to face the problem of preaching on a topic they are not familiar with or a text they do not understand or that does not resonate with them. The resulting problem is that shaping the faith of the congregation is challenging because of a lack of coherence in what comes from the pulpit.

The data further indicates that four congregations (representing 15%) give preachers topics but allow them to choose biblical texts to preach from. This allows preachers to choose texts they can manage, but sometimes texts and topics may not be in agreement. The figure below illustrates the data.

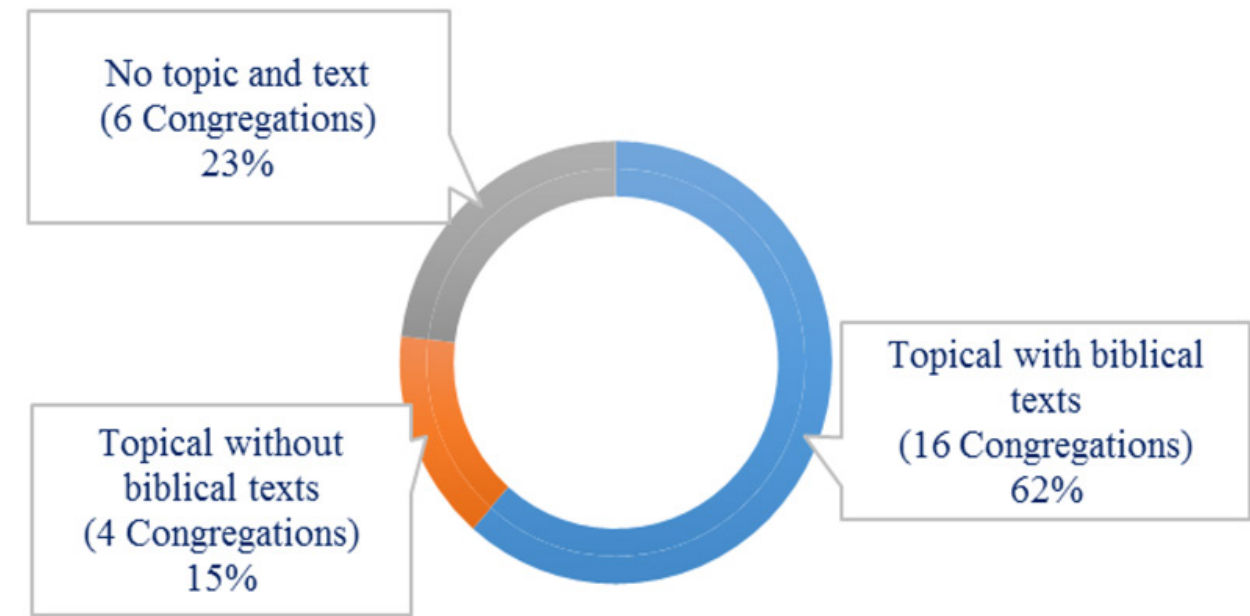


Figure 9. Preaching program formats

5.9 Orientation of preachers

This study also investigated whether or not pastors orient preachers featured in the preaching program before they preach. This inquiry was based on two assumptions: 1) that both pastors and church service committees have objectives to accomplish whenever they draw up a preaching program, and 2) that these objectives motivate their choices of who should preach when and what kind of guidance they provide. The figure below shows a graphic presentation of the data.

