

NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
THEOLOGY

WIDOWS: POTENTIAL CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS
IN THE EDUCATIONAL MINISTRIES
OF THE NAIROBI BAPTIST
CHURCH

BY

MARGRET WANJIKU N. MUHIA

JUNE, 1999

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IN THE EDUCATIONAL MINISTRIES OF THE NAIROBI BAPTIST CHURCH**

BY
MARGRET WANJIKU N. MUHIA

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

Approved:

Supervisor:

Suraja Raman

Dr. Suraja Raman, Phd

Second Reader:

Victor Cole
Dr. Victor Cole, Phd

External Reader:

Ruthie Rono

Dr. Ruthie Rono


Nairobi, Kenya

July 1999

Student's Declaration

WIDOWS: POTENTIAL CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS IN THE EDUCATIONAL MINISTRIES OF THE NAIROBI BAPTIST CHURCH

I declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any college or university for academic credit.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Muhia', written over a horizontal line.

Margaret W. Muhia

July, 1999

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to
my beloved husband Charles Muhia Ng'ang'a
and my dear children Andrew Ng'ang'a
Jessy Njihia and
Grace Muhia

ABSTRACT

This Study is a report of an attempt to find out the Nairobi Baptist Church's understanding of the role of widows in her educational ministries, especially how they are nurtured and deployed. This purpose was achieved through a detailed review of related literature focusing on both Biblical and African perspectives and also the role of the church and Christian educational ministries.

Data was collected through the use of a self-administered questionnaire which had both open-ended and closed-ended questions. It was administered to twenty-nine leaders of the NBC who included Pastors, Elders, Board directors, and ministry leaders. An interview guide was also used. It was administered to twenty-three widows of the NBC. The researcher identified widows with the help of the Church office, pastors, women's ministry leader and the social worker.

Collected data was analyzed and interpreted. Findings revealed that widows had a role in the educational ministries of the church. However, there was a need for an appraisal of the widows in order to find out how they could impact the church. Findings further revealed that widows received care and nurture through the Special Singles fellowship, Care groups and Area Pastoral Units. Effective ministry to the widows could be strengthened if NBC could employ a pastor for adults.

Widowhood had a strong impact on widows and affected how they viewed themselves as women. Most testified to feeling isolated and lonely. This could change if the church was sensitized on their needs, hopes, and aspirations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 1) First and foremost, I wish to thank the Lord for enabling me to complete this daunting task at a time when my health had given way. Only through his love and endless grace was it possible to get to the end. To Him be all glory and majesty forever and ever, Amen!
- 2) To Dr. Suraja Raman my thesis supervisor, whose love, commitment and unwavering support for me and my work will never be forgotten. She never stopped believing in me even when I was de-motivated. May God bless her greatly.
- 3) To Dr. Victor Cole whose invaluable insights were of tremendous help. I am especially grateful for sharing his knowledge on research methodology.
- 4) To my dear colleagues at NEGST, some of whom have graduated, for their input in my social, academic and spiritual life. More particularly to the following whose contribution to this work went far beyond the call of Christian charity:
 - John Balema Laba- for the seemingly endless hours he spent typing the drafts, formatting the text and proof-reading.
 - Pius Wawire- For timely suggestions and help in proof-reading and printing.
 - Uzo Asiachi Nanjero- For donating a computer and printer towards the initial work on my thesis. He was always at hand to offer transportation.

- Timothy Mutinda- For installing Windows '95 computer software on my PC when the old program crashed.
 - To Christine Elenborne- for assisting me with typing, reading and editing the text.
- 5) To the entire NEGST family for their love and prayers. Their encouragement kept me going when the going got tough.
 - 6) To our mother-church, the Nairobi Baptist Church who in more ways than one, provided the foundation as well as the backbone for this research. In particular, I would like to thank them for their continued prayer support, book scholarships and consistent financial assistance throughout our time at NEGST.
 - 7) To the Christian family at Karen Community Church for offering prayers, fellowship and numerous opportunities for spiritual growth and service.
 - 8) To my accountability groups here at NEGST and in Nairobi who offered their precious time in friendship, moral and material support. May the Lord reward them for their kindness.
 - 9) Last but not least, to my dear family for their incredible patience during the weeks I was unavailable to them. They were always there acting as my cheerleaders and never lost faith in me. I thank God most sincerely for this most precious gift that expresses His love for me.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Nairobi Baptist Church (NBC) is situated in the south western part of Nairobi, about two kilometers from the city on Ngong road. Started in 1957, the NBC emerged as it is today in 1987 as a multi-racial church that lays emphasis on and practices systematic expository Biblical preaching, true conversion in the Lord Jesus Christ and baptism (Gichinga 1989, 1-3). Among her various ministries is the women's ministry which dates back to 1958. Some of the key purposes of this ministry were to develop the devotional lives of women at the NBC, in order to contribute to the spiritual life of the church, as well as missionary involvement (Gichinga 1989, 60). In order for the church to enhance fellowship and concern among women, the NBC's women ministry introduced care groups and a "singles" fellowship in 1987. In 1988 and 1989 "Leadership retreats were organised... in order to challenge, equip and enrich the leadership" (Gichinga 1989, 66). Soon after, the Singles Fellowship was expanded to encompass other single women by virtue of separation, divorce and widowhood under a new name, the "Special Singles" Fellowship. In 1991 a widows fellowship was started and for the first time in the history of NBC, there seemed to be an awakening to the existence and inclusion of widows in the church's life. Widows, like other women, have

needs, hopes and aspirations. They need to be involved in the mainstream of life without any stigmatisation and subsequent isolation (Gitau 1996,3).

What was outstanding among these widows was the fact that they recognised their needs were different from those of their married women counterparts yet their abilities and potential remained the same.

As observed earlier, the Nairobi Baptist Church has responded to the widows' need to be loved through the creation of care groups and the Special Singles Fellowship, which groups together widows, spinsters and single mothers. However, none of these elements shared the deep wound of bereavement followed quickly by the ensuing social insecurity and stigmatisation. Marriage means security for a woman (Adeyemo 1997,1). Needless to say, widowhood steals this security and renders the widow vulnerable to isolation and suspicion, sometimes even being labelled as a prostitute and snatcher of husbands (Gitau 1996, 3).

Through this study the NBC may see their privileged position to provide a model for widows' nurture and ministry involvement to other churches experiencing rapid growth.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Within the context of a church like NBC which identifies specific groups of people for special care, it would be of interest to find out how NBC has

continued to minister to the widows who worship there. The purpose of the research concern, therefore, was to gain an insight into the Nairobi Baptist church's (NBC) understanding of the role of widows in her education ministries, how they are nurtured and what contribution they make in these ministries.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the NBC's understanding of the role of widows in her educational ministries?
2. How does NBC nurture and deploy widows in the educational ministries?
3. What attitudes do widows have towards themselves that could either limit or enhance their involvement in the NBC's educational ministries?

JUSTIFICATION

There is a need to bring widows out of the isolation, suspicion and stigmatisation associated with widowhood. This can be done through giving them responsibilities in the church so that they could regain their social worth and identify meaningfully within the Body of Christ.

The church is well placed to help the widows understand that before God they are as worthy as the rest of humanity and that widowhood is not akin to

inability. The genuineness and selflessness of widows in service is well illustrated by Christ's approval of the widow's contribution of two cents (Mk. 13 :41-44). churches have a need for workers who are committed, faithful and available. Women have proved themselves as good educators at their work places. They are seen as reliable in leadership, utilizing their awareness for detail, planning and sensitivity (Mathu 1997, 6) in task performance. These qualities do not diminish with widowhood.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The whole issue of widows has not yet attracted a lot of scholarly attention in the recent past. This study, therefore, sought to provide scholars with information on the topic of widows; specifically in the area of Christian nurture. Additionally, the completed study will shed more light on established Biblical principles, both in the Old and New Testaments, for the care of widows and how these principles could be applied in the local church. The study sought to provide information to churches intending to integrate widows into the functioning ministries in the church. It also sought to provide information to churches on the form of Christian nurture that widows would need in order to grow as Christians as well as create confidence in widows' importance as gifted vessels God could use for the growth of His church. This would help to re-establish the widows' valuable position in the community, enabling them to replace their self pity with enthusiastic support for and service in the church of Jesus Christ. This way the NBC might participate in bringing widows to the

mainstream of Church development to the glory of God and the extension of His Kingdom.

