

EGEIRO



AWAKENING AND EMPOWERING HIS CHURCH

SALE AND CONVERSION OF CHURCHES INTO MOSQUES

BY

KAMIL KIROGLU

June 2014

Published by EGEIRO Ministry, Republic of South Africa.
www.egeiroministry.org

This work is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

You can freely download, copy and share this work as a whole without changing its content in any way, for noncommercial purposes only, as long as you give appropriate credit to the author and the publisher and copy and share under the same conditions.

Introduction

In recent years, we have been hearing reports and rumours of church buildings being sold and converted to Muslim mosques.

Therefore, we have conducted research to find out why churches are sold, what happens afterwards and what can be done to prevent other churches from closing down and becoming Muslim mosques.

Thus, this research document is written with the objectives of (1) informing the Body of Christ about the Islamic strategy of buying and converting churches to mosques, (2) helping Christians understand the reasons that have led to the death of churches and the sale of church properties in the context of South Africa and (3) encouraging church leaders to implement strategies that will help prevent the closure and sale of churches.

Firstly, I will try to answer the questions of “Why do Muslims want to buy churches?”, and “What is the Islamic thought behind the practice of buying and converting churches to mosques? Secondly, I will try to analyse three cases of church sales and conversions to Muslim mosques which have happened in South Africa during recent years. This analysis will be done objectively, based on a biblical perspective, with the Kingdom of God in mind. Lastly, we shall look at the case of a church which was not sold, but was successfully transformed to become even more useful for the Kingdom of God.

1) Why do Muslims want to buy churches?

Islamic obsession of buying church buildings and converting them into mosques can be easily seen in their willingness to pay unbelievably high prices for old church buildings. Muslims will gladly pay 9-10 times more than the actual value of the property. For many Western Christians, the sale of a church building is an ordinary transaction and it will be sold to whoever will pay the most. But for Muslims it is a strategic move in their spiritual battle against the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Buying a church and converting it to a mosque means one less church and one more mosque. Besides, in a traditionally Christian country like South Africa, buying and converting churches into mosques will give Muslims many great advantages and opportunities to promote Islam and to dethrone Christianity in the hearts and minds of local people. Simply put, the message will be

“This building was a church but now it is a mosque. Christianity was the religion of yesterday, Islam is the religion of today. Yesterday you were Christians but today you ought to be Muslims because the old church is gone and the new mosque has come”.

You may think that this is a ridiculous strategy, but you will be surprised to see how successfully Muslims have been in using this strategy for many centuries all over the world. One of the oldest examples of this practice is the ancient church of Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) in Istanbul in Turkey. [Hagia Sophia was built in 537 AD](#) and used as a church for more than 900 years. In 1453, when Muslims invaded the city, they [converted Hagia Sophia into a mosque](#) and called it “Ayasofya” and it remained as the principal mosque of Istanbul until the secular Turkish leader Ataturk transformed it to a museum in 1934. The conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque was a loud declaration that *“Christianity in Constantinople (Istanbul) is terminated and the new dominant religion of the city is Islam”*. Secondly, the conversion of Hagia Sophia gave great power to Muslims in

influencing the hearts and minds of Christian people across the land. Many other similar incidents can be observed across Europe today as [Muslims buy and convert old European churches into mosques](#) and then use them to convert local people. Muslims are using this same strategy in South Africa. Therefore, the sale of a church property to Muslims is not at all an ordinary transaction, it is a great strategic victory for the kingdom of Islam, and a great strategic loss for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

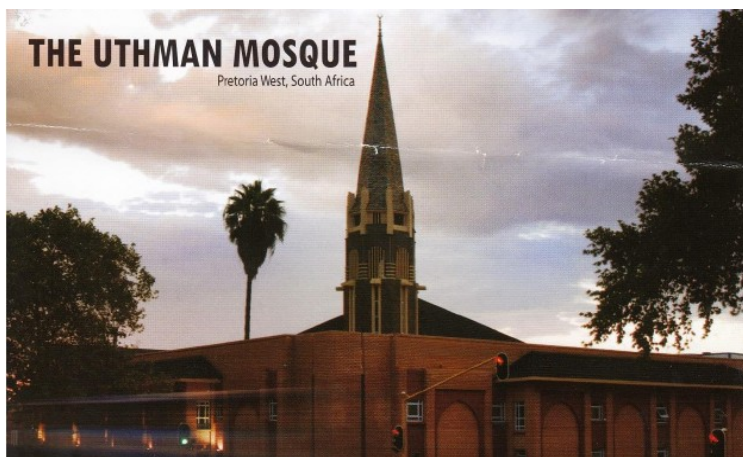
2. Pretoria West Dutch Reformed Church

Pretoria West Dutch Reformed Church was sold to Muslims in 1997 for R1 650 000 and later converted to a mosque. Today, in the place of Pretoria West DRC, stands the Muslim mosque, Masjid Uthman.

