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NOVEMBER, 2015
DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

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REG. NO. C50/CE/14545/2009

Signature…………………… Date…………………………….

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University Supervisors.

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DEDICATION

To my parents- George Adongo and Wilfrida Akinyi, wife- Olivia Akoth and son- Jetter Wema for their love, care and encouragement throughout my education journey. Importantly, to all the pioneers of the Voice of Salvation and Healing Church, for their effort in making history, in forming and establishing the church under study.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I thank the Almighty God for taking me this far. I also wish to thank all those who directly or indirectly made this study possible. In particular, I am grateful to my supervisors: Prof. Philomena N. Mwaura and Dr. Julius Gathogo both from the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies of Kenyatta University for thoroughly reading the work and giving constructive scholarly guidance.

Secondly, I wish to thank all the members of the Voice of Salvation and Healing Church (VOSHC) who assisted me during the field work. I would like to single out the Archbishop Dr. Silas Owiti and Bishop Dr. Winnie Owiti for hosting me on a number of occasions, and for availing much of administrative information on the VOSH C. I also recognize posthumously the late Mzee Vitalis Angura, Allen Ojwang’ and Washington Omori (who went to be with the Lord a few days after I interviewed them) Rev. Misuku Awendo, Rev. Deborah Ondong’a, Pastor Absalom Odera and Rev. George William Ngode for providing me with much information on the early beginnings of the VOSHC.

Finally, I wish to thank my dear wife Olivia Akoth and son Jetter Wema for their love and support by enduring my frequent absence from home while pursuing this work.
This study investigates the history, beliefs and practices of the Voice of Salvation and Healing Church (VOSHC), an African Initiated Church (AIC) which emerged in the 1950s. It is closely associated with the East African Revival Movement of the 1930s in terms of its beliefs and practices. The study is significant because it explored the various factors that led to the formation and establishment of VOSHC during the pre-independence period of Kenyan history. The study explored the uniqueness in the one-man leadership of VOSHC since 1954. The study also addressed the beliefs and practices of VOSHC that have brought coherence to its adherents as it has remained relevant to the present. The study was guided by a historico-anthropological-analytical design. This involved the use of a descriptive approach in examining the objectives of the study. Primary data was mainly from field research which relied on oral interviews (OIs), participant observations (POs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The study sample comprised leaders and members of VOSHC. They were selected on the basis of gender, age, position in the church and length of membership. The instruments used to collect data were interview schedules, observation schedule and interview guide for FGDs. A total of sixty informants were interviewed. From the data analysis, the study has shown that VOSHC was founded under the influential African leaders led by Silas Owiti. VOSHC emerged from a mainstream church, now the Anglican Church of Kenya. It is evident from the study that both sociological and theological factors were clearly central in the formation of VOSHC. In particular, the church was founded on the emphasis on teachings about salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ, divine healing and the in-filling of the Holy Spirit evident in the speaking in tongues as was on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). For the VOSHC adherents, understanding of the roles and manifestations of the Holy Spirit is central to the Christian faith. The study has shown that VOSHC has developed and grown amidst challenges over the years. This has been evident in its leadership organizational structure and spatial advancement into other areas outside the Luo Nyanza region where it was first established. From the findings, the study notes that: VOSHC could have made more impact in the society if it were not for some misunderstandings over certain sociological, theological, integrity and doctrinal issues which led to two major schisms in a span of ten years. Moreover, VOSHC could have spread all over Kenya and other parts of Africa, if the leaders could have been dynamic and ready to accommodate universal strategies of empowerment such as formal education, theological training of its ministers, among others.
OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

African Independent/ Initiated/ Instituted/ Indigenous Churches: Churches founded by Africans to worship God in an indigenous way due to the contact with Christianity and the missionaries’ proclamation of the gospel in different forms along denominational lines.

Church Growth: Quantitative and qualitative development of the church, in the application of biblical, anthropological and sociological principles to congregations, denominations and their communities in an effort to bring up the greatest number of people for Jesus Christ.

Church: The wide body of Christians all over the world. Any of the various denominations of Christianity for example the Anglican Church of Kenya, the Catholic Church, among others. A building where Christians congregate. In this study, the term is also used to refer to a group (assembly) of Christian believers.

Crusades: An aspect of Christian evangelistic efforts aimed at promoting through public proclamation of the gospel, awareness of and commitment to the Christian faith characterized mostly by mass assemblage in form of public rallies.

Indigenous: What is not foreign: beliefs and practices whose roots go as far as the pre-colonial period.

Mainline/ Mission/ Established Churches: Major Christian church denominations, for example, the Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church, the
Anglican Church and the Methodist Church, among others. They are also referred to as historic, established, former mission or mainstream churches.

**New Religious Movements:** Religious organizations or churches of African foundation which resulted as either from secessions from mainline churches or independent creation to offer alternative forms of Christianity to that of the mainstream churches.

**Pentecostal:** Any of the Christian groups that emphasize the activity of the Holy Spirit, holy living, confession of sins and expression of their religious feelings unlimitedly especially speaking in tongues.

**Pentecostalism:** Teaching and practice by a section of Christians revolving around the in-filling of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, belief in spiritual healing that excludes conventional healing.

**Pentecostal African Independent Churches:** Groups of Christian churches with African background and origin which emphasize the activity of the Holy Spirit especially speaking in tongues and confession of sins.

**Religious Independence:** Any organized religious movement with a distinct name and membership formed within a community either separated from an existing or outside the mainline churches as a new kind of religious entity under African(s).

**Revival Movement:** Any orthodox renewal or awakening of the Christian faith within the mission churches characterized by enthusiasm and a large following.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACK</td>
<td>Anglican Church of Kenya</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGM</td>
<td>Annual General Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIC</td>
<td>Africa Inland Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIM</td>
<td>Africa Inland Mission</td>
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<td>AICs</td>
<td>African Instituted Churches</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>CUEU</td>
<td>Christian Universal Evangelical Union</td>
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<td>CMS</td>
<td>Church Missionary Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td>District Commissioner</td>
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<tr>
<td>EA</td>
<td>East Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>EEPC</td>
<td>Elim Evangelistic Pentecostal Church</td>
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<td>EMA</td>
<td>Elim Missionary Assemblies</td>
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<td>FAIM</td>
<td>Friends Africa Industrial Mission</td>
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<td>FGDs</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussions</td>
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<td>ICE</td>
<td>International Council of Ministers</td>
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<td>IFTSU</td>
<td>International Faith Theological and Seminary University</td>
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<td>IPAM</td>
<td>International Pentecostal Assemblies Missions</td>
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<td>KAU</td>
<td>Kenya African Union</td>
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<td>KATWA</td>
<td>Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
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<td>MHF</td>
<td>Mill Hill Fathers</td>
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<td>NT</td>
<td>New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCE</td>
<td>National Council of Elders</td>
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<td>NCM</td>
<td>National Council of Ministers</td>
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<tr>
<td>NLC</td>
<td>Nomiya Luo Church</td>
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<td>NRMs</td>
<td>New Religious Movements</td>
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<tr>
<td>OI</td>
<td>Oral Information/ Interview</td>
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<td>OIs</td>
<td>Oral Interviews</td>
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<td>OT</td>
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<td>PAOC</td>
<td>Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada</td>
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<td>PO</td>
<td>Participant Observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAG</td>
<td>Pentecostal Assemblies of God</td>
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<td>PEFA</td>
<td>Pentecostal Evangelistic Fellowship of Africa</td>
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<td>RM</td>
<td>Religious Movements</td>
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<td>RMs</td>
<td>Religious Movements</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSV</td>
<td>Revised Standard Version</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDA</td>
<td>Seventh Day Adventist</td>
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<tr>
<td>SGM</td>
<td>Special General Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>TSC</td>
<td>Teachers Service Commission</td>
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<td>VOSHC</td>
<td>Voice of Salvation and Healing Church</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a brief background of the study. It describes the motivation of the study, the statement of the problem and the objectives of the study. The chapter also captures the research questions and premises. It further presents the justification and significance, scope and limitations of the study.

1.2 Background to the Study

African Independent Churches (AICs) have been a widespread and fascinating phenomenon. AICs have attracted numerous observers and analysts over the years. They represent one of the most profound developments in the transmission and transformation of both African Christianity and Christianity in Africa. Afe Adogame and Lizo Jafta (2005:309-328) observe that most AICs have roots from mission Christianity and the earliest traces of indigenous appropriations in the form of revival movements, among others. AICs started to emerge in the African religious centre-stage in the early nineteenth century. They came to limelight apparently under similar but also remarkably distinct historical, religious, cultural, socio-economic and political circumstances particularly in the western, southern and eastern African continent. This kind of religious independency and innovation has been an attempt by Africans to forge new identities for themselves. AICs now constitute significant strand of African Christian demography.
David Barrett (1968) observes that Eastern African was the last of the African regions to become involved in Christian church independency. He notes that the greatest proliferation of AICs has been in Kenya, where bodies of all kinds have emerged. In western Kenya in the Luo Nyanza community, Christian missions began with the arrival of Roman Catholic missionaries in the Lake town, Kisumu in 1902. This was followed by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) in 1906, and also an interdenominational body, the Africa Inland Mission (AIM). Over the years, a multiplicity of new missionary agencies emerged in the region.

The growth and expansion of the missionary churches was exuberant and of promise. African catechists and clergy played important roles in missionary expansion as well as in administrative posts. From the outset, the missionary churches maintained relationships of respect in the Luo society. The churches did, however, oppose a handful of traditional institutions unfavorable to European ideas of morality namely, polygamy and ancestral cult, with magic and divination.

In spite of this history of vigorous and progressive church growth, occasional reactions and religious protest movements began almost at once. In 1908, a year after colonial administration had began in South Nyanza, there occurred the first of a long series of politico-religious movements affecting the Luo people. Hoehler-Fatton (1996) observes that in 1913, a Luo of Central Nyanza named Onyango Dunde began a cult in which the god Mumbo in the form of sea-serpent in the
Lake announced his displeasure at the presence of Europeans, denounced the Christian religion as rotten and predicted the imminent expulsion of all Europeans. Although the Mumbo cult attacked the doctrines of the missionaries, Christian influence was evident in its teachings.

A year later the Mumbo reaction began the first separatist church in Luo Nyanza and Kenya at large came into existence. In 1914, a Luo named Johana Owalo who had belonged successively to several missions left the CMS to form the *Nomiya* (I was given) Luo Mission. Two years later, a Luo Anglican preacher named Alfayo Odongo had a vision commissioning him to begin the *Roho* (Spirit) movement. The movement picked up but largely remained within the church for eighteen years. In 1934, Odongo, by then an Anglican priest, was murdered in a burning hut; his followers then seceded to begin the *Roho* churches—Religion of the Holy Ghost. Numerous other movements followed elsewhere in the Luo Nyanza region.

In 1952, came the first trouble within the Roman Catholic Church. A Luo woman, Mariam Ragot, received a revelation which commissioned her as a prophetess to denounce both the Roman Catholic Church and the white race (Barrett 1968).

By this time, a considerable number of Luo Anglicans had been influenced by the powerful East African Revival, famously known as *Kututendereza* Movement. The latter had spread since 1927 from Rwanda. Despite the opposition from the missionaries, it had reached Luo Nyanza in 1938. At first, this revival worked deep within the church, changing people’s lives and renewing church life at a profound
level. It soon had Luo adherents, known as Jo Mowar (saved ones). It is from this group of the saved ones that the AIC under study, the Voice of Salvation and Healing Church (VOSHC) later emerged in 1956.

AICs are those Christian churches which have been founded in Africa, by Africans and primarily for Africans. They lacked the substantial association with Western Christianity found in almost all the older churches (Barrett 1968). As one of the AICs, VOSHC was initiated by charismatic lay Africans. They were motivated by religious and socio-cultural factors. They formed and enforced a leadership and theology which has remained unique and relevant to the adherents.

AICs have been of great scholarly research interest and attention to David Barrett (1968), Teresia Hinga (1980) and Mildred Opwapo (1981) and Hoehler-Fatton (1996), among other scholars. The interest AICs generated in the 1960s and 1970s was largely due to the hope that they represented the future of Christianity in Africa (Shorter and Njiru 2001). VOSHC particularly is of great interest since it represents the dynamic face of the pre-independent AICs in Kenya in terms of its unique establishment. Notably, there has been much research done by both local and foreign scholars and researchers on religious independency and innovation in Africa. AICs in particular, have elicited much research in terms of their history and theology, among other dimensions. For instance, Allan Anderson (1999) examined AICs throughout the continent, with particular focus on religion and culture, the history as well as theology. Welbourn and Ogot (1966) carried out a
study of AICs: Church of Christ in Africa (CCA) and African Israel Nineveh Church (AINC) in Western Kenya, focusing on their appeal and impact on the Africans. Olang’ (1973) equally carried out a theological investigation of the impact of spiritism on the Luo of western Kenya, conception of the Holy Spirit and how that impact was manifested in their way of worship and lifestyle. Hoehler-Fatton (1996) studied on the history, faith and gender in Roho (Spirit) Religion in western Kenya.