DELIMITATION

This study was confined to widows of the NBC, only because widowers are a minority and besides, in a male-dominated society like Kenya, men can re-marry at will as long as they can identify a willing partner. To underscore this point Gitau notes that “while widowers tend to re-marry without too much difficulty, the same cannot be said about many African widows” (Gitau 1996, 3). Additionally, widowers have no stigma attached to their status.

DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

WIDOW: The Old Testament describes a widow as a woman who has no one to support her and she therefore depends on the protection of the community. For this study, a widow will be defined as a woman who has lost her husband by way of death.

WIDOWHOOD: This refers to the unique situation of a widow characterised by insecurity, loneliness, sometimes harassment by in-laws and other unscrupulous members of the community.

LEVIRATE MARRIAGE: A form of remarriage by a widow to her late husband's brother or other male relative, commonly practised among the

traditional societies of the Kikuyu of central Kenya, the Luos of Nyanza Province and the Luhyas of western Kenya. It was also common among the Israelites of the Old Testament (Deut. 24).

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION MINISTRIES: Those church ministries that make conversion and spiritual growth their major goal (Nzigo 1997).

NURTURE: This term is used to refer to the kind of care directed towards widows for their spiritual growth.

DEPLOY: The definition given by the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, "to use effectively", will be used in this work.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature for this study was reviewed in two sections. The first section looked at literature covering the Biblical and African perspectives, the role of the church and Christian Educational ministries. The second section covered methodological literature. The following libraries were consulted for literature relevant to this study: Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST), Nairobi International School of Theology (NIST), Nairobi University and Hekima College.

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

Widows and widowhood are subjects that have attracted a lot of coverage both in the Old and the New Testaments.

The Old Testament (OT): The first account of a widow's plight is recorded in Genesis 39:18 where God emerges as the protector of a widow against deceit. God goes on to use the law as a guide to the community in order to make them take responsibility and make provision for the widows amongst them (Deut.10:18,24:19-21). Creig's comment on Deuteronomy 24:19-21 highlights the laws on protection of the legal rights of widows and the aliens

who were residents in Israel. Here the Hebrews are enjoined to love the aliens who are resident among them since they too were aliens and in effect “widows” in Egypt and therefore, their concern for this group of people should arise out of past experience and their new status as free covenant people (Creig 1976, 59). Here the concern for the widow, the alien and the orphan is imbedded in the whole Exodus experience and the covenant (Creig 1976, 59). Further care for the widow is provided for in Levirate marriages which gain legal authority in the community of Israel in Deuteronomy 14:5-10 (Creig 1976, 316) and in Ruth 1: 11-13 whereby a male relative of the deceased husband usually took care of the widow, bore children for his late brother or relative (Cundal & Morris 1968, 256) and supported the widow. This would be the case if the widow had no son and lived in the large family context. The Levirate law also protected the deceased’s brother from being compelled to marry the widow though he incurred the disapproval of both the widow and the community should he refuse to do so (Creig 1976, 314). The neglect, lack of succor or compassion to people without protection, especially widows and children, is condemned as a form of the worst social evil (Anderson n.d. 203). The Bible also condemns injustice, taking advantage of and oppression of the widow and the fatherless (Ps.94:6, Zach.7:10 and Mtt. 23:14, Mk. 2:40, Lk.20:47) in which case God emerges as their protector and judge (Ps.68:5). The predicament of widows does not appear to be an envied one as seen in the expressions of Rev. 18:5 where the writer says that “I sit as queen not as a widow” and Is. 47:8 “I shall not sit as a widow” where the widow is used as an image of desolation. However, this notwithstanding, positive images of

widows do appear. For example, widows were referred to as the altar of God, a metaphor representing the purity expected of widows (Thurston 1989, 106) and their dedication to service. He goes on to compare the widow with the Old Testament altar; steadfast, unmoving but always ready to have the sacrifice offered to God. In like manner the widow, as in Anna's case in Lk. 2:36-38 (Bromiley 1988, 1060), offered sacrifices of prayer and praise to God as an altar. Again the widow emerges as a figure with positive contributions, indeed with spiritual powers in the community (Thurston 1989, 108).

From these few examples, the widow is portrayed as continuously active and dynamic, with God hearing her cries (Ex. 22:23). Another positive image of a widow is found in Ruth 2:1ff. Ruth, a young Moabite widow rose above the loneliness, financial deprivation and social insecurity through the opportunity given to her by her mother-in-law Naomi. Instead, through the opportunity given to her by Naomi, Ruth served her, clung to her, went out to work and brought food home, confided in her and obeyed her (Adeyemo 1997, 2).

From Ruth's story, the picture given is that widows need the opportunity to serve, a place to belong, the challenge to contribute positively to the welfare of the community, a confidant, and an opportunity to exercise their great sense of responsibility.

This point is further reemphasized in 1 Kings 17:9 where God chooses to use a widow and commends Elijah to her for care and provision. This clearly

shows that God has a place in His Kingdom for widows to enter into service. Why did God not use the rich women of Zarephath instead of a poor widow? He knew and still knows the commitment, love, and dedication inherent in most widows and their need to feel useful and accepted in society was as real then as it is today. The Zarephath widow continued to supply food to the prophet for as long as the drought lasted (1 Kings 17:14-15).

The New Testament: In the New Testament, widows' social and legal position did not differ much from that which was given in the Old Testament. Widows were still poor (Lk. 21:2-4; Mk.12:42-44; Acts 6:1ff.). They were victims of exploitation even by the religious leaders of their day (MK. 12:40). Securing Justice was very difficult for them (Lk.18:1-5). The OT picture of oppression on one hand and God's love and protection on the other hand is carried forward to the NT. Particularly in the book of James, the Church is admonished to take care of widows and orphans as demonstration of a religion that is true and pure (Jas.1:27). Indeed, care and support for the widow was a Christian duty (Guthrie 1984, 100) through which the Church would demonstrate active and serious obedience to God. The early Church considered the care of widows as one of her priorities. Acts 6:1-7 gives a picture of a church that appointed elders for this task. By the time the Pastoral Epistles were being written, there had emerged an official order for the care of widows. This was a major component of the early church ministries (Bromiley 1988, 1061).

I Timothy 5:3ff gives guidelines on how the Church should take care of widows. The Church is instructed to take care of older widows without family support. The task of hospitality and service to others in a committed manner to the Lord is given to those widows enlisted for Church care. The Church was therefore a place where widows could be cared for and placed in a position of responsibility. The Christian widow can therefore be viewed as a Christian worker performing various tasks in the Church. Younger widows are encouraged to remarry (1 Tim. 5:5, 9-15). The early Church gives the contemporary church a model for the systematic, on-going care for widows (Thomas 1996, 2215). Luke's example of Anna's devotion to prayer and fasting (Luke 7:11-15) illustrates the crucial role of prayer to the spiritual life of the early Christian community (Thurston 1989, 24).

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

I Timothy 5: 5ff views widows as a group that merits special attention and care. The guidelines on the care of widows given by Paul to Timothy are indeed directed to the church (Knight 1992, 213). The Church needs to view the same instructions as functionally relevant and applicable in their context (Tucker 1992, 89). There is a need for purposeful development of God's People (Habermas 1992, 12). As a people who have been subjects of social unfairness, in terms of injustice and so on, and yet gifted for service, the Church needs to look for tangible ways through which widows could be nurtured in a purposeful way. The emotional, social, family and financial

structure shaken by bereavement can be put together by the love of Christ that the Church is able to offer through fellowship and opportunities for service. The churches' role would therefore be to help the widows identify their strength in service and deploy them appropriately, either as paid workers or volunteers.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATIONAL MINISTRIES

The Christian educational ministries of the church could offer a useful avenue through which widows could work toward spiritual maturity. It is also through these educational ministries of the church that widows' abilities and gifts can find expression.

Indeed the church needs to begin looking critically at the quality of the members through rooting them in the word. The purpose of the educational ministries of the Church among other things is to strengthen believers in order that the transformed lives are nurtured into maturity (Powers 1981, 12). The educational ministries of the Church help believers to see their place in the Church as they endeavour to fulfill the great commission as spelt out in the scripture. Widows would therefore find a place to serve and find belongingness as they grow towards spiritual maturity.

AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

Widowhood constitutes one of the biggest burdens that a woman can bear. It carries with it heavy financial, social, emotional and spiritual implications. In the African context widowhood implied the loss of the protection of a designated marital partner, leaving the widow with an unidentified and insecure social position within the society, especially if she was young. It would only be through her continued fertility that she could maintain the integrity and continuity of the family started by her late husband (Kirwen 1979,12). The widow was, therefore, expected to remarry in a Levirate union, failing which she would suffer as a non-conformist. Through a levirate union the widow would be able to look forward to care and protection in her old age (Kirwen 1979, 13) from the society's point of view. Commenting on widows' remarriage in the old African set-up, Gitau notes that "the widow was part of the family concerned and the extended family made sure she never lacked anything" (Gitau 1996, 3). This has changed with modernity and the practice has of late attracted a lot of debate based on the right of the widow to choose, if she so desires, another husband without undue influence and the need to consider the underlying health implications, especially with the current AIDS epidemic before she commits herself to remarriage.

The traditional African support system is no longer there. Its equivalent could only be seen in the community of believers in our local churches today. Nevertheless, as it was in the Jewish and NT early Church, widows continue to face neglect, isolation, exploitation and even suspicion. The community

looks at an unattached widow as publicly prone to promiscuity (Kirwen 1986, 13). This perspective of a widow seems to presuppose that widows have no economic value. In a research done by Michael Kirwen among the Kuria of Nyanza Province, methods applied in the care of the widow, such as giving her land to build and grow food, did not address her problem of loneliness and the need to feel useful. The Catholic Church would hinder widows from participating in Church activities, arguing that the widow would be prone to promiscuity (Kirwen 1979, 14). Today's Church has the privilege of being partners with other organisations concerned with the plight of widows in alleviating their problems.

Majority of women in Kenya depend on their husbands for financial support either totally or partially. Thus in the event of widowhood, most widows are financially devastated. When widows are seen as potentially useful and productive in the society, there is a chance to help them overcome the financial loss by engaging them in gainful employment.

SUMMARY OF LITERATURE

The scriptures reveal God's compassion, care, provision, protection and restoration for the needy and the disadvantaged (Lk. 7:11-15). He emerges as their benefactor, protector and defender while pronouncing harsh judgement against their oppressors. Religious practices in the OT demanded respect for the widow and the orphan (Stulac 1993, 85). The early Church

recognised not only the importance of addressing widows as a group with special needs but also saw the services they could offer to the church for the edification of the body of Christ. In the African traditional society, widows were cared for, especially in the extended family context.

Commenting on the moral law, Anderson, as quoted by Lee (1989, 21), observes that the law applies to believers today because “it is an expression of the character of God himself and of that righteousness... its requirements have always been written in men’s hearts.” The education ministries of the church would offer good opportunities for the care of widows and also for their nurture.

METHODOLOGICAL LITERATURE

Literature on methods of data collection was reviewed. There are various methods of data collection which include the questionnaire, the interview method and the observation method. For the purpose of this study, literature on the questionnaire and the interview methods was reviewed. These two methods of data collection being popular with researchers were adopted because of their effectiveness in data collection and also because they were less time consuming as compared to the observation method.

Records too are an invaluable source of data collection. Thus the records of NBC were perused in order for the researcher to get preliminary information

on the exact number of leaders serving in various capacities at NBC. In addition, records were required in order to establish who among the members were widows. It was hoped that the membership and the attendance registers would provide the needed information.

The questionnaire is a well known tool of data collection because specific data related to a specifically defined problem can be collected, analysed and interpreted; and it gives a better understanding of the issue. This instrument could either be open-ended or closed-ended. Closed-ended questions help in guiding the thoughts of the respondent. The self-completed questionnaire is an impersonal research instrument with less possibilities of interviewer bias (Mann 1985, 165). A well designed questionnaire has the advantage of getting respondent's attitudes especially through open-ended questions which facilitate the use of the respondent's own words in answering questions. With open-ended questions, therefore, the opinion of the respondent can be gathered without influencing his/her response. It also has poor response rates. Nevertheless, the questionnaire is an effective data collection tool.

The questionnaires could either be mailed or administered personally, which is an accepted mode of reaching the respondents in research (Leedy 1993, 187). Experts in data collection methods have found out that it is important to emphasise clarity and conciseness of the questionnaire in order for the researcher to communicate exactly what it is he/she intends to say and also to enable the respondent to answer the questions as concisely as possible.

Caution should be exercised in order not to stress the respondent. This is to be ensured by designing an instrument that is not too long to demand a lot of time from the respondent, thereby interfering with the easiness with which the respondents should give their views (Leedy 1993,189).

The interview adds flavour to data collection because questions that are sensitive can be delicately probed without hurting the respondent's feelings. Also the interview method offers a chance to clarify statements made by the respondent there and then. The interview is administered personally and orally. Interviews can either be structured or unstructured. Interviews should be structured so that all respondents are exposed to nearly identical experience in order to ensure reasonably comparable responses. Interviews are guided by interview guides that contain questions to be asked by the interviewer. Open-ended questions are usually used. The unstructured interview is usually recommended for situations where the type of information sought is difficult for the subjects to express or is psychologically distressing to the individual. This procedure must constantly adapt to the respondent and it is highly subjective and time consuming (Borg & Gall 1989, 467).

The unstructured interview followed the interview guide and was used when the interviewer sensed that the widow may have been experiencing difficulties owing to the fact that the nature of information sought had psychological impact on the individual. As such, the researcher was sensitive to adapt to the

respondent and took the time needed to gather the required information. The interview method has higher return rates than the questionnaire but both instruments are and were effective data collection tools.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This study used the descriptive research design to help the researcher gain insight into the NBC's understanding of the role of widows in the Christian Education Ministries, the process of nurture and their service to this Church. This chapter looked at the procedures which enabled the researcher to collect the needed data. These included: entry, population, sampling, instrument design, pilot testing, and data analysis.

ENTRY

Entry is the process through which initial contact between the researcher and the source of data was established. An approach was necessary in order to notify respondents of the intended study, the purpose of conducting it and the person who would be conducting it. This process prepared the respondents to receive the researcher ahead of time (Mann 1985 145-19).

In order to facilitate data collection, an initial introductory meeting was scheduled with the Senior Pastor. Thereafter, a letter of introduction was obtained from the Vice Principal of Academic Affairs to the Senior Pastor of

the NBC. This letter was appended to the thesis. Thereafter, individual respondents to the questionnaire were given an introduction/explanatory letter attached to the questionnaire while interviewees were approached by telephone and interview appointments booked accordingly.

POPULATION

For this study two groups of people were studied in order for the researcher to gain an insight into the NBC's understanding of the role of widows in her education ministries, how these widows were nurtured and what contribution they made in these ministries. The first group comprised the widows from the Nairobi Baptist Church in Nairobi. These were middle aged women in professional careers. Some had teenage children while others had young adults. These were also women who had lost their husbands and were either registered members, regular attenders and occasional attenders/ counsel seekers at the NBC. All the widows of the NBC comprised twenty five women.

The second group comprised of leaders MBC in Nairobi. These were men aged between thirty and sixty years who were involved in church leadership. They held various positions of authority either in Government or in the private sector. They were converted Christians. They were registered church members. This group was made up of people entrusted by members with the task of making recommendations and decisions and implementing the same

on behalf of the members. The leaders were categorised according to their positions. All the leaders, about thirty of them, were approached for the study.

SAMPLING

There was no sampling because the populations were fairly small. For the purpose of this study, the population consisted of widows of the NBC who were described as above. The other group consisted of leaders of the same church, the NBC. These are leaders who were involved in the decision making process of the church. It was expected that each member of these populations would be approached for data collection.

INSTRUMENT

The researcher developed two instruments for data collection. These were an open and closed-ended questionnaire and an interview guide. One, the questionnaire, was administered to the NBC leaders whereas the other was administered through the interview method to the widows.

The questionnaire was a seventeen-item instrument divided into three sections consisting of both open and closed-ended items. The closed-ended items were designed to help the respondent enjoy the freedom of expressing personal opinions. The closed-ended questions , among other things, facilitated the classification of variables.

Section A had three items that sought demographic information such as position in leadership to years of service. Section B had six items seeking information related to widows' involvement in church ministry. Section C contained information related to care and nurture of widows. It had eight items. The second instrument was seventeen-item instrument divided into four sections. Section A consisted of demographic information covered in six items. Section B consisted of three items seeking information related to attitude. Section C consisted of four items seeking information related to widows' ministry involvement. Section D consisted of four items seeking information related to Christian nurture.