Reverend Etienne Maritz was the last pastor of this congregation and he was the presiding pastor during the process of the sale of the church property to Muslims. He made the following statement concerning the sale of Pretoria West DRC:

“We were busy in evangelism work in Africa, our neighbourhood was becoming a commercial centre. Our people were moving out of the area and other ethnic groups were moving in. The demographics of our area changed so much that we did not have enough people and enough resources to keep the church running. We asked for financial help from the rich churches in the East of Pretoria but they did not want to help us. Because of the decreasing church membership and our financial inability to carry on we decided to close down and sell the church. The only offer we got was from an Indian business man who gave us the impression that the property was going to be used for business purposes if he bought it. Then we sold it to this Indian business man in 1997. He then sold it to other people who converted it to a mosque.”

Today



Today, there is no such thing as Pretoria West Dutch Reformed Church. That church is now history and just a memory of its former members, most of whom have either died or moved away. Today, in the place of that church, stands the Uthman Mosque (Masjid Uthman). Muslims use this mosque very effectively to influence and Islamise South African people, especially the youth.

In other words, the grandchildren of the people who built, worshipped and even served at Pretoria West DRC are now Islamised in the very same building, because the last leadership of the church sold it to Muslims.

(Please [click here to see how South African children are Islamised at the former Pretoria West DRC.](#))

For the Pretoria West DRC it was probably an ordinary sale but for Muslims it was a strategic move which would give them the ability to move the hearts and minds of people away from Christ towards Islam. Instead of promoting the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, that building is now attacking and turning people away from the Kingdom of Christ.



A further analysis of the case from a biblical point of view suggests that Pretoria West DRC died because the members did not effectively reach out and evangelize people of other ethnic groups and nationalities within their own community. If they had been willing to welcome other ethnic groups into their church, evangelise and disciple them, change the language of worship from Afrikaans to a language these people understood, and give up some of their traditions so that these people would have felt welcome and at home, then their membership would never have shrunk so much and this church would not have died. On the contrary, this church would have become a place where people of all ethnic groups would find Jesus and be saved. However, they allowed things to die instead of welcoming these people into their church and disciplining them for Christ.

What can God do with a church that is stubbornly unwilling to reach out and share the love and salvation of Jesus with the people on their doorstep? Such a church is neither light nor salt even in their own community. Such a church is fruitless, and John 15 warns us about the dangers of fruitlessness.

3. Living Waters Church in Hermanus

In 2011, the Living Waters Church building on 51 Main Road, Hermanus, [was sold to Muslims](#) to become [an Islamic centre](#). Christo Van Niekerk was the presiding pastor of this church during the sale. In our telephonic interview with him, Pastor Van Niekerk gave the following statement:

“Our congregation grew and our church building became too small for us. We needed to make the building bigger, but the municipality did not allow us to extend the building because of the limited parking space. Then our only option was to sell the property and move into a bigger place. We did not close down our church and did not sell our church property due to decreasing church membership. On the contrary, our congregation grew and we needed a bigger place. When we put



the church into the market, few other Christian churches and business people attempted to buy the building, but none of them actually finalized the process and bought it. The Zionists also wanted to buy it but we did not want to sell it to them. Without our full consent, the estate agency started the process of selling it to Muslims. When we objected the sale of the church to Muslims, the president of the estate agency accused us of being biased and discriminative. At the end of the day, I could not stop the sale, and at that time i just let the sale go through. We sold the property to Muslims for R7.5 million. Hermanus has been full of Muslims even before our church property was sold to them. I did not open the gateways of Hermanus to Muslims. They were already here long ago. They also continue to buy properties in Hermanus. I see them as a growing mission field at our doorsteps.”

Today

Today, the new Muslim owners are busy converting the old church building into an Islamic centre. Soon it will be utilised to worship a foreign god and turn people away from Jesus. Chances are very high that one day, this mosque will also be used to invite and Islamise the children and grandchildren of those who sold it to Muslims, as it is now happening in the former Pretoria West DRC.



The biblical responsibility of a church concerning Muslims is to evangelise and integrate them into the church and disciple them, not to sell church properties to them and allow them to convert them into mosques. Analysis of this case reveals that this church building could have been sold or given to another Christian church to further the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, but they would not have received R7.5 million. While we will never know the full picture, it raises the question of when money starts to outweigh the Kingdom of God (*Matt 6:31-33*).

4. Langlaagte Dutch Reformed Church in Johannesburg



In 2012, Langlaagte Dutch Reformed Church was sold to Muslims [to become an Islamic religious school](#). The church property had been rented and used by a Pentecostal church (Glory Divine World Ministries, or GDWM) for 12 years prior to the sale. When the DRC leadership asked GDWM if they wanted to buy the building, [GDWM offered R700 000](#). The church was later sold to Muslims for [R2.7 million](#).