The foregoing studies were carried out on churches which were contemporaries of VOSHC. Most importantly, despite having been started before Kenya gained her independence and having made important contributions in the society, VOSHC, an AIC which began in the 1950s, has no record of any systematic study. Therefore, this study is timely in discussing the history, some beliefs and practices of VOSHC. This forms the background and motivation of the study.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Despite attention given to AICs in western Kenya by scholars such as Welbourn and Ogot (1966), Barrett (1968), Hinga (1980) and Opwoapo (1981), Hoehler-Fatton (1996) among others, the VOSHC which is a contemporary of CCA, AINC, Legio Maria and even Roho (Spirit) movements has not been studied save a few instances of media reports (Osore, 1997, August: “The Anointed Voice”), limited information is available on how it was formed, established and thrived. Although the church has a leadership which comprises more or less the same leaders that
pioneered it, their lives and contributions are not known. VOSHC has also beliefs and practices which were supposedly influenced by the founder(s).

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives, to:

1. Investigate the origin of VOSHC in Luo Nyanza.
2. Identify and describe the major beliefs and practices of VOSHC.
3. Examine the leadership and organizational structure of VOSHC.

1.5 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What led to the emergence and establishment of VOSHC in Luo Nyanza?
2. What are the major beliefs and practices of VOSHC?
3. What is the organizational structure of VOSHC?

1.6 Research Premises

The study was informed by the following assumptions:

1. There are certain religious, cultural, economic and political reasons that led to the rise and establishment of VOSHC in Luo Nyanza.
2. There are distinctive beliefs and practices of VOSHC which are probably influenced by the Christian convictions and beliefs of the founding leader.
3. VOSHC has a hierarchical system of government in its leadership structure.
1.7 Justification and Significance of the Study

There are a number of reasons that make the study important. First, though VOSHC is one of the oldest AICs in Kenya, no detailed and systematic study has so far been carried out on its history, leadership profile and aspects of its beliefs and practices. Therefore, the present study provides a historical background that led to the formation of VOSHC hence a pointer to investigate other churches of similar nature. Secondly, there has been an urgent need to record the historical development of VOSHC because majority of the founding members are aging. If this is not done, vast and rich information will be lost about it.

The study is equally beneficial to scholars of theology and religious studies on the role and contributions of VOSHC in the development of Christianity in Kenya under the leadership of African leaders. Again, through the study, certain academic works such as research books, monographs among others can be developed by various scholars to add to the knowledge in the field of AICs. Such information is of great benefit to other churches and their leaders at large for comparison and additional knowledge on AICs.

1.8 Scope and Limitation of the Study

In terms of content, the study focused on the historical development, beliefs and practices, organizational structure and leadership profile of VOSHC between 1954 and 2012. This is the period when the church emerged and established. Remarkable development has occurred in the leadership organization of VOSHC
since. Therefore, the study restricted itself to VOSHC congregation. Geographically, the study focused itself to Luo Nyanza region. In this study, “Luo Nyanza” refers to the Western administrative counties along the Lake Victoria in Kenya, largely dominated by Luo speakers. The study focused on VOSHC headquarters in Kisumu City. This is where most of the administrators and archives of VOSHC are found. In order to acquire accurate and diverse information regarding the objectives of the study, research was also conducted in two other branches of VOSHC: Apondo and Kabondo VOSHC. The former is in Nyando District in Kisumu County. This is the home church of most of the pioneers of VOSHC. The place was therefore critical for accurate history of the church. The latter, Kabondo VOSHC, is in Rachuonyo North District in Homa-Bay County, Southern Nyanza region. The place was equally significant as it represented another face of VOSHC in the other part of Luo Nyanza since the former two VOSHC branches are found in the central part of Luo Nyanza.

1.9 Conclusion

The chapter has given an overview of the background, stating as well the statement of the problem of the study. The chapter has also highlighted the objectives, research questions and premises of the study. Justification and significance of the study has been equally described in the chapter. Certain related literature was reviewed in line with the objectives of the study. This forms the next chapter.
CHAPTER TWO

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The phenomenon of AICs, has generated much literature, on its causes and implications. It is not possible to review all the arguments and explanations regarding the phenomenon for they come from diverse intellectual positions. This diversity is inevitable for the phenomenon itself is heterogeneous. For the purposes of the study, the literature was discussed in three broad themes: historical origin and establishment of AICs; religious beliefs and practices of AICs and finally, leadership in AICs.

2.2 Historical Formation and Establishment of AICs

Before reviewing literature on the historical formation and establishment of the AICs, it is important to look at its nomenclature. This would show the various characteristics of the categories of AICs. This would in turn help us locate the church under study in its right category among the AICs.

2.2.1 Nomenclature of AICs

Philomena Mwaura (2005:411) defines AICs as autonomous church groups with an all African leadership and an all African membership. Some of them arose initially as breakaways from former mission churches. Others have arisen
spontaneously around a charismatic or a prophetic personality, who often draws upon the beliefs and practices of a number of Christian groups.

Hesselgrave (1978) and Anderson (2000) acknowledge the complexity in grouping the AICs due to variances in their religious expressions. They observe that ecclesiologists, missiologists, sociologists and others have tried to group AICs according to common characteristics, though disagreements have arisen about which characteristics and taxonomy is most accurate. Although it is possible to distinguish groups of denominations with common features, there is also much overlap, with some denominations sharing the characteristics of two or more groups. Perhaps, VOSHC finds itself in the overlap by sharing certain features in terms of beliefs and practices with other denomination especially those which were established during the same period with it.

In her analysis, Mwaura (2005:416) observes that AICs have been labeled variously depending on their origin, historical period and theology as prophetic, Ethiopian/Spiritual/Zionist/Aladura/Prophet healing/Charismatic and Neo-Pentecostal. In her typology, AICs are grouped for simplicity into three categories: ‘Nationalist’ or ‘Ethiopian’ churches, which believed they were mandated by God to work politically and in other ways to overthrow colonial rule, ‘Spiritual’ otherwise known as Zionist, Apostolic, Roho (Spirit), Akurinu, and Aladura churches, in which the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit are celebrated in a close symbiosis with African culture; and more recently, ‘Indigenous African
Pentecostal Churches,’ which also focuses on the Holy Spirit, but are orientated more to modern globalized society. The present study attempted to establish whether VOSHC has the Holy Spirit celebrated in symbiosis with the local culture of the Luo in Nyanza, western Kenya where it was formed.

Marthinus Daneel (1987) prefers the term "African Independent Churches (AICs)" because, even though it is provisional, it does not necessarily imply a value judgment. “AICs” signals that they are independent in their origin and organization. A range of other names indicates the variety in the genre. “Separatist churches” underscores that they have broken away from historic churches. “Spiritual” or “Pentecostal” emphasize the Holy Spirit and experiencing Pentecost anew; they offer a range of techniques for the emotional enhancement of religious experience. From the data, the study was able to establish that the pioneers of VOSHC were personalities that came from established churches. The study attempted to discuss more on this in Chapter Five.

Sundkler (1961) presents AICs in two major categories: Zionist and Ethiopian churches. Ethiopian churches are patterned on the Protestant churches from which most broke away. On the other hand, Zionist churches tend to glide towards Pentecostalism and healing practices. They are primarily interested in the adaptation of Christian teaching and liturgy to indigenous cosmology and ways of worship; they stress expressive and emotional phenomena and cater for the strong fears of witchcraft among Africans. Furthermore, they emphasize on theology of
divine healing as part of their practice as an integral part of the gospel. What beliefs and practices does VOSHC embrace in their liturgy? Could such beliefs and practices influenced by biblical interpretations or cultural beliefs of the pioneers? Attempts are made to unearth these concerns in the study.

In his typology, West (1974) locates churches in relation to the active presence or absence of the Holy Spirit. Prophetic churches are built on a strong leader, a prophet. This is possible in part because of the paucity of leadership, which encourages persons with initiative to claim authority in these churches. This, he says, is the largest grouping of AICs, which includes a wide variety of some of the biggest churches in Africa. He observes further that “prophet-healing” or “spiritual” churches are AICs with historical and theological roots in the Pentecostal movement. Through the study, however, it was established that VOSHC traces its roots in the famous Revival movement in East Africa in the early 1930s commonly known as the Kututendereza Movement, which was a revival movement. This is discussed in chapter five. In view of the categorizations above, this study had opted to use the term African Independent Churches (AICs) since the church under study has an African origin and leadership; which has shaped its beliefs and practices.

2.2.2 Historical Origin of AICs

Adogame (2005:300) underlines the fact that in an evidently simultaneous accomplishment, AICs came to the limelight under remarkably distinct historical,
religious, cultural, socio-economic and political situations. Similarly, Welbourn and Ogot (1966), Paul Gifford (1992:81-82) argues that conditioning of the African peoples by the products of new socio-historic circumstances in the new religious groups appears as an avenue for liberation and for the search for personal and collective salvation. They appear like efforts made in various ways to recapture the message of the Bible, which, according to charismatic leaders was distorted and rendered lifeless by the missionaries who came from outside the continent. Therefore many AICs are formed in response to the needs that arise as a result of the new living conditions often characterised by misery and subhuman living conditions. With regard to VOSHC, the present study encountered certain factors that contributed to its formation and establishment in Luo Nyanza. Some factors were more prominent than others as discussed is in Chapter Five.

Most of the AICs, are more established and rooted in rural setups and among the middle income earners. Gifford (1992:81), Kalu (2005:295), Shorter and Njiru (2001) add that in Kenya, AICs continue to survive in their effort to satisfy people of certain economic class of society. Their members are relatively unsophisticated people, who remain on the margins of modern society and who maintain firm links with their ethnic tradition. AICs were essentially ethnic in origin, although a few have achieved a measure of inter-ethnicity and even internationality. The translation of the Bible into various African languages played an important role in the development of AICs. Even then, it enabled them to discover discrepancies between the biblical text and both the teaching and practice of mainline churches.
on certain cultural issues on the African context. Thus AICs emerged in specific geo-cultural milieu, with each context largely shaping its worldview. To some degree, the study found out that the pioneers of VOSHC were mainly from Luo ethnic community who were low income earners and semi illiterate. VOSHC often came into existence in the rural areas, and only later made their appearance in the cities and towns. Attempts to discuss this demography are in chapter five.

In a different dimension, Barnett (1968) views AICs as particularly relevant to the immediate needs of the local people. Healing in particular is central in many of these churches. When major epidemics have come to primal societies, both traditional healers and Western medicine have often failed. It is at these times that the people have turned to the AICs. Whereas the genuineness of the claims to such formation are challenging to ascertain, there were claims from the majority of the membership of VOSHC to have been victims of the ‘failed’ Western and traditional medicine. They found solace in VOSHC after experiencing restoration of their health in their own bodies or their relations. Chapter Seven has dealt with this in-depth.

2.3 Religious Beliefs and Practices of AICs

AICs started in Africa by Africans sometimes hold to one or more African ethnic belief systems syncretised with Christianity. They tend to draw their values and beliefs from African traditions and the Christian Scriptures. They represent a continuation of many African traditional values into the Christian faith. AICs are
diverse in their forms, structures and beliefs. The study has made an attempt to discuss the source of influence of the beliefs and practices of VOSHC. For example, to what degree has the biblical views influenced the beliefs and practices of VOSHC?

Hesselgrave 1978 and Burnett (1988) observe that AICs are notable with a strong sense of community. The leaders will visit the members almost every day and pray for their particular situations. Sins may be freely confessed within the context of an individual’s new family and tribe. Whatever disturbs the harmony of the participant’s environment are shared and committed to the family; this too is their responsibility. Within the communality of the group, the participant has every reason to believe that what concerns him/her concerns every member of the group. Nothing is too shocking for the family’s hearing. This sense of belonging carries over into the daily lives of a number of the AICs as they seek to relate to one another in the new family. Salvation is understood as a communal event, for humankind is not solitary unity but a ‘family’. Even their conceptualization of sin is built on communal solidarity. Sin is that which disturbs the equilibrium in the community, that which underlies unrest and disharmony, and that which by harsh words and unbecoming acts, causes violence and suffering. The study established that VOSHC view church as a family. Sharing of ones testimonies and experiences in the faith is essential and forms part of the believer’s religious practice.
Many AICs share traditions with Christians from other parts of the Christian world. Such include mainstream churches. West (1974), Turner (1979), Anderson (1987) and Daneel (1987) observe that AICs, for instance the Ethiopian or “African” churches are similar to the churches from which they emerged in terms of their practices. For example, they usually practice infant baptism, read set liturgies and wear European clerical vestments during worship. They are less enthusiastic or emotional in their services compared to prophet-healing churches. They tend to be less prescriptive regarding food taboos, the use of medicine and consumption of alcohol. To some certain extent, though an AIC, VOSHC has adopted some of the practices from the mainline churches where most of its pioneers emanated. Some of these practices are discussed in the study.

West (1974), Anderson (1987), Burnett (1988) and Harvey Cox (1996) share the view that New Pentecostal AICs also emphasize the power and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. There is a strong western Pentecostal influence in many of these churches both in liturgy and in leadership patterns. These churches tend to be less inclined to some traditional African practices as well as those of older AICs. They dissuade their members from alcohol and tobacco use, polygamy, the ancestor cult, the use of symbolic objects in healing rituals and the wearing of church uniforms. Healing plays a vital part in the faith and worship of the AICs. They believe that there are greater possibilities for healing in their churches than there is in western medical hospitals. The laying on of hands, exorcism of spirits, the vigorous shaking and even slapping which accompanies such healing rites, are seen as more
efficacious than are the impersonal administrations of western medicine. They see western Christianity as being academic, book-centred and inept in tackling the real life issues. The belief in the effectiveness of magic, sorcery and witchcraft is still prevalent. However, the real answer is seen to be in the greater power of the Holy Spirit, realised through faith and prayer. Could it be that VOSHC has some western Pentecostal influence in liturgy? This is in order to investigate, considering that many AICs at one time in their establishment had western connections, funding their projects. Does such assistance come with conditions?