PILOT STUDY

This form of survey was carried out before the actual study was undertaken. Five Master of Divinity students, already actively serving in the leadership of local churches were surveyed. It was expected that the selected leaders were well versed with what was actually happening within the churches they were serving in.

The interview guide was tested with widows. Five widows who were willing to accept being interviewed were surveyed. They were selected from the Karen neighbourhood. The purpose of the pilot study was to test the validity and clarity of the items in the questionnaire and the interview guide. It also facilitated corrections and modifications as needed. After the instruments

were corrected, they were then administered to the respondents. The interview was conducted by the researcher while a research assistant was hired to assist in the administration of the questionnaire. The assistant was needed because NBC leaders with the exception of the Pastors, work outside the premises of NBC and they therefore needed to be located at their places of work.

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The responses from the respondents were tallied and summed up in order to find out the NBC's understanding of the role of widows in her education ministries and how these widows were nurtured and deployed in the Church. Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods were used. Sections A of each instrument containing independent variables such as position in leadership, period of service (in the questionnaire) and church membership, period of membership, educational level and period of widowhood (in the interview guide) were used in analyzing responses obtained from the various respondents. A tabular representation of the categories of widows who responded to the Interview guide is given below:

Table 1a: Categories of widows

CATEGORY OF WIDOW	NO. PER CATEGORY	NO. OF RESPONDENTS
Registered member	15	12 (80%)
Regular attender	5	3 (60%)
Total	20	15 (75%)

From the above table it can be observed that out of twenty interviewees, fifteen participated in the interview. This showed a participation rate of 75%. A tabular sample of how respondents to the questionnaire would be categorised is given below:

Table 2a: Category of leaders

CATEGORY OF LEADER	NO. PER CATEGORY	NO. OF RESPONDENTS
Pastors	4	4 (100%)
Elders	11	5 (45%)
Board chairmen	6	4 (67%)
Ministry leaders	5	5 (100%)
Any other	0	0
Total	26	18 (69%)

From the table above, out of 26 questionnaires sent out to leaders, 18 were returned. This showed a return rate of 69%. The return rate was lowest among Elders.

Finding and interpretation

In order for the researcher to report the findings for interpretation, three research questions raised in chapter one served as a guide.

The first research question was stated as follows:

Research question 1: What is the NBC's understanding of the role of widows in her education ministries?

Section B of the questionnaire, which had seven items seeking information on widows' involvement in church ministry, provided data to this research question.

The second research question was stated as follows:

Research question 2: How does NBC nurture and deploy widows?

Section C of the questionnaire, which had seven items, provided data to this research question. Responses in this section were analysed qualitatively.

Research question 2: How does NBC nurture and deploy widows?

This question also had its data provided by sections C and D of the Interview guide. It facilitated the comparison of responses from the two groups of people which were studied on the areas of nurture and deployment.

The third research question was stated as follows:

Research question 3: What attitudes do widows have towards themselves that could either limit or enhance their involvement in the educational ministries of NBC? Section B of the Interview guide provided data to this question.

Each question was analyzed in terms of the main thought given the total number of respondents. For example, question 10 in the Interview guide sought to find out what opportunities widows found to share their needs at NBC. The possible answer could be that ten out of twelve widows might give

Care Groups as the main answer. These widows might be registered Church members with over five years of membership. They might be professionals with secondary education and they might have been widowed for over five years. After data analysis, observations were made, conclusions arrived at and recommendations made and reported.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter will look into how collected data were presented, analyzed and interpreted. Two groups provided data for analysis. The first group comprised of twenty-three widows and the second one comprised of thirty leaders. The two groups were from Nairobi Baptist Church. Among the widows, seventeen were registered members, three were regular attenders and three sought counsel at the NBC. The leaders were as follows: four pastors, eleven elders five board leaders (or directors) and ten committee members. The findings were reported in two sections. The first section entailed response from the interview guide and the second section entailed responses from the questionnaire. The response rates for both the interview guide and the questionnaire were presented in table form.

INTERVIEW GUIDE RETURNS

Out of the twenty-five widows targeted, twenty-three were contacted and interviewed. Among the twenty-three, nineteen were registered members while four were regular attenders. The responses are given as a percentage of the

expected responses. The participation rate to the interview guide was summed up in the table below.

Table 1: Interview guide returns

Church membership	No. in category	Response rate %
Registered members	17	68
Regular attenders	3	12
Counsel seekers/occasional attenders	3	12
Total	23	92

The above table shows a 92% of the expected participation rate. Out of twenty widows of NBC seventeen were registered members and three were regular attenders. Of the three occasional, two were registered members while one was a regular attender in other denominations.

Demographic information from the interview guide

Demographic data for the interview guide were summarized as follows:

Period of Church membership

Table two below shows widows' Church membership distribution.

Table 2: Period of membership.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Below 1 year	0	0
1 - 2 Years	3	13
3 - 4 years	3	13
5 years and above	17	74
Total	23	100

Table two shows that three interviewees had a membership of one to two years, another three (26%) had a membership of three to four years while seventeen had membership of five years and above. This reveals that majority (74%) of widows have a church membership of over five years.

Educational group

Table three below shows widows' educational groups.

Table 3: Educational group.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Elementary	2	9
Secondary	15	65
First degree	3	13
Post graduate	3	13
Total	23	100

Table three shows that two widows had elementary education, fifteen had secondary education, three had first degrees and another three had post graduate degrees. The two interviewees with elementary education and one with secondary education were counsel seekers. Majority of the widows had

completed secondary education. A few had pursued further studies, university and post graduate work. None had pursued Ph. D studies.

Occupational group

Widows educational groups are shown in the table below.

Table 4: Occupation group

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Skilled	3	13
Non-skilled	2	9
Professional	18	78
Total	23	100

Table four shows that three widows were in a category of skilled occupational group. This category has individuals who are trained to do certain jobs or have learnt through experience. Two were in non-skilled occupations (they do the type of work that does not require training or experience) and eighteen were in professional occupations. The study revealed that more than half of the widows were in the professional category.

Period of widowhood

The table below shows Period of widowhood distribution.

Table 5: Period of widowhood.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Below 1 year	3	13
2 - 3 years	7	30
4 - 5 years	3	13
Above 5 years	10	44
Total	23	100

Table five shows that three widows had been widowed for a period of less than one year, seven for two to three years, three for four to five years, and ten for over five years. This reveals that majority fall in the two to three years(30%) and five and above years (44%) category. This further indicates that some of the interviewees had been widowed for longer than others.

Summary of Finding

From the demographic data collected, the findings revealed that fifteen widows had been attending NBC for over five years, two widows for three to four years and three widows for a period of one to two years. Two of those that sought counsel (occasional attenders) were registered members of their churches while one was a regular attender. 83% of interviewees had over five years of membership while 17.% had less than five years of membership. Majority of the widows had secondary, graduate and post graduate education and they were in the professional occupational group with the exception of two. Their periods of widowhood ranged between two and five years and above. Majority (65%) of respondents had been widowed for over five years.

Interpretation

Majority of interviewees were registered church members for more than five years. Church membership could be one of the ways that gives them the opportunity to interact with various individuals. The findings also revealed that majority (65%) are above average education. The report revealed that 26% had university education and were in professional occupations. About 9% had elementary education and were in unskilled professions. All the interviewees of NBC were found to be educated. They were in professional occupations apart from two who were in skilled and non-skilled occupations respectively. This reveals a big pool of skilled and professional workers for the church. The church should tap their resources in Christian service and encourage them to utilize their talents for the Kingdom of God.

QUESTIONNAIRE RETURNS

Twenty nine leaders from the Nairobi Baptist Church responded to the questionnaire. Table two below sums up the rate of response:

Table 6: Questionnaire returns

Category of leader	No. in category	rate of response
Pastors	4	4 (13%)
Elders	11	10 (32%)
Board heads	6	5 (16%)
Ministry leaders	10	10 (32%)
Total	31	29 (93%)

Table six above shows a 93% response. Out of the twenty nine respondents, four were Pastors, ten were Elders, five were Board heads and ten were ministry leaders. This revealed that NBC leadership comprises of pastors, elders, board heads or directors and ministry leaders.

The table below shows the distribution of their periods of service.

