

AFRICA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

**PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE RELEVANCE
OF THE MEMBERSHIP CLASSES AT THE
FRIENDS CHURCH-NGONG ROAD**

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**A Thesis submitted to the Graduate School in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Christian Education**

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE RELEVANCE OF
THE FRIENDS CHURCH MEMBERSHIP CLASSES AT
THE FRIENDS CHURCH-NGONG ROAD

I declare that this is my original work and has not been
submitted to any other College or University for academic credit

The views presented herein are not necessarily those of Nairobi Evangelical
Graduate School of Theology or the Examiners

(Signed) _____
Simon Khaemba Makokha

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study sought to provide information that would show the relevance of the membership class in assisting those who go through it to lay Christian foundations for their lives. The study also sought to assist the church with information that would show whether there was need for the church to evaluate, and, or revamp its membership class program.

The study indicated that participation in the membership class resulted in transformation of the spiritual and social aspects of class participants. Regular class attendance assisted respondents in cultivating their relationship with God. It also improved their relationship with other people. The study further indicated that respondents appreciated the class content, teachers, fellow students, church leaders, family, and the learning environment. However, respondents took issue with the shallow content, inept teachers, a laity that stood aloof and learning environments that were not conducive. In spite of these shortcomings, respondents ended up more committed to the Friends Church than they were before. Their commitment was seen in their involvement, and heightened willingness to participate in church activities and, or leadership.

In view of the findings, the researcher recommended enhancement in the depth of the content taught in the class, and the inclusion of the history of the Friends Church-Ngong Road in the class content. He also recommended that only qualified and available class teachers should be allowed to teach the classes. The researcher further recommended that there be an improvement in the facilities that were used for classes.

To

My beloved wife Evalyne, my children: Gift and Happiness,

and,

the Friends Church fraternity where we labor for the knowledge and reverence of Christ

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I am greatly humbled by the grace that God gave to me in the course of this study. In times when the family, church and the school placed great demand on my time, He provided the grace that I needed.

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To the one and only true God, and to His Son Jesus Christ, be glory and honor, now and forevermore. Amen.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The question of membership within any given organization is a decisive factor of existence. It is impossible for an organization to exist without members. Strong organizations have often been identified with bigger and consistent membership. Having a big name, more often than not, culminates in receiving stiff competition from other players in one's field. This, therefore, necessitates continual expansion, while at the same time maintaining the values by which one is known. Because of this, most organizations, including the Christian Churches, have come up with systems of enrolling, equipping, motivating, and, as much as is possible, retaining members so as to check the levels of attrition.

Friends Church-Ngong Road Monthly Meeting

The Friends Church-Ngong Road, a branch of the Friends Church-Nairobi Yearly Meeting, has been keen on finding, and thereafter preparing church attendees for formal recognition as members of the church. From its inception in 1987, as is the practice in all Friends Churches, prospective members attend classes as a prerequisite for the full-membership status. Regardless of one's attendance at a Friends Church, official membership status is only attained on successful completion of the classes. Over the years, some makeshift curriculum had been used in the identification, and vetting of who qualified for membership. It was not until January 1999 that a formal curriculum was launched, by which, on its successful completion, one was then opened to the possibilities of partaking in the full benefits of being a member of the

Friends Church fraternity locally and worldwide. These benefits, for instance, would include, though not limited to, possibility of being given key leadership roles in the Church, participation in high level board meetings, and also being given a befitting burial at the time of death. It has been the church's desire that those who finally qualify to be members of the church be men and women of integrity, people who fear God and adhere to His Word.

The Friends Church membership classes run at two levels: Class 1, also called the "associate membership class", and, Class 2, also called the "full membership class." The ultimate goals for these classes are clearly stipulated in the church's class manual: *Catechist class lessons: Class 1 & 2 guidelines*. In the associate membership class, "Our aim is to teach our members about **SALVATION**. They should confess their sins and accept Jesus Christ as **Lord** and **Saviour** (sic)... It is a must that during this time one should accept Jesus Christ (be born again) as his/her personal savior: John 3:3" (Friends Church-Nairobi Yearly Meeting, 1999, 3). On the other hand, for the full membership class, "Our aim is to teach Christians topics which will enable them to mature spiritually. In class two we teach members who have already accepted Jesus Christ as their personal savior. On successful completion of these teachings one is able to defend his/her faith, and even be a leader of God's people..." (Friends Church-Nairobi Yearly Meeting, 1999, 3-4).

The Ngong Road Monthly Meeting has over 2,500 registered members. This membership comprises of both the associate-members and the full-members, excluding children and those who are yet to take the classes. These members, and their children, are spread out in nine congregations that form the Ngong Road Monthly Meeting. It is at the Monthly Meeting level that the membership-classes are conducted. The Monthly Meeting, therefore, determines the curriculum, the venue,

and the teachers for the classes. The objectives of the membership class, as laid out in the membership class manual cover the cognitive and the affective domains, and include:

- 1) Ensuring that those who are to be confirmed are born again.
- 2) Those to be confirmed are introduced to the Bible and to the various topics that are critical to a believer's life: God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; sin; salvation; prayer; giving; evangelism; Bible study, and marriage, amongst others.
- 3) Those to be confirmed fully understand the origins of the Quaker Church; its geographical expansion from England up to the time of its establishment in Kenya; and the Church's faith and practice.
- 4) Those to be confirmed indicate their commitment to the church.
- 5) Those to be confirmed as full members are well prepared to take up key leadership roles in the church. (Friends Church-Nairobi Yearly Meeting, 1999, 3-4).

Problem Statement

The Membership-Class curriculum of the Friends Church comes second to the Church's constitution in issues of delineating the denomination's faith and practice. This curriculum, however, has never been reviewed since it was put in place. While it is true that these classes are highly valued, and that they are pivotal in identifying legitimate members, the relevance of the classes, and of the material taught, as perceived by class participants, is not explicit. This research, therefore, was an inquiry into the perceptions of class attendees regarding their experiences in the class, and their perceptions of the relevance of the class in helping them develop Christ-like dispositions that are in line with the class objectives laid down by the church.

Purpose of Study

The research sought to investigate perceptions of church members in relation to the relevance of the membership classes in laying a Christian foundation in the lives of class participants. The results of this study were to be given back to the church so that it could consider expediting the launch of an evaluation of the membership program, with the aim of revamping the classes.

Research Questions

- R. Q. 1. What testimonies of inner transformations do confirmed members attribute to the membership class?
- R. Q. 2. How do confirmed members regard the membership class curriculum?
- R. Q. 3. How do confirmed members assess their sense of belonging to the Friends Church?

Limitations

In this study, the number of class 2 members invited for interviews was arrived at through purposeful sampling. An all-inclusive study, that would cover all class 2 members that had ever gone through the classes at the Ngong-Road Monthly Meeting, or all the 35 members that were confirmed in 2008, would be difficult due to logistical, time, and financial constraints.

Delimitations

This research was done at the Friends Church-Ngong Road Monthly Meeting. Therefore, the findings and conclusions were only applicable to Ngong-Road Monthly Meeting, and not to the twenty Monthly Meetings that form the Friends Church-Nairobi Yearly Meeting. Therefore, regardless of the similarities between the various Friends Churches within Nairobi Yearly Meeting, the findings, conclusions and

recommendations of this research can be applied to the other Monthly Meetings with caution.

Significance of the Study

Insight into the perceptions of the class participants will assist the Friends Church in ascertaining the appropriateness of its membership class curriculum. The participants' perceptions on: class administration, aptitude of teachers, learning environment, topics offered, and the criteria for enlisting class participants, and so forth will form a basis upon which the Church will be advised to make an evaluation that would determine whether to maintain the status quo, make modifications, or do away with the class. In addition to this, insights touching on class experiences that participants valued will enlighten other churches that run, or that were planning to run such classes. To the academic community, the study will provide insights on matters touching on the running of church school programs.

Assumptions

Since respondents could choose to give or fail to give complete accounts of their experiences, and since respondents and the church leadership could misinterpret the researcher's aims of carrying out the study, the following assumptions were made:

- 1) Since the church had given a go-ahead for the study, respondents would respond sincerely, freely and without any fear of intimidation from fellow members, or the church leadership.
- 2) While respondents had the discretion on what to say, they would not exaggerate their answers, or give false responses.
- 3) Even though people have varied perceptions and interpretations of matters, the church, and the respondents in this study, would not take this research as a cover-up meant to praise, subvert, or criticize the membership class program.

- 4) Perceptions of a third of the class participants (The sample size) would be sufficient in giving a fair impression of what most class members made of their class experiences.

Explanation of Terms

Friends Church-Ngong Road Monthly Meeting: The Friends Church, also referred to as “the Quakers”, is a Protestant church denomination. The term “Friends” is drawn from the book of John 15:14 where Jesus said that, “You are my friends if you do what I command.” The term “Ngong Road” is in reference to a major road within the Capital city of Kenya, Nairobi, along which the church is built.

The administrative structure of the Friends Church-Nairobi Yearly Meeting is pyramidal: local churches, that meet every Sunday for worship, form the foundational level; “Monthly Meetings”, that bring together several local churches for a joint worship service once every month, form the next level; thereafter are the “Quarterly Coordinating Committees”, that meet every three months for planning purposes; and finally, at the apex, is the Nairobi Yearly Meeting which holds an annual conference for all its constituent churches.

In this paper, the names “Friends Church”, “Friends Church-Ngong Road”, “Friends Church-Ngong Road Monthly Meeting”, and “Ngong Road Monthly Meeting” are used interchangeably in reference to the focus of the research: “Friends Church-Ngong Road Monthly Meeting”. To differentiate between the various Friends churches, the name of the geographical location in which a church stands is added to the name Friends Church.

Objectives: These were the intentions that the church sought to achieve through the membership classes.

Membership-Class: This is a formal class that the whole Friends Church fraternity (in Kenya) has set up as the means through which people can be taught and confirmed as members of the church. Though it is one class, it is divided into two sections: *associate class*, and the *full membership class*. The duration for the associate class is six months, while the full membership class is about nine months. The prerequisite for the full membership class is that one must have done the associate class first. However, in cases where someone transfers from other recognized churches (non-Friends), in which basic Christian lessons are offered, and a card is given to attest, the requirement to do class 1 is waived.

Respondents: These consist of 12, of the 35 persons that attended the membership class in the year 2008, and that were selected as the sample for this study. They are also identified as participants by virtue of their involvement in the interview.