Omoyajowon (1982) and Anderson (2000) observe that the Zionist was followed by Pentecostal movements, whose teachings focused on spiritual gifts and baptism in the Holy Spirit, with subsequent evidence of speaking in tongues. The worship was lively, loud and the clothing colorful. Processions became an integral part of the liturgy. Apocalyptic visions with the resultant expectation of the imminent second coming of Jesus Christ characterized their belief systems. Several members had the experience of speaking in tongues. However, with time, the liturgy changed completely, from the more formal tradition of the time to one where people clapped hands, danced and ran around in circles. The study attempted to find out to what extent baptism, the Holy Spirit and eschatological expectation are emphasized as a belief and practice in VOSHC.

On materialism, Anderson (2000) and Chitando (2002) observe that most AICs understand poverty as both material and spiritual. Poverty is attributed to
exploitation, break-down in relationships, the work of evil spirits and failure by Christians to claim these blessings from God. In addition, more often, the causes of poverty have been given spiritual connotation in many AICs. Some church members have accepted poverty as God’s will. Others, from a more theological perspective, regard it as the inevitable cost of preserving the moral economy, of reciprocity, hence maintaining ‘the life of the Spirit’. AICs do not respond to neatly defined and articulated theological positions. The belief that the religious and administrative leader of the church is a mediator between the congregation and God through Jesus Christ. Thus, like Christ, he/she can perform supernatural acts such as reversing or invoking poverty, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. However, through the study, attempts were made to establish the view on poverty in VOSHC and how it is confronted.

2.4 Leadership in the AICs

In their organizational system, Kalu (2005), Adogame and Jafta (2005:326) observe that AICs vary depending on the extent of their local appeal, the demographic and cultural composition of their membership. The founder’s position remains the constant reference point of the church as he/she occupies the apex of the church’s hierarchical structure. The founder is seen to have the ultimate and unchallengeable authority in all matters affecting the church. Most founders and leaders of the AICs, through their charisma, play these spiritual and administrative roles in addition to their father-figure status. AICs are anything but
hierarchical, authoritarian and their leadership charismatic in nature by having the unquested authority of the founder. The leadership of AICs follow traditional ethnic patterns, being nearly always a form of hereditary. Leadership is chieftain based on personal vocation, the spiritual gifts and the personal charisma of the pastor, preacher or the prophet. He/she connects people with God, mediates healing power and ministers grace to them. His or her words are viewed as God’s words. To give the leader one’s tithe or one’s financial contribution is equated to giving to God himself and is believed that a reward from God then follows. In the present study, it was observed that the leader of VOSHC has remained in his position since its inception. However, he is not the final authority in the church. He has a team he works with in running the church as discussed in Chapter Six.

Regarding women participation in leadership, Mwaura (2005:411) observes that though women still dominate the pews in mainline churches, AICs and Pentecostal churches, they are absent from the power structures, which are male-dominated. Women within Christian churches are also not permitted to hold positions in the ministry, nor in the executive structures of the church. On the contrary, since the establishment of Christianity in Africa, there has been an upsurge of female religious leadership particularly in the prophetic, revival movements and AICs. It is evident in the study that women have leadership opportunities in VOSHC but not on an equal measure as their male counterparts.
In summary, four categories of literature have been reviewed in this section. First, are works featuring the nomenclature of the AICs. Second, are touching on the historical formation of AICs. Third, are literature on the beliefs and practices of AICs. Lastly, are those which are linked with the leadership of AICs. The review confirms availability of materials and works on history, beliefs and practices of AICs. However, direct literature on VOSHC is limited. A study as the one undertaken was therefore necessary in contributing toward filling these gaps.

### 2.5 Theoretical Framework

The study was informed by the theory of David Hesselgrave (1978) on causes and growth of Religious Movements (RMs). The author uses the theory to explain how certain religious movements form, establish and attain rapid growth in their respective cultures. Similarly, it was established that VOSHC was formed and established in the Luo culture. Hesselgrave underlines two major aspects of growth of any religious movement.

First, growth can be measured in quantitative and qualitative terms. Thus the kind of membership of a given religious movement affects its quantitative growth. This could be in terms of economic class, racial or ethnic balance, level of education among other parameters. Secondly, and of much interest to the study, is the aspect of culture which Hesselgrave argues affects the formation, growth and establishment of a given religious movement. He uses this aspect to ascertain the extent to which growth factors mirror cultural dynamics. The author explains that
from an anthropological perspective, every religious system shows a universal framework consisting of belief, group organization, rituals, religious objects and emotional elements. In his theory, Hesselgrave has assumed that culture is also subject to change. Culture is influenced by other underlying factors such as education, technology, among others. In this respect, although, culture of the Luo community of Western Kenya influenced the beliefs and practices of VOSHC as discussed in chapter seven, biblical interpretation featured more prominently.

The scholar further distinguishes the various types of causation of which he also highlights four. A necessary cause which must occur, independent of other factors surrounding a given RMs. Sufficient cause which is always followed by initial growth. Contributory cause, which acts as a catalyst in the growth process and contingent cause which makes it possible for another factor to function as a contributory cause. In his explanation, Hesselgrave emphasizes that any RMs must be viewed from both theological and scientific viewpoints. This may not be the ideal case in all RMs. The present study encountered little scientific aspects in the formation and establishment of VOSHC. It means that RMs can still be viewed from other aspects such as culture.

For instance, the author remarks that biblically, there is a real sense in which the only sufficient cause for the growth of the Church of Jesus Christ is the sovereign and gracious action of the Triune God. Jesus indicated that He would build His Church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18):
In admonishing His disciples to bear much fruit, Jesus also reminded them that, He was the vine, His followers are the branches: for without Him they can do nothing (John 15:5). Apostle Paul also wrote concerning his role in the growth of the church at Corinth he said, in 1Corinthians. 3:6:

> I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase (KJV)

In a nut shell, theologically, the author argues, in so far as the religious movements are concerned, their growth is primarily due to the sovereign activity of God. Most of the founders of VOSHC were not well educated yet they preached the Gospel with authority and managed to convert a number into their new denomination. Moreover, Hesselgrave reckons that the only necessary cause for church growth is that God’s people go forth to faithfully preach the gospel in accordance with the command of Jesus Christ, the head of Christian faith (Romans.10:13-14):

> How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher? How shall they preach, except they be sent? (KJV)

Hesselgrave further asserts that for growth to occur, a necessary cause that must occur, namely leadership. Through the study, it was established that VOSHC expanded further especially after its formal registration in 1956 under Societies Act. With this, following registration, VOSHC became more organised in terms of
leadership which facilitated growth of the church. However, the theory is silent on salient issues touching on leadership. For instance, the study established that there were leadership wrangles between certain personalities which feature in Chapter Five of the study.

According to Hesselgrave (1978), for formation and establishment (growth) of any religious organization, three aspects which are interdependent are necessary: biblical, scientific and anthropological. This means that for any religious organization to thrive, all the factors must be properly in place. Theological factors have to be interpreted in the context of a given culture (anthropological factors). The interpretation must be put in the right context when there are right leaders (scientific factors) who are organized, dynamic and competent in discharging their duties. This assumes that VOSHC pioneers were able to relate the biblical teachings in the context of the Luo culture and traditions. The population in their surrounding was able to be evangelized since they were able to identify with the message. VOSHC leadership was able to develop beliefs and practices for the church by contextual interpretation of the scriptures. The founders managed to discharge the ecclesiastical duties effectively. Despite the abovementioned flaws, Hesselsgrave’s approach informed and helped the study in explaining how the aforesaid factors influenced the historical development, beliefs, practices and leadership of VOSHC both directly or indirectly.
2.4 Conclusion

The chapter has reviewed related literature with reference to the objectives of the study. It has discussed the theoretical framework on which the study is anchored. Through this, it came out that formation and establishment of any religious group including VOSHC is influenced by a number of factors which are interdependent and must be in place. The next chapter discusses the methodology used in the study to arrive at the findings.
CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter has discussed the research methodology of the study. It has stipulated the research design, the study area, target population, validity and reliability of the instrument used. It has also outlined the methods used to collect data and analysis of the same. The chapter has also brought out the problems that were experienced during the research and ethical considerations which were put into consideration for the study.

3.2 Research Design

The study used historico-anthropolical analytical design in order to unveil the history, beliefs and practices of VOSHC. This involved a descriptive approach, defined by Kombo and Tromp (2006) as a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to sampled individuals. Questions were asked to determine possible factors that led to the formation of VOSHC. The questions asked were meant to find out the prevailing circumstances underlying VOSHC’s establishment in the Luo Nyanza region. Anthropologically, the study relied on the Oral Interviews (OIs) and unpublished literature for data in line with the objectives of the study.
3.3 Study Area

The study covered the current VOSHC headquarters in the lakeside city of Kisumu, Kisumu County in the western part of Kenya. This was due to the fact that most of the administrators and archives of VOSHC are based in Kisumu. Secondly, Apondo VOSHC is in the current Nyando District located in the outskirts of the eastern part of Kisumu City. This is the home church and area of most of the pioneers of VOSHC. Kabondo branch church of VOSHC from the southern part of Luo Nyanza in Homa-Bay County was covered by the study too. Most of the current office bearers and the co-founders of this church also hail from these selected areas and were very resourceful during the study.

3.4 Target Population

The target population was mainly the members of VOSHC. The study drew sixty respondents on the basis of positions held in the church, duration one had taken to be a member and on gender basis.

3.5 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The selection of the sample was based on variables such as gender, age, status and length of period in the church. It was believed that these variables influenced the attitudes of the adherents towards the beliefs and practice of the church. Purposive sampling, where a group of people believed to be reliable for the study is targeted. In the present study, respondents considered as having information relevant to the study were selected as follows:
Firstly, those who were selected to give information on the history of the church were to have been either founders, contemporaries of the founders. Secondly, in order to get information on the beliefs and practices, church leaders/ founders were selected because of the roles they played as leaders while in VOSHC. For precision, extreme case and snowball types of purposive sampling were employed. These are types of purposive sampling where focus is given on cases that are rich in information in question and where sample size increases as new contacts are mentioned by the people a researcher started with respectively. These two purposive sampling methods were used more so in findings out the specific information on the history, beliefs and practices of VOSHC. Three VOSH Church branches sampled for the study were: Kisumu and Apondo in Kisumu County and Kabondo in Homa-Bay County.

For historical information about VOSHC, both men and women who had been members of VOSHC for more than ten years were selected. Snowball sampling was used to sample such respondents. This was done by talking to the church members of the sampled branches. In getting information on leadership, both current and retired VOSH leaders were selected. Concerning some beliefs and practices of VOSHC, both men and women irrespective of whether they were leaders or not, were selected provided they had been in VOSHC for not less than ten years.
3.5.1 VOSH Church Leaders

A total of fifteen leaders responded to the questionnaires provided (See Appendix II). They stated the factors they knew to have facilitated the formation of VOSHC, its beliefs and practices. The leaders were interviewed over the same. Using three FGDs, each in the sampled church branches, the researcher discussed with the leaders about VOSHC organizational structure and their understanding on beliefs and practices that have enabled it to be relevant all the years of its existence. Each FGD was composed of six individuals who had relevant features to the study, depending on the study objective which was to be discussed. They were moderated during the discussion by the researcher.

3.5.2 VOSH Church Members

A total of forty-five members of VOSHC in the selected churches were sampled using snowball sampling. This was a fairly representative population distributed equally among the three branch churches sampled. They provided background information on the earlier beginnings and establishment of VOSHC (See Appendix II). Using FGDs they also discussed the reasons why VOSHC was rooted in Luo Nyanza. In the questionnaires, they were asked to discuss some of the beliefs and practices of VOSHC.
Figure 1.1  Summary of the Distribution of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Area</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Sampling Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kisumu VOSHC</td>
<td>Members</td>
<td>≥20yrs</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Snowball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leaders</td>
<td>≥40yrs</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Extreme Case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apondo VOSHC</td>
<td>Members</td>
<td>≥20yrs</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Snowball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leaders</td>
<td>≥40yrs</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Extreme Case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabondo VOSHC</td>
<td>Members</td>
<td>≥20yrs</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Snowball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leaders</td>
<td>≥40yrs</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Extreme Case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.6  Methods of Data Collection

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Details of data collection, analysis and presentation are examined in the next section.

3.6.1 Secondary Sources

Secondary sources included library and archival materials. The researcher visited Kenyatta University Post Modern library, Carlile College Library and Hekima College Library in Nairobi. Other written sources were derived from the Registrar of Societies in the State Law office in Nairobi. This enabled the researcher to access the copy of the constitution and registration certificate of this church. Church records such as the register of members pertaining to membership registration or any correspondence deemed relevant to the present study were obtained from church leaders. This was possible after the researcher asked for permission from the church leaders to access them. As already stated, there is hardly any literature on VOSHC except a few write ups, articles, newsletters, letters and its constitution which were examined.
3.6.2 Primary Sources

In order to collect primary data, the study employed the following research instruments: interview schedule, an observation schedule, a checklist guide, and questionnaires. These were used as follows:

a) Interviews Schedule

This involved administration of questions prepared by the researcher in line with the objectives of the study (See Appendix II). The researcher probed the participants through the questions to give their own opinions on the possible reasons why VOSHC was started and established in Luo Nyanza.