Table 7: Period of service

Period of service	Frequency					%
	P*	E*	BD*	ML*	Total	
1-2 years	1	5	2	3	11	39
3-4 years	1	2	1	5	9	32
5-6 years	1	1	0	1	3	11
Above 6	1	2	1	1	5	18
Total	4	10	4	10	28	100

- Key
- P= Pastors
- E= Elders
- BD= Board Directors
- ML= Ministry Leaders

Interpretation

The above table shows that a group of eleven (39%) leaders had served for one to two years. Another group of nine (32%) leaders had served for three to four years. Two other groups of three (11%) and five (18) leaders had served for periods of five to six and over six years respectively. The study revealed that 71% of the leaders fell in the one to two and three to four year periods. Eight leaders had served for periods exceeding five years. These findings revealed

that an eighty-nine percent majority of respondents had served for four years and below. It could be inferred that leaders serve for short terms and they are eligible for re-election. Eleven of the leaders who had served for a one to two year period could have been relatively new in leadership while the other sixteen could have been re-elected.

RQ1

There were three research questions for this study. The first one was:

What is the NBC's understanding of the role of widows in her educational ministries? Section B of the questionnaire had seven items that sought information on widows' involvement in ministry at the NBC. These seven items were used to gather information for this research question.

WIDOWS INVOLVEMENT IN MINISTRY

Leaders' engagement in NBC ministries

Leaders were asked to list the current ministries they were engaged in at the NBC. The following ministries were listed. Category B comprised of other ministries also specified by leaders.

Category A

- Worship
- Adult
- Youth
- Children
- Administration
- Outreach

Category B

Teaching category

Preaching

Management category

Finance committee

Call committee

Administration

Social outreach committee

Worship category

Prayer

Choir

Ushering

Age category

Men's ministry

Young couples fellowship

Women's ministry

Young professionals

Sunday school

Interpretation

Out of thirty one leaders, twenty nine responded to the questionnaire. All the leaders were involved in the various ministries of the Church. This revealed that NBC offered a wide range of ministries and leaders participated in them both as

leaders and as servants. This could be inferred from the articulation of the broad ministries and the specification of other ministries. This could further reveal that leaders were well informed about the needs of the congregation.

Leaders growth in ministry

Leaders were then asked to state if these ministries were involved in helping leaders to grow. The following responses were obtained:

Table 8: Leader’s growth in ministry

Response	Frequency	percentage
Yes	25	83
No	5	17
No response	0	0
Total	30	100

Interpretation

The above table shows that twenty five (83%) leaders responded that these ministries were involved in helping leaders to grow. Five (17%) leaders indicated that these ministries were not involved in helping leader to grow. These findings revealed there was concern for growth of leaders. Various ministry leaders could therefore benefit from existing opportunities for growth.

Widows’ place in ministry

Leaders were also asked if widows had a place in these ministries. Their responses were as follows.

Table 9: Widows role in ministry

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	25	83
No	3	10
No Response	2	7
Total	30	100

Interpretation

Table nine above shows that twenty five (83%) leaders indicated that widows had a place in these ministries. Three (10%) indicated that widows did not have a place in these ministries while two (7%) did not respond. This revealed that majority of the leaders saw the place of widows in ministry. NBC leaders were non-discriminative against widows. NBC leaders could therefore be encouraged to elicit widows' participation in ministry.

Widows and positions

When asked whether they would approve if the position of a board leader was occupied by a widow, leaders indicated as follows:

Table 10: Holding position-Widows

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	24	80
No	0	0
No indication	1	3
No response	5	17
Total	30	100

Interpretation

Twenty four (80%) leaders responded in the affirmative. One (3%) respondent gave no indication while five(17%) did not respond. This revealed that leaders viewed widows as available and potential Christian workers. They therefore had no problem working with widows or having them take leadership positions in the church.

Widows working in the church

Leaders were asked to give the number of widows who were currently working in the church, either as volunteers or as paid workers. Twenty seven leaders responded to this question. Since respondents were to choose more than one response, totals are absent in the presentation of data. The following were their responses:

Table 11: Widows working in church

Responses	Responses	
	Paid workers	Volunteers
1-5	4	3
6-10	2	2
Many	0	5
No response	6	8

Interpretation

The above table reveals how leaders responded to the issue of widows working in the Church. Six leaders indicated that there were widows working as paid

workers. None of the leaders indicated whether or not there were any widows working as paid workers in the six to ten or in the “many” brackets. Six leaders did not indicate whether there were any leaders working as paid workers. Three of the leaders indicated that there were one to five widows working as volunteers. Another group of two of the leaders indicated that there were six to ten volunteer widows. Still another group of five leaders indicated that there were many widows working as volunteers. Still another group of eight of the leaders did not indicate whether any widows worked as volunteers. Sixteen of the leaders responded to each part of the question.

The findings revealed that there is an awareness among the leaders that widows were serving in the church either as volunteers or as paid workers. However there was no consensus on exactly how many they were in each category. Of those to whom the questionnaire was administered, sixteen reported that widows worked in the church both as volunteers and as paid workers. Of the sixteen, ten indicated that there were widows working only as volunteers in the church. This further revealed that not every leader at NBC was fully informed on the exact number of widows serving in the church whether as volunteers or as paid workers.

Areas of ministry where leaders expect widows to be involved in

Leaders were asked to suggest areas of ministry whereby widows were expected to be involved. All the leaders indicated that widows were expected to be

involved in all the ministries of the church. Two leaders indicated that widows were expected to be involved in all the ministries except in the pulpit ministry. This shows that leaders were aware of the expectations of widows in terms of ministry involvement and widowhood should not limit women's involvement in church. This notwithstanding, there appears to be a restriction on women's involvement in the pulpit ministry.

Widows' placement in ministry

Respondents were then asked to indicate the areas of Church ministry widows were being placed in and the specific responsibilities given to them. The respondents listed the following areas and responsibilities: One of the areas listed was the Special Singles fellowship where widows were given the responsibilities of leading, organizing and encouraging other widows. In Care groups and Area Pastoral units, widows were expected to be members. In Sunday school, they were to be responsible for the teaching. Under the area of hospitality, they were to serve as the need arose. Under the area of visitation, widows were given the responsibility of evangelism and serving as intercessors in the prayer ministry. This revealed that widows had the opportunity to exercise their skills and gifts as they served in various capacities at the church.

Summary of findings

Research question one revealed that widows had a role in the ministry life of NBC where they could take various responsibilities. Leaders viewed them as

skillful, gifted and available servants for the Lord's work at the church. Leaders also displayed a fairly good understanding of the needs of their congregation by articulating the ministries they were currently involved in. However, leaders found it difficult to articulate the exact number of widows working in the church either as paid workers or as volunteers. There is a need for a fresh appraisal of widows' contribution to NBC life. This would also make it easy to quantify the help or services received from widows. This could further strengthen NBC's understanding of the role of widows in the educational ministries of the church.

CARE AND NURTURE OF WIDOWS

RQ2

The second research question read: **How does NBC nurture and deploy widows?** Section C of the Questionnaire, sought information related to care and nurture of widows. Seven items provided data for this research question. Responses to this question were analyzed qualitatively.

Equipping of leaders

Leaders were asked to mention how NBC equipped the various ministry leaders. Leaders indicated they were equipped for ministry through retreats, seminars, theological training, discipleship, workshops and internship. The table below shows these responses in table form:

Table 12: Ways of equipping leaders

Responses	Frequency
seminars	21
Retreats	17
Theological training	16
Discipleship	13
Workshops	19
Internship	16

This showed that NBC used both formal and non-formal training approaches to equip leaders for ministry. This revealed that leaders use their leadership skills and gifts in the Church. There were many opportunities to grow in Christian character and service through acquiring ministry skills, sharing of one's faith and experiences.

Ways NBC assisted widows to grow

Respondents were asked to mention ways through which NBC assisted widows to grow. Their responses were as follows:

Table13: Ways of assisting widows to grow

Responses	Frequency
Special Singles fellowship	26
Care groups	23
APUs	10

The study revealed that the Special Singles' fellowship was a major way of assisting widows to grow. This indicated that they were recognized as one of the various small groups in the church. The study further revealed that Care groups

contributed significantly towards the growth of widows. Area Pastoral Units had a role to play too. This revealed that NBC integrated widows into the body of believers.

Provision of Care groups, widows' needs and the Churches' response

Leaders were asked to mention whether provision of Care groups showed that widows had special needs and if so, what were they? Leaders were thereafter asked to indicate how the Church was responding to those need. Multiple responses were obtained from each leader for the last two questions.

When asked whether provision of Care groups showed that widows had special needs, all the leaders with the exception of four indicated that indeed provision of Care groups showed that widows had special needs.