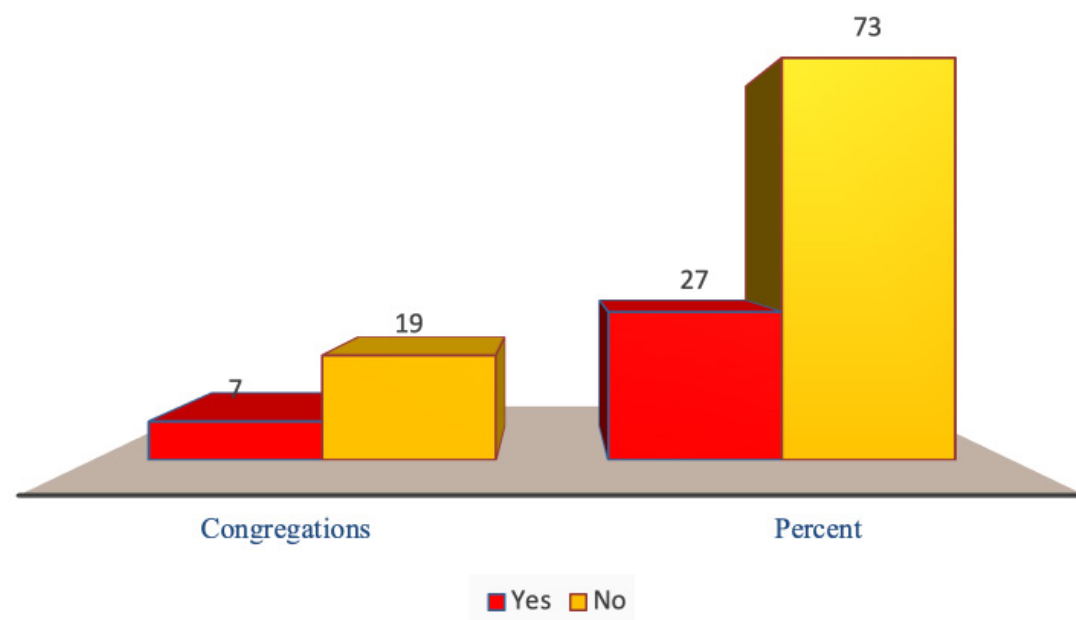


Figure 10. Orientation of lay preachers

The figure above shows that in nineteen congregations (representing 73%) preachers are never oriented before they preach while in seven congregations (representing 27%) pastors orient preachers before the time. A cross-tabulation with the variable about the dominant preachers with the orientation of preachers reveals that eighteen of the nineteen congregations which never do the orientation of preachers on the preaching program are dominated by lay preachers. The picture becomes even bleaker when a further cross-tabulation is done with the issue of whether pastors provide preachers with training in Bible interpretation and preaching. The data reveals that sixteen of the nineteen congregations that do not provide guidelines to lay preachers do not offer training in Bible interpretation or sermon preparation, either. This means in many congregations preachers lack both orientation and training on how and what they are supposed to preach.

6. Reimagining the Role of the Pastor as a Teaching Elder

It is reasonable to conclude that the findings of the situational audit of the CCAP NS congregations in Lilongwe reflect the situation in the Nkhoma Synod as a whole. This argument hinges on the fact that most Nkhoma Synod congregations are in rural areas covering a wider geographical area and have more prayer houses (Phiri 2020, 23–44). Regardless of the reasons, the fact that laypeople preach more than pastors is a call to reimagine how pastors should fulfill their role as teaching elders tasked with proclaiming the biblical truth to the flock entrusted to them. While preaching is an important means of fulfilling their teaching role, the fact that lay preachers dominate the preaching program means that pastors must consider other means of fulfilling their teaching role. Against this background, the study suggests that pastors must empower their congregations to preach effectively. This study presents the following findings and recommendations:

6.1 The findings

6.1.1 The need to empower laity

The study found that based on the following factors, pastors should empower their congregants in the ministry of preaching. Even if a pastor can have the zeal to fulfill his mandate of preaching, it is not just difficult but impossible to be effective in preaching if his congregation has many prayer houses. It is possible to preach every Sunday, but if a congregation has many prayer houses it means laypeople will preach more than the pastor. Therefore, it is important to invest in the people who do most of the preaching so that if the pastor is absent because he is preaching at another prayer house, the preaching will be done by a preacher who is well-equipped and empowered.

6.1.2 Meeting the people's need for variety

Technology has broken the geographical barriers which were there in the past. Information travels fast. People have a taste for different voices and listening to a single person every Sunday might irritate some. This is why in some congregations, people prefer that the preaching program features a variety of preachers. This implies that even if a pastor has enough zeal to preach every Sunday, the fact that people need a variety of preachers impedes his zeal. However, a pastor can preach indirectly every Sunday by raising up a variety of preachers who will stand in the pulpit each week.

6.1.3 Other pastoral engagements

Pastors will always be responsible for ministerial duties other than preaching. In light of this, a pastor should empower the people who stand in the pulpit whenever he is not preaching. If the laypeople are empowered, a pastor does not have to be concerned when a lay preacher enters the pulpit.

6.1.4 Spiritual growth and maturity of the church

Empowering laypeople is a means that can aid congregations in spiritual maturity. A congregation that has people who are empowered to preach will have missionaries who are always ready to testify about Christ and teach others wherever they are. As a pastor teaches his congregants to become teachers of the Word, their teaching ministry is not confined only to the congregation but can be practiced wherever they find themselves. Therefore, pastors must invest in the laity so that they can go on to teach others.

6.1.5 False doctrines

I have pointed out repeatedly that laypeople preach more frequently than pastors in most congregations. This means that without empowering the laity

pastors are indirectly sowing seeds of false doctrine in their congregations. On average pastors spend five years of theological training in the CCAP NS because their duty is so critical that they are supposed to guard against false teachers and teach the congregants the truth of Scripture. The thorough training of pastors to guard against false teaching, could be jeopardized if laity are not equally empowered for their preaching ministry. Having the laypeople who are not empowered preach the most to a congregation can be compared with a qualified pilot entrusting a plane full of passengers to one of the passengers who does not know anything about flying a plane. If pastors are serious about combating false doctrines, then they must empower the laypeople before they stand in the pulpit.