The interviews were organized for the researcher by church leaders especially the pastors. They did this by getting the sampled individuals prior to the arrival of the researcher. It is worth noting that eliciting information through the questions was quite tiresome. Many church members were suspicious of the responses being recorded on a questionnaire. It therefore, became necessary to explain to most respondents the purpose of the interview. Sometimes, appointments could be postponed due to abrupt commitments of the informants. Later schedules were fixed to compensate.

Most interviews took place in church compounds after the worship services. Some took place in the respective homes of the leaders/elders. The homes of the leaders/elders or founders were very necessary for accessibility of some ceremonial
objects such as photographs, ecclesiastical attire and literature. However, some founders had tight schedules. Hence, the researcher had to re-schedule appointments with them.

Some of the oral interviews were recorded on cell phone memory and sometimes, the researcher had just to take notes. The interviews were conducted in Dholuo and English depending on the literacy level of the respondents.

b) Participant Observation

Kombo and Tromp (2006) describe PO as a situation where,

The investigator becomes an active functioning member of the culture under study. An investigator participates in any activity appropriate to the status which is assumed.

The researcher prepared an observation schedule (See Appendix II) to assist in focusing on central aspects in each worship service. For instance, a phenomenon such as speaking in tongues, exorcism and faith healing sessions can only be observed effectively during worship services. An observation schedule was used during three Sunday services and religious activities ranging from one baptism ceremony in Kabondo, to dedication of children which was conducted in one of the Sunday service in Kisumu VOSHC branch. The researcher was guided by the observation schedule in collecting information according to the objectives.

PO gave the researcher an opportunity to assess the mentioned activities from the insider’s perspective. During the services, both the members and the leaders reiterated the church beliefs in the prayers they offered. This ranged from
testimonies that were given, to songs sang and sermons delivered. Most of these are mentioned and discussed in the subsequent chapters. All these experiences enabled the researcher to arrive at some conclusions with regard to beliefs and practices of VOSHC.

Some ecclesiastical ceremonies were not frequently scheduled since some, such as burial services which is dictated by unpredictable death. Others, for example, baptism and Holy Communion are held depending on the church calendar; which did not fall in the study period. The researcher was also a full time Teachers Service Commission (TSC) employee. This meant sandwitching the field work between the teaching schedules. Therefore, it took five months to collect adequate data for the entire study.

c) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Kombo and Tromp (2006) define a FGD as:

A special type of group in terms of its purpose, size, composition and procedures and is usually composed of 6-8 individuals who share certain characteristics, which are relevant for the study. The discussion is carefully planed and designed to obtain information on the participants’ beliefs and perceptions on a defined area of interest.

The FGD conducted comprised seven participants: four men and three women. Two participants each were drawn from Apondo and Kimori branches of VOSHC while three were from Kisumu VOSHC. The FGD was conducted in Kisumu VOSHC compound. The checklist (See Appendix II) used comprised broad-based questions on which discussions on the history, leadership, beliefs and practices of
VOSHC were generated. The discussions aimed at an in-depth evaluation of the beliefs and practices, opinions on the leadership profile and various views on the history and origin of VOSHC as well as the vision and mission of the pioneers.

During the discussions, participants were given opportunity to express their view exhaustively. Through FGDs, the researcher was able to get information, such as the beliefs and practices of VOSHC, which was not possible to generate during the individual interviews. In addition, much of what came out from the PO and interviews were confirmed in the FGDs. For instance, it came out that in VOSHC; one of the surest sign that one is filled with the Holy Spirit is by speaking in tongues. This probably explained why majority of the members were praying in tongues in the services we attended.

3.7 Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

The instruments were cross-checked by the supervisors in two areas: the clarity and suitability of the questions. The cross-checking helped the researcher to rephrase and adjust the question appropriately enabling administration of questionnaires and conducting of interviews with consistent results.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed and themed in respect to the objectives of the study. They were categorized, synthesized, discussed to form various chapters and sections of the study as presented in the subsequent chapters. From the analysis, conclusions were drawn and summarized at the end of each chapter.
3.9 Problems Encountered During the Research

During the study some challenges were encountered. First, there was reservation among some church members who became suspicious of the questions they were being asked concerning the church. We had to explain to the informants that the information sought was well intended. Data recording and taking notes during the church services was involving hence the researcher had to rely much on his memory. Data from some founders and early history of the church was not readily available because some of the key founders had died. But the researcher managed to talk to their close family members and contemporaries for information.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The researcher made appointments with the respondents prior to the research day. Respondents were of diverse backgrounds. The researcher assured them of confidentiality, self-respect and safety in the course of providing any information. However, they did not sign any consent forms since the researcher did not have them. In the FGDs, all the participants were given a chance to share their views.

3.11 Conclusion

The chapter has discussed the methodology that the study used in coming up with data. It has also examined the reliability and validity of the instruments use in the data collection. Challenges which the researcher encountered during the study and ethical considerations for the study have equally been addressed in the section. The next chapter focuses on the findings of the study.
CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF THE LUO COMMUNITY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses socio-cultural and religious background of the Luo community of Western Kenya in which VOSHC developed. It discusses the development of Christianity in Luoland to the point at which new forms of Christianity emerged. The chapter begins by first surveying the cultural and religious background of the Luo community. It then attempts to situate VOSHC as an AIC in that community. In so doing, the chapter addresses historical course of VOSHC, situating it within the wider socio-cultural and religious milieu within which it was born and nurtured. The chapter reveals the histories, the charismatic personality of the founders and leaders, belief patterns, practices and organizational policies of VOSHC as shaped by the Luo culture.

4.2 Socio-Cultural and Religious Background of the Luo Community

The Kenyan Luo, commonly referred to as Joluo, are of Nilotic origin. In Kenya, they are found in the Southern block on the shores of Lake Victoria. The name was derived from the fact that the Joluo were constantly following one another in search of better pasturage (Ongong’a 1978). Their constant movement was determined by geographical conditions, like floods and frequent droughts. Such migrations usually took place along the rivers. The Luo word luwo designates, following after one another. They therefore came to refer to themselves as oganda
luwo or Luo, people of Luo. Presently, the Luo community is predominantly established in four counties around the shores of Lake Victoria: Siaya, Homa-Bay, Migori and Kisumu (see appendix IV).

Ongong’a (1978) asserts that traditionally, the Luo society was politically autonomous and male dominated. The society was made up of clans, which were composed of lineages or extended families. Each clan was self-sufficient; it had its own territory and leadership. While there were no political leaders as such, those with domestic and religious authority had also socio-political functions. However, their powers of representation varied a great deal. The whole organization centered on kinship. Each clan was headed by a clan elder, who was a male figure, heading his family. It was believed that since he was able to head his own family, such leadership skills could be exhibited in such position of a clan elder.

Ongong’a (1978) further observes that in terms of education, the Luo society was organized such that parents took charge of educating their children. The children were given very basic but practical knowledge of situations in which they would find themselves throughout their lives. Small children were taught by their mothers. As they gradually reached the playing age, they began to imitate adult activity. At the boyhood stage, fathers took charge of their sons’ education. Meanwhile, the girls learned the equivalent from their mothers. Education also included the knowledge of the community leaders, genealogy and how to respect
elders and seniors of the community. Other areas which parents would not teach such as sex knowledge were learned through age groups.

Socio-politically, the Luo community had various specialists. For instance, there were elders. They were influential figures and had to earn and measure up to that status. Though the elders came from dominant lineages, they did not inherit leadership; rather they demonstrated it. As such, they did not all have the same rank or status. Some were lineage elders and others were clan elders. Elders were called upon to settle disputes, especially land related. They intervened and suggested the most amicable way of possible solutions. Elders would signal the time for planting, weeding and harvesting. Apart from leading the community in agricultural matters and solving its disputes, the elders were also ritual leaders *par excellence*. They conducted communal sacrifices. They also kept such symbols of unity which could be used for rituals at times of calamities (Ongong’a 1978).

Ombewa (O.I 3/3/2012) emphasized that the Luo community depended on the warriors for its security. These were successful brave men responsible for offensive and defensive fighting. Occasionally, they were expected to lead raids into an enemy’s territory after a dispute. Medicine men (*jobilo*) were ritual experts greatly sought after and highly respected in the community. Their professions in most cases were passed on from father to son. They played a role in the preparation for raids, for war and even for the new planting season. A medicine
man prayed and blessed the spear which would be thrown first among the enemy, asking God to make the enemy’s spear blunt and miss the warriors.

The religious beliefs and practices of the Luo community were based on the understanding that life is not artificially divided into the sacred and the secular, but rather that both are intertwined and that the former acts as the vehicle for the latter. These religious ceremonies served to bind and hold the group together. Without them, society would fall apart. This was because of the way in which the sacred permeates the whole life. There was no particular time set for religious activity; individually, people turn to God at any time.

One may pray to God in time of need: in the morning while starting a journey, in gratitude for a favour gained, when searching for a lost article, when expecting a guest and for a healthy family. These may take the form of invocation, libation, uttering a few words or sacrifices made by a family. Prayers said take the form of conversation with God or the ancestors. Publicly, liturgical meetings were formed and include sacrifices and funeral rites.

Hoehler-Fatton (1996) also gives a brief overview of the Luo society. She observes that the Luo society was patrilineal, exogamous and organized into territorial segmentary lineages. Within this system, people acquire land primarily through patrilineal inheritance. Under Luo customary law, women did not have independent rights over land; instead, they were assigned plots by their husbands. Women have no autonomy and independent legal rights over their children.
Before the coming of the missionaries, the Luo community practiced traditional religion, especially ancestral veneration. Hoehler-Fatton (1996) observes further that the Luo indigenous religion, like any other religious system, has many facets and involves individuals on varieties of levels with varying degrees of intensity. The Luo perform rituals that reinforce the existing social order and participate in spirit-possession cults that, to some extent, challenge it. Men tend to dominate in the arena of lineage-strengthening rites and in making frequent offerings to the ancestors in small shrines located within each homestead. Luo women, too, participate in some of these lineage-based religions, such as naming of infants after ancestors and installation of a married son in his new home (Potash 1978).

Hoehler-Fatton (1996) reiterates that although Nyasaye (Luo name for God) is today worshipped as the Christian high God, His power has not eclipsed the strength of the ancestors and anomalous spirits in popular belief. Spirits are known generally as juogi and may be called jochiende or tipo if they become malicious. Apart from the ghosts of distinct ancestors, spirits are generally believed to exist in clusters. Each cluster or family of juogi has its name and characteristics. Spirits can affect individuals in a variety of ways, but a common manner is through possessing an individual and causing him/her to run wild. Such a victim is then taken to an expert known as jajuogi who can discern which spirit is causing trouble. It is said that such experts have been possessed by the same spirits and thus function as their medium. Consequently, mediums and healers are a common phenomenon in Luoland.
In the later half of the nineteenth century, indigenous possession movements arose in Kenya. These millenarian and frequently militant movements bore a striking resemblance to one another, despite having originated from and in different ethnic contexts. Some of these movements intensified during the First World War. In Luo Nyanza, there were several kinds of such eclectic movements that came up and operated in the region. Such movements included Mumbo cult mentioned in chapter one. Such religious movements within Luoland contributed in the origin and establishment of VOSHC as discussed in the next chapter.

Despite the existence of millenarian and militant movements in Luo Nyanza, there was persistence of certain social and spiritual adequacies. For instance, many people suffered from incurable diseases, works of witchcraft and sorcery were experienced among the people of Luo community. Moreover, the Luo community continued with certain cultural traditions which weighed people down. Such challenges among others, prepared a good ground for the offing of AICs such as VOSHC. Much of these are elaborated in the subsequent chapters.

It is important to look at how Christianity penetrated the Luo Nyanza region which had millenarian and militant movements in the name of religion. But first, the next section traces how Christianity generally reached the Kenyan scene.

4.3 Establishment of Christianity in Kenya

Some African countries, for example, Egypt and Ethiopia were early recipients of Christianity in Africa. Christianity did, however, penetrate the rest of Africa with
the coming of the European era of exploration and colonization, particularly the
nineteenth century. The penetration of the whites into Africa was geared towards
two goals: the primary concern of them was to expand their territory by bringing
as many people as possible under their imperial wings. Secondly, the explorers,
particularly the missionaries, also came with the aim of civilizing Africa.

Burnett (1988) observes that in 1498, the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama
reached the Kenyan coast at Malindi, and in his company were several Roman
Catholic missionaries. Although they did not remain to take up sustained
evangelistic work, sporadic contacts were made with the local population. The
pioneer Jesuit missionary, Francis Xavier, stopped at the coast in 1542 on his way
to India by sea and had conversations with Muslim leaders in Malindi. Later in
1598, three missionary priests moved to Lamu, although their work only endured
for a few years. Later, Augustinians friar built a church in Mombasa, a town at the
Kenyan coast. Although there remained a handful of Christians, mostly traders
from India, organized missionary work in Mombasa had thus collapsed long
before the arrival of the first Protestants.

