

# Mobilisation of Berea Baptist Mission Church's assets towards 'Just housing' in Johannesburg: An oikomiological perspective

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**Dates:**

Received: 29 June 2024

Accepted: 01 Oct. 2024

Published: 20 Nov. 2024

**How to cite this article:**

Mangayi, L.C., 2024, 'Mobilisation of Berea Baptist Mission Church's assets towards 'Just housing' in Johannesburg: An oikomiological perspective', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 45(2), a3231. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v45i2.3231>

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Housing is one of the greatest needs that African immigrants confront in Johannesburg's inner city, South Africa. One of the reasons for the manifestation of shortage of housing correlates with the large-scale and uncontrollable migration, which has occurred over the past three decades or so. This mass migration, predominantly of black Africans, has drastically reconfigured the demographics of Johannesburg's inner city. Unfortunately, most African migrants and refugees who happened to be foreigners find that they are excluded from the benefits of housing services. This reality brings into focus one of the socio-economic gaps and class realities of cities, that is, most of the urban migrants, specifically in the Johannesburg inner city are poor. Berea Baptist Mission Church (BBMC) ministers daily to this volatile vulnerable 'rightless' migrant community.

**Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications:** In this article, the author argues for ways that BBMC can mobilise its assets towards formulating and reimagining new conditions under which affordable, sustainable and aesthetically attractive housing in an urban environment such as Johannesburg's inner city is feasible. Insights from the 'oiko-missiological perspective' are helpful in this process of formulation and reimagination of new conditions towards 'just housing' in Johannesburg's inner city.

**Keywords:** Johannesburg; church; assets; inner-city; housing; oikomiology; Berea Baptist Mission Church.

## Introduction

Any local church or Christian faith community that sees itself as having nothing to contribute to public collective wellbeing of her community is biblically and morally bankrupt and confused about her identity and functions in society. The church is an asset and has assets to be mobilised for the good of community, and this includes housing. Some of these assets are latent in churches such as Berea Baptist Mission Church (BBMC) in Johannesburg city, South Africa. Hence, the need for the mobilisation of these assets.

Housing is one the greatest needs that African immigrants are faced with in Johannesburg inner city. One of the reasons for the manifestation of shortage of housing correlates with the large-scale and uncontrollable migration, which started in the past three decades or so. This large migration, predominantly of black Africans, has drastically reconfigured the demographics as well as the environmental capital of Johannesburg inner city. Environmental capital or natural capital here refers to 'indispensable resources and benefits, essential for human survival and economic activity, provided by the ecosystem' (Rhode 2021).

Demographical explosion in the inner city has consequently engendered exclusion. Unfortunately, most African migrants and refugees in Johannesburg who happened to be mostly foreigners find that they are excluded from the benefits of housing services as stated in the revised draft of 2009 social housing policy in South Africa. For example, social housing is not an option for the very poor such as refugees who have no secure income, formally or informally. This reality brings into focus one of the socio-economic gaps and class realities of cities where we found that most of the urban migrants, specifically of Johannesburg inner city, are poor. One of the reasons for their poverty is high cost of housing. BBMC ministers to this volatile vulnerable and rightless migrant population daily.

**Note:** Special Collection: Just housing. The manuscript is a contribution to the themed collection titled 'Just housing: Transdisciplinary perspectives from theology and the built environment,' under the expert guidance of guest editors Stephan F. de Beer & Thomas Wabel.

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Different encounters with various marginalised groups namely African migrants and refugees have made me realise that there is a need for an inner-city church such as BBMC to intentionally embrace urban spatial development for the growth and sustainability that it holds for the community around it.

I am not an urban town planner nor an architect, but a professional development worker, an adult educator and an urban missiologist. I am reflecting on just housing concept in relation to Johannesburg inner city from a theological and missiological, specifically, oikomissiological vantage point. The central question for reflection being: how could BBMC's assets be mobilised towards the realisation of just housing in Johannesburg?

I do so with anticipation that this will entail a rethinking of ways to mobilise BBMC's assets towards formulating and reimagining new conditions under which affordable, sustainable and aesthetically attractive housing in an urban environment such as Johannesburg inner city is feasible. Insights from the 'oikos' concept will be helpful in this process of formulation and reimagination of new conditions towards 'just housing' in Johannesburg inner city.

I start by presenting the challenge of housing in a post-apartheid Johannesburg followed by a brief description of the concept of 'just housing' before I highlight BBMC's assets. Then I will present oikomissiology as a theoretical, conceptual and practical framework suitable for just housing. Thereafter, I will expand on *Oikomissiology* to the extent where it inspires participation in the planetary agenda and just housing in Johannesburg. This will include highlighting the Church's assets for *Oikomissiology* and just housing in Johannesburg. And in the final instance, I will present a practical model on how the BBMC can mobilise its assets towards 'Just housing – Affordable, sustainable, aesthetically appealing'.