Curriculum: Gress and Purpel, while looking at a curriculum in a school setting, define “curriculum” as, “...all the experiences the learner has under the guidance of the school...” (1988, 23). In the Friends Church’s membership class the experiences that form the church’s curriculum include: taking of a roll-call, singing, praying, offertory, giving of testimonies, Bible reading, Christian fellowship, lectures, participatory sessions, and discussions. Topics covered in the class, amongst others, include: Life and ministry of Jesus Christ; Homiletics and Bible verses; Evangelism; Eschatology; Quakerism; Church leadership and administration; Giving: tithes and church finance; Family life and HIV/AIDS; and Communication.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

As the researcher sought to investigate perceptions of church members in regard to the relevance of the membership classes in assisting them lay Christian foundations for their lives, this chapter on literature review examines literature that relates to the study, as Kombo and Tromp (2006, 62) suggest. The researcher focused on disciplines of prayer, Bible study, Christian fellowship, Christian giving, Christian living as a whole, and education principles. He also examined contents of the Friends Church membership-class curriculum; and the literature that informed the methodology applied in the study.

Substantive Literature Review

The study sought to determine the extent to which class participants appreciated the Friends Church membership classes, and the content taught. The study sought to know the impact that the classes had on the members in assisting them become better Christians.

Nature of the Church

While denominations may differ in their doctrinal emphases, a clear picture of the universal body of Christ would assist in understanding church membership. “The universal church is often termed invisible, yet the New Testament never speaks of the invisible church” (Saucy 1972, 17). Though the New Testament church was visible, having believers and non-believers, emphasis was on making the true, universal, invisible, body of Christ. The New Testament church consisted of believers who

possessed both physical and spiritual bodies, and therefore the church had members who were vulnerable to human weaknesses. To this day, the church is a complex organism. It is both a visible and invisible organism, and, God is using the church to fulfill His purposes in the world: *“to reconcile persons to himself and to restore their lives to working order, in harmony with his design”* (Ellis 1982, 33).

Salvation and Holy Living

Within the church, there is need to ensure that members grow in the things of the Spirit. There is need for personal, corporate, conceptual, structural, and missiological renewal in the church (Snyder 1997, 285-291). This renewal needs to be genuine and long lasting, and, beginning from the individual level grow to have missiological dimensions (Snyder 1997, 292). New members who join churches ought to grow and mature in Christ; this necessitates good educational structures in the church.

Salvation is part of God’s plan for humankind. Through the preaching of the Gospel, people realize that they are sinners: lost, condemned and having the wrath of God on their lives. However, because of what Jesus did on the cross at Calvary, salvation/regeneration is made possible for humankind. “Regeneration is understood as an inward spiritual renewal today and as a cosmic renewal in the future” (Toon 1987, 185). Once a person gives his or her life to Christ, God fills such a person with His Spirit. Of this, and as Peterson (1995, 115-116) says, “If the Holy Spirit is in charge, however, should we not expect progress in the sanctified life... Paul anticipates progress, but not simply as a result of human achievement.” He adds that it is the Holy Spirit who does regenerative work in people so as to bring about faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord (Peterson 1995, 133). This is to say that salvation is neither to be received outside of the Gospel message nor outside the working of the Holy

Spirit. Salvation is a gift of God (Titus 3:5); it is not attained through our works, but by the working of faith. Cowen discusses five factors in the New Testament that bring about salvation: "...the preaching of the cross, the essential element of the grace of God... repentance (a change of mind)... faith, and finally endurance" (Cowen 1990, 18-19). All these aspects are necessary for salvation to be effected in a sinner's life.

Once one comes to faith in Christ, holy living is expected: "...what separates believers in Christ from those of the world, is holiness – whether it be holiness in the specific areas of sex or work, or, indeed, in all the activities of life" (Longenecker 1996, 99). Holy living demands that one separates him or herself from things that defile. It is also "...characterized by mutual love within the family of God, by quiet living, by non-meddling behavior, and by self-sufficient work" (Longenecker 1996, 100).

Leadership Training

Leadership training is inevitable in churches that desire growth. Jesus used four crucial steps in preparing those who were later to become leaders in the church: 1. Recruitment, 2. Selection, 3. Training, and 4. Deployment (Malphurs and Mancini 2004, 68-72). Klopp, looking also at Jesus' way of developing leaders says that,

Jesus followed a very careful training format of: (1) teaching the disciples the basic principles of ministry through parables, illustrations, and focused teaching; (2) doing the ministry himself with the disciples watching; (3) Having the disciples do ministry with him coaching them; (4) Releasing the disciples to do ministry on their own. Interestingly, most of the training was on-the-job, not sit-and-soak. (2004, 75)

It is important that the church follows such an approach, which incorporates practical training, in its' leadership development programs. There is need for the church to develop men and women that would be excellent in handling responsibilities, sharp in solving problems, self confident when approaching issues, persistent in worthy

courses, and demonstrate exemplary lifestyles. Such leaders, according to Harris, are to be likened to slaves of Christ. He says,

Christ's slaves render services voluntarily, not under external compulsion. They may confess, to be sure, that Christ Jesus has 'laid hold' of them (cf. Phil 3:12), but they serve him by their own choice, grateful that he has set them free. They have committed themselves to him totally and unconditionally.... (1999, 154)

Believers in Christ humbly submit to the lordship of Christ, and strive at doing what Christ demands of them. A Christian leader, therefore, is one who is a servant leader, one with a credible character, and endowed with special capabilities for his ministry. Malphurs and Mancini define a Christian leader as, "...a servant who uses his or her credibility and capabilities to influence people in a particular context to pursue their God-given direction" (2004, 20). In the church context, leaders can only succeed if they draw on both their God-given abilities and other trainings that they have acquired in life: "Often, both God-given abilities and developed abilities combine to forge exceptional leaders who can make significant difference for the cause of Christ" (Malphurs and Mancini 2004, 22). On his part, Sanders says that, "Spiritual leadership blends natural and spiritual qualities. Yet even the natural qualities are supernatural gifts, since all good things come from God" (1994, 28). This is to say that even the natural abilities that people have should be perceived as God-given. Sanders (1994, 29), therefore, contrasts natural and spiritual traits in leadership as shown below:

<i>Natural</i>	<i>Spiritual</i>
Self-confident	Confident in God
Knows men	Also knows God
Makes own decisions	Seeks God's will
Ambitious	Humble
Creates methods	Follows God's example
Enjoys command	Delights in obedience to God
Seeks personal reward	Loves God and others
Independent	Depends on God

As a whole, leaders need to carry themselves in accordance with the light given in God's Word. Fernando discusses good leadership, and makes a case using Paul's first letter to Timothy in which he says that the Bible explicitly indicates that good leaders are temperate, self controlled, respectable, not given to much wine, not violent, gentle, not quarrelsome, and not lovers of money (1988, 57-65).

Friends Church Membership-Class Curriculum

The membership classes are in a big part conducted in a similar way to classes in formal school setups. The only exception is the mode of examination, in which face to face interviews are conducted. The Friends Church membership class programmes are designed to be both conventional and contextual: the classes have a clearly laid out syllabus, duration, and procedures, on the other hand the influence of the Church is seen in the consideration of individual students' strengths and weaknesses, and priority on the Church's doctrinal beliefs. Cole, while addressing normal class setups, shows that conventional programmes often reflect the generally accepted way of doing things while contextual programmes, on the other hand address specific felt needs. In his view, "...should the conventional and the contextual be at variance, the latter must be opted for on the basis of usefulness, desirability, what is worthwhile, relevance, appropriateness, and so forth" (Cole 2001, 326). This kind of perception has been the determining factor in the appropriation of time allocated to various topics in the classes.

In this study, attention was given to the material covered in both the associate, and the full membership classes. While respondents in the study were full members in the church, topics covered in the associate membership class had to be listed because the associate membership class was the basis upon which the full membership class

material was built. Moreover, a good understanding of the full membership class would only be achieved if the associate membership classes were kept in view.

Associate membership class

The Associate class takes six months, and covers the following topics: Bible study and Bible survey; Salvation; Introduction to Quakerism; Prayer; Faith and practice of Quakers; Bible passages and verses; Giving and tithes; and Church leadership. These are designed to give basic introduction to the Christian faith, discipline, and fellowship.

Full membership class

The *full membership class* takes nine months to complete, and is designed to prepare members for leadership roles within the church, Christian ministry, and, Christian family life. The topics covered include: Life and ministry of Jesus Christ; Homiletics and Bible verses; Evangelism; Eschatology; Quakerism; Church leadership and administration; Giving, tithes and church finance; Family life and HIV/AIDS; and Communication.

Common aspects of the membership classes

The Friends Church membership curriculum is designed to address not only the cognitive aspects of learning as shown above, but also the affective learning, as shown here after. In both the associate and the full membership classes, practical expressions of the faith are encouraged. Every class session begins with singing, and prayers, and often concludes with offertories, and, an alter call with the teacher calling on the class to respond to the lessons learnt. In addition, the class members are expected to be active members in their local churches, lest they jeopardize their confirmation by not getting recommendations from their local churches.

Administration of the membership classes

The outcomes of the membership class are often determined by how the class has been managed, and how teachers achieved the objectives of their work. When teachers do their best to teach and manage their class times, and class coordinators do their best to ensure the smooth running of the classes, there are higher chances of meeting the class goals. The class coordinators, appointed by the Monthly Meeting leadership, are the immediate administrators of the membership classes. Leithwood (1982, 269), looking at the administration of education in classroom set-ups says that, “The curriculum manager’s role may be conceptualized as maintaining and improving the effectiveness of classroom curricula by influencing the action choices of intermediaries (persons in roles between the manager and the student)...” This is to imply that what the teachers of the membership class do, or fail to do, is greatly influenced by the decisions of the church leadership and class coordinators. Therefore, the success or failure of the class should be traced back to these administrators.

At the end of the membership classes, the denominational head office dispatches designated pastors to go to the Monthly Meetings for the purpose of interviewing the students. Each Monthly Meeting is expected to communicate beforehand and let the head office know what was taught. Based on these reports, the pastors sent to carry out the “interviews” interact with each class member, one at a time, to determine if they meet the basic expectations. The interviews are not graded examinations, but interactions to confirm whether individual members satisfy expectations stipulated in the goals and objectives of the class. In formal school settings, written examinations are commonly used in assessing student understanding. For the Friends Church setup, “interviews” are preferred because they are more

contextual, friendly and relaxed. The oral examinations, such as those in the Friends Church membership classes, are preferred because the “interviewer” can adjust to a student’s level, in a relevant way, and church members present during the interviews affirm whether a member has given, or failed to give satisfactory responses for confirmation.