Opwapo (1981) asserts that in 1844, a German Lutheran preacher employed by the
CMS of London, John Ludwig Krapf, landed at Mombasa pioneering the modern
era of Christianity in East Africa. He preached the gospel to all who would hear;
but only one person, a dying cripple named Maringe was baptized. Along with his
co-worker the Reverend John Rebmann, who arrived in 1846, Krapf also produced
the first Kishwahili dictionary and translated the scriptures. He wanted to move inland where it was healthier and the people were more receptive, but his comrades particularly Rebmann, opposed this plan as impractical, whereupon Krapf left the CMS and sailed back to Europe from Kenya. Consequently, the British United Methodists commissioned him to pioneer a new mission, whose object would be to reach the Galla empire which was believed to stretch from Kenya to Ethiopia. This Methodist mission, launched in 1862, suffered a series of disasters. Frustrated in the attempt to move inland, the mission settled at Ribe town, along the Kenyan coast.

Teresia Hinga (1980) notes that it is David Livingstone who gave the impetus to the missionary invasion in East Africa. Livingstone had been working as a missionary explorer in Central Africa. In his journeys of exploration, he had encountered the chief obstacle to Africa’s civilization: the evil of slave trade. He felt that this together with poverty and ignorance was a great hindrance to civilization. He consequently pioneered a programme known as the 3 Cs (Commerce, Colonization and Christianity). In 1844, he sent an appeal for missionary settlers from home. After the period particularly due to the Berlin Conference which demarcated Africa to various colonial powers in 1857, various agents were sent out to Africa. This included the alien government, the settlers and the missionaries. They all came with the aim, not only of furthering the imperial interest of their respective countries but also to win Africa for Christ, particularly the missionaries.
Burnett (1988) affirms that a new vision of missionary work was brought soon after by Sir Bartle Frere, governor of Bombay in India and a convinced evangelical Christian. While in East Africa to sign a treaty ending slave trade, he took the trouble to examine the state of the missions. The CMS and the Methodists, he reported, lacked direction; they were preaching the gospel and were pioneering linguistics, but were not meeting other pressing basic needs of the day. They were too ‘bookish’ and not sufficiently practical. Frere therefore recommended that they should take an active part in opposing slavery and the slave trade. As a result, the CMS in 1875 founded Freretown, which was to serve as an outpost for freed slaves across from Mombasa Island. One Giriama Christian, David Koi, was invited to become a teacher of a large settlement of the freed slaves.

The spread of Christianity continued as an influx of missionaries set in during the later half of the nineteenth Century. In East Africa, Christianity was initially spread by Protestant denominations particularly the Anglicans and German Lutherans. By 1877, Christianity had also reached Uganda. Catholic missionaries came into Uganda from Rome in 1879 (Hinga 1980).

With much regret, the relationship between Catholics and the Protestants were characterized by a distinctive rivalry if not antagonism over theological emphases and approaches to mission work, a relationship that was apparently continous. This rivalry was also perpetuated to a lesser degree among the Protestants missionaries themselves who were represented within the region.
Consequently, the Christianity which was brought to sub Saharan Africa was therefore a very fragmented one. Divisive influence on the African society was the result. Africa adherents of one denomination were led to mistrust and were alienated from the fellow Africans who were followers of other denominations. The Catholic-Protestant rivalry was particularly emphasized. Again, Christianity inclined towards being too ‘intellectual’. This was mainly due to the methods used to Christianize Africans. Missionaries used several methods to win converts. These were through provision of Western medical care and evangelism. By far however, the most noteworthy method was through provision of formal education. Mission stations often included a school in which converts were taught to read and write. Thus in the minds of Africans at this early period, Christianity was equated with education hence was not well related to ones’ personal commitment.

Owiti (O.I 4/1/2011) observes that the process of proselytizing was itself very academic. Candidates attended catechism classes in which they were often orally examined. They were baptized only if they passed their catechism examination. Therefore baptism depended on the ability of the candidate to memorize facts. As such, nominal Christianity which appeared to have more to do with names and the intellect rather than personal commitment led to certain aloofness in the church.

Ojwang’ (O.I 12/5/2012) notes that the majority of the African converts lacked real commitment to Christianity and its values for they were only but nominal Christians. Christian missionaries were also preoccupied with emphasizing their
denominational differences at the expense of preaching convincingly the central Christian message of love. They apparently failed to understand and display this love to Africans as their equals. Thus Christianity presented to the Africans was so clothed in Western cultural array that they found it rigid to embrace. The result was that there was a marked dryness and lethargy in the church at this time. There was an apparent need for awakening, a need for revival!

In East Africa, a revival began in the late 1920s whose influence has remained significant on the East African region. The phenomenon is commonly referred to as the East African Revival Movement, or the Tukutendereza Movement. The phenomenon has also been referred to as Rwandism since it started in Rwanda, within the East Africa region. The revival movement was marked by a conversion experience often associated with visions and dreams, public testimonies and confession. The revival movement had a pronounced separation tendency. Members of the revival were often stricter than the missionaries, more thorough in their rejection of the values of the Africans societies (Isichei 1995).

To some extent, the movement is connected with the roots of VOSHC. However, to understand the revival movement, it is necessary to go a few steps back in time to look and study what led to the revival hence the formation of a new church which finally gave birth to VOSHC. But before that, the next section covers the establishment of Christianity in Luo Nyanza.
4.4 Christianity Reaches Luo Nyanza

Opwapo (1980) notes that the first missionary work in Luo Nyanza was primarily an extension of the missionary enterprise in Buganda. In the Luo Nyanza, the CMS was the first to arrive in 1877. Two years later, the CMS were followed by the Mill Hill Fathers (MHF). Notably, the missionary movement changed radically following the establishment of British colonial rule in 1895. Indeed, when the railway reached Nairobi in 1899 and Kisumu (then called St. Florence) in 1901; Protestant missions sprang up in every direction. In particular, when the new railway line extended inland to Kisumu as a port city of Lake Victoria in 1901, missionary enterprises increased with improved transport systems. In 1903 the MHF founded a mission station in Kisumu, marking the start of Catholic works among the Luo. By then Luo Nyanza was part of Uganda before the boundaries were redrawn in 1903.

Burnett (1988) states that once established and settled, the missionaries began asking themselves the question of how the gospel could be spread effectively after the freed-slave colony phase was over. New ways had to be tried. In 1895, a pioneer missionary of the African Inland Mission (AIM), Willis Hotchkiss arrived at Maseno with a policy of solely evangelism. Six years later, he went to Kaimosi with the Friends Africa Industrial Mission (FAIM). He had come to believe that evangelism alone was not enough. He therefore introduced practical training in handicraft and subsistence farming in the Kaimosi community.
Conversely, the foreign mission teaching amongst the Luo community started at Maseno in Central Nyanza in 1906 when a CMS Archdeacon Willis arrived to establish Maseno School. Willis had a different method of introducing Christianity, providing elite education. He invited Luo chiefs to send their sons to the new school. However, only the dispossessed and unwanted children from the community were sent. Fifteen years later, the chiefs discovered those who had gone to school were displacing the traditional chiefs. Ombewa (O.I 21/7/2012) narrates that the Luo chiefs that heeded to the advice and embraced western education included Odera Akango’ of Yala and Ojijo Oteko. In Luo Nyanza, Western education turned out to be the most popular missionary method of winning Africans to Christianity, combined with medical care and evangelism.

In addition, several missionaries before 1900 are still remembered for their support of African interests. For instance, Archdeacon Owen of Kavirondo (Nyanza) insisted on the rights of the African majority, openly opposing his fellow missionaries in London in 1923. Owen also began the Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association (KATWA), aimed at teaching civics and aiding economic development. For a time, Owen became popular with Africans especially due to this initiative.

When Christianity penetrated Luo Nyanza population, other forms of Christian independency emerged within the region. Such emergence included the *Roho* (Holy Spirit) movements which the next section describes briefly.
4.5 The Origin of the Holy Spirit Movement (Joroho) in Luo Nyanza (1907-1933)

It is necessary in this section, to deal with some of the aspects of the Holy Spirit movements- Joroho. As will emerge in the subsequent sections, Joroho have made contributions, both to individuals and the Luo society. Their contribution is equally reflected in the formation and establishment of VOSHC.

In the early nineteenth century, in the Luo Nyanza region, the Protestant missions founded church denominations. They gave a certain measure of responsibility to Africans. However, there was increasing discontent which occasionally erupted. Hoehler-Fatton (1996) remarks that according to most historians of AICs, the first indigenous Luo denomination was Nomiya Luo Church (NLC). Nomiya means “It was given to me”. The it can refer to the founder’s revelation or to the Holy Spirit. Others claim that the church was known locally as dini Kowalo and that Owalo, the founder, was indeed the first man in Nyanza to receive the Holy Spirit. Others interpret the name Nomiya Luo to mean that the new denomination was specially given to the Luo by God (Barrett 1968).

Opwapo (1980) describes Owalo, the founder of the first AIC in Kenya to be from Asembo in present day Siaya County. In his vision, Owalo was transported aloft by the angel Gabriel through a series of heavens: He was shown into the presence of God. On his right side sat Jesus who told him that God alone was worthy to be worshipped. Thus they were equal as both were the messengers of God, and that
Owalo should return to preach the gospel to all the Luo. This experience taught him that the CMS’ teaching on Trinity was wrong. This forced him to leave the CMS. Earlier, Owalo was baptized a Roman Catholic at Ojolla near Maseno in the present day Kisumu County. Later, while working in Mombasa on the Kenyan coast for a missionary, Owalo converted to Islam (Opwapo 1980). Later, after the NLC, other religious independencies were witnessed in Luo Nyanza.

In 1927, a sudden surge of revivalism was witnessed in the mainstream churches within Luoland, later known as the Holy Spirit Revival. Charismatic personalities emerged denouncing sin and leading people to mass public confession. African elders in such churches confronted the prophets and demanded an end to this ‘embarrassing’ practice. Large numbers of the congregants in such mission churches refused to abandon the revival groups. Instead, they seceded from the established churches to begin the Roho (Holy Spirit) churches, which gradually became a powerful spiritual force.

4.6 Conclusion

From this chapter, it is apparent, that the formation of VOSHC in the Luo Nyanza region was majorly as a result of religious factors. The Luo cultural beliefs and practices had little to do with it. The Luo community was religious in diverse aspects of their lives. This acted as a seed bed for the emergence of other forms of religion including Christianity. The next chapter which we turn to discusses the origin of VOSHC.
CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 THE ORIGIN OF VOICE OF SALVATION AND HEALING CHURCH

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter gave an overview of the Luo community in terms of their religious and cultural practices. It has presented a background to the birth of VOSHC. The present chapter thereon, traces the birth and growth of VOSHC in the Luo Nyanza region of Kenya. VOSHC had roots from a revival which was experienced within the East African region in the late 1920s. The next section has described the revival.

5.2 The Rise of the East African Revival

Zablon Nthamburi (1991) observes that the East African Revival has a deep impact on many of the Protestant churches in the East African region. This was a revival that began within the CMS mission in 1927 onwards in Rwanda through Uganda before it finally reached Kenya in 1937. The revival began with an assurance to its adherents that salvation comes through a deep religious experience, resulting in spontaneous open confession of sin. Emphasis was placed on the blood of Jesus Christ which was shed on the cross, making possible the certainty of God’s forgiveness. The East African Revival offered to individuals the challenge of a deeper experience of salvation in Christ and a more radical commitment to Christian discipleship. In the present study, the East African Revival is significant because it acted as a launching pad for the formation of
VOSH C as will be discussed later in the chapter. There are a series of events that led to its spread.

In the mid 1920s, the coldness and lethargy within the East African (EA) church could be felt in the CMS missions and other mainline churches. The zeal with which Africans converts had initially accepted Christianity was beginning to decline. Even missionaries seemed to have lost their original fire. The Africans felt the missionaries did not practice the love of Jesus Christ they claimed to preach to the African converts. The various missionaries were propagating their own interests and ideologies. The missionaries became their own rivals (Hinga 1980). In Luo Nyanza, like many areas of EA where Christianity had made a way into, the stage was set for a revival.

Nthamburi (1991) observes that in 1933, a group of Ugandans attended a Rwanda-Keswick convention in Kabale, where a definite revival was felt. More and more, those who attended the convention got ‘saved’ as they committed their lives to Jesus Christ. In Uganda, the revival continued to spread by the people who embraced the revival movement (revivalists). The revivalists began preaching in Uganda and shared their new experiences with fellow Ugandans. The revivalists zealously emphasized the fact that the lethargy and lack of commitment and purpose in church hitherto, was due to unrepented sins in the hearts of individual Christians. To rectify the situation, therefore, it was necessary to confess all sins, however shameful.
Sundkler and Steed (2000) note that the evangelical convictions of the revivalists were clear: the Anglican mission was to operate on Bible, Protestant and Keswick lines. The meetings organized by the revivalists at that time in Uganda were characterized by emotional and joyous singing of hymns, expounding of biblical passages and relating them to daily life situations. This form of evangelism touched the inner most life of the Africans: a religion that came from within the heart and called for a moral transformation that could be called nothing less than a new birth. The experience was a direct contrast to the ‘academic’ Christianity that preceded it; which put much emphasis on the intellectual at the expense of the spiritual lives of the people. From its nucleus in Uganda, the revival spread to other East African regions including Kenya. The next section surveys how the revival reached the Kenyan scene.

5.3 East African Revival Reaches Kenya 1927-1953

Burnett (1988) observes that after World War II, the revival movement developed in Kenya and increased in membership, particularly in the Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist churches. This development came as a result of the dynamic evangelistic approach of the members of the revival.