## Housing shortage in a post-apartheid globalised Johannesburg inner city

Post-apartheid Johannesburg as a globalised city has undergone a geo-demographic reconfiguration. It is, as it is with cities elsewhere, 'becoming more of everything: more people, more buildings and expanding neighbourhoods (Keith 2013:2)'. Nevertheless, there are valid reasons behind the exodus to cities. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA 2015) explains:

Both men and women migrate to cities in search of a better life, in terms of economic opportunities and access to services. Several gender-specific factors may push women to migrate to cities, ranging from forced eviction, to increased domestic violence, harmful practices such as child marriage, or health problems associated with HIV and AIDS. (p. 32)

Notably, this migration presents great opportunities relative to sharing the gospel as well as challenges for being the

Church with others in mission with God. One of these challenges is housing. Cities of Africa, as it is with those of Indian subcontinent, are growing extremely fast, but their demographic growth comes at a great price: extreme poverty (Conn & Ortiz 2010:15). This extreme poverty mostly affects vulnerable communities such as poor migrants who are lured to the city in the search for better life.

Unfortunately, this better life including decent housing remain elusive for many of these migrants. Partly, because of housing shortage and politics of exclusion. Many of these poor migrants and immigrants who find themselves pushed to live on city street pavements and public parks and in inhumane housing conditions including 'in bad buildings, backyard dwellings or informal settlements' (De Beer cited by Pretorius [2023]) are in a sense homeless. This is compounded by their exclusion from meaningful economic and wealth benefits of the city. This results in deterioration of the environment as 'the migrants damage certain natural forests to build their homes' (Mthiyane, Wissink & Chiwawa 2022:4) in informal settlements which exacerbates community health risks due for example to inadequate provision of water and sanitation. Therefore, just housing is not only a crucial need amounting to death or life but also about equality of rights and access in Johannesburg. It appears that many organisations including the Church in the city fail to understand and appreciate this issue. Voices of scholars such as Falk 45 years ago, who warned that churches have 'failed to recognize fully the tremendous needs of the multitudes who left their homes and went to the cities' (Falk 1979:426), have been ignored. Local churches such as BBMC should therefore not remain indifferent to this need to provide just housing in Johannesburg.

## Just housing

Just housing is a concept promoted by Just Homes. According to Just Homes, an organisation in Washington DC, 'Housing that is "affordable" isn't enough. We need housing that is just (...)'.<sup>1</sup> Housing that meets the traditional definition of affordable housing is often lacking in safety and quality standards. It is in areas far from jobs and other resources, and still priced beyond the reach of extremely low-income households.

Thus, the notion of just housing captures, in the words of Just Homes, the 'vision of what housing should look like: a safe, healthy place that serves as both a sanctuary and launching pad for opportunity. A home' – which is called *Oikos* in the Ancient Greek.

In this article, my understanding of just housing concurs in essence with the vision articulated by Just Homes (Just housing), that is:

Justice housing is not only affordable to households with extremely low incomes, but also sustainable, accessible, safe, high-quality, and located in areas of opportunity. Justice housing upholds and reflects human dignity. It honours each person as an image-bearer of God. And it affirms the right of every individual to have a just place to call home. (n.p.)

1.see [www.justhomesdc.org](http://www.justhomesdc.org).

Here high quality is understood in relation to metadata on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11.1 articulated by UN-Habitat (2018) which names, among others, access to sanitation facilities, clean water, a sufficient living area per person to avoid overcrowding.

I further concur that every individual including African migrants and refugees, regardless of their nationality has an intrinsic right derived from being image-bearers of God to have a just place to call home on earth which is our common household together with non-humans. I therefore reflect on just housing from the oikomissiological perspective to include an ecological dimension which goes beyond anthropocentrism. I argue that the just housing notion should be expanded to include non-human beings as inhabitants of the *oikos*, while it is necessary to exercise pest control. This practically means that spatial urban planning should, on one hand, take cognisance of ecological capital of the given area, and on the other, work in harmony with this capital to sustain the livelihood of all inhabitants of that part of the *oikos* who live in harmony with others. A holistic and inclusive approach to sustainability should not therefore be an after-thought, but rather at the centre of the whole urban spatial development. This is what oikomissiology intimates and strives to.

## Berea Baptist Mission Church's assets to be mobilised for *oikomissiology* and just housing in Johannesburg

All church assets such as social as well as spiritual capitals should be intentionally employed towards the realisation of sustainable communities, specifically housing in Johannesburg. Let me begin by giving a glimpse into BBMC assets and the potential they hold for contributing towards just housing.

Table 1 gives an idea regarding the BBMC assets map useful for housing.

To address housing challenges in Johannesburg, BBMC's physical and material assets would, for example, make

land available to build a high-rise building. While assets emanating from associations and affiliations, gifts of individuals and spiritual capital would, for example, provide the financial and human resources needed for housing provision.