Table 14: Provision of Care groups

Response	Frequency (%)
Yes	25 (86)
No	4 (14)
Total	29 (100)

Interpretation

The lack of consensus as to whether provision of care groups showed that widows had special needs revealed that Care groups do not necessarily cater for widows' needs but rather they should be designed to take care of widows' needs.

Care groups would therefore, emerge as a unique way of helping leaders to find out widows' special needs.

Leaders listed the following needs: They included financial, material, companionship, acceptance, encouragement, care, love, fellowship and help with raising their children. These needs are summarized in the following table:

Table15: Widows' needs

Responses	Frequency
Financial	18
Material	10
Companionship	10
Acceptance	14
Encouragement	1
Care	8
Love	2
Fellowship	14
Help with raising of children	13

Interpretation

This revealed that through Care groups, needs of financial, material, emotional and spiritual nurture found room for expression. The study also revealed that provision for care should include the children of the widows.

Leaders were asked to indicate how the Church was responding to these needs.

Apart from Care groups, the needs listed above were met through the Special singles' fellowship. The pastors' compassionate fund also catered for financial needs of Church members. Non- members were provided for mainly through an

outreach ministry of NBC that cares for non-church members. This information is summarized as follows:

Table16: Ways NBC responded to widows' needs

Response	Frequency
Care groups	6
Special singles' Fellowship	12
Adoption of widows' families	7
NOW committee (Nairobi Outreach through Welfare)	10

Interpretation

The study revealed that leaders were not only aware of widows' needs but were making efforts towards meeting those needs.

Services widows could offer to the Church

Apart from needing care and nurture, leaders indicated that widows could offer the following services in the church. These were counseling, teaching, singing, visitation, hospitality, and raising awareness on widowhood. A tabular summary is given here below:

Table17: Services widows could offer

Responses	Frequency
Counseling	12
Teaching	8
Singing	4
Visitation	6
Hospitality	4
Raising awareness on widowhood	6

This revealed that apart from serving in the active ministries, leaders expected widows to take the initiative and inform the church about their plight. This could perhaps enable leaders to assess their needs for focused intervention. Additionally, participation in ministry would perhaps be an indication of spiritual growth (Ex.6:9).

Leaders attitude towards widows' training for ministry involvement

Leaders were asked to indicate their attitude towards widows' training for involvement in the Churches' educational ministries. Twenty eight leaders expressed their support for widows' involvement in ministry by affirming that their attitude towards widows' training for involvement in the Churches' educational ministries was positive. Their responses were as follows:

Table18: Leaders' attitude towards widows' training

Response	Frequency (%)
Positive	28 (97)
No response	1 (3)
Total	29 (100)

This revealed the fact that leaders recognized widowhood as a status with a heavy impact on an individual. There is a cry to support the growth and involvement of such an individual. This further revealed that leaders have a supportive and professional attitude towards widows in the Church.

Ministry resources used for widows' nurture

Leaders were also asked to indicate which ministry resources they had used to nurture widows. The following ministry resources were indicated:

Table 19: Ministry resources for widows' nurture

Response	Frequency
Special singles' fellowship	26
Care groups	13
APUs	10

The Special Single's fellowship (28 respondents), Care groups (13 respondents) and Area Pastoral Units (APUs) (10 respondents) were the three ministry resources used expressly to nurture widows. This revealed that the Special Singles' fellowship, Care groups and APUs were very important ministry resources for growth in Christian maturity.

Further strategies for effective ministry to widows

Finally leaders were asked to specify some further strategies for an effective ministry to widows. Leaders gave more than one response each. The following suggestions were give:

Table 20: Further strategies for effective ministry

Responses	Frequency
Separate counseling ministry to widows	12
Creation of awareness	28
Need for an adult Pastor	9
Linking of widow to non-widow families	4

Twelve leaders suggested that the Church establishes a separate ministry focusing specifically on widows with counseling as one of its main functions. Creating an awareness in the church was also suggested in order to eliminate ignorance on issues pertaining to widowhood. This suggestion was given by twenty eight leaders. Four other leaders suggested that there was a need to link the families of these widows with church members to serve as foster families. The need for an adult pastor was highlighted by nine leaders. Further indications were that employing an adult pastor would provide for the Church the opportunity to minister effectively to widows. This revealed that leaders have noted the need to raise awareness in order for the whole Church to assist widows in their grief and growth. Counseling emerged as a recognized ministry tool for effective intervention in bereavement.

RQ2: How does NBC nurture and deploy widows in her educational ministries?

Responses to this research question were gathered through sections C and D of the interview guide. These sections had four items each. Section C of the

interview guide sought to gather information related to ministry involvement while section D sought to gather information related to Christian nurture.

MINISTRY INVOLVEMENT

In order to find out how widows were involved in ministry, the researcher developed four open-ended questions. These questions were designed to help the researcher gather information related to widows' ministry involvement.

Ways widows felt welcomed and needed

Interviewees were asked to list the ways in which they had felt both welcome and needed in the church as widows. Their responses were as follows.

Table 21: Ways widows felt welcomed and needed

Response	Frequency	%
As they served in the church	9	39
None	9	39
No particular way but always felt needed and welcomed	4	17
Not availed self of the opportunity	1	4
Total	23	99

The above table shows that nine (39%) of the widows indicated that serving in the church was one way through which they felt both welcomed and needed in the church. Another group of nine widows (39%) indicated that they had not felt needed nor welcomed. Four (17%) widows indicated that they had always felt both needed and welcomed though they could not mention in which particular way(s). One (4%) other widow indicated that she had not yet availed herself of the opportunity to find out if she were welcomed or needed.

Interpretation

Findings from the above table revealed that thirty-nine percent (39%) of widows felt both welcomed and needed as they served in various ways. Findings further showed that those widows who were not serving in the church felt neither welcomed nor needed.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit- Widows'

Interviewees were asked to list the gifts they felt the Holy Spirit had given them. They listed the gifts of prayer, hospitality, teaching, singing, encouragement, counseling and service. Five widows indicated that they were uncertain about their spiritual gifts.

Interpretation

This reveals that God is at work in the lives of widows through His Holy Spirit. Widowhood does not limit His work in the affected individuals. Since not every

interviewee was certain about her area of gifting, there is a need to facilitate means through which they could identify their spiritual gifts. This would not only enable them to offer their services but would also increase their feeling of being needed and welcomed.

Utilization of gifts

Interviewees were asked to indicate how they had utilized their gifts in the various educational ministries of the church. Table thirteen below shows their responses.

Table 22. Areas of Gift use

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
None	9	39.1
Sunday school	3	13
Women ministry	3	13
Hospitality	3	13
Prayer	1	4.3
Encouragement	1	4.3
Counseling	2	8.7
Outreach	1	4.3
Total	23	99.7 (100)

About 60% (14) of the interviewees were using their spiritual gifts in the various ministries of the church. About 40% (9) were not using their spiritual gifts.

The interviewees who had not used their spiritual gifts were asked to indicate which areas of ministry they would use them. The following areas were listed:

women ministry, visitation and hospitality. As mentioned in the literature, the women's ministry is concerned with the development of the devotional lives of women in the church (Gichinga 1989, 60). Hospitality and visitation are areas that call for personal interaction as well as reaching out to others.

Interpretation

The study revealed that there exists a wide range of ministries at NBC where widows could use their spiritual gifts. There is therefore a need to establish and encourage processes that would ensure that widows get to discover areas the Holy Spirit had gifted them in.

Confidence in using of spiritual gift

When asked what were some of the situations that would make them feel confident as they used their gifts, interviewees gave the responses shown in the table below:

Table 23. Confidence in using gift(s).

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
While serving I felt accepted	12	52
Felt Holy Spirit working in my life	1	4
None	10	44
Total	23	100

Interpretation

Twelve (52%) interviewees who had had the opportunity to use their gifts had felt confident as they served. This was because they felt accepted. Ten (44%) did not list any situation that had made them feel confident. This revealed that the process of service enables people to feel accepted which also helps them gain confidence in using their spiritual gifts.

CHRISTIAN NURTURE

Under the above sub-title, data related to Christian nurture were analyzed.

Question related to this section were open-ended.

Provision for Christian growth

Interviewees were asked to indicate whether they felt the church offered enough opportunities for Christian growth. Their responses are shown in the table below.