Effect of class teaching on student perceptions

The teaching style adopted for a class is a decisive factor in shaping the perceptions that students have about the class. While some class members might prefer a system of facts and figures, there may be others who may prefer more practical approaches that look at ability to synthesize material and apply it. “Good instruction ... stimulates higher levels of cognitive ability and is characterized by mental processes such as synthesis and analysis, rather than recall and application” (Connelly et. al 1980, 27). This study reflected on class members’ perceptions on the relevance of the class content, and experiences, in assisting members to develop Christ-like lives. Morrison and others, while addressing conventional school settings, say that, “In the case of educational programs, the important outcomes are basic skills, knowledge, competencies, and performance in occupational settings. For training programs, important outcomes include appropriateness of the training, competencies of employees, and benefits to the organization” (2004, 337). It is the church’s desire to both educate and train members so that they can be competent in their leadership roles, and knowledgeable in matters touching on faith and the church’s doctrines. The church’s expectation of the class is that class members synthesize the class content and use it for their spiritual growth and character development.

Methodological Literature Review

There were several approaches through which perceptions of respondents could be got. Creswell (2003,18) says that one can employ quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approaches in carrying out research. While the quantitative approach is founded on empirical measurement and observation, as seen in experiments and surveys, the qualitative approaches mainly utilize open ended interview protocols. Qualitative inquiry can be done in phenomenological studies, grounded theory studies, and also in case studies (Creswell 2003, 18). The mixed method approach uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches in data collection. According to Creswell (2003, 18), the mixed methods approach provides both “numeric information as well as text information so that the database represents both quantitative and qualitative information.”

In this study, the researcher chose a phenomenological approach in the bid to inquire into perceptions that class members had as they went through the full membership class at the Friends Church-Ngong Road. Their experience of being taught for 2-3 hours every weekend, for a period of nine months, was expected to be a life impacting phenomenon, and was the focus of this study. Kothari, in discussing methods that researchers adopt, states that the choice of method is informed by the problem under study, the time available, and, the resources that are at the researcher’s disposal (2004, 113).

This research looked at the experiences that participants had when exposed to: teacher-learner interactions, observing of class rules and regulations, expectations to actively participate and be transformed, guidance, and much more. Phenomenological studies are often descriptive and, or explorative. They are descriptive because they describe the essence of human experiences concerning a given phenomenon. They

present subjective views of experiences that participants had when they were exposed to certain phenomenon, and how the participants interpreted their experiences. As explorative studies, phenomenological studies look into broad pictures of the phenomenon being investigated. Long interviews and, or discussions are applied in looking at the individual experiences that assist researchers give full descriptions of participants' experiences, thoughts, feelings, images, and memories. Kothari (2004, 2-3) and Best (1981, 25) agree in saying that descriptive research describes issues as they are now, and also how they were in the past. Testimonies that respondents give are considered accurate since individual experiences may not be identical.

Responses in this study were sought through a field study, and showed the attitudes and opinions of respondents with reference to the relevance of the classes in assisting class participants form biblical orientations as foundations in their lives. In studying the opinions of the respondents, the researcher bore in mind the fact that opinions given by respondents would not always reflect what they truly believed, or even their attitudes. Best and Kahn say that, "it is difficult, if not impossible, to describe and measure attitude" (1989, 179). Even though individual biases were inevitable, the responses of participants in this study were taken as fair representations of their beliefs. This understanding was based on the fact that responses were spontaneous, and were given openly in focus group sessions where other class participants could affirm or question the opinions given.

The Phenomenological Approach

In phenomenological research, "...the researcher identifies the 'essence' of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, as described by participants in a study" (Creswell 2003, 15). The researcher separates his own experiences so that he may understand what his respondents make of their experience. Phenomenological

research assists the researcher in determining the experiences that people had when they were exposed to certain phenomenon, and how they interpreted their experiences.

Phenomenological research is not a theory-driven research, and, therefore, it does not start with any hypotheses. Phenomenological research aims at discovering subjective views of a particular people. Because of its nature, long interviews or discussions are employed in the collection of data; the data may be collected through interviews, written reports, or even in artistic and poetic works. Gall and others say that the long interviews with respondents are necessary "...in order to obtain a comprehensive description of their experience of the phenomena being studied" (2003, 482).

At the time of this study, the expectation of the church was that the membership class would play a central role in helping to establish the Christian foundation for all who went through the class. Therefore, in this research, respondents were required to describe their individual experiences, and to give their subjective assessments as to how far the classes assisted, or failed to assist them in laying the Christian foundation in their lives. Because of this, responses had to be solicited with great care. Waters, looking at the researcher's role during data collection, as indicated on the psychology website of the Capilano University, says,

Try to be as non-directive as possible in your instructions. Unlike a survey or questionnaire, in a phenomenological study you would ask participants to describe their experience... without directing or suggesting their description in any way. However, do encourage your participant to give a full description of their experience, including their thoughts, feelings, images, sensations, memories - their stream of consciousness - along with a description of the situation in which the experience occurred. ...follow up questions should again ask for further description of the detail, without suggesting what you are looking for.

Sampling

Where the population that is under study is large, researchers take samples to understand the population. The sample can be a simple random sample, a systematic sample, a stratified sample, or even a non-probability sample. In this study, the researcher employed a purposeful sampling method. This method is "...not designed to achieve population validity. The intent is to achieve an in-depth understanding of selected individuals..." (Gall et. al 2003, 166). In this study, without overlooking the representation of individual local churches, purposeful sampling was aimed at getting views of those (from local churches) who had long experiences in the class. Because of this, categories such as gender, levels of education, prior experience and training in related fields, and such other categories did not determine who was, or was not selected. Purposive sampling limits a researcher to respondents that have information that is relevant to the study (Mugenda 2008, 196; Kombo and Tromp 2006, 82). Gall and others (2003, 165), add that, qualitative studies usually have few respondents so as to attain a deeper understanding of the phenomena being studied. In this study, one third of the class participants were sampled.

Interview

Data collection through face to face encounters between the researcher and the respondent(s) was employed in this study. Litosseliti, while discussing focus group research, cites Gibbs who says, "Focus group research is useful for revealing through interaction the beliefs, attitudes, experiences and feelings of participants, in ways which would not be feasible using other methods such as individual interviews, observation or questionnaires" (Litosseliti 2003, 16). Focus group research enhances the chances of gaining more information on the views, beliefs, motivations, and perceptions that respondents have concerning a given topic (Litosseliti 2003, 18).

In this research, the unstructured interview, which permits for a level of flexibility, was employed. Nsumbuga states that, "...in an informal, unstructured interview, one can penetrate behind answers, follow up unexpected clues, redirect the inquiry into more fruitful channels on the basis of emerging data, and modify categories to provide for a more meaningful analysis of data" (2000, 41). During the interview, the researcher picks what is said directly, or indirectly, through expressions and other indicators. "It is advisable that the interviewer makes a record of significant emotional displays, hesitations, stammering, sudden silences or transitions, quickly corrected words, and obvious omissions" (Nsumbuga 2000, 46).

Interviews often take different forms. There are those that provide for limited responses; those that provide for free responses, and those that provide for defensive responses (Chrisnall 1991, 207). Interviews in this study took the second option of the free responses. Nachmias and Nachmias talk of this kind of interview as a nonscheduled-structured interview. They assert that, "although the encounter between the interviewer and the respondent is structured and the major aspects of the study are explicated, the respondent is given considerable liberty in expressing his or her definition of a situation that is presented to him or her" (1976, 101). This approach was considered to be best placed for this phenomenological study since it would give respondents the liberty to exhaustively express their views during the interviews. The researcher also sought consent from the participants so that he could record their responses on tape. Wellington states that, "It is not acceptable to tape-record interviews (or observations) without the subjects' prior knowledge and permission. If the subject feels uncomfortable or simply does not wish to have his/her voice taped, that wish must be upheld" (2000, 77).

Data Analysis Strategy

Data analysis "...involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read" (Merriam 1998, 178). The meaning, in the data, is arrived at through the process of "...moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation" (Merriam 1998, 178).

The data analysis, in this study, commenced at the time of collecting data in the field, and continued through the coding process. Transcription of the data preceded the final analysis. Several themes emerged from the data as the researcher read through the transcribed texts.

Transcription

The researcher prepared the field data for analysis by transcribing the audio recording into text. The transcribed text was laid out in a way that allowed more space for jotting down comments along the margins of the text, and also between words spoken by the various respondents (Creswell 2002, 260).

Stages in the data analysis

In doing the data analysis, Creswell lays down six stages that are to be considered. These stages are: the organizing and preparation of field data for analysis, reading through the data, coding of the data, using the codes to develop themes, using the themes to give findings in the analysis, and finally interpreting the analyzed data (Creswell 2003, 191-195). The researcher found these steps appropriate for this study on the membership classes.

Coding

“**Coding** (emphasis his) is the process of segmenting and labeling a text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data” (Creswell 2002, 266). To identify codes and themes in this study demanded that the researcher go over the text several times, making meaning of the message that was stated in the text. The coding process involved “...identifying text segments, placing a bracket around them, and assigning a code word or phrase that accurately describes the meaning of the text segment” (Creswell 2002, 266). The researcher was aware that the themes resulting from the coding of the text would either be ordinary, unexpected, or hard to classify themes (Creswell 2002, 271). In this study, the researcher considered the different views that were presented by the respondents, and came up with themes. Information that did not support or confirm the themes, that Creswell (2002, 272) regards as “contrary evidence” was also taken into consideration.

In this study, the researcher read the transcribed text, and listened to the audio tapes several times to internalize the views of the respondents, and, to clarify sections that he had not heard well during the interviews. Creswell (2002, 258) says that on the first round of reading, the researcher scans the information, on the second, he identifies the codes, while on the third, he generates the themes. He also adds that, “At other times you will only listen to tapes or simply read through field notes to begin the process of analysis. When time is short or funds are scarce, qualitative inquirers may have only a few interviews or a few observational notes transcribed” (Creswell 2002, 259).

Analysis of the findings

The initial reading of the transcription, and the subsequent coding of the data, marked the commencement of the data analysis. Hand analysis was preferred

whereby, “The **hand-analysis of qualitative data** (emphasis his) means that researchers read the data, mark it by hand, and divide it into parts...” (Creswell 2002, 261).