Unfortunately, most of these assets remain untapped, unmobilised and underused. Creativity and reimagination of BBMC mission praxis are required to strategically mobilise these assets in the project of Just Housing in Johannesburg. Learning from other churches and faith-based organisations such as Yeast City Housing in Tshwane is necessary.

## *Oikomissiology* as a theoretical, conceptual and practical framework for just housing in Johannesburg

*Oikos* is a Greek word in the New Testament which literally means [house], [household] or [home]. Notably, I concur that in a contemporary Christian theological interpretation focussing on the understanding of the Earth, there are rules which govern this household (The *Oikos* Journey 2006:24, see also Ritenour 2010:1) such as harmony or balance of life on earth, interdependent nature of life and integrity of creation. My understanding of this concept and its implications for a public theology of mission was enhanced by the document of the *Oikos* Study Group (2006) entitled, *The Oikos Journey: A theological reflection on the economic crisis in South Africa*. The *Oikos* Study Group was overseen and initiated by the Diakonia Council of Churches in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. I have contended elsewhere that the *oikos* concept offers us insights and hints into a process of reimagination of home and its inhabitants. 'Chief among these insights is the notion that the earth (*oikos*) is our common home' (Mangayi 2023:197).

In relation to this research, I set to find answers on how BBMC's assets could be mobilised towards the realisation of just housing in Johannesburg together with the *oikos* concept as a central hermeneutical tool in this whole process. Considering the *oikos* concept as a hermeneutic tool is crucial. Because, the current urban spatial development, including housing trend in Johannesburg is

**TABLE 1:** Berea Baptist Mission Church assets map.

Physical or Material	Associations or Affiliations	Gifts of individuals	Spiritual or Faith
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 940 square metre property</li> <li>• Highrise building possibilities</li> <li>• Fully owned property</li> <li>• Public transport roads</li> <li>• Vicinity to parks and/or recreational outdoor spaces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local fraternal</li> <li>• Baptist Northern Association</li> <li>• Baptist Union of South Africa</li> <li>• Community and/or Ethnic networks</li> <li>• Multi-nationality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Businesspeople</li> <li>• Academics</li> <li>• Accountants</li> <li>• Civil engineers</li> <li>• IT professionals</li> <li>• Architects</li> <li>• Property developers and builders</li> <li>• Youth</li> <li>• Adults</li> <li>• Urban missionaries</li> <li>• Community workers</li> <li>• Educators</li> <li>• Development professionals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• +33 years of ministry presence</li> <li>• Saving lives ministry</li> <li>• Hundreds of dedicated believers</li> <li>• Prayer</li> <li>• Called Servant leaders</li> <li>• Scripture</li> </ul>

Source: Retrieved from BBMC members registry IT, information technology.

unsustainable since it is associated with the market mechanism which generates environmental problems, including the negative externalities of pollution, the subordination of weak interests that cannot be expressed in terms of money and failure to supply collective goods, such as a healthy and safe environment. Simply put, it leads to the destruction of the environmental capital.

This destruction exacerbates the exclusion and the vulnerability of already vulnerable communities such as poor urban migrants and refugees. The City of Johannesburg should therefore recognise that there is the need to promote and foster sustainability in relation to urban spatial development including housing. Local churches such as BBMC who are servants of *missio Dei* are expected to contribute to this process aimed at providing housing for every member of the community. Berea Baptist Mission Church, for example, should as a participant and servant of *missio Dei* promote the ecological dimension of *missio Dei* which I named *oiko-mission*. To put it simply, it is the mission which works for the sustainability of all forms of life on earth. Housing project and provision should be mindful of this.

Generally, Henilane (2016:173) explains, 'housing is a building or part of a building where a household can live all year round and which meets certain statutory requirements, including also residential address'. Many poor migrants and refugees live in shelters which fall far too short of meeting statutory requirements relative to housing as described on SDG 11.1 articulated by UN-Habitat (2018). The poor who have come for the prospect of:

[M]aximising chances to access quality life and jobs since the city offers great services and infrastructure (i.e. housing, roads and transport, electricity, energy, water, sewerage, education, health, safety, communication, financial institutions, transport, governance)'. (p. 3)

But they found themselves excluded and cannot find a place to call home in *the oikos* – the household of God.

The question of housing in Johannesburg is, therefore, I contend, a missiological, theological as well as a social justice issue connected to other ones like racial discrimination, xenophobia, immigration, asylum, unemployment and poverty, and intergenerational racial, ethnic and class inequalities. Video episodes conceived and produced by students in the course, 'Global Urban Histories of Housing Justice' at Columbia University portrayed similar correlations. They elaborate, using examples from cities around the world, these episodes feature archival and oral history research as they delve into stories that get to the bigger picture about how, throughout the world, 'the provision of shelter for urban populations has been at the center of urban crises and conflicts, as well as their solutions' (Columbia.edu 2022). This is the case in Johannesburg as far as housing is concerned.