Table 24: Provision for Christian growth.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, preaching ministry	12	52
Yes, care and prayer groups	1	4
APU*	2	9
Yes, but not enough	4	17
Uncertain	2	9
Unavailable	2	9
Total	23	100

APU*: Area Pastoral Unit

Interpretation

The main response expressed by fifteen widows was that they were able to grow in Christian maturity through preaching, Care groups, prayer groups and Area Pastoral Units. Four indicated that there were no efforts carried out to help the widows in their grief and readjustment process through the preaching ministries. Another four had not yet assessed the situation. This revealed that the preaching ministry is supplemented by other ministries in order to provide sufficient nurture that would contribute to Christian growth. However, there is a need to focus on pertinent issues pertaining to the various groups in the church. The findings also reveal an awareness among the widows of their need to grow as Christians.

Specific ways provided for Christian growth

Interviewees were asked to identify specific ways in which Christian nurture has been provided to widows by the church. Interviewees responded as follows:

Pastoral visitations were conducted immediately after the death of respective husband. There was prayer and moral support from pastors and encouraging messages from different Christians. Area Pastoral Units (APUs), Counseling, Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) and Special Singles fellowship and Care groups were also mentioned as some of the means through which NBC provided Christian nurture for widows.

This showed provision of nurture for Christian growth is multifaceted and the NBC is not limited to any one way of providing it. Widows could therefore be encouraged to capitalize on any or many of the available opportunities and grow.

Widows' comments on Christian growth

Interviewees were asked to comment on Christian growth provided for widows at NBC. Comments obtained from interviewees indicated that in order for NBC to provide for Christian growth for widows, there was a need to focus on the following:

Christian service

Interviewees expressed a need to be trained in and for Christian service. This would help them identify gifts or strengthen skills so that they could serve the body of Christ and also gain a sense of acceptance and belonging; to be empowered to work among other widows for encouragement and growth; to be counseled for exposure to the whole issue of widowhood and thus to be able to assess their situation within the first year of bereavement and thus avoid saying "It is too soon to assess"; need to be given space to deal with their situation.

The Church

Interviewees noted that there was a need for the church to enable the congregation to be aware of widows' plight to eliminate suspicion and foster support and understanding; to integrate Special Singles' meeting with single men

especially senior bachelors and widowers; There was also a need to prepare members for widowhood; And a need to demystify death by educating members and to enable them to know that widows are honorable people; then to include visitations to be extended beyond husbands' burial.

Interpretation

The above information demonstrates a sharp awareness among widows of their needs for recognition and respect, acceptance and integration through training, empowerment for service. There is also a need to train and empower widows for service in order to foster a sense of belonging and usefulness. Counseling is of vital importance for helping individuals cope with readjustment and growth needs. This should be done with sensitivity because as some interviewees indicated, widows need to be given space to grieve without undue pressure. The church has a duty and a responsibility to raise awareness among members on the position of widows and expose them to the whole issue of widowhood. This would enable members to provide continued support even after the home-going of their husbands.

This would further encourage a shift from self to others and thereby hasten the process of healing and growth. The church could work at helping widows redefine individual and life goals in the context of Christian growth and development.

The third research question was stated as follows:

Research question 3: What attitudes do widows have towards themselves that could either limit or enhance their involvement in the educational ministries of NBC?

Information for research question three was obtained through section B of the interview guide.

ATTITUDE

Effect of widowhood on widows' view self

Interviewees were asked to mention how widowhood had affected how they viewed themselves as individuals. The responses were as follows:

Table 25: Effect of widowhood on view of self

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Negatively	6	26
Positively	1	4
Both positively and negatively	14	61
Not at all	0	0
Too early to assess	2	9
Total	23	100

When asked how widowhood had affected the way widows viewed themselves, a 61% majority (14) responded that their view of self had been affected both

positively and negatively. About 26% (6) said they were negatively affected while 4% (1) said that the effect was positive. Another 9% (2) said that it was too early to assess or comment.

Summary of findings

The period of widowhood, church membership and period of membership seemed to affect responses to this question. These three independent variables affected widows' response to the question "how has widowhood affected the way you view yourself as an individual?" The following three tables show how the above variables affected interviewees responses. In each of the three tables, the X Axis showed the response while the Y Axis showed the variable.

Table 26: Effect of Church membership on widows view of self

	Registered member	Regular attender	Occasional attender
Negative (-)	2	1	2
Positive (+)	1	0	0
Both -&+	11	2	1
Too soon to assess	1	0	0
Not at all	2	0	0

Table 27: Effect of membership Period on widows' view of self

	Below 1 year	2-3 years	3-4 years	5 years and above
Positively	0	0	2	3
Negatively	0	0	0	1
Both -&+	0	3	1	10
Too soon to assess	0	0	0	2
NOT at all	0	0	0	1

Table 28: Effect of widowhood period on Widows' view of self

	Below 1 year	2-3 years	4-5Years	5 years & above
Negatively	1	2	1	1
Positively	0	0	0	1
-&+	0	5	2	7
Too soon to asses	0	0	0	1
	2	0	0	0

Interpretation

The study revealed (as seen in the above three tables) that fourteen of the interviewees reported they were affected both positively and negatively. Seven of them had been widowed for five years and above; Ten of them had been members for five years and over as registered members. The two who said it was too early to asses, had been widowed for less than one year but had over five years of membership. One of the three affected negatively had been a Church member and had been widowed for over five years.

The above findings further revealed that widowhood does affect how women view themselves. Some positive effects could be as a result of a marriage that had stifled the woman's personhood. The negative effects could be as a result of inability on the part of the widow to overcome the devastating effects of bereavement in which case the widow is still in the process of recovering from grief. In regard to those widows who had cited both effects, this could mean that they had overcome the initial grief. They are adjusting to the situation and

opening to the Lord's working in their lives. The study revealed that widows experience the healing process differently.

Various views held by people in regard to widows

Interviewees were also asked to mention the various ways they perceived other people to view them. The following responses were obtained:

Table 29: Widows' perception of how others viewed them

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Isolation and loneliness	7	30
Suspicion	9	39
Friendship and love continued	5	22
Do not know	2	9
Total	23	100

Although friendship and love continue for five (22%) of the interviewees, seven (30%) felt that they were subjected to isolation and loneliness. Nine (39%) felt that they were viewed with suspicion while two (9%) felt they did not know how widowhood had affected the way others viewed them, particularly in the church.

Interpretation

Widows reported that they were perceived in different ways by others. This was expressed through feelings of suspicion, isolation and loneliness as indicated in table seven above. However, these negative effects could be minimized by enhancing the community of faith's capacity to continue showing love and

friendship to widows. With regard to the widows who do not know how widowhood affects the view of others, it is possible that there is denial or fear of stigmatization. Counseling would therefore be necessary for those individuals.

Opportunities for expression of needs

Interviewees were asked to indicate the opportunities, if any, to express their needs, desires and aspirations. Findings to item nine of interview guide were interpreted qualitatively.

Interviewees indicated that they found those opportunities in the Special Singles' fellowship and Care groups. However, there were six widows who indicated that they had not found opportunities to express their needs at the church. This shows that the Special Single's Fellowship and Care groups offered widows a forum for expression and sharing of needs. There is also a need to publicize these forums in order to increase opportunities for widows to express themselves.

Summary of Research Question 3

Findings to this research question have revealed that widowhood affects the way widows viewed themselves. From a widow's perspective, widows were perceived in different ways by others. Nevertheless, opportunity for expression of needs was found mainly in the Special Singles Fellowship and Care Groups.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to gain an insight into NBC's understanding of the role of widows in her educational ministries, how they are nurtured and deployed in these ministries. Both widows and leaders supplied information to help the researcher in this endeavor. Three research questions were raised.

These were:

1. What is NBC's understanding of the role of widows in her educational ministries?
2. How does NBC nurture and deploy widows in the Church?
3. What attitudes do widows have towards themselves that could either enhance or limit their involvement in ministry?

Summary of findings

Information gathered through research question one revealed that widows have a role to play in the educational ministries of NBC. However, NBC's understanding of the role of widows in the educational ministries of the church could be strengthened by encouraging leaders to carefully appraise widows in the church and the impact they could have on the church. By quantifying the

paid and voluntary services rendered by widows to the church the church's understanding of the role of widows in the educational ministries of the church would be strengthened.