Describing and developing themes

The analytic description in this study progressed from the broad to the narrow perspectives. “This broad-to-narrow description is intended to assist the reader understand the context or place of the incident...” (Creswell 2002, 270). In analyzing the data, and developing the themes, the researcher was aware that “Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive.... One cannot escape the personal interpretation brought to qualitative data analysis” (Creswell 2003, 182). The ultimate goal, however, was to utilize views of the respondents in answering the research questions and in forming an in-depth understanding of the focus of the study (Creswell 2002, 265).

Conclusions

After the meaning units, themes, were made, an overall description of the meanings was derived (Creswell 1998, 149-150). The data needs to be “...compressed and linked together in a narrative that conveys the meaning that the researcher has derived from studying the phenomenon” Merriam (1998, 178-179). The tasks of analyzing and interpreting the data are inseparable. A researcher “...must always keep in view that the task of interpretation is very much intertwined with analysis and cannot be distinctly separated” (Kothari 2004, 346).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This study was to investigate perceptions of church members in regard to the relevance of the membership classes in laying a Christian foundation in the lives of those that go through the class. Kothari (2004, 8) and Mugenda (2008, 280) say that research methodology looks at research methods, and the logic that stands behind the methods applied in a research study. This chapter, therefore, focused on the methods and procedures that were used in collecting and analyzing perceptions of class participants.

Population

Participants in the membership class of 2008 were drawn from the eight local churches of the Friends Church-Ngong Road: Friends International Centre, Gachie, Medical, Lenana, Karen, State House, Westlands, and Kenya High. While more than 45 people had registered for the full membership class, only 35 completed it successfully and were confirmed as full members of the church. The research population was therefore defined as those who successfully completed the full membership class of 2008.

Sample

From the 35 class members that were confirmed in the year 2008, the researcher, through purposeful sampling, selected 12 respondents. The choice of the sample was informed by the need for comprehensive responses. The sample was arrived at by selecting students with high attendance records, and only after

considering representation from the eight local churches. Students with high attendance records were sampled because they were exposed to longer hours of class experiences and, therefore, could give deeper testimonies of the class experiences. In the sampling, a church was represented if, first, it met the one third threshold that was required in determining the sample size, and secondly, where a local church was sampled, the representative with the highest attendance record was selected.

Involvement of participants from the eight local churches was to attempt representation in the study. Of the twelve that were selected for the interview, one was not able to attend the interviews due to personal engagements.

Table 1 (Appendix B) gives statistics on the number of members that were confirmed in the year 2008, and how the congregations were represented in the population and sample. Class registers were used in determining students with the highest attendance. In cases where the top attendee was not available, the next person on the attendance list was taken for this research. The three centers where classes took place (Friends International Centre; Gachie, and Karen) are custodians of the class registers. For the purposes of sampling, congregations were required to have a minimum of two members among those that were confirmed in that year (2008). This threshold was purposely set to coincide with the proportion of the sample size, which was 1/3 of the population. Friends International Centre and Gachie Friends Church gave 4 participants each, Karen gave two, while the Lenana and Medical congregations gave one participant each, according the proportion of their representation in the class. Three local churches failed to meet the two-member threshold and, therefore, they were not represented in the study.

Instrument Design

The instrument used to obtain data that were used to answer the research questions is given in appendix A. It is an interview path consisting of 22 items. Each item was designed to respond to a specific research question as follows

RQ 1: What testimonies of inner transformations do confirmed members attribute to the membership class?

Items 1 to 6 were designed to solicit data for this research question. The researcher asked respondents whether they were born again (Item 1); their understanding of “born again” (Item 2); descriptions of their conversion experiences (Item 3a); testimonies of respondents’ spiritual growth (Item 3b); contributions that the class made to their spirituality (Item 4); their descriptions of spiritual persons (Item 5); and whether the respondents were filled by the Holy Spirit (Item 6). Inner transformations were inferred if the respondents indicated that they got saved; they experienced spiritual growth; they were filled with the Holy Spirit; or that their lives had changed and become more Christ-like as they went through the class.

RQ 2: How do confirmed members regard the membership class curriculum?

Items 7 to 18 were designed to solicit data for this research question. The researcher sought the reasons that respondents had for joining the class (Item 7); their expectations in joining the class (Item 8); their general impression of the class experiences (Item 9); specific areas of the class that were relevant to them (Item 10); assessments that they had on the class lessons (Item 11); things that participants felt were not addressing their needs (Item 12); things that they did not find in class (Item 13); things that participants would like to see maintained (Item 14a), improved (Item 14b), or discarded (Item 14c) from the class; the effect that class teachers (15a), fellow students (15b), church leaders (15c), family (15d), and learning environment (15e) had on respondents; whether respondents considered the classes as necessary

(Item 16); their views on the approaches used in teaching the class (Item 17); and, their general feelings in going through the class (Item 18). Appreciation for the class curriculum was inferred if participants showed approval for the various aspects of the class. For instance, the reasons for enrolling, coupled with expectations at the time of enrolling would suggest the value that respondents put on what was taught in the class. In addition, their assessment of the content taught, approaches used by teachers, contributions of fellow students, church leaders, learning environments, and so forth, would tell whether respondents appreciated the class curriculum or not.

RQ 3: How do confirmed members assess their sense of belonging to the Friends Church?

Items 19 to 22 were designed to solicit data for this research question. The researcher sought to know the current involvement of respondents in church activities (Item 19); feelings of participants, now that they were confirmed members (Item 20); the general commitment of the respondents to the church (Item 21) and, whether they knew of any of their colleagues who had deserted the church after their confirmation (Item 22). A deep sense of belonging to the church as a result of attending classes was inferred based on: current involvement of respondents in church activities, feelings that respondents have toward the church, current sense of commitment to the church, and if none of the class participants left the church following their confirmation.

Validation of Instrument

The questions in the research instrument were put in simple language so as to minimize chances of ambiguities. The instrument was scrutinized by colleagues of the researcher, and ultimately by the course supervisor to ensure appropriateness of the instrument for this research. Creswell (2003, 195) asserts that, “Validity does not carry the same connotations as it does in quantitative research, nor is it a companion

of reliability... or generalizability....” In this qualitative study, individual responses were taken as unique, and valid, for the purposes of this study. These individual responses were unique and could only be generalized with caution. However, the research instrument was designed to be simple so to enable respondents give proper answers to the interview questions.

Pilot Testing

Pilot testing was done to ascertain whether questions in the research instrument were easy to understand. The test was done on a pastor at the Friends Church-Kawangware Monthly Meeting. The pastor, a full member of the Friends Church, was conversant with the membership class experiences since he had once attended the class, and was now a teacher in a similar membership class. The experience with this pastor prepared the researcher for the actual interviews by helping him familiarize with the art of asking interview questions, and generation of spontaneous questions where clarity was required.

Mode of Entry

The researcher made a formal request to the Friends Church-Ngong Road through a letter (appendix C), for permission to undertake the research. The researcher also cultivated rapport with the responsible offices to ensure that the research proceeded without hindrances. Thereafter, invitations were sent out, on three levels, to all who were selected in the sample. First, the researcher requested the pastors from the concerned congregations to assist in inviting those selected for the interviews; second, chairpersons of the class (now disbanded) were requested to assist in inviting those selected for the study; lastly, the researcher personally called all who had been selected for the study and invited them to the interviews. Each of the three focus

group sessions lasted between 1-1 ½ hours, a time that was considered sufficient for three or four respondents to give an impression of their experiences in the class. The venue for the focus group sessions was the Friends International Centre church. This venue was chosen due to its centrality, and by virtue of being the location on which the Monthly Meeting offices were located.

Data Collection Strategy

The researcher, who was also the moderator in this study, collected data in three group interviews, and two individual interviews. Proceedings were recorded on tape, while discussion notes were highlighted on flip charts. The researcher himself took the discussion notes, and managed the recording equipment. This was because the tape recordings required minimal human input, while the notes on the flip charts were limited to the major points that were emerging from the interviews.

The 22 major questions that were used in the interview are shown in Appendix A. The questions required both closed-ended and open-ended responses. The researcher rephrased questions and, or followed them up with additional clarity questions whenever there were issues that needed clarification in the answers given by respondents. This was in line with what Nsumbuga (2000, 41) states concerning unstructured interviews where he asserts that in unstructured interviews a researcher can follow up issues with additional questions of clarification. Moreover, the researcher allowed for interactions between the participants during the interviews.

Research Design

This phenomenological research investigated the perceptions of church members in relation to their experiences in the membership class. In investigating the relevance of the membership class in assisting participants develop Christian

foundations, the researcher had in-depth interviews with 11 respondents selected from the 2008 class two membership class. Three sequential focus group interviews were used in getting descriptions of the experiences of the respondents during, and immediately after their time in the membership class; their experiences were used in determining their perceptions on the relevance of the membership class in helping participants develop Christ-like orientations.

Respondents came in three separate focus-groups of four, four, and three. It was not possible to gather all the 11 respondents in one sitting due to their personal engagements. Group interviews were preferred because they would consume lesser time as opposed to individual interviews for all the eleven respondents. In places where some respondents concurred in their experiences, respondents affirmed such concurrences and thereafter added testimonies of any other class experiences. Besides the group sessions, however, the researcher held two individual interview sessions using the same instrument. This was aimed at getting views of individual respondents outside the possible restrictions that can be in a group session. In case there was contradiction from what was said in the group interview, the respondent was to give the reason as to why he or she did not bring out the issue during the group interview. The research instrument (Appendix A) guided the interviews. Questions were asked, though not necessarily in the sequence in which they appear in the research instrument because live interviews can be dynamic.

This phenomenological study was necessitated by the need to understand experiences of the respondents as they went through the membership class phenomenon. For the researcher to get the most from them, respondents were given time to express themselves in all they could recollect of their class experiences. The researcher, after welcoming participants, explained why the research was being

carried out, and why there was need to record proceedings on tape. He then ensured that participants were comfortable, guided the discussion, took notes, operated the recording equipments, ensured that all participants were actively involved in the interviews, took note of participants' non-verbal behavior, and wrote participants' comments on the flip charts.

Validity of the Data

Validity in this study was achieved through triangulation and the member checking process. Triangulation involves "...corroborating evidence from different individuals (e.g., a principal and a student), types of data... or methods of data collection... in qualitative research" (Creswell 2002, 280).