'Just Housing' for me amounts to adequate housing as defined by UN-Habitat (2013) and is a fundamental human right elaborated as follows:

Adequate housing was recognized as part of the right to an adequate standard of living in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Other international human rights treaties have since recognized or referred to the right to adequate housing or some elements of it, such as the protection of one's home and privacy. (p. 1)

Civil society institutions in Johannesburg such the church should not fold their hands in the face of marginalised thousands around the city who live in life- or health-threatening conditions, in overcrowded housing units including slums and informal settlements, or in other conditions which do not uphold their human rights and their dignity. Furthermore, these marginalised individuals are forcibly evicted, or threatened with forced eviction, from their homes every year. They are victims of what is known as 'shifting' – a Johannesburg slang for people who are forced to constantly relocate because of financial instability.

The foregoing has substantiated, albeit with reference to Johannesburg only, the need for us to understand and highlight that the earth or *oikos* is our common home. And in this case, its inhabitants include nationals, non-nationals and refugees, and even non-human inhabitants of Johannesburg. However, our reflection in these lines is limited to just housing for vulnerable communities of urban migrants including refugees. Our reflections are done in ways which resonate with ecological integrity – meaning the ability of 'an ecological system to support and maintain a community of organisms that has species composition, diversity, and functional organisation comparable to those of natural habitats within a region' (Parrish cited in Wurtzebach & Schultz 2016:450). Hence, human activity such as providing housing should be carried within the confines of the planetary agenda as unpacked here underneath.

### ***Oikomissiology, participation in the planetary agenda and just housing in Johannesburg***

McFague (1993) elucidates that planetary agenda refers to ways about how we can address the ecological crisis. This notion includes lifestyle choices, means and strategies which could lead to the collective well-being of all inhabitants of the planet. This means then, with reference to just housing in Johannesburg, providing housing which supports lifestyle choices, means and strategies which are geared towards the realisation of collective well-being of all inhabitants of the planet who reside in Johannesburg. For example, trees would not be cut down to make ways for housing. Rather, building in harmony with nature should be prioritised so that the result should be providing homes for humans which also accommodate the non-humans. It implies therefore that matters regarding building materials, places to build and how to build should have sustainability as a yardstick.

Considering the assets mentioned in Table 1 and the housing need, the church in general and BBMC in particular, as the instrument of *missio Dei*, has a wide range of roles it is expected to play towards collective wellbeing and prosperity in Johannesburg. Drawing insights from Mangayi (2016), some of these roles in relation to just housing should include: (1) the implementation of the teachings of the Bible in concrete ways by becoming strategically involved in the communities for the purpose of housing all Johannesburg inhabitants; (2) becoming involved in addressing socio-economic issues affecting communities and which are exacerbated by exclusion of the city poor from accessing housing; (3) acting out in faith; (4) fostering a type of spirituality which enables it to deal with real community issues such as housing in concrete ways (practical spirituality); (5) taking the lead towards transformation in society. It must take the lead to see new things and to start dreaming about an alternative vision for society regarding housing and (6) to be like 'cement that is holding the society together'. Thus, practically churches such as BBMC should, as a participant to *missio Dei*, mobilise their assets to facilitate inclusivity as an act of faith and in the process be an embodiment of the prophetic spirit which exposes injustices and discrimination in the structures of Johannesburg society as part of the *oikos* – the household of God.

Hence, I contend for an *oikos*-based framework for just housing in Johannesburg. Using this *oikos*-based framework should result in a broadened missiological agenda of the Church in Johannesburg which forces the church in partnership and collaboration with other discipline experts such as the urban town planners, architects, economists, sustainability scientists and development experts to consider the ecological and social problems faced by the marginalised, including opportunities of the City of Johannesburg in the search for just housing and a sustainable way of life in our society. This way just housing is no longer a disconnected or disjointed vision, but it is a form of our Christian contribution to the manifestation of the household of God or *oikos*. In short, it is embracing and letting the planetary agenda be infused in our vision for a sustainable future in Johannesburg. Sustainability then becomes part of the DNA code of theology and missiology relative to just housing in Johannesburg.

Further, the church can foster virtue, rights and actions for common good in its praxis as a co-worker in *missio Dei* for holistic justice and collective wellbeing in Johannesburg in support of the planetary agenda. Human rights relative to adequate housing, which are equally suitable to just housing, such as freedoms, entitlements, provision of more than four walls and a roof, protection against forced evictions and ensuring access to adequate services must be safeguarded and promoted. This will entail opposing a socio-economic and political agenda which breeds injustice, marginalisation of some of the inhabitants of the *oikos*. Rather, it should work and embody justice as far as housing is concerned in the public sphere as well as in individuals' lives.

I concur with Sandel (2009:261) that: 'justice is not only about the right way to distribute things. It is also about the right way to value things'. *Oikomiology* understands that creation has integrity and value. It is therefore best suited to help the church to integrate an earth perspective which is grounded in eco-justice principles in reading the Bible, such as those developed by the Earth Bible project (Deane-Drummond 2008:89; see also Warmback 2005:177–178).