Research question two gathered information from both the leaders and the widows. Findings revealed that widows were receiving care and nurture through the Singles' fellowship, Care groups and Area Pastoral Units. They were also offering their services in these areas as well as in others without discrimination or restriction. The study further revealed that widows' needs for spiritual development, emotional and social support were being met (to some extent) through the Special Singles' fellowship Care groups and APUs. The pastors' compassionate fund and the social outreach ministry were meeting their financial needs. The study also revealed that existing ministry resources like Sunday preaching, seminars, retreats, workshops and theological training could be utilized in order to strengthen widows' development in Christian life and service. This would enable widows to serve in the areas of teaching, counseling, intercession, singing, hospitality and raising of awareness of widowhood with effectiveness. The study further revealed that effective ministry to widows could be increased by employing an adult pastor. Further still, the study revealed that there were no discrepancies between the leaders' and the widows' responses to research question number two. However, widows demonstrated a sharp awareness of their needs for recognition, respect, acceptance, integration and training.

Findings for research question number three revealed that widowhood had a double impact on widows. It affected how they viewed themselves as women as well as their perception of how others viewed them. Widows indicated that they felt isolated and lonely. They also reported that they perceived that people viewed them with suspicion. More effective ministry would become a reality through the provision of foster care for widows' families.

The study further revealed that widows constituted a big pool of individuals in the professional and skillful realm. They should be encouraged to utilize their talents in the church.

CONCLUSIONS

Findings from the study revealed that NBC understand that widows have a role in the educational ministries of the Church. As such, widows are not hindered from taking part in the ministry life of NBC. However, NBC has an important role in the overall ministry of widows because they (widows) need the Churches' spiritual encouragement and support.

Findings further revealed that NBC is involved in the process of nurturing widows in order for them to grow towards Christian maturity. NBC is seen to be seeking creative ways of ministering to widows.

Findings also revealed that widows tend to differ in their outlook due to past experiences and circumstances. But they are open to the Lords leading and the challenges ahead of them. This is where the Church could accept the challenge to reach out to widows and view this as a vital ministry for Church growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of this study, the following are recommendations for the local church:

1. That NBC hold a widowhood awareness week to bring to light their issues.
2. To expand the capacity of the Special Singles' fellowship, Care groups and APUs to care and nurture widows by integrating them in their family lives.
3. That NBC employ an adult pastor to minister to widows.
4. That NBC update her records on all issues pertaining to widows.
5. That widows be given more opportunities in leadership roles.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In view of the above recommendations, further research should be done to determine the impact of NBC ministries on the spiritual growth of members.

The above study should be expanded to include both urban and rural churches. Another study could be done to include both widows and widowers.

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APPENDIX 1(a)

INTERVIEW GUIDE

A. Demographic information

1. Name of the church

Nairobi Baptist Church

2. Church membership

Registered member

Regular attender

Occasional attender

3. Period of membership.

Below 1 year 1-2 years 3-4 years 5 years and above

4. Educational group

Elementary Secondary First degree Post graduate

5. Occupational group

Skilled nonskilled professional

6. Period of widowhood

Below one year

2-3 years

4-5 years

Above 5 years

B. Information related to attitude

7. How has widowhood affected the way you view yourself as a woman?

_Negatively

_Positively

_Not at all

8. How do you think widowhood has affected the way others, particularly in the church, view you?

9. What opportunities do you find to share your needs in the church?

C. Information related to ministry involvement

10. In what ways have you felt both welcome and needed in the church as a widow?

11. What gift or gifts do you feel the Holy Spirit has given you?

12. In which of the various education ministries have you used your gift/gifts at the NBC?

13. If you are not already using the gift/gifts, where do you feel you could use it?

D. Information related to Christian nurture

14. What are some of the situations that would make you feel confident as you use your gift and why?

15. As a widow, do you feel the church offers enough opportunities for Christian growth?

Yes/no Please elaborate

16. Identify specific ways in which Christian growth has been provided for you in the church.

17. What further comment do you have in regard to Christian growth for widows at the NBC?

APPENDIX 1(B)

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PASTORS AND CHURCH LEADERS

This questionnaire will be self administered.

A. Demographic information

1. Name of the respondent _____
2. Position in church _____
3. Period of service in above position _____

B. Information related to widows' involvement in ministry

4. Please list current ministries you are engaged in at the NBC

5. Are these ministries involved in helping leaders to grow? Yes/No.
6. Do widows have a role in these ministries? Yes/no
7. Would you approve if the position of a board leader was occupied by a widow?
___ Yes
___ No
___ Unsure
8. How many widows are currently working in your church
___ either as paid workers
___ or as volunteers?

9. In what areas of church ministry do widows expect to be involved?

10. In which areas of the church are they being placed and which specific responsibilities are being placed on them?

Area	Responsibility
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

C. Information related to care and nurture of widows

11. How does your church equip the various ministry leaders?

12. In what ways does the NBC assist widows to grow?

13. Does provision of care groups show that widows have special needs?

Yes/no

Please list two of these needs.

1. _____

2. _____

14. How is the church responding to these needs?

15. List some of the services that widows could offer in your church.

16. What is your attitude towards their training for involvement in your church's education ministries?

17. What ministry resources have you used to nurture the widows?

18. What are some further strategies that you could employ for a more effective ministry to widows?

LETTER FROM RESEARCHER

12/ 10/ 1999

Margaret W. Muhia
Nairobi Evangelical Graduate
School of Theology (NEGST)
P.O Box 24686
Nairobi

The Respondent
Nairobi Baptist Church
PO Box 44128
Nairobi

Dear sir/ Madam,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. As you are aware, I am currently undertaking a Master of Arts degree at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of theology (NEGST). My program of study requires students to carry out field research in an area of their interest. I have chosen the following topic: **Widows: Potential Christian Educators in the Educational Ministries of the Nairobi Baptist Church.**

The purpose of the study is to help me gain an insight into the NBC's understanding of the role of widows in her educational ministries, how they are nurtured and what contributions they make in these ministries.

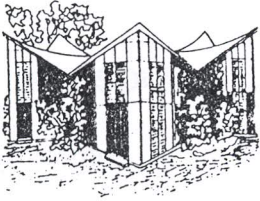
I have designed and hereby enclose a questionnaire to this effect. I would appreciate it if you could kindly complete it for my further necessary action.

It is confirmed that all the information gained as a result of this questionnaire will be treated confidentially and used for the stated purpose only.
Thank You for your cooperation and assistance.

Your Fellow Servant,

MARGARET MUHIA.

LETTER FROM NBC



**Nairobi
Baptist
Church**

NGONG ROAD . P.O. BOX 44128 . NAIROBI KENYA .

TEL: 728400/1, 724682 . Fax: 726855

March 9, 1999

Dear.....

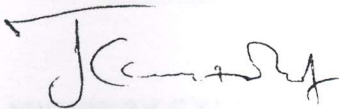
RE : RESEARCH - MRS MARGARET MUHIA

As you know, Charles and Margaret Muhia, are our trainees at NEGST. Margaret is conducting a research on Widows: Potential Christian Educators in the Educational Ministries of the Nairobi Baptist Church for her M.A Thesis in Christian Education.

We believe that the work will be of great benefit not only to the Nairobi Baptist Church but also as a source of information for the nurture and integration of widows in the larger Christian body. We as NBC fully support this study and wish to avail all the help necessary to make it a success. In this regard, therefore, I wish to request that you give Margaret any information she may require from you.

Margaret has designed a questionnaire for this purpose and I would urge you to complete it and return it to her for compilation and analysis by Friday the 12th March 1999.

Sincerely,



John C. Gichinga (Rev.)
PASTOR

JCG/mmb.

PASTORS:

Rev. John C. Gichinga, B.A., (Ed.), MA

Fred Nyabera, B.A., B.D.

George Shiramba, B.A., M. Div.

CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL DATA

Name: Margaret Wanjiku Muhia
Date of Birth: 4TH May 1962
Country: Kenyan
Marital Status: Married
No. of Children: Three (3)
name of Spouse: Charles Muhia Ng'ang'a

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Mary Leaky Girls School------(Ordinary and Advanced Levels)-----1977-1982
Nairobi University------(Bachelor of Arts Honors Degree)----1984-1987
NEGST------(Master of Arts in Christian Education)---1996-1999

WORK EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant-----1985
Personnel Officer----- (Ministry of Supplies & Marketing)----1988-1992
“ “ --(Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock Devpt. & Marketing)--1993-1995
“ “------(Ministry of Works & Housing)-----1996

MINISTRY EXPERIENCE

Bible Study Fellowship----Discussion Leader-----1993-1996
Nairobi Baptist Church- Sunday School Teacher-----1994-1996
Karen Community Church-Sunday School Teacher-----1996-1999