The revival movement reached Kenya when the missionary churches were already well established. By 1920, the church in Kenya, Luo Nyanza needed a change of approach to their mission activities. Welbourn and Ogot (1966) assert that the church in western Kenya was characterized by leadership wrangles and separatists.
This was brought about majorly by theological and doctrinal differences among the church leaders and some from the members. A section of the church felt that there was overemphasis on materialism in the church at the expense of spirituality. Consequently, it was at this critical time that the revival movement from Uganda was spreading in western Kenya. This was a time when many African Christians were becoming disenchanted by Christianity since there was a thin line between the missionaries and the colonialists. African nationalism was becoming a powerful force.

Hinga (1980) notes that in the early 1930s, AICs and African independent schools were being introduced in the western and central parts of Kenya. They were majorly rooted in the rejection of western Christianity, education and medicine. They started questioning what western Christianity meant to them. The major concern for Africans was whether or not it was necessary for them to reject their culture in order to become Christians.

Burnett (1988) notes that this widespread movement of spiritual life in Kenya was also commonly called the Revival Fellowship, or Brethren. A person became a member of this fellowship by accepting Jesus Christ as his/her personal savior. Assurance of salvation was believed to come through a deep religious experience, resulting into spontaneous open confession of sin. Emphasis was placed on the blood of Jesus shed on the cross, making possible the certainty of God’s forgiveness. Members of the Revival Movement referred to one another in the
Kiswahili language as *ndugu* (brother) or *dada* (sister) in Christ, and were called collectively *wandugu* (brethren). In Kisumu, a town in Luo Nyanza, those who accepted the message of salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ were called *Jo Remo* (the people of the blood) because they believed that their sins had been washed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Welbourn and Ogot (1966) reiterate that members of the group were referred to as *Jo remo* because they were always singing ‘blood hymns’. Again, due to the overemphasis on confession, revivalists were nicknamed ‘*Jo Lahruok*’ (those who meet and deeply share issues of the heart with a spiritual perspective) in Luo Nyanza. The revivalists saw that giving testimonies from their hearts on what God had done and the sins they had been washed from by the blood of Jesus Christ was worth sharing. Later in 1954, there was a splinter group of *Jo remo* known as *Jo hera*, People of love. This was because they emphasized love as the greatest of all among the spiritual gifts. “So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love” RSV (1Corinthians 13:13).

Welbourn and Ogot (1966) bring out the differences between the *Jo remo* and the *Jo hera*. The *Jo hera* believed that true revivalism could be conducted only within the Church, whether in the spiritual or in the institutional sense. They therefore believed in supporting the Church fully. The *Jo remo*, on the contrary, completely rejected church leadership. But the *Jo hera* believed that lay leaders needed to recognize ordained ministers as the true leaders of the Church. The *Jo hera* based their stand on John 13:34-35:
A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one another.

The Jo remo believed that people were saved only through repentance and confession of sin. The Jo hera on the other hand, taught that a person was saved only through faith in Jesus Christ. They believed that it is faith that ‘gives substance to hope, and makes certainty of realities not seen’ (Hebrews 11).

The Jo remo also believed that a person is saved many times. Whenever one sins there is an opportunity of asking for and receiving a new salvation. The Jo hera on the other hand, preached that the salvation of a soul occurs only once for eternity. There may be backsliding but when a sinner truly repents, he/she can be restored to life and forgiven. Though one may be saved, the Jo remo believed, one still live under the power of sin; and one can not therefore help sinning. To this the Jo hera retorted that the Lord Jesus Christ saves by faith from the power and dominion of sin, and thus liberates us from the rule of Satan and sin. We then become righteous and holy, true children of God gain a new birth and a new life (Barrett 1968). All in all, the extent of these two different groups to co-exist peacefully was the question that confronted the church leaders in the Luo Nyanza region especially between 1952 and 1957.

Nthamburi (1991) gives a summary of the message of the brethren as well summed up in the revival hymn entitled “Tukutendereza”. This is a Luganda word meaning “We Praise You Jesus”. The hymn was used by the brethren to greet each other and identify each other as the ‘saved ones’. The whole revival movement and
experience came to be seen as to be ‘saved’. Hinga (1980) reiterate that the song is a good summary of the faith of the revivalists:

1. Long my yearning heart was striving
   To obtain His perfect rest
   But when I gave up trying
   Simply trusting I was blest

2. I am trusting every moment
   In the precious blood applied
   Calming resting on the fountain
   Dwelling at my Savior’s side

3. Consecrated to thy service
   I would have a divine for thee
   Gladly tell the wondrous story
   Of salvation full and free

   Chorus
   Glory, glory, Jesus saves me!
   Blessed be His holy name
   For the cleansing blood has
   Reached me
   Hallelujah to the lamb

In their preaching, the revivalists emphasized on sin and its manifestations. The result of the emphasis was confession of sins mentioned by name and confessed as it was. Hinga (1980) affirms that the confession of sins was often combined with restitution. People would confess theft and return the goods stolen or throw them away. If one had quarreled with anybody, it was felt necessary for one to go and confess to the person offended before one could be accepted by the revivalists.

Sundkler and Steed (2000) indicate that this Fellowship through the Revival was brought about not by intellectual argument or theological definition or by any ‘Faith and Order’ declaration by experiential togetherness but also by the zeal of the revivalists to walk right for God and share the same message with others. These zealous efforts of confession of sins by the revivalists enabled the revival to penetrate in the Luo Nyanza region as discussed in the next section.
5.4 Impact of the Revival in Luo Nyanza

Welbourn and Ogot (1966) demonstrate how the revival did not permeate Luo Nyanza until after World War II. The revival reached Luo Nyanza from Uganda in 1937 in Maseno. Under the leadership of Dr. Norman Green, Medical Officer in charge of Maseno Hospital 1930-1945, Maseno became a strong center of revival in Nyanza.

Under the leadership of some Africans such as Ishmael Noo of Sakwa-Bondo who had been converted in 1938, the movement spread from Maseno to Bondo area in Siaya County in the subsequent years. It insisted on ‘being saved by the blood of Jesus’ and on the public confession of sins. The message, notwithstanding the vehemence with which it was proclaimed, initially was not commonly accepted within the region. Majority of the people in the area remained indifferent to, or critical of, what appeared to many as mass movement.

Welbourn and Ogot (1966) note that in 1944, the group, was organized in small ‘armies’ under the leadership of one Simeon Noo Ooro from Gobei in Bondo, Siaya County. Under the leadership of Noo, the revivalists toured Bondo area, moving from market-place to villages, preaching through Tung’ (traditional megaphones) and asking their listeners ‘to straighten their crooked paths’. They had no church building. Apart from preaching in market-places, they preferred house to house evening fellowships, when the countryside was quiet and when most people were at home. They composed and sang many hymns.
Ombewa (O.I 21/7/2012) notes that the most common of the hymns was, ‘I heard the voice of Jesus say to me.’ Many who listened to the songs decided to answer the call contained in the hymn. They resolved to follow Jesus. Noo and his followers continued in the movement to the extent that members who were second and third wives of polygamous marriages started to desert their non-Christian husbands. Many wives of monogamous marriages left their ‘unsaved’ husbands to obey the call. Most of the ‘saved’ women who had left their husbands went to live in Noo’s home. From about 1945 onwards, a large part of his congregation were women. The deserted husbands and others accused Noo and his supporters to the government for leading a subversive movement. They also accused the revivalists of promiscuity with their wives and daughters.

Ombewa (O.I 21/7/2012) states that it was not long before the followers of Noo played into the hands of their accusers. The accused insisted that both sexes should sleep together, irrespective of blood relationships or moral codes. The accused contended, there was nothing wrong in this practice. Noo and his followers were accused of sexual immorality especially homosexuality and masturbation among the brethren. Disturbed by these practices, a group of revivalists from Kano-Nyando in Kisumu County under the leadership of Allen Ojwang’ Iro from upper Nyakach, openly rejected the teachings of Noo. Their attempts to dissuade Noo from such practices were in vain (Ojwang’ O.I 12/5/2012).

Mbara (O.I 30/3/2012) recalls that almost at the same time, the unity of the revival movement in Luo Nyanza was assailed from another quarter. Bildad Kaggia, a
Gikuyu, had been baptized and brought up as Anglican. However, during a short visit to Britain, he began to have doubts about the type of Christianity practiced in Kenya. On his return, to Kikuyu in 1945, he left the Church which was sponsored by the CMS and started his own congregation, to which he gave no special name because he did not believe in denominational names. He also abandoned those parts of the Bible which deal with Jewish customs and practices, because he regarded them as irrelevant to African setup. In 1948, he turned his attention almost entirely to politics. Some of his disciples he influenced by his preaching came from Luoland. In particular was certain Blasio Oking’ Mbara from Miwani in Kisumu County and Kefa Usenge from Bondo in Siaya County. The two among others heard Kaggia when they were on employment in central Kenya where Kaggia hailed from. The two later returned to their homes in Luo Nyanza to preach ideologies of Kaggia.

The Kaggia followers emphasized confession of sins; they spoke in tongues and rejected all forms of medical treatment, relying almost entirely on spiritual healing. They also refused to use the any prayer book and those sections of the Bible which deal with the institutions of the Jews. Thus by 1948, Luo Nyanza had three revival movements operating independently: The revivalists who were within the CMS and AIM churches, the Noo group and the Kaggia group (Ombewa O.I 21/7/2012). Coincidentally, the revival movement appeared in Luoland amidst Kenyans’ efforts to cope with colonialism, white settlers and missionaries. Later, the challenges of modernity and globalization would trigger widespread revivals in the quest for supernatural interventions.
All the forms of revivals had certain features in its effort to create an impact in Luo Nyanza. First, the revival responded to a prevalent religious structure of the mainline churches message, implications and a tendency to privilege a certain dimension of the message found most appropriate, especially the charismatic resource. In addition, it had an effort to reshape the interior of a prevalent religious tradition. The revivalists re-directed the core message to deeply felt needs within the community. Consequently, revival provided an answer to socio-economic, political needs and restore moral order by appealing to supernatural intervention.

The revival also acted as a counter culture of the Luo community which the revivalists found going contrary to the. Importantly, it threw up a new leadership under Africans, able to deploy religion in the explanation, prediction and control of the Luo cultural dynamics.

Burnett (1988) adds that the revivalists operated quite differently from the normal ecclesiastical structures of the mission churches. There were no officials, no executives, no salaried workers; no headquarters, no offices; no bureaucracy, no paperwork, no minutes; no budgets, no membership lists and no annual subscription fees. The fellowship was informal, unstructured, spontaneous and group led.

However, the revival was not unanimously accepted within Luo Nyanza. In some cases, it was regarded as disruptive elements in the mission churches. Its members came to be known for their dedication and passion particularly, for their refusal to acknowledge the mission churches as the only vehicle through which one could be
saved. The revivalists often appeared to be too zealous to the ‘new’ faith and were at times regarded as crazy, spiritualists as they went round denouncing sinners from tree tops, house tops and market places. For this, they even used *Tung’* (traditional megaphones) which earned them names in Luo Nyanza - *Jolendo* (those who announce the Word).

Bible translation into various vernacular languages had been accomplished. By 1914, the Bible in Kiswahili language had been completed. By 1926, the Kikuyu and Luo New Testament had been in place (Nthamburi 1991). Again, this had a significant effect on the direction Christianity was to take in Kenya. Since the scripture was now available, it was felt that there was no need to wait until Sunday for the ordained priest to read and interpret the scriptures for the laity. A concern for what exactly the scriptures say began to develop. For instance, Ojwang (O.I 14/7/2010) notes that they could spend days and nights in the bush, reading and meditating on the scriptures respectively.

Due to the tendency on the part of the converts, to seclude themselves, there was discontent within their mission churches. Revival began to be regarded as a rebellious element. To others, it was the pupil turning into a teacher. Furthermore, the laity who were used to being preached to on Sundays, usually with messages that had to do with their lives, were now standing up and claiming that they were washed clean from their sins by the blood of Jesus Christ, completely side-stepping the leaders of the mission churches. They were challenging the ‘pillars’
of the Church to confess their sins and become saved, in order to participate in fellowship with other brethren who were now all equal before the Lord.

The rise of the revival in Luo Nyanza prepared a ground for the formation of new forms of church denominations including the one in the present study. The next section outlines how the revival culminated to the formation of a new church which finally led to the formation of VOSHC.

5.5 Birth of a New Church

Although, generally, some revivalists were totally in the mission churches, some leaders who were converted in certain churches under the missionaries, particularly the AIM refused to accept the revival completely. Some of their members who accepted the revival were regarded as disobedient to the mission church and were disciplined by the church by being asked to confess that they had accepted the bad religion of Rwanda. In places such as the CMS missions where the revival was accepted by the leaders, however, majority of the revivalists remained within the church and made attempts to keep the fire of revival burning by having regular meetings. However, it was challenging since they were not dully embraced by the church leadership (Angura O.I 3/7/2010).

Burnett (1988) observes that between 1937 and 1945, this new revival fellowship faced severe opposition from the mission churches. Members were not allowed to participate in the normal laid down programme and activities of the mission churches they belonged to. The leaders in the mission churches particularly resented the revivalist’s open confession of sin and their constant claim to have
been born again. In many places, revivalists were not allowed to hold meetings in church buildings and at times their meetings were violently disrupted by opponents. Nevertheless, the Brethren continued to come together in homes, bushes and at times under trees near churches.