### ***Oikomiology*, eco-justice and just housing in Johannesburg**

There are six eco-justice principles, written by Deacon Joey Clavijo of St. Margaret's Episcopal Church (2020), which inform *oikomiology* and have significance in relation to interpretation of the Bible in ways which support the planetary agenda, and I suppose resonate with just housing concept. I allude to these principles here without detailed elaboration. These principles are (Clavijo 2020):

- Intrinsic Worth – The universe, Earth, and all its components have intrinsic worth/value.
- Interconnectedness – Earth is a community of interconnected living things that are mutually dependent on each other for life and survival.
- Voice – Earth is a living entity capable of raising its voice in celebration and against injustice.
- Purpose – The universe, Earth and all its components are a part of a dynamic cosmic design within which each piece has a place in the overall of that design.
- Mutual Custodianship – Earth is a balanced and diverse domain where responsible custodians can function as partners with, rather than rulers over, Earth to sustain its balance and a diverse Earth community.
- Resistance – Earth and its components not only suffer from human injustices but actively resist them in the struggle for justice.

In relation to just housing, these principles imply that the process of building houses for humans should be done in ways which comply with these principles and thus in harmony with the earth. If we do not, the earth will actively resist further violations as we are experiencing by means of ecological catastrophe which threatens the sustainability of life in cities across the world.

Therefore, to achieve a sustainable life for humanity and the environment in Johannesburg, *oikomiology* offers inspiration to help the church and its members in Johannesburg to make mainstream sustainability in their mission praxis geared to housing. Everybody everywhere must participate for the wellbeing of the whole of creation to contribute, for instance, to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – which is a global plan of action for people, planet and prosperity – on the one hand, and on the other, to participate in *missio Dei* in relation to housing in Johannesburg. Thus, mobilisation of all church's assets is crucial.

## The church, theological insights and other faith-based organisations' experiences in community building as an asset

Swart (2012:66) highlights [that] churches and other faith-based 'organisations should be seen as highly strategic for the religious sector in South Africa' (2012:66) in relation to social development, including housing. Working with these organisations brought an awareness that in South Africa 'development had to be understood in the spirit of the liberation struggle against apartheid and colonisation' (Swart 2012:68). Inadequate housing is one fact which could be linked to discriminatory policies of apartheid era. I therefore argue that churches should revisit their role in the development project in South Africa, including Johannesburg inner city.

Furthermore, it should be recognised that a church such as BBMC is an important player to the success of the social development project including just housing. We admit this success is dependent on collaborative efforts of 'inter-sectoral partnerships in social development' on the ground. The key element for effective inter-sectoral partnerships is the social capital which 'refers essentially to the importance of "social partnerships" and "social networks" as the building blocks of society' (Swart 2012:75). By her nature, BBMC is rich in social and spiritual capital. Spiritual capital is a concept that involves the quantification of the value of individuals, groups and society of spiritual inspiration and practice. Dana Zohar defines it broadly as the value of personal, social or cultural beliefs and meanings that stimulate creativity, encourage moral behaviour and motivate individuals.<sup>2</sup>

These social and spiritual capitals are assets for addressing issues of poverty and other social ills and challenges developmentally. In the similar vein, Ter Haar (ed. 2011:5) points out, 'for most people in the developing world, religion is part of "the vision of the good life"'. Swart (2010:325) further states, 'churches and other faith-based organisations should be regarded as most strategic in contributing to the challenge of moral regeneration and reaching the South African population at large'. They should be perceived as offering "a stock of social capital for promoting social development" (Swart 2010:326).

The experience and role of the church in modernising societies, in the global economy and in building sustainable communities, and so forth is well documented by the works of Duchrow and Hinkelammert (2012), Casanova (2001), Nelson, Palonsky and McCarthy (2007) and Smock (2010). This experience is an asset to tap into in the provision of just housing. Insights from organic scholars such as de Beer, Mangayi, and Mashau, who live and are rooted in inner city churches in South Africa, where severe poverty and marginalisation relative to housing are daily realities, should assist to find ways of bridging the '...worlds of [urban] development including housing and faith' (ed. Ter

Haar 2011:6). Such faith-based development work fits within the ambit of liberation/contextual theologies which naturally emerge from critical social analysis.

Insights of scholars such as Gustavo Gutiérrez (1973) are helpful for praxis because he contends that liberation has three main dimensions; that is, firstly, it involves political and social liberation, the elimination of the immediate causes of poverty and injustice. Secondly, liberation involves the emancipation of the poor, the marginalised, the downtrodden and the oppressed from all 'those things that limit their capacity to develop themselves freely and in dignity'. Thirdly, liberation theology involves liberation from selfishness and sin, a re-establishment of a relationship with God and with other people. Insights from Leonardo Boff (1997) who calls theology to listen to the poor and those with a marginalised existence for the sake of deeply committed reflections which pave the way for authentic liberation are also helpful for transformative praxis in the city such as Johannesburg.