The member checking process was done in two ways during the three interview sessions. First, since the interviews were done in three focus groups, participants within the groups would affirm or dispute issues raised by their colleagues. Matters that were factual such as teachers failing to come to class would be disputed by other respondents in event of misrepresentation of facts. Second, the researcher went over the data on flip charts to clarify with the respondents whether the points noted on the flip charts were a true and fair representation of their views. The flip charts were used in noting the main points or issues raised by respondents during the interview.

On the other hand, triangulation in the methods of data collection involved corroboration of the data collected on tapes, flip charts, and through observation. The accuracy of what was written on flip charts was measured against the comprehensive information captured on tape. On the other hand the researcher took note of intonations, facial expressions, reactions to opinions given by fellow respondents in the focus groups, and gestures such as nodding of the heads as the interviews went on.

The gestures, therefore, backed up what was verbally said by the respondents. Finally, in the bid to validate the findings, the researcher was continually guided by his supervisors at the graduate school in handling the technical steps of the research. The guidance involved the clarification of research procedures, and the presentation of findings.

During the focus group interviews, unlike the individual interviews, the researcher had observers seating and watching the proceedings. Each focus group session had a different observer drawn from the laity in the church. The observers gave feedback during debriefing sessions after the interviews. They raised points that the researcher had overlooked and, or points on which much time was spent during the interview. At each focus group session, the researcher introduced the observers to the respondents. Litosseliti states that, “As the moderator, you should explicitly tell the group that the observer is there to listen and to take notes that can facilitate the research process, not to judge or assess what will be discussed” (2003, 69).

Data Processing

Before the day and time for the research interviews, the researcher ensured that a venue was reserved, a tape recorder was at hand, flip charts and pens were available, and that all who were sampled were invited to the interview together. During the interview sessions, the researcher made introductory remarks, and thereafter made agreements with the respondents with regard to recording the interviews on tape, and using the responses of the participants for the study. He also assured the participants that, for the sake of confidentiality and openness, their identities would be concealed.

After capturing the field data on audio tapes and flip charts (Audio recordings covered whole interview sessions, while flip charts were used in noting major points

during the interview sessions), transcription of the audio tapes was done in preparation for analysis. The transcribed texts were used as the main documents in the analysis process. The researcher read through the text, and listened to the audio tapes several times to familiarize himself with the responses. In this process, the researcher was able to identify a number of significant statements made by the respondents. Similar-looking statements and thoughts were then used in developing eight categories of data after the coding process. The categories of data were then condensed into three themes that answered the three research questions of the study. The three themes were then used in describing the perceptions of class members on the relevance of the membership classes in helping them form Christ-like characteristics. Though the overall meanings were determined through points of concurrence in the respondents' views, the researcher tried to ensure that variation in opinions was not lost. Whenever there were variations in opinions, the researcher undertook to illustrate such points of departure.

In the data analysis, the transcribed text of the audio recordings served as the comprehensive raw data, while the data on the flip charts and from observations supplemented that data. Flip charts provided the general overview of what respondents said, while the transcribed text provided details of what was said in the interviews. The process of analysis involved identifying specific responses that answered the research items in the interviews; clustering the responses under categories that would distinguish the responses; deriving meaning from the responses under the various categories; and, using the meanings in answering the research questions of the study. Direct citations were taken from the transcribed text and used in illustrating responses in the various categories. The categories that answered the same research question were put under one common theme.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents findings of the study that was done on eleven respondents who successfully accomplished requirements for confirmation as “full members” at the Friends Church on Ngong Road. The study was done on eleven participants drawn from the 2008 membership class. The sample studied was not intended to be representative, but to suffice in providing a broad insight into the role played by the membership class in helping participants lay Christian foundations for their lives. This phenomenological study sought to determine whether the membership class, as it was at that time, was relevant in achieving expectations set by the Church. In this study, qualitative data was collected in three ways: through audio recordings, flip charts, and the observation of non-verbal communication. The study was conducted in three focus group sessions, besides which the researcher also engaged two of the respondents on a one-on-one reflection after the group sessions.

Findings of the Study

In responding to the research questions that guided this study, the researcher identified eight categories, and three main themes. The following categories were used in developing themes: participants’ conception of salvation, participants’ conception of devout persons, transformations in participants’ lives, class enlistment, issues affecting students’ performance, participants’ assessment of the membership class, involvement of participants in the church, and attrition after attending class. The three themes drawn from the categories included: changes resulting from class

experiences, participants' views on the membership class curriculum, and participants' commitment to the church after completing the class. The findings of the study are presented here under the three themes that also answer the Research Questions of the study. It should be noted, however, that all interviews were confidential and therefore the names used in presenting these findings are not the real names of those interviewed.

Changes Resulting from Class Experiences

In response to RQ 1 which states "What testimonies of inner transformations do confirmed members attribute to the membership class?" the researcher asked respondents whether they were born again; their understanding of "born again"; descriptions of their conversion experiences; testimonies of their spiritual growth; contributions that the class made to their spirituality; their descriptions of spiritual persons; and whether the respondents were Spirit filled. The findings are discussed below:

Participants' Conception of Salvation

In answering the first research question, the question of whether respondents were now born again was posed. Two respondents said they gave their lives to Christ while undertaking class 2 lessons. Six others said that they committed their lives to Christ while taking the class 1 lessons.

The remaining three respondents said they got saved long before joining the membership class. Their declarations, coupled with other reasons that made them join the class revealed that the reasons for enrolling in the membership classes were not limited to salvation. This implied that what was to be taught in class had to encompass a wider spectrum if it was to satiate all who enrolled for the classes.

When the respondents were asked on what they meant when speaking of “salvation”, most respondents indicated a good understanding of the term. One respondent, for instance, said that “to be saved is to surrender ones’ life to Christ. In salvation one abandons evil and sinful ways and commits one’s self to God in such a way that all his or her deeds, and speech, are in line with God’s Word.” Some, however, struggled with explaining what salvation entailed.

Participants’ Conception of Devout Persons

The second aspect that the researcher sought to know in relation to the first research question was on the respondents’ understanding of who a “spiritual person” was. In this study, most respondents demonstrated a reasonable understanding. Peninah, for instance, said, “A spiritual person is one who is born again, and is mature in spirit; one who often meditates on God’s Word, and is serious with prayers; one who prays and lays his hands on people, and they get healed. A spiritual person is led by God in all he does.” Wambua added by saying that “a spiritual person is one who has accepted to be led by the Holy Spirit.” On the other hand, Karanja was of the view that “a spiritual person was one who was able to control himself, one who would do things from the depth of the heart, and, that was not living for this world.”

In this study, two respondents confessed that they were not Spirit-filled. Angeline and Elsie confessed that even after going through the membership class in which “salvation” and “the Person of the Holy Spirit” were taught, amongst other topics, they were not yet Spirit filled. Some respondents coiled back when they were asked this question, and refrained themselves from divulging any information on whether they were Spirit-filled or not. The findings revealed that some respondents were confirmed as full members of the church before they could be filled with the Holy Spirit, or while in doubt on whether or not they were Spirit-filled. Moreover,

some of the respondents experienced difficulties in explaining characteristics of a spiritual person. These findings cast doubt on confessions made by some participants concerning their salvation, and whether they were living out their Christian lives well.

Transformations in Participants' Lives

The third area in which the researcher sought to gain understanding, in relation to the first research question, was on whether respondents had undergone any noteworthy transformation as a result of attending the church membership classes. Findings of the study showed that the membership classes had left significant impressions on the lives of those that had attended the classes. For instance, most of the respondents indicated that they had discarded their old ways and assumed new ways of doing things. The study showed that as a result of the membership classes, marital feuds, pride, fear, stinginess and other characteristics of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:16-21) that had previously bound most respondents, had been replaced with godliness. For instance, Bernadette testified that, "I used to have some weakness in my house, even with my husband; but after I went through the class, things have improved." She also added that before joining the class she used to have a "hard heart" and "quick anger", but that the class had helped her. On her part, Elsie, testified of her transformation saying that, "I used to be so shy, but now I can talk." After going through the membership class, with the various experiences, the shyness that she used to have was no more.

Three respondents confessed that before joining the membership classes they were mere "church-goers". However, on completion of the classes, their church attendance was no longer the routine exercise that made no impact, but that their attendance had become purposeful and productive. For instance, Elsie confessed that she could now go back home and teach others what she had learnt in church. The

findings suggested that the membership classes had made respondents to appreciate attendance of church services to the extent of making them more than mere church goers.

Summary of findings in the first research question

The first research question had asked, “What testimonies of inner transformations do confirmed members attribute to the membership class?” The findings showed that going through the church membership class had resulted in inner transformation of participants. All the eleven respondents sampled in this study claimed they were born again. Most of them said they had committed their lives to Christ in the course of the classes, but a few had committed themselves to Christ prior to enrolling in the classes. Not only did respondents claim they had given their lives to Christ, they also added that they manifested an improvement in their spiritual and social lives. The participants also revealed that the membership class experiences had transformed their lives for the better.

Participants’ Views on the Membership Class

RQ 2 asked, “How do confirmed members regard the membership class curriculum?” To answer this question, the researcher began by inquiring on matters of enlisting students for the classes, he then inquired on the issues that affected the students’ achievement in the classes, and concluded his inquiry by seeking the participants’ assessment of aspects of the class. It was important to note the issues that affected student performance because these issues would likely contribute to the kind of regard that students made of the class.

Class Enlistment

The process of enlisting candidates for the membership classes at the Friends Church-Ngong Road was often carried out in the months of January and February. In this study, it was evident that those who enrolled for the classes had individual expectations of things that they hoped to meet, or satisfy as they joined the class.

Rationale for enrolment

Respondents enrolled in the membership classes for different reasons. While most respondents were mainly driven by the need to be identified as full members of the church, other motivations also drew respondents to enroll in the class. These drivers are highlighted hereafter.

Identification as full members

Eight respondents enrolled for the classes because they desired to be identified as full members of the church. This desire for the “full member” status was because the respondents wanted to be fully identified with the church. Some respondents desired the identity so as to show that they were legitimate members who qualified for all benefits due to full members of the church.

Church requirement

Three respondents had enrolled for the membership classes because it was a requirement set by the church. Two respondents argued that if the church had not laid down this requirement for those aspiring to be members of the church, some church members would not enroll for the classes.

Personal needs

Four respondents said that they enrolled in the classes for their own spiritual growth, hoping that they would be disciplined. Some respondents revealed that they enrolled in the classes because they desired spiritual assistance to help them cope with, or overcome pains resulting from traumatic experiences undergone in life. One respondent, Peninah, indicated that the reason she joined the class was that several unpleasant incidents had plagued her life in the early part of the year. She had felt that joining the class would be her opportunity to heal, and to improve her relationship with God. Matthew 11:28 (NIV) says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” The classes gave opportunity for participants to hear God’s word that could heal the broken and hurting hearts. These reasons for enrolment indicated that some participants enrolled for the classes with the hope that the class content and the approaches given in the teaching and ministering to participants would address their individual needs.

Issues Affecting Student Achievement

In this study, class teachers, fellow students, church leaders, family, and the learning environment were the main factors that influenced the performance of the respondents in the membership class.

Influence of class teachers

This study indicated that six respondents found teachers of the class to be good. The respondents lauded some teachers for knowledge and commitment to their teaching tasks. Others were lauded for showing concern when they made efforts to know the whereabouts of students whenever students were absent. Class teachers

were also noted to have used different approaches such as interactive sessions, stimulating questions, and lecture, in their teaching.

The findings also indicated that though there was an overall appreciation for the role played by teachers in assisting students to attain their desires, inadequacies on the part of teachers were not lacking. For instance, Angeline, Elsie, Wambua, and Karanja questioned the competence and commitment of some of the teachers. Elsie, a respondent, portrayed an unfortunate picture when she said that,

...there were some teachers that used to come with papers in class, and start reading. The teachers would refer to Bible verses; but whenever students asked them hard questions, they would commit themselves to give responses the following week. Unfortunately, that would be the end of those questions, and students would go without understanding. (2009)

The study indicated that respondents were concerned about teachers who concluded class lessons before students could understand what was being taught. The respondents noted that some teachers were too busy for the class to the extent that one of them failed to teach even a single class that had been assigned to him. Moreover, the respondents asserted that teachers never used group discussions as ways through which students could learn. Most respondents nodded to a comment made by one respondent, that the only times when students had group discussions was in times when teachers were absent. At such times, the students organized themselves and held discussions so that they would not go back home without doing anything.

The findings showed that the spiritual and the educational influence of teachers on class participants were not optimal. Some respondents were of the opinion that an overhaul of the teaching staff, or an establishment of strict stipulations for all teachers be done. The respondents had reservations as far as class teachers were concerned. For instance, Karanja asserted that even though teachers had a positive impact on him, some teachers never came to class. As a result, “the impact was sort of

limited because of the limited interaction between teachers and class members.” On her part, Angeline said “I would like to urge the church to consider church members who are willing to teach and are free to take up the classes. We felt bad that teachers had to miss classes as though it had been forced on them. Why not give a chance to fresh people who have some time to spare?”

Concerns on the incompetence of some teachers, coupled with lateness and, or absenteeism, suggested that the heights to which participants could have ascended in relation to spirituality, knowledge, and commitment to the Church, were limited by the failures of teachers. The researcher, however, did not pursue the teachers to ascertain the truthfulness of the allegations leveled against them since that would have exceeded the scope of this study.

Contribution of fellow students

This study found that fellow students played a key role in the development of respondents. For instance, five respondents maintained that their fellow classmates shared experiences and opinions that assisted them to learn so much. They asserted that questions raised by colleagues in class helped them to see wider perspectives of issues. Wambua, a respondent, put it well by saying that,

...my colleagues really helped me because I too never used to have time for the class. I depended more on the notes that my colleagues had. In addition to this, we had colleagues who had many questions. For instance, we had a classmate that used to ask questions up to the last minute. He used to ask questions to an extent that you could understand an issue well; at other times he even went beyond our scope with many questions, making us to discover that even certain things were wrong. (2009)

Respondents in this study affirmed that their colleagues assisted them in catching up with their class work whenever any of them was absent. Colleagues also assisted the respondents in class discussions whenever class teachers failed to show

up. Moreover, colleagues sought to know the whereabouts of fellow students whenever students were absent.

Impact of lay leaders

This study showed that lay leaders of the Church influenced the learning that respondents had in the membership class. Respondents noted the influence of lay leaders in the making of decisions to enroll for classes, class attendance, distribution of class handouts, and much more. Four respondents asserted that lay leaders kept encouraging them to continue with the classes. The respondents said that some lay leaders visited the homes of class members who were absent and encouraged them to keep attending classes.

Wambua disclosed that there was a leader who used to assist him in getting class-notes that other participants had no access to. This raised the question of fair-play in the class. While acknowledging this anomaly, some respondents said that even during the interviews fair-play was not seen. The respondents argued that during the interviews there were class participants that were asked more questions, and even difficult ones, as opposed to others, without any intervention from the laity. In this issue, the respondents had no problem with the clergy, a position which the researcher appreciated since for a long time the laity in the Friends Church were perceived as the real leaders of the church. Karanja complained that overall, the laity stood aloof from the start to the end of the classes. The failure of the laity to attend to expectations of most participants left negative undertones amongst class participants who felt that the laity did not show seriousness and concern for most students.

Contribution of kinfolk

This study showed that all families from which respondents came contributed to the progress of respondents in the membership classes. The responses indicated that participation in the membership classes was a joy to participants' families. The responses also showed that respondents received encouragement from their kinfolk. Several respondents said that their enthusiasm for the classes united their families, and destroyed barriers that had hitherto existed in their families. As Bernadette put it, "My family was very glad to learn that I had decided to join the membership class." Elsie, who was living with her elder brother when she was enrolled in class 2 said that her brother used to remind her that the questions during the interviews would be tough, and therefore, he would wake her up early to ensure punctuality for classes. Wambua, whose brother was a lay leader in the church, said that his brother often brought to him reference notes from the class teachers and church evangelists. On his part Karanja, testified that in the initial days his family had questioned why he had joined the membership class at a mature age; however, at the end of the class, the family had appreciated the discipline in time management that he had come to develop as a result. Bernadette, while concurring on the support received from the kinfolk said that her mother was so encouraged by her enrolment in the class that she travelled over 400 kilometers to come to Nairobi and witness the confirmation ceremony. These responses suggested that respondents also appreciated the membership classes because of the resultant good effects that were felt outside the four walls of the classrooms.

Influence from the learning environment

Responses in this study showed that class participants in the three centers of learning had a place in which they held the classes. Respondents, while

acknowledging that facilities may not have been the best, asserted that they had been willing to learn even under harsh conditions such as in the hot sun, or when exposed to winds. The respondents' indication that they had resolved to learn, in spite of the shortcomings, suggested that students had additional driving forces that made them overlook the challenges which they used to encounter in their respective venues. In spite of their willingness to learn at any cost, the respondents recommended that there be improvement in the facilities used for membership classes.

This study also showed that the venues in which the membership classes were held affected respondents in different ways. In Karen, there was no classroom *per se*; the class usually met in the church hall after the service. In Gachie, though the classes were also held on the church compound, the church benches were never enough. As a result, whenever the Sunday school children arrived, the benches would be taken away. At the Friends International Centre, the only concern was to have a permanently designated venue for the class meetings. For them, failure to designate specific venues led to some classes being held in the open whenever classrooms were occupied for other purposes.

Participants' Assessment of the Class

Responding further to RQ 2, the researcher asked respondents to make their assessment of things that needed to be maintained, improved, or that needed to be discarded from the class. In response, the respondents acknowledged that the membership class had both positive and negative sides to it. Amongst the things that were appreciated were: the subjects taught in the classes; the dedication of some teachers; the fellowship with colleagues; and, the class as a system through which church members were identified and also introduced to practices of the church. The following discussions present assessments that respondents made of the class:

Benchmarks for participants

Wambua, Peninah and Onyango said that there was need to maintain high standards of discipline in the membership classes. In addition to this, Wambua argued that the classes ought not to be used for merely getting church membership cards, but also the transformation of lives. The respondents wanted the membership classes to be known for excellence. They indicated that the values upheld by students, teachers and administrators of the class would determine the success or failure of the class.

The study also showed the need to revisit the question of minimum age *vis a vis* maturity of those who enrolled in class two. Respondents suggested that the level of maturity at the point of enrolment was a significant determinant of what one eventually got from the class. While most respondents argued for mature entrants, with some respondents preferring persons who were already married, Wanyonyi, a teenager, asserted that, "...age does not matter", showing that the perceptions of youth, on certain matters, may differ from those of adults. Other respondents, however, felt that the decisions to join classes should be left to individuals, and should not be pushed by anyone.

Most respondents did not favor the idea of older class participants sharing classes with younger participants. However, some respondents desired to see humility and Christian discipline upheld in the classes. This presents a dilemma to Christian educators on whether to abide by Erickson's developmental stages (Mangal 2005, 106-108), where educators consider human stages of development in the learning capabilities, or whether to follow Christian virtues (Job 32:4-9; Mark 10:13-16) that propose humility and equality regardless of age or status.

Shortcomings in the class

Findings of this study indicated that there was diversity in the intellectual capacity of those who attended the membership class. Amongst the respondents, there were some who considered class lessons to be incomprehensible and some who relished the classes. The findings showed that those who enjoyed the classes freely sought clarification on issues, while some of their colleagues who had a hard time with the lessons skipped the classes. Peninah, a respondent, was such a case:

“Homiletics” was not very good for me. Up to now I don’t know what we were being taught in that subject. . . . I enjoyed all the topics apart from this one. I even used to look at the program to know which subject we were to handle; if it happened to be homiletics, I would fail to come to class because I never used to understand it. (2009)

Whereas some members complained about the depth of the class content, there were a few others who felt that it was the sequencing of the lessons that was inappropriate. This latter group decried the poor continuity in class scheduling, arguing that a topic covered on a given weekend would be suspended for four-to-five weeks for it to feature again. The former group, however, argued that it was the class content that required bolstering.

The findings also showed that some class participants were mainly concerned with answering the final interview questions correctly in utter disregard of the more important spiritual transformation. Connelly and others say that “Good instruction. . . stimulates higher levels of cognitive ability and is characterized by mental processes such as synthesis and analysis, rather than recall and application” (1980, 27).

Respondents said that answering correctly the final interviews could be a matter of cramming, and nothing more. Because of this, some respondents said that the final questions be done away with.

Shattered hopes

Findings also revealed that several respondents finished the class with disappointments. At the time of enrolling, respondents had expectations that everything would be perfect, and that since this was a Church class, sloppiness would not feature. However, Karanja and Wambua, with concern written all over their faces, disclosed that the homiletics class did not assist them with the knowledge of interpreting scripture as they had anticipated. Their sentiments were expressions of shattered hopes, because the homiletics class did not assist them in knowing how to interpret scripture.

The study also revealed that respondents were hardly guaranteed of class venues, punctuality of teachers, or the assurance that a teacher would be present. Consequently, some respondents confessed that they were uncertain of what would become of them at the end of the class.

Though respondents had expected a wholesome preparation for ministry work, their expectation was not fully met. Some respondents had hoped that they would be given practical exposure through field observations where they would see people leading various meetings, but this was not so. The respondents had hoped that such practical exposure would have assisted them in seeing vividly how skills taught in class related to actual situations. Moreover, some respondents had come to the class hoping to receive the Holy Spirit, but this never materialized. Even a year after their confirmation, some respondents were not yet Spirit filled. Consequently, the findings suggested that there were shattered hopes for some of those who attended the class.

Participants' counsel

Responses in this study indicated that several things needed improvement. Favoritism during the class sessions and at the time of the interviews was regarded as

unfair if class participants were to have an equal playing ground. All participants desired equal opportunities for all. However, Peninah, who had concerns with how enrolment was done, said that she had expected to see stringent rules such as: you must first be married, you must have done a church wedding, be the husband of one wife, or be the only wife, but that this was not the case. She felt that such crucial information should be included in the information at the enrollment stage.

Respondents also cited the history taught in the membership class as insufficient, saying that it did not incorporate the history of the Ngong Road-Monthly Meeting. One respondent, Wambua, asserted that teachings on the church's history ought not to be reserved for the membership class only, but that the history should be taught to all, beginning with children in the Sunday school. He argued that Sunday school children should know where the Friends Church came from, without having to wait for the membership classes as the only place where Quaker history was taught. Moreover, some respondents suggested that there was need for more topics, or something bigger and deeper to supplement the curriculum that was in use, if better results were to be seen.

In this study, respondents complained that even though the topic, "Church Leadership", was taught in the membership classes, some church leaders of that time, and who had formerly taken the classes, portrayed questionable characteristics. The situation was blamed on teachings that were not wholesome. One respondent argued that confining participants to classrooms only yielded half baked members; and therefore he recommended developing of leaders through teaching and practical ministry. His views concurred with Klopp's (2004, 75) understanding of how Jesus developed leaders.

Permanence of the membership class

In seeking an overall assessment that respondents would make of the membership class curriculum, the researcher asked respondents to share their thoughts on the future of the membership class. The responses given showed that the respondents found it inconceivable to think of a Friends Church without the Friends Church membership classes. One respondent, Karanja, asserted that, "...every organization has its own culture, and to bring people into the organization, you initiate them." His argument, which received support from other respondents, was that classes have to continue as long as the church kept receiving new people.

The respondents also expressed the need for continuity, arguing that the membership class prepared church members and leaders in matters of character formation and Christian discipleship. Membership classes were seen as instrumental in bringing church attendees into a deeper understanding of the Christian faith, and the doctrines of the Friends Church. In addition to this, respondents insisted that it was important for church members to know where they were going. I John 4:1 (NIV) says, "...do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God..." indeed, church members ought to know what their church organizations stand for.

Summary of findings in the second research question

The second research question had asked, "How do confirmed members regard the membership class curriculum?" In this study, all respondents spoke well of the curriculum. They appreciated the classes for the knowledge acquired and the transformation that participants had seen in their spiritual and social lives. The study also indicated that the curriculum was appreciated by respondents as profitable for Christian living. Moreover, the respondents saw the classes as foundational in

indoctrination of new converts and migrants from other denominations. The membership classes were seen as crucial in bringing participants into a growing relationship with God, and in helping participants grasp the faith and practices of the Friends Church.

Although the study showed several negative aspects of the class, there were many positive aspects. Most respondents kept on with the classes because they recognized the membership class as a potential answer to their spiritual quest. Other respondents recognized the membership class as the legitimate way to attaining the official Friends Church membership status. Some of the respondents acknowledged that the membership class is authoritative in delineating Christian doctrine, and the Friends Church's faith and practice. The respondents, therefore, depicted the membership class as invaluable within the Friends Church fraternity.

On the negative side, this study showed that the class content, class teachers, church leaders, and, the learning environment were wanting across the board. The researcher found out that the respondents desired to see more commitment from the teachers, enhancement in the depth of class content, setting of clear rules for the administration of the classes, and avoiding partiality in dealing with class participants.

Commitment to the Friends Church

The third RQ stated, "How do confirmed members assess their sense of belonging to the Friends Church?" To answer this question, the researcher sought to know the respondents' views on their involvement in the church after being confirmed as full members, and also whether they knew about any participants from the 2008 membership class who had left the Friends Church after confirmation. This study showed that most respondents were involved in various church activities, and that only one of those that were confirmed had left the Friends Church.

Involvement in the Church

A number of respondents in this study indicated that they were already involved in church activities. For instance, Karanja, who had been the 2008 class chairman, had already been assigned responsibility to teach in one of the membership classes. Moreover, he was already sharing the knowledge that he had received in the class with others. His efforts had resulted in people, both from within and from outside the Friends Church, requesting him to supply them with copies of the Friends Church membership class material. As a result, Karanja longed for a time when the class material would be developed into a booklet that could be sold across the counters.

Findings in this study also indicated that the membership class had radically changed the perceptions of the respondents. Five respondents declared that they were more committed to the church than before. With optimism written on their faces, Wambua, Peninah, and Betty asserted that they were willing to take up any level of leadership that they would be requested to occupy. On the other hand, Elsie had a different opinion of leadership and said, "I don't admire being a lay leader; I would rather be a singer or preacher." She went on to assert that she had become more active in Church: "I wake up early every Sunday to go for the morning glory, English service, and to sing in the choir." On the other hand, Wambua, who was overwhelmed with engagements at his place of work, said that he had decided to be making "technical appearances" every Sunday so as to show his commitment to the Church.

These findings indicated that the membership classes had transformed most participants into more committed members of the church. With 1 member already teaching in one of the classes, 5 declaring that they were more committed to the church, 3 declaring that they were willing to take up any leadership responsibility that

the church would assign them, and 2 saying that they are comfortable remaining as mere members, it was evident that the membership classes were meeting the aims of the class as stipulated in the membership class manual (Friends Church-Nairobi Yearly Meeting, 3-4).

Attrition after Attending Class

In the third research question, attrition could not be overlooked. Deserting the Friends Church after going through the membership classes was an issue of great interest. In the 2008 class, one out of the 35 who were confirmed was said to have left the Friends Church. In view of this, Karanja, who had served as the class chairman, said that the decision to leave a church was a personal one, and it depended on what one had been looking for in the first place. Though he had not interacted directly with the individual, Karanja suggested that the leaving could have been prompted by information unveiled in the class, or other personal motivations. He emphasized, with a crunched face, that the decision to move away from a Church, just as joining, could be either personal or caused by external factors and, therefore, the church should not bar anyone from moving away from the church except when the person is moving to a confirmed cultic movement. This finding implied that joining the membership class was not a guarantee that the person who had joined the class would stay on after confirmation.

Summary of findings in the third research question

The third research question had asked, “How do confirmed members assess their sense of belonging to the Friends Church?” Respondents showed that they had generally developed a greater sense of belonging to the Friends Church. Few respondents were already in leadership, several were ready for any leadership roles

that the church would assign to them, while one out of the 35 participants that were confirmed in the year 2008 was known to have moved away from the Friends Church. These responses indicated that there were high chances that those who went through the class developed deeper ties with the church.

Description of the Year 2008 Membership Class

Respondents in this study concurred that the membership class immensely benefited them. Exposure to foundational Christian doctrines, the faith, practice, and structures of the Friends church, coupled with supportive interactions within the class, resulted in spiritual and social transformation of respondents (R.Q.1). The transformation that respondents went through outweighed the problems of incomplete lessons, shallow content, unmet expectations, inadequate class facilities, incompetent teachers, and the absconding teachers. The findings indicated that the respondents appreciated the membership class in spite of its several shortcomings (R.Q.2). Moreover, the findings also indicated that respondents had devoted themselves to the Friends Church to the extent of having deeper sense of belong to the church (R.Q.3).

Overall Patterns

Going through the membership class resulted in spiritual and social transformation of those who went through it. The class answered most questions that class participants had, and was considered as crucial in teaching Christian doctrines and the practices of the Friends Church to church attendees, new converts, and migrants from other denominations.

The membership class was also authoritative in delineating the Christian doctrine, and the Friends Church's faith and practice. It gave those who went through it a greater sense of belonging to the Friends Church and made many participants

willing to take up leadership roles within the church. Moreover, the class was esteemed for making participants to be recognized officially as members of the Friends Church.

The class content, class teachers, church leaders and learning environments, for the membership class were wanting. The classes needed commitment from teachers; enhancement in the depth of class content; clear rules for the administration of the classes; impartiality in dealing with class participants; and, improvement in the venues where learning took place.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In this study, the researcher sought to investigate perceptions of church members in regard to the relevance of the membership classes in laying a Christian foundation in the lives of class participants. Results of the study were to assist the church in determining the necessity of launching an evaluation of the membership class program. This chapter presents a summary of findings, interpretations, conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further studies.

This study was a phenomenological inquiry that used the focus group approach to get perceptions of participants in the membership class. The population in the study consisted of 35 members who were confirmed as “full members” of the Friends Church in the year 2008, at the Friends Church-Ngong Road. A purposeful sample (Gall, et al. 2003, 166) of 12, based on the number of participants confirmed from a local church and the participants’ attendance record, was taken for this study. Of the 12 that were sampled, only 11 respondents managed to attend and participate in the study.

The study involved three focus group sessions and two individual member interviews. Data was collected through audio tapes, flip chart notes, and observation by the researcher. Audio data was transcribed, linked up with data captured on flip charts and through observation, and thereafter analysis was made.

Summary of Findings

R. Q. 1. What testimonies of inner transformations do confirmed members attribute to the membership class?

Respondents in the study indicated that participation in membership classes had led to transformation of their spiritual and social lives. They further insinuated that regular class attendance fostered their relationship with God, and improved on participants' interpersonal relationships. 8 respondents indicated that they gave their lives to Christ as they attended the membership classes, while 3 respondents said that they gave their lives to Christ before joining the class.

R. Q. 2. How do confirmed members regard the membership class curriculum?

In this study, respondents had mixed feelings toward the class curriculum. On one hand respondents said they had high regard for the class content, teachers, fellow students, church leaders, family, and the learning environment. They argued that the classes were foundational in indoctrination of church attendees with regard to Christian doctrine, and the Quaker faith and practice. On the other hand, respondents desired to see more commitment from the teachers; enhancement in the depth of class content; clear rules in the administration of the classes; involvement of the laity; improvement in class facilities; and, impartiality when dealing with class participants.

R. Q. 3. How do confirmed members assess their sense of belonging to the Friends Church?

Eight respondents said they were now either already in leadership, or were willing to take up any leadership role that would be offered to them. The eight respondents indicated that they were now more committed to the Friends Church than they were before their confirmation. Their heightened sense of belonging was evident in their engagements in the church, and their keen interest and willingness to participate in church activities. 5 respondents were already serving as leaders within

their local churches, while 3 others were ready for any leadership roles that the church would assign them. Of the total population of 35 members that were confirmed in the year 2008, only one member was known to have moved away from the Friends Church.

Interpretations of Findings

RQ 1. What testimonies of inner transformations do confirmed members attribute to the membership class?

With two respondents giving their lives to Christ while in class 2, the responses suggest the likelihood that the systems of confirming class 1 members, at the time and place where those two were confirmed, were slack, lenient, incompetent, or partial. This is because only born again persons were confirmed in class 1. On the other hand, with two respondents saying categorically that they were not Spirit filled, and some fearing to declare their status on whether they were Spirit filled, the findings suggest that the membership class of 2008 failed to assist some class members in experiencing the in-filling of the Holy Spirit. In addition to this, the spirituality of some respondents was questionable because they could not tell the characteristics of spiritual persons. This inability indicated that some respondents were probably not living out their Christian lives well because if they were they would not have the difficulties that were observed. Nevertheless, with one respondent saying that she could go back home and teach others the things that she had learnt, there was indication that the membership classes had inherent transformational influence that could enable participants share their faith after their confirmation.

RQ 2. How do confirmed members regard the membership class curriculum?

Most respondents considered the membership classes as having potential to answer spiritual quests and establish good doctrinal foundation for class participants.

Spiritual quests of several respondents were achieved during the class. This suggests that those who were confirmed as members had good doctrinal foundations. In addition to this, respondents in this study attached great significance to the class because it helped them build closeness with one another. The participants assisted one another in catching up with class work, and learnt from the experiences of their colleagues. This cooperation, closeness and mutual support that was built during the class, would likely continue to unify the participants for a long time.

On the other hand, with eight respondents saying that they enrolled for the class so as to be identified as “full members” of the church, the findings suggest that a majority of those who enrolled for the class did so because of the desire to be identified as “full members” of the church. The findings suggest the likelihood that nominal church attendees who had a keen desire for the “full member” identity may have been among those who enrolled for the classes.

This study also showed that respondents desired to see improvement in class facilities. The desire underscored the significance that respondents attached to the classes, and suggests that the respondents wanted better classes for those who would come after them. On the other hand, absenteeism among teachers may have limited transformations that students would have had. With most participants suggesting that they wanted more than was offered, and with others complaining about depth of class content, insufficient history of the church, and failure of the class in assisting respondents know how to interpret scripture, it would suggest that students did not get the utmost from the class. The crave for more than was offered suggests that the church may have underrated the capacity of class participants, used obsolete class material, or even engaged incompetent teachers in teaching the classes.

RQ 3, “How do confirmed members assess their sense of belonging to the Friends Church?”

The study showed that most of those who went through the class were more committed to the church than before. The heightened sense of belonging suggests that the church had a bright future to look to. Moreover, with only one person from the 35 that were confirmed leaving the church, it is likely that other motivations besides the class experiences were responsible for the leaving.

Conclusion

This study shows that respondents experienced spiritual and social transformation as they went through the class. Respondents also considered the classes as crucial in teaching Christian and denominational practices to church attendees, new converts, migrants from other denominations, and in answering questions that class participants had. The responses indicated that the membership classes at the Friends Church-Ngong Road helped participants to become more Christ-like in their lives. However, there was need for the church to emphasize to class members that application of lessons learnt in class was more important than giving of accurate responses in the class interviews. Moreover, since the desire for recognition as full members, together with the desire to have spiritual quests achieved were perpetual, the membership class stood high chances of continuity. Furthermore, with respondents viewing the class as authoritative in delineating the Christian doctrine, explaining the Friends Church's faith and practice, and giving respondents greater sense of belonging to the Friends Church, there was indication that the Church actualized its goals for the class. The goals of having proper understanding of Christian teachings, members committing themselves to the Friends Church, and leaders being prepared were by and large realized in the membership class. With only one of the 35 class participants of the 2008 class leaving the church, the Friends

Church still had a future to look to. However, there is a warning that members can leave the church even after their confirmation.

In spite of all the good that was realized in the class, findings of the study indicate that the class is not perfect, and that there is room for improvement. The findings suggest that the church needs to carry out a comprehensive evaluation so as to adequately attend to the concerns of respondents in this study.

Contribution Made by this Study

This study is the first of its kind to be conducted on the membership class at the Friends Church-Ngong Road. The study provides descriptive information that the church can use as a basis for understanding the classes, and evaluating the membership class.

This research also provided perceptions of class participants on the role that various factors played in determining the nature of results obtained in the church membership classes. Of concern to the church were perceptions of participants on the content taught, the class teachers, the lay leaders, and the venues where learning took place. The study showed that there was need for improvement in these areas.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are suggested. It is necessary for Friends Church-Ngong Road to attend to the following:

First, the depth of the class content requires enhancement. Findings had shown that as much as respondents had appreciated what the church offered, most respondents wanted a little more than was offered.

Second, the church is to ensure that class teachers are both available for classes, and, qualified for tasks assigned to them. The study indicated that even-

though some teachers made great effort to teach, some were sloppy in their responsibilities.

Third, there is need for improvement of facilities used for classes. The study showed that even-though venues were available, students were often uncertain of particular classrooms, or were inconvenienced by inadequate facilities.

Fourth, there is need to include the history of Friends Church-Ngong Road Monthly Meeting in the *history* lesson taught in the membership class.

Fifth, the church needs to come up with mechanisms of following up those who are confirmed, and creating an environment that was appealing to those confirmed.

Suggestions for Further Research

First, this study was conducted at the Friends Church-Ngong Road Monthly Meeting alone. Further research incorporating other Monthly Meetings in Kenya could be conducted to determine similarities and, or differences.

Second, this study was limited to participants who did their class in the year 2008. Further studies could be done to determine whether participants who were confirmed in other years had similar experiences.

Third, this study was limited to the perceptions of class participants. There is need to incorporate the views of class teachers for a comprehensive perspective of the class experiences.

Fourth, this was a qualitative study that sampled only 12 respondents. A quantitative approach could be carried out to determine specific views from a bigger population.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

For Participants of the Membership Class Two who were Confirmed in the Year 2008 in the Ngong Road Monthly Meeting

1. Are you born again?
2. What do we mean when we say “born again”?
3. How would you describe:
 - a. Your conversion experience (how you came to be born again)?
 - b. Your spiritual growth during and after the classes?
4. Did class contribute in any way to your spirituality?
5. Who is a spiritual person?
6. Are you spirit filled?
7. What made you to join the class?
8. Did you have any expectations when joining the class?
9. Describe your experience of the membership class that you attended.
10. Which particular areas of the class were of greatest relevance to you as a person?
 - a. Which things in class benefitted you most? (Rephrase Q 10)
 - b. Which things in class helped you most in making you Christ-like?
11. What can you say about the teachings on the Friends Church?
12. Are there any examples of times when you felt that the classes, or the subject(s), being taught were not addressing your particular needs?
13. Mention anything you expected to find, but did not find in the class.
14. Which things would you like to see:
 - a. Maintained in the class?
 - b. Improved in the class?
 - c. Done away with in the class?
15. Describe the effect that the following had on you as a class student:
 - a. Class teachers
 - b. Fellow students
 - c. Church leaders
 - d. Family
 - e. Learning environment
16. Is there any need of us having this class at all? (Please support your answer)
17. How would you consider the approaches that were used in teaching the class?
17. Describe what you felt-like after the teachings in the church leadership class (Class two).Having completed the classes successfully, how can you describe your involvement in the church?

18. How do you feel being part of the Friends Church?
19. How would you describe your commitment to the church now?
20. Do you know of any class participant who left the church after being confirmed as a full member of the Friends Church?

THE END

Thank you four your time and kind response!!

APPENDIX B

Distribution Table of the Respondents

Table 1. Distribution of confirmed members, by local churches, within Ngong Road Monthly Meeting in the year 2008

Name of Local Church	Population of those confirmed in class II, 2008	2008 members who had moved away or died	2008 members who were still present (X)	Sample size of respondents (1/3 of X)
1. Friends International Centre	12	1	11	4
2. Medical	2	0	2	1
3. Lenana	2	0	2	1
4. Karen	6	0	6	2
5. Kenya High	1	0	1	0
6. State House	0	0	-	0
7. Westlands	0	0	-	0
8. Gachie	12	0	12	4
TOTAL NUMBERS	35	1	34	12

APPENDIX C

Permission Letter

Pastor Simon Khaemba
C/o Friends International Centre,
P. O. Box 41946 – 00100,
NAIROBI.
15th March 2009

THE PRESIDING CLERK
NGONG ROAD MONTHLY MEETING
P. O. BOX 41946 – 00100
NAIROBI.

Dear Clerk,

REF: REQUEST TO CARRY OUT MY COLLEGE RESEARCH WITHIN THE CHURCH

Receive my brotherly greetings in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Following our earlier discussions concerning my studies at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, I would now like to make a formal request to be allowed to carry out my research within the church. The research, which is part of my course requirement, will need to be done during my current academic term which is ending before the close of this month. I know that this formal request comes within a short notice, but I request for your assistance in my endeavor.

As we had discussed earlier, I will be carrying out a research on our church membership classes. The topic of my research is: “Participants’ perceptions on the relevance of the Friends Church Membership Classes at the Friends Church-Ngong Road”. I intend to interview 12 members from last year’s class.

I hope and trust that you will give my request a favorable consideration.

Yours in Christ’s service,

Simon Khaemba Makokha
Pastor – Friends International Centre