Angura (O.I 3/7/2010) observes that in Luo Nyanza, the major concern however, was with the development of some of the revivalists who were forced to break away from the mission churches. To the contrary, the excommunicated revivalists did not keep quiet after being sent away. The zeal did not diminish as they continued to preach in market places and any other gathering they could come across. Tung’ in hands, they would demand that the listeners repent for them to be saved. Ombewa (O.I 21/7/2012) emphasizes that the revivalists had become a disquieting group which even refused to submit to the established order, government or church. By this time, the revivalists had some ‘autonomy’. They were now no longer in the mission churches, having been explicitly excommunicated in the mid 1940s.

The revival movement by this time in the Luo Nyanza region was both an informal and spontaneous mass movement initiated and sustained by African Christian laity and clergy. However, it was predominated by the lay, cutting across denominational, gender, ethno-cultural and geographical distinctions. Being devotional and evangelistic in nature, the gatherings of the revivalists were for individual and mass spiritual renewal through praise, testimonies, witnessing, Bible reading, mutual comfort and support.
Nonetheless, there were some aspects of Christianity which were not real to them. Angura (O.I 3/7/2010) narrates that the revivalists believed in salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ, but not divine healing of the sick and infilling by the Holy Spirit. For instance, they argued that these were long gone aspects of Christianity. Divine healing ceased with the earthly ministry of Jesus and that speaking in tongues due to the in filling of the Holy Spirit also ceased with the apostles in the early church.

Notably, Angura (O.I 3/7/2010) observes that the major turning point of the movement came in the early 1950s, when a visiting missionary Nicholas Bekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu (1909-1985) from Zululand in South Africa came to Kenya. He was invited by the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC). Indeed, the history regarding the birth of VOSHC cannot be complete without mentioning the contribution of Nicholas Bhengu, whom we now turn to.

5.6 Nicholas Bhengu and his Contribution in the Formation of VOSHC

Bhengu was one of the most successful twentieth-century Pentecostal church leaders in South Africa (Dubb 1976). He was born on 5th September, 1909 at Entumeni, KwaZulu-Natal, where his father was a pastor of the American Lutheran Mission. He received his early education at the mission school but later attended two Roman Catholic schools, at Inkumama and Mariannhill respectively.

Angura (O.I 3/7/2010) observes that in 1952, Bhengu was invited by the Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) church stationed in Nyang’ori. They organized for him crusades and revival meetings in Kenya. In Luo Nyanza region,
he was scheduled to have a crusade in Awasi market in the present day Nyando District, Kisumu County. Much of the advertisements went round verbally that a preacher from Zululand, South Africa was to visit the area. What was quite distinct about the visiting preacher was that he preached about salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ, infilling of the Holy Spirit and divine healing. This increased the curiosity of the people and heightened their expectation since they had not embraced such teachings in their respective mission churches. Consequently, Bhengu’s teachings were different from the teachings and belief of the revivalists to some extent. Among other differences, though the revivalists believed in salvation, they did not subscribe to the belief that a person could be filled with the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues.

Angura (O.I 3/7/2010) observes that surprisingly, people from the mainstream churches were warned by their respective church leaders not to attend the crusade meeting in Awasi where the visiting preacher from South Africa would preach. However, people still went to see for themselves especially a few from the revival group, including Vitalis Angura from Muhoroni Scheme, Durcila Ochieng’ from Apondo-Kano and Chief Owiti Omori Washington (Cousin to Silas Owiti). People from other mission churches such as AIM also attended the services including Allen Ojwang’ and Evan Agumba who were then students at Onjiko High School. Angura (O.I 3/7/2010) recalls that prominent people from the area such as the then area veterinary officer named Benard Nyawira, who were looking forward to healing from various ailments they had in their bodies also attended the meeting. During the evangelistic crusade meeting, messages of divine healing dominated.
Bhengu’s visit was significant since it is the members of the revival whom he impacted with his teaching on divine healing and infilling of the Holy Spirit who later formed VOSHC. They formed VOSHC after they were excommunicated from the mission sponsored churches, which the next section discusses.

5.7 Excommunication from the Mainstream Churches

On their return to their respective home congregations and churches around Nyando and some parts of Kisumu County, those who had attended the evangelistic crusade spread the same message of divine healing and infilling of the Holy Spirit. This did not go well with the leaders of the AIM and CMS missions where the recipients belonged. As a result, preachers allied to these mainline churches were sent to those who had attended the crusade to secretly convince them to ignore the teachings of Bhengu. However, this did not deter the revivalists from believing the message they had received and experienced. The revivalists were adamant and were finally excommunicated from the AIM and the CMS sponsored churches. The excommunication was attributed to the fact that the revivalists passionately believed a different teaching; infilling of the Holy Spirit and divine healing together with salvation through the blood of Jesus (the full Gospel). On the other hand, some members of the revival argued that revival was possible within the church hence remained in the CMS and AIM churches.

The revivalists who were excommunicated did not have a place to identify with as a church. Consequently, they conducted prayers in homes of their members in rotation. They continued to preach more powerfully and started operating in
Nyakach and Kano locations of Nyando regions, Kisumu County since most of them were from these localities.

School-going students who were in the group was sent away from their homes because of the faith they had embraced. The students who had now dropped out of school were accommodated in the older member’s homesteads where they were devoted to prayers, fasting and Bible study. This was a point of blessing somehow; their persistent, consistent and insistent devotional prayers and fasting increased the faith of the entire group and they grew stronger day by day in their faith; a feature that was exhibited by the early believers in Acts 2:42-47:

And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Angura (O.I 3/7/2010) reiterates that God was with them as evidenced by the miracles that accompanied their preaching and witnessing. They could pray for the sick and get them healed by placing on them their hands. They received the Holy Spirit with the speaking in tongues and laid their hands on people to receive the same. They had weekly fellowships and house to house fellowships. They could also organize prayer meetings in villages, homesteads and open air market centers nearby. They felt so indebted to share the message of the cross to everyone whom they could come across at any given moment.
Up to this time, however, neither did the group have any organizational structure nor any form of leadership in place. As a result, the revivalists could meet without any permission from any authority. Accountability was a challenge which led to frequent arrests by the police as illustrated in the next section.

5.8 Under Police Surveillance

Owiti (4/1/2011) observed that by early 1950s, the Mau Mau (Africans who were agitating for political independence from the colonial government in Kenya) had emerged in central Kenya. The Mau Mau agitation did not go well with the British who had colonized Kenya. The police suspected that the meetings of this group—revivalists in Luo Nyanza—were a front for some back-door Mau Mau activities; a movement which was dominant in Kikuyuland of Central Kenya. This was due to the religious activities of the revivalists which were distinct. They could pray and fast for many days in the forests as well as converge in closed door prayers overnight, among other practices. In many instances, they could be accused of making noise in the surrounding areas due to their nature of preaching and praying using Tung’. They were closely monitored by the police.

Owiti (O.I 4/1/2011) notes that those whom the authorities perceived to be leaders of the group in Nyanza were often arrested and handed down to police stations for questioning on the basis of such rumors and accusations mentioned above. Each time, after thorough interrogations, they found nothing warranting their arrests and could let them go back to their various homes in Luoland.
Still, Angura (O.I 3/7/2010) observes that at least a police officer attended every service and recorded every hymn they sang and testimony shared. The colonial government intelligence officers were sent to their meetings to find out more about the identity of the group. Later, police scrutinized their notes as they sought to assess their connection with the *Mau Mau* but nothing could be found. In one of their meetings in Nyakach in 1955, a chief inspector by the name Okoko was sent to spy on them as usual. The police officer attended the meeting held in the shade of a large spreading tree. He listened to their prayers and preaching in that service. Consequently, at the end of the service, he felt a conviction in his heart to repent of his sins. In fact, as the Word was preached, he fell to the ground and began weeping and confessing his sins. After a while, the officer got up, brushed himself off, declared his faith in Christ, took Holy Communion with the congregation and confessed that he was a government officer (Owiti (O.I 4/1/2011). This was the beginning point of formal registration of the group. This has been discussed in the next section.

Owiti (O.I 4/1/2011) acknowledges that despite these shortcomings, the officer who had attended the meeting saw nothing harmful in their ministry. The intelligence officer returned to the police station in Kisumu and reported to the Police Commissioner, Mr. Charles Murgor (Opwapo 1981),

This is the best group of Christians I have ever met. Their leaders all appear to be earnest, descent and very religious people. They have only two faults: They sing their choruses over and over again too many times, and when they pray, they pray too loud and cry like babies. They need to have their organization officially registered with the government, and then they will no longer be under suspicion. This would bring to a close frequent arrests and harassment from the government due to the rumors.
The leaders of the mission churches and denominations such as the Anglicans also became envious and jealous of them. They thought they would lose their members both adults and teenagers who were being converted to join the revival fellowship (Ojwang’ O.I 14/7/2012).

Opwapo (1981) emphasizes that the then colonial government was concerned with such groups in the name of religion. This was as a result of many uprising movements such as *Dini ya Msambwa* which justified their criminal activities in the name of religion. Thus there was a government policy to register any group that claimed to be religious.

Consequently, Owiti (O.I 4/1/2011) recalls that when the suggestion for registration was floated to the group, it was not an easy idea to embrace. A view shared by other pioneers. The members were against the registration of their group as a denomination by the government. They argued that there was no scriptural record that the Apostles in the early church were registered. For the registration to be effected, it also meant that they had to have proper and functional leadership. This was another obstacle: to them, any form of leadership would take away the anointing of God from them. Secondly, according to Mbara James (O.I 30/3/2012), leadership positions were viewed as of the ‘world’. Most significantly, they feared that by being registered, the government would impose certain policies contrary to their faith.

However, after a long deliberation in a series of meetings in Apondo in Kano in Nyando District; a place which acted as their center of major meetings, they
agreed to have the group registered. The government, through the then District Commissioner (DC) of Central Nyanza, C.F Atkins advised the group to register their group as a church. The DC invited their perceived leaders to the police station and explained to them how to go about the registration process of a church organization. In the move towards registration, Bildad Kaggia played a critical role which cannot be over-looked. This forms our next section.

5.9 Kaggia Group and His Influence in the Formation of VOSHC

During this period of time, there was a renowned ex-soldier and later a politician by the name Bildad Kaggia (1922-2005) who hailed from Kangema in present day Murang’a County, Central Kenya. Though Kaggia was mainly talked about in terms of his contributions in the Kenyan politics, yet he is one of the pioneers of the early revival in Kenya, especially in Central Kenya. He was among the six freedom fighters who were detained at Kapenguria prison by the colonial government over their involvement in the freedom movement in Kenya. However, Kaggia contributed in the spread of the gospel and more so the spiritual awakening in Kenya too.

Kaggia, who had been travelling around the world as an army officer of the colonial government, had just come back in 1945 from World War II. Ombewa (O.I 21/7/2012) narrates that in order to counter the uprising of the Africans agitating for independence especially from the mission churches, the colonial government came up with an idea on how to counter the wave. In the early 1950s, certain African laity were selected by the British, all from the CMS within East
Africa to go for a tour in the western countries. In Kenya, such individuals were Bildad Kaggia together with Obadia Kariuki from Central Kenya, a Zulu named Nicholas Bhengu from Zululand-South Africa and Bishop William Nagenda from Tanzania (Ombewa O.I 21/7/2012).

They toured development projects in the United Kingdom, then to the USA. In the USA, they visited Pentecostal churches under William Bynum. They witnessed how the Holy Spirit worked in the lives of Christians. The Christians prayed individually, weeping and prophesying. This experience influenced them, through the messages of faith and the Holy Spirit that were predominant.

Ombewa (O.I 21/7/2012) notes that when those who had been taken for the tour returned home, unlike the rest, Kaggia was different. He praised the good development they witnessed. However, he had an issue with how giving is done in the European churches. for he compared that with what the missionaries had taught them in Kenya. The missionaries taught them to give just a cent or an egg as an offering in the church. With this, he lamented that many Africans in Kenya had missed the opportunity to serve God with their possessions. He also witnessed overseas how Christians had the liberty to pray individually unlike what the missionaries taught the Africans; that it was only the clergy or priest who offered prayers on behalf of the congregation.

Ombewa (O.I 21/7/2012) notes that Kaggia came back to Kenya in 1945 full of ideas. His major task was to liberate Kenyans from the colonial yoke. He writes (Hinga 1980):
In my enthusiasm, I felt charged by God to liberate Kenya just as Moses was commanded to liberate the Israelites from the Egyptian’s bondage. However, he felt that political liberation was not enough. The basic slavery was that of the mind and the enslavers were the white men and their agents were the missionaries and the settlers, who had taught the black men to believe that they were less of human beings than the white men.

Ojwang’ (O.I 12/5/2012) further observes that Kaggia decided that the greatest bondage of the Africans was the Europeans’ religion-Christianity. Kaggia, therefore, gave his mission a radical approach. He preached that ‘churchism’ and all religion that overemphasized the need for formality were but a hideout for hypocrisy hence worth denouncing. He had the intention of fighting within the CMS. However, he left the church but decided to venture into market places in areas like Fort Hall (Murang’a), Kiambu and Embu.