This contribution seeks to articulate a vision of development, especially relative to just housing, from the 'bottom-up'. It sees, on one hand, BBMC as being able to contribute to just housing in Johannesburg inner city by purposefully and strategically mobilising her assets, while on the other, it regards the inner-city church as providing a bridge between the world of urban spatial development and faith. The church can therefore complement and enrich urban spatial development by bringing in another perspective grounded in the oikos concept as discussed here. However, the church has limitations.

### Church's limitations

In general, the church and other faith-based organisations in Johannesburg are explicitly excluded in urban spatial development including housing. This is most likely because of the prevalent limitations as named by Nürnberger (1999:372) related to (1) a spiritual concept of salvation which neglects social concerns; (2) a traditional orientation which looks backward into the past rather than forward into the future; (3) an inflexible orthodoxy which spiritualises human needs and offers stereotyped spiritual recipes; (4) a hierarchical, often authoritarian leadership structure; (5) a lack of social-analytical skills; (6) a tendency to withdraw into cosy and homogenous in-groups which shun challenges and conflicts and (7) an atmosphere which does not attract the youth, the men – and women – in their prime or leading intellectuals.

Elsewhere, Mangayi (2016) added limitations such as: (1) a greater emphasis on doing welfare and charity to the detriment of development; (2) a lack of understanding of socio-economic and political issues and studies and (3) a paucity of self-critical reflection. These limitations must be understood, analysed, and addressed and overcome so that the church can contribute towards housing development projects.

<sup>2</sup>See <http://www.spiritual-capital.org/what-is-spiritual-capital-2/#sthash.ybEQ9CkC.dpuf>.

I concur with Swart (2010:27) that the religious sector will only gain credibility as one of the significant drivers of social change if 'it becomes a rigorous exponent itself of the social development paradigm on the level of actual implementation and empowerment'. Swart's suggestion is a call which amounts to some sort of 'reformation' given the fact that, as Ter Haar (ed. 2011:5) writes, 'many secular people find it hard to think about religion in positive terms, as something that can help build human societies rather than contribute to their destruction'. A church such as BBMC's resolute to mobilise her assets towards the provision of just housing in Johannesburg will be changing this perception as she will become an instrument of hope and restoration in the community. This will also amount to 'standing where God stands', that is as an advocate in solidarity of the poor in Johannesburg who remain excluded in terms of housing – decent just housing in that matter.

### **Berea Baptist Mission Church's assets and strengths for an oikomiological praxis towards just housing in Johannesburg**

Reflecting on the church's limitations, Nürnberger (1999) argued that:

What will make the church relevant in economic and ecological terms is the awareness that (...) development is derived from its peculiar vision and therefore part of its mission. Other prerequisites such as openness, social concern, service, an empowering leadership and the acquisition of skills follow from that. (p. 372)

For an intentional praxis to emerge, BBMC should be aware of these and her own limitations and learn to circumvent these to contribute to the provision of just housing. This will also entail strategically mobilising her physical, spiritual assets, gifts of individuals and associations as forms of capital useful for just housing. It will also mean that the prevailing attitude, whereby the church's assets are mobilised with an inward intention to benefit humans only, should be reformed and abandoned. Berea Baptist Mission Church should ensure that all the assets it possesses are invested in giving, maintaining and propagating life holistically in such a manner as to benefit all the inhabitants of the *oikos* in Johannesburg. Her strengths should be maximised.

In addition to the assets map highlighted in Table 1, BBMC must draw strength from the rich history and heritage of prophetic roles the Church in South Africa played to facilitate a multidimensional reconciliation and healing. Physical and material as well as associations' assets and gifts of individuals will be used in harmony with the earth. This will be the basis for oikomiological practice relative to housing at BBMC. Just housing project efforts could be built upon these first steps in faith projects or hopeful actions. This rich heritage of the church's involvement in social activism including an ecological dimension in this country and the world over is also a strength which could inspire BBMC's mission thrust to draw and drink from its 'own wells'. As a result, BBMC will contribute a contextually relevant solution to housing challenge in Johannesburg.

In relation to the *oikos*, these strengths must be used in ways which respect the integrity of creation, the 'whole household of God' in Johannesburg. With the integrity of creation in mind, these strengths should enable BBMC to engage in just housing as a hopeful action aimed at liberating or saving the houseless communities in Johannesburg from the shackles of powers and systems which breed death. Thus, the aim of this liberation will also include decent housing for the houseless communities.

Berea Baptist Mission Church will do well then to be partisan to a holistic salvific vision which facilitates the realisation of each inhabitant to 'live life to the full' (John 10:10) as God intended in harmony with the earth. I envisage just housing as one of the outcomes of this vision. Living life to the full as God intended is *shalom*. Moreover, BBMC should particularly mobilise the gifts of its members to act in the public sphere as viable co-workers with others such as sustainability scientists, sustainable development experts and practitioners and the like, to champion the vision of building sustainable communities and sustainable just housing.

### **Mobilisation of Berea Baptist Mission Church's assets towards 'Just Housing': An *oikos*-based practical public theology model**

The elements that should be part of a transformed missional model and praxis focussed on just housing are discussed in the following sections.

#### **A new commitment to the city with a mission agenda focussed on *oikos*-based housing**

Berea Baptist Mission Church should produce a new commitment to the city of Johannesburg in the face of the current housing situation. All assets of the BBMC, that is, physical and material, associations and affiliations, gifts of individuals and spiritual capital should be mobilised as being necessary for this new commitment to the city. I contend that the process should include a refocusing of her biblical and/or theological impulses for community action relative to just housing, to broaden her perspective and involvement in socio-economic development to include participation in the planetary agenda and sustainability as related to just housing as well as to develop an *oikos*-based housing paradigm for Johannesburg. This new commitment requires action on going missional, urban, public and educational given the fact that since 1980s, the city has, in general, increasingly become a frontier of mission (Bakke 1997; Conn & Ortiz 2010; Greenway & Monsma 1989; Hildreth 2014:2; Smith 2011). With reference to Johannesburg, 'the arrival of people in a city often accelerates the growth of informal settlements' (Keith 2013:4) including the lack of decent housing. These painful new realities call local churches such as BBMC to understand that mission must be re-orientated towards these realities.

Furthermore, local churches should also bear in mind that the city of Johannesburg is not just a centre of power, wealth, culture and employment. It is also a place with a high concentration of 'the poorest of the poor in an ever-expanding sprawl of informal settlements' (Bulkily & Betsill 2013:138) characterised by sub-standard housing. It is therefore imperative for the public missional presence of the church to include on its agenda just housing concerns in addition to the ongoing moral issues which have preoccupied the church, such as abortion, homosexuality, pornography, and so on (Kusmierz & Cochrane 2013:66).

### **Establishing a value-based incarnational presence highlighting incarnational possibilities and examples**

Berea Baptist Mission Church must discover, develop and nurture a theology as big as the city (Bakke 1997) and as big as the whole immediate neighbourhoods of Yeoville, Hillbrow, Berea as well as conduct actions of service and love that will credibly and visibly demonstrate its commitment. Just housing is one such action. This will build on existing evangelism, spiritual formation and pastoral care and community ministries conducted by BBMC. Furthermore, this incarnate action focussed on oikos-based housing must be grounded in six eco-justice principles as highlighted in section 'Oikomisology, eco-justice and just housing in Johannesburg'. What is required is an alternative imagination, which defies the dominant anthropocentric housing policies, countering the negative perceptions about poor city communities and their aspirations and working towards an asset-based sustainable housing compliant with a wide range of roles as highlighted earlier that BBMC, as an instrument of *missio Dei*, is expected to play towards the collective wellbeing and prosperity in Johannesburg.

### **Nurturing community through incarnational presence**

Not having a suitable housing or being homeless represents poverty of the worse type. I concur with Bedford-Strohm (2008) who points out:

[T]he struggle to overcome poverty is an issue and a challenge for all people of goodwill. It needs competent expertise in economics, political science, psychology, and education. Yet for good reasons it is a theological institution which brings people with all these and other specialisms together. (p. 145)

Berea Baptist Mission Church, for instance, has this wide range of gifts of individuals, as highlighted in Table 1. She should therefore pull these gifts of individuals together for the purpose of building sustainable decent housing where human and non-human beings could prosper in harmony with the earth.

Additionally, BBMC needs to establish a relationship of critical solidarity with other communities in the city such as business, local government, community organisations, institutions and residents to work together for the collective wellbeing of the city. In line with its ethos of prophetic

witness, BBMC will remain in critical solidarity (Kusmierz & Cochrane 2013:69), while recognising that all these other communities and institutions are also assets and part of the household of God under the lordship of Christ.

### **Fostering a concrete spirituality of just housing, liberation, and justice**

A concrete spirituality of just housing including eco-justice, is needed in Johannesburg and this will pave the way in connecting individual and community lives with the life of the oikos. This spirituality, in the process of delivering just housing, must go much further in mapping out a way of life which is connected to the City of Johannesburg's ecological wealth to ensure social-ecological welfare and economic justice for all the inhabitants of Johannesburg as well as inspiring political participation and accountability needed. Insights from Campolo (2008:34) who contends that practical acts of loving our neighbour transform us into personal expressions of the Christ we worship should inspire BBMC in this venture. Furthermore, concrete spirituality enables the church to position itself (Kusmierz & Cochrane 2013, cf. Villa Vicencio 1992):

[I]n the middle, at the nexus, of the tension between 'powerlessness and power', it has a special responsibility towards those who are forced to the margins by the powers that be. (p. 83; p. 30)

Berea Baptist Mission Church has powerful members involved in businesses, property development, academia and other sectors – as shown in Table 1 – who understand how systems of power function in the city. These powerful individuals mingled daily with powerless people in the church and in the community. Therefore, this power and powerlessness which exist together should inspire to work with those who are on the margins with acute housing needs.

### **Discovering and practising an oikomisology focussed on just housing**

Building on the foregoing, the members of BBMC should be commissioned into the public life of the city as agents to facilitate transformation regarding housing. Therefore, I concur with Campolo (2008) who points out that:

God has chosen to use the church to usher in the fullness of His presence in history, and the primary way through which the church changes the world is by commissioning its members to serve in each and every social institution. (pp. 34–35)

All assets of BBMC should be mobilised and used intentionally to address the housing needs in Johannesburg and this way giving expression to their mission statement, that is, they exist to 'be lifelong servants of God working towards the realisation of the Great Commission and the Greatest Commandment' in their immediate neighbourhoods, surroundings and to the ends of the earth. This is an intentional proclamation.

## Proclaiming and sustaining life and *shalom* as central to *oikomiology* focussed on just housing in Johannesburg city

The theology of just housing I seek to propose in this article stands out because its goals go beyond anthropocentric concerns to include ecological concerns in ways which promote sustainability. It advocates for sustaining all webs of life in Johannesburg. Such a theology and/or *missiology*, as articulated elsewhere (Mangayi 2016):

[I]s in a creative interaction between theological / theoretical themes – like liberation, reconstruction or rebuilding and working to produce and distribute the bounty of the earth – and praxis and spirituality. (p. 589)

It is unfortunately beyond the scope of this article to discuss how proclamation in relation to these themes would look like. But it suffices to say that the incarnational presence of BBMC in Johannesburg being in solidarity with the city – particularly with the marginalised houseless and homeless – must be translated into visible actions for justice or *shalom* (social, economic, and ecological) and wholeness in the public sphere. Just housing should be that one visible action to sustain life. Furthermore, to sustain life, BBMC must confront death in all its forms in the city by proclaiming and sustaining life, through a holistic promotion of just housing in this case.

### A holistic church initiative for *oikomiology* focussed on just housing in Johannesburg

A BBMC-based initiative for just housing needs to be embedded in a broader strategy for transformative urban *missiology* in Johannesburg. As stated earlier, this initiative will mobilise all the resources and potential that BBMC has for community building as well as traditional and cultural assets and work towards restoring fundamental relations for life which will engender long-term collective wellbeing in Johannesburg.

The holistic initiative I promote in this article initially concurs with Greenway and Monsma's (1989) and agrees that:

[S]trategies for conversion to Christ and discipleship, church planting and church development, community ministry, as well as the broader ministry that addresses global and cosmic concerns, should be part of a holistic model. (p. 53)

However, as stated elsewhere in relation to local economic development, this research stretches these strategies to (Mangayi 2016):

(1) consider an ecological worldview; (2) address the ecological crisis as related to the current anthropocentric activity; (3) safeguard creation's integrity in the pursuit of economic interests, (4) investigate the practicalities related to participation in the holistic planetary agenda and (5) emphasise sustainability, collective wellbeing or *shalom* and justice as the goals of an economy. (p. 592)

## Conclusion

I have in this contribution presented ways which BBMC could employ to mobilise her assets towards formulating

and reimagining new conditions under which affordable, sustainable and aesthetically attractive housing in an urban environment such as Johannesburg inner city is feasible. All assets of the BBMC, that is, physical and material, associations and affiliations, gifts of individuals and spiritual capital should be mobilised towards the realisation of just housing in the city of Johannesburg. Insights from the 'oikos' concept were shared as being helpful in this process of formulation and reimagination of new conditions towards 'just housing' in Johannesburg inner city. An *oikos*-based practical public theology model, which consists of (1) a new commitment to the city with a mission agenda focussed on *oikos*-based housing; (2) establishing a value-based incarnational presence which highlights incarnational possibilities and examples; (3) nurturing community through incarnational presence; (4) fostering a concrete spirituality of just housing, liberation and justice; (5) discovering and practising an *oikomiology* focussed on just housing; (6) proclaiming and sustaining life and *shalom* as central to *oikomiology* focussed on just housing in Johannesburg city and (7) a holistic church initiative for *oikomiology* focussed on just housing in Johannesburg, was proposed.

## Acknowledgements

Some contents of this article were first presented as a paper at the VI Consultation of the Global Network of Public Theology: 'Public Theologies in Vibrating Cities: Precious and Precarious', 03 to 06 October 2022, Curitiba, Brazil.

This article is partially based on the author's thesis of the degree of Theology in *Missiology*, University of South Africa, South Africa, with promoter Prof. A. Van Schalkwyk and co-promoter Prof. S. De Beer, received September 2016, available here: <https://uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/22674>.

## Competing interests

The author declares that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

## Author's contribution

L.C.M. is the sole author of this research article.

## Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

## Ethical considerations

This article does not contain any studies involving human participants and animals performed by any of the authors.

## Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

## Disclaimer

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