6.2 Recommendations for the CCAP NS

Following the situational audit, this study makes the following recommendations:

1. Pastors must take a leading role in the formulation of the preaching program.
2. Pastors should provide preachers with topics and Bible texts.
3. Congregations with prayer houses (regardless of the number) must preach from the same topics and the same biblical passages.
4. Pastors should train all people featured in the preaching program in the basic principles of preaching, discuss each topic on the preaching program with them, and outline points from the passages that everyone preaches from every Sunday in all prayer houses.
5. No person should be allowed to stand in the pulpit if he has not participated in what is stated in the previous point.
6. Pastors should encourage congregants to participate in Veritas and other Bible interpretation and preaching training.

7. Conclusion

This research investigated the role of the pastor as a teaching elder in the CCAP NS. Having surveyed the relevant literature and the Bible, the study presented a situational audit of the current practices of the involvement of pastors in preaching programs in the CCAP NS congregations in Lilongwe city. Having conducted the data analysis the research proposed that there is a need to reimagine how a pastor can fulfill his role as a teaching elder. This study has established that based on several factors, a pastor can be effective in his role as a teaching elder by empowering the laypeople who dominate the preaching program in most congregations.

Works Cited

- Akin, Daniel L. 2004. "The Single-Elder-Led Church: The Bible's Witness to a Congregational/Single-Elder-Led Polity." In *Perspectives on Church Government: 5 Views*, edited by Brand Chad Owen and R. Stanton Norman, 25–86. Nashville: B&H.
- Alemekezeke K. C. 2020. *A Healthy Church? The Status of Nkhoma Synod Congregations: A Critical Study and the Way Forward*. Nkhoma: Nkhoma Litho Press.
- Barrett, Matthew. 2015. "The Duty of a Pastor: John Owen on Feeding the Flock by Diligent Preaching of the Word." *Themelios* 40(3):459–472.
- Calvin, John. 1961. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. London: Westminster John Knox.
- Carnes, Philip Gene. 2007. "Like Sheep without a Shepherd: The Shepherd Metaphor and Its Primacy for Biblical Leadership." M.A. thesis, Reformed Theological Seminary.
- Croft, Brian. 2015. *The Pastor's Ministry: Biblical Priorities for Faithful Shepherds*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- DeRidder, R. Richard, and Leonard J. Hofman. 1994. *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: CRC.
- Gan, Jonathan. 2010. "The Metaphor of the Shepherd in Zechariah 11:4–17." M.Th. Thesis, University of South Africa.
- . 2019. "The Shepherd Metaphor in the Old Testament, and Its Use in Pastoral and Leadership Models." Ph.D. Diss., University of South Africa.
- Hindson, Edward, and Ed Dobson. 1983. "The Pastor's Roles: Complex and Challenging." *Fundamentalist Journal* 2(10):10–12.
- Jefferson, Charles. 1980. *The Minister as Shepherd*. Hong Kong: Living Books.
- Jeremias, J. 1968. "Ποιμήν." In *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Fredrich, 1250–1254. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Jones, Leo. 2014. "The Role of a Pastor: As a Faithful and Authentic Servant of God." M.Th. Thesis, Trinity Lutheran Seminary.
- Kaphesi, Elias, and Grace Kaphesi. 2018. *Doing a Research Project: A Guide for Research Students*. Lilongwe: Nkhoma Litho Press.
- Karrant-Nunn, Susan. 2003. "Preaching the Word in Early Modern German." In *Preachers and People in the Reformation and Early Modern Period*, edited by Larissa Taylor, 193–219. Leiden: Brill.
- Lincoln, Andrew T. 1990. *Ephesians*. WBC 42. Dallas: Word Books.
- MacArthur, John. 2005. *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically*. Nashville: Nelson.
- Manetsch, Scott M. 2013. *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536–1601*. New York: Oxford University.
- Msangaambe, Chatha. 2011. "Laity Empowerment with Regard to the Missional Task of the CCAP in Malawi." Ph.D. Diss., Stellenbosch University.

- Nkhoma Synod. 2009. *Malongosoledwe a za Mumpingo*. Nkhoma: Nkhoma Press.
- Piper, John and Carson, D.A. 2011. *The Pastor as Scholar and the Scholar as a Pastor: Reflections on Life and Ministry*. Wheaton: Crossway.
- Save the Children. 2020. *Conducting a Situational Analysis: A Guide for Save the Children's Sponsorship Programs*. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/sitan_guide_2020_update.pdf/
- Stitzinger, James F. 1995. "Pastoral Ministry in History." *The Master's Seminary Journal*. Volume 6(2):143–180.
- Stone, Wilford A. 2006. "The Role of the Pastor in Southern Baptist Churches: A Biblical View Versus a Prevailing View." Ph.D. diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary.
- White, James R. 2004. "The Plural-Elder-Led Church: Sufficient as Established – The Plurality of Elders as Christ's Ordained Means of Church Governance." In *Perspectives on Church Government: 5 Views*, edited by Chad Owen Brand and R. Stanton Norman, 255–296. Nashville: B&H Group.
- Zeze, Willie S. D. 2012. "Christ, the Head of the Church? Authority, Leadership and Organisational Structure within the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian." Ph.D. Diss., Stellenbosch University.