Hesselgrave (1978) observes that in the early history of African culture, there were contacts between Africans and the Western missionary cultures. As a result, there were those enterprising Africans who sought to remodel the impact of Western culture on ethnic structures. Consequently, Mbara (O.I 30/3/2012) affirms that Kaggia had the following objectives: to create a purely African movement divorced from European denomination and entirely independent of the European church’s doctrine. Again, he wanted to establish a holy church free from all European customs which had been preached to Africans. Furthermore, he wanted to formulate an independent doctrine to suit African customs and traditions. On this, therefore, all converts had to be re-baptized. Through this, they acquired new names, erasing foreign names. Matrimonial ceremonies were also to be conducted in a new African way (Hinga 1980).
By the early 1950s, it seemed as if the birth of the new ‘church’ had been accomplished. Kaggia’s role was to accommodate these followers into a more or less homogeneous group for which he supplied dynamic leadership. The Kaggia group embraced holiness in the work of salvation though he did not agree with building church structures for worship. The Kaggia group also refuted anything Western especially in celebrating Holy Communion using wine and unleavened bread. Moreover, the Kaggia group did not support the idea of registration of their ‘church’. As a result, Kaggia was arrested due to his conservative stands that were opposed to the policies of the government of the day. Later in 1963, Jomo Kenyatta became the first president of Kenya, convinced Kaggia to join him in politics. Kenyatta promised him appointment as a Minister for Religious Affairs. This would free him from frequent arrests from the government authorities. Kaggia turned his efforts towards political liberation and joined the strong nationalist party, KANU under the leadership of Jomo Kenyatta.

Meanwhile, his group *Ahanoki* (the saved ones) continued with the religious activities based on what Kaggia had believed and taught them. His preaching on salvation to his fellow citizens yielded into many converts in other parts of the country. Most of the people whom he witnessed to and influenced in and outside Central Kenya region were commonly known as *Jo’ Kaggia* (the people of Kaggia). He had converts in Luo Nyanza region. They included Blasio Oking’ from Miwani in Nyando district, Peterlis Oluoch Awando and Christopher Allando Kasera both from Asembo in Siaya County, among others. Oking’ was the leader of the Kaggia group in Luo Nyanza. This is significant to the present study
because, it is the Kaggia group that produced the first top leaders of VOSHC. This is discussed more in the next section of the chapter.

Ombewa (O.I 21/7/2012) also notes that during the same period of time, some separatists from the revivalists wing of the Anglican Church operated in Luo Nyanza. This group was led by Simion Noo Ooro from Gobei village in Bondo District, Siaya County. Noo was a former church teacher, an eloquent preacher, with a flair for poetic phrases and a dynamic leader. Once converted to revival, he took it up seriously; and from his home, he toured most of his village locality preaching the new message of conversion and purity of heart (Welbourn and Ogot 1966). The group preached the gospel of salvation and they were commonly using *Tung’* to preach and sing in public places. Most of his followers met at his home for their periodic fellowships and conventions. By 1942, he had gathered a devoted group of disciples. However by 1947, the Noo group joined the Kaggia group in Luo Nyanza under Blasio Oking’ Mbara. During the registration of VOSHC, the Kaggia group had significant contribution, especially in producing majority of the office bearers. The input of the groups cannot be overlooked as is discussed in the next section.

### 5.10 Formation of VOSHC

When the idea of registration was imminent, there were three major revival splinter groups operating in Luo Nyanza autonomously. Firstly, was a group that had been excommunicated from the *Tukutendereza Movement* mainly from the CMS and AIM sponsored churches. This group could easily be referred to as the
liberal *Tukutendereza* wing since unlike their colleagues in the movement, they embraced divine healing and baptism in the Holy Spirit evidenced by speaking in tongues; a teaching which was propagated by Bhengu. They were mainly around Kano in Nyando and Nyakach and their perceived leader was Allen Ojwang’ Iro from Nyakach. Secondly, there was a group which was commonly referred to as the *Jo Kaggia* Kaggia group. This was the group that was influenced by the teachings of Kaggia in Central Kenya. Its leader in Luo Nyanza was Blasio Oking’ Mbara from Miwani in Muhoroni. Thirdly, Welbourn and Ogot (1966), identify another group called the Christian Universal Evangelical Union (CUEU). It had seceded from the CMS in 1948. This group particularly operated in Gobei Village around Bondo in Siaya County. It was led by Simion Noo Ooro. Significantly, all these groups were amorphous in nature; they did not have any formal registration and a systematic organization.

Ombewa (O.I 21/7/2012) notes that there was need for the three groups to come up with ways of formalizing their operations. This was necessary since the colonial government had put such a requirement for all religious groups. None of them however, was willing to take up leadership positions. They viewed leadership as worldly. Lastly, all the groups realized that they had common beliefs of salvation through the blood of Jesus. However, at the initial stages, the liberal *Tukutendereza* group had some reservations in working together with the other groups due to a number of reasons.
Firstly, there were differences in the administration of the Holy Communion (Angura O.I 3/7/2010). The Kaggia group argued that the Jews used wine and unleavened bread in the administration of the Holy Communion because these were their staple foods. Consequently, Africans were to use their staple foods ugali (cooked solid paste made from maize flour) and porridge. They did not give any scriptural reference in support of the practice hence the other group did not agree with them. Secondly, there were differences in baptism especially in giving of new names. The Kaggia group argued that since they were Africans, they should have African names as opposed to the biblical (Jewish) names. As a result, they had names such as Wuod Ng'ané KA'ng'ané (son of so and so)’, or Nyar Ng'ané KA'ng'ané (daughter of so and so). The Kano group did not find this as biblical and did not subscribe to it. They saw nothing wrong in giving biblical names.

Ombewa (O.I 21/7/2012) adds that there were also differences in the freedom that comes with salvation (Ritruok). The Kaggia group argued that once one was saved, the individual was no longer under the law and could live and interact freely with both sexes. In fact, they could sleep in one room on the same mat- men, women and children. This kind of practice was commonly known as ‘Thagalany Par Jolendo’ (free mat for all those who announce or confess). The group from Kano saw this as disorderly. Unlike the Kaggia group, they could not even allow men and women to sit on the same pew during their worship services. They advocated for distinctive sitting arrangements even for couples during worship sessions. Fourthly, there were differences in eating of blood from slaughtered animals. The Kaggia group argued that eating of blood from any animal was not bad but the
Kano group did not condone this citing the Levitical laws which forbade the same (Leviticus 17:10-16):

> And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul…

It is worth noting that despite their differences in beliefs and practices, the majority in Kaggia, Kano and Noo groups were able to come together and agree for registration. The issues that were bringing the differences were also ironed out. Apparently, there were those who were not for the idea of registration completely. Consequently, in early 1956 they remained and opted to call themselves Kristo Makende (Christ the One and Only). The separated team was now led by Oliech Oguta from Uyoma in Rarieda, Siaya County.

Owiti (O.I 4/1/2011) confirms that as a result, a meeting was held on 16th May, 1956 and application for registration was made. Silas Owiti was given the mandate to draft the by-laws necessary for the registration. In the by-laws, focus was on membership- anyone aged twelve years and above was eligible for membership, baptism and Holy Communion which they offered without any charge and marriage; where saved brethren were to marry only the saved too. Allen (O.I 12/5/2012) adds that the group wanted to be different from established mission churches in terms of monetary charges that were tagged on offering various ecclesiastical services. The group was registered as one of the few, first indigenous Pentecostal church movements registered by the British colonial government in
Kenya under the name “Voice of the World Wide Salvation and Healing Revival”. Owiti (O.I 4/1/2010) recalls that the given registration certificate was number 488.

The name has, however, gone through many changes. After some time, it was changed to The Voice of Healing, The Salvation and Healing Church both in 1961 and 1963. During this period (early 1960s), there were controversies regarding the leadership of the church. Two groups emerged with different names each claiming authentic leadership of the church. In 1964, a new name was acquired, namely, the VOSHC; a name it retains to date under the leadership of Silas Owiti. As was mentioned in the introduction, VOSHC is the name used in this work.

Owiti and Allen (O.I 2010) claim that God showed them that the church should remain “a voice of one crying in the wilderness of Africa” and the world at large that: “Jesus Saves, Jesus Heals.” The name was very significant to them because they wanted the group (church) to remain a voice of hope to the hopeless; a voice of salvation to the lost humanity and a voice of healing to those suffering from sicknesses of all kinds. It aimed at restoring total wholeness of humanity. In 1956, when the first registration was effected, Mbara (O.I 30/3/2012) notes that the first leadership lineup of this church (Voice of the World Wide Salvation and Healing Revival) was as follows: The leader of the group was Allen Ojwang’ from Rae-Nyakach assisted by Evan Agumba. The Chairman was Blasio Oking’ Mbara who hailed from Miwani, Vice Chairman was Allando Kasera from Asembo Ndori in Siaya County. The Secretary was Javan Aggrey Silas Owiti from Apondo- Ahero and Treasurer was Vitalis Angura from Muhoroni scheme.
Angura (O.I 3/7/2010) observes that there were various factors that influenced the leadership lineup. For instance, the two leaders Ojwang’ and Agumba earned their positions, for being good friends and God was also using them mightily in preaching the Word and performing of miracles at the time. Secondly, Oking’ was given the position of chairperson because of his age. Among the group, he was the eldest hence it was perceived that he would provide wise leadership. Owiti became the secretary due to his education background. Among the group, having gone through Maseno School, Owiti had higher academic credentials than the rest in the group. Awino (O.I 8/6/2012) also confirms that though Ojwang’ was equally learned, Owiti could reason from both spiritual and secular approaches, hence could reason with much wisdom. Dursila Ochieng’ had prayed to God to bring in their midst an educated person who understood issues in the secular world too. Angura Vitalis on the other hand became the treasurer due to his honesty in dealing with people, as was perceived by everyone in their team. He was among the first group to be excommunicated from the CMS.

There were other senior pioneers of this church who had much significant contributions in the beginnings. These included women such as Dursila Ochieng’ Modi from Apondo. She was also a prophetess in the group. She had prophesied that the church would be registered by the colonial government and that God would bring someone learned in their midst to help them with registration processes. Joseph Ochieng’ Ja Muma (one who own the Bible) who was a famous businessman in Katito town in Nyakach. He was a relatively rich person in the midst of the group. Many at times, he helped the group in sorting out issues that
involved finances. His presence also added value as a testimony that even the rich business people could be saved. Others included Margret Olang’, Christine Aseso (sister to Blasio), Adera (the wife to Vitalis Angura). Other pioneers were Jacktone Alolo, Samson Abungu, Jackton Obodo, Ezrer Sirare Madanye and Okungu Maurice Okwiri. Before discussing the spread of the VOSHC, it is significant to focus on Silas Owiti, the current leader who has remained in the top leadership since its registration.

5.11 Silas Owiti-Pioneer and Current leader of VOSHC

Silas Owiti hails from Kano plains of Kochogo in Kano Location, Western part of Kenya. His father was Jowi Oiko and his mother was Mariam Dede Jowi from Kodumo in Kabondo near Kadongo Market in Southern Nyanza. Owiti is the third born of Miriam Jowi. His parents lived in a small village called Apondo which is situated at a place on the South Eastern side of Kisumu town and Eastern side of the Lake Victoria. Jowi was wealthy by the traditional standards of life; was honored and a polygamous elder among his people, and was married to five wives. Owiti was Silas’ family given name and Javan Aggrey Silas were baptismal names which he was given in the Church during his dedication. Though the exact date of his birth is not clear even to him, most of his documents suggest that he was born in the 1920s.

During his school days, most of the schools were maintained and run by missionaries. One of the requirements of joining such denominational schools was membership to that denomination or possession of a Christian name. Most parents
preferred taking their children to missionary schools because they were well managed. Therefore, children were required to learn some scriptural messages and catechisms in order to gain a pass for baptism.

Owiti joined AIM Kagimba Elementary School where he learned basic arithmetic and reading. His brilliance and intelligence convinced his teachers to recommend him for further education thus earning himself a place at Onjiko Primary School. Here, he performed very well in his final primary school examination. This enabled him to be admitted at the then prestigious Maseno School in 1930s. This was being managed and maintained by the CMS. Although he was a member of the AIM due to its dominance in their area, Owiti had to change to CMS to enable him gain easy entrance to Maseno School. At Maseno School, Owiti joined baptism class and was later baptized by the late Archbishop Festo Olang’, the then Bishop of Maseno Diocese.

Owiti was first employed by the Cereals Board of Kenya in the present day Kisumu town (now City) of Kisumu as a clerical officer. He was posted to Butere in then Kakamega District. Because of his good work, he was later transferred to Bungoma District on promotion to take a job as a Depot Manager. After about three years, he was again transferred to Kisumu. In 1952 he terminated his services with the Maize and Produce Board on his own volition (O.I Owiti 13/1/2011).

Owiti married Phenny Adhanja in an African customary way in January 1953. Her mother, Deborah Ndago, daughter of Osano, was sick most of the time. Therefore, the family agreed with Owiti that instead of paying full bride wealth, he should
assume the responsibility of educating his in-laws siblings and provide them with basic needs such as clothing. Their first baby was a girl- Edith Akinyi named for the nurse who assisted at her birth. Besides her, God gave him four other children.

In December, 1984, Owiti and his wife Phenny were involved in a tragic road accident near Naivasha on their way from Nairobi. Unfortunately, Phenny Resley Owiti sadly passed away in the accident and was laid to rest the