In 1902, this property was inaugurated as a church and for more than a century it was utilised to worship Jesus and preach the gospel. Soon this building will be utilised to worship a foreign god, to convert people to Islam and to train the children of South Africa as future Muslim leaders of this country. Perhaps some of those will be the children and grandchildren of those very same people who sold the church to Muslims. How much was money the core issue at stake?

5. PE-Central Dutch Reformed Church



In a lot of ways, PE-Central Dutch Reformed Church was in the same situation as Pretoria West DRC. This church is situated right in the centre of the city of Port Elizabeth. Since the 1990s the church was suffering declining membership as Afrikaans speaking people were moving away from the neighbourhood and people of other ethnic groups, languages and nationalities were moving in. The neighbourhood became very multicultural and multinational with many foreigners.

Also the area became more and more dangerous with drug dealers, prostitutes, human traffickers and alcohol abuse in the streets. Naturally, declining membership also brought about financial problems and an inability to sustain the church.

However, instead of closing down the church and selling the building, the PE-Central DRC started reaching out to the drug dealers in their streets. Here is how Reverend Gillie Noeth explains the transformation of their church:

“Already in 2004, the church received a call to reach out to all the people of Central, but the congregation was not ready for the sacrifices which were asked of them. Then in August 2007, the church started reaching out to the drug dealers in our area. It all happened around our Evangelism team. They were diligently reaching out to the Afrikaans speaking community over a period of 12 years when one of the team members challenged us with the question: “Why are we only reaching out to the Afrikaans speaking community? Why don’t we go to the drug dealers and the prostitutes?” So we did and we came back, transformed as new people. Shortly hereafter, nine Nigerian men gave their lives to the Lord during a Friday night outreach (inspired by one of our church members) when we showed the film “The Cross & the Switchblade”. Four of them regularly visited our church despite many attempts to get them to join our neighbouring English speaking churches. The Lord clearly called us to go through a long process of change. In August 2009, we changed our name to Anchor of Hope as a means of reaching the many African people living in Central. In August 2010, we went a step further when we changed our language from Afrikaans to English.”

Of course, this was not at all easy. According to Reverend Noeth, some of the difficulties they faced included:

- a) changing their language from Afrikaans to English
- b) adapting to a new way of worship
- c) sacrificing many traditions
- d) accepting the cultural differences
- e) a constant challenge to move outside of their comfort zone
- f) the loss of many Afrikaans-speaking people
- g) the loss of monthly income due to the loss of members
- h) fear of the unknown and safety issues

Today

Today the membership of Anchor of Hope Church is 50% white and 50% black. Of the 50% black, most of them are foreign nationals. Although the church is fully English speaking and the name is Anchor of Hope, it is still a full member of the Dutch Reformed Church. The members continue to reach out to the prostitutes and the drug dealers on a weekly basis. Additionally, through their NPO, they also provide various training programmes and opportunities to help people find better employment and to improve their standard of living.

6. Conclusion

Changing demographics in our neighbourhoods demand that we also change the way we manage our churches. We have to reach out, welcome and disciple people of all ethnic groups and languages who live in our neighbourhoods. In other words, no church has the luxury of serving only one specific ethnic group and ignoring the rest of the society. Churches that insist on focusing only on Afrikaans-speaking people and ignoring the growing population of other ethnic groups in their neighbourhoods will become irrelevant, suffer decreasing membership and may even die in a few years time. When the properties belonging to the dead churches are put in the market, Muslims will do all they can to buy and convert them into mosques, speaking the message that Christianity is over and Islam is here to rule.

Another great challenge is to resist the appeal of money. Selling a church building to Muslims just because they offer more money suggests the valuing of money more than the kingdom of Christ. Instead of selling an unwanted church property to Muslims for many millions of rands, it would be better to donate it or sell it to another Christian church or organization for much less. This is much easier said than done. However, if money is truly the ultimate desire when a church is sold to Muslims, is it not like selling a birth right for a bowl of lentil stew (Gen 25:29-34), realising later the extent of the mistake (Gen 27:36)?

List of Sources:

Interview with Reverend Gillie Noeth

Telephonic interview with Reverend Etienne Maritz

Telephonic interview with Pastor Christo Van Niekerk

http://orthodoxwiki.org/Hagia_Sophia_%28Constantinople%29

<http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/2761/converting-churches-into-mosques>

<http://showme.co.za/hermanus/news/soundproof-mosque-opens-in-town/>

<http://www.vocfm.co.za/index.php/component/k2/item/2820-2nd-mosque-for-hermanus>

<http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/NG-church-becomes-Muslim-school-20120415>

<http://tia-mysoa.blogspot.com/2012/04/historic-church-in-johannesburg-to.html>

<http://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/holy-war-for-one-of-joburg-s-oldest-churches-1.1276699>

<http://www.egeiroministry.org/images/mosquevisits.pdf>

<http://152.111.1.87/argief/berigte/citypress/2012/04/16/CP/5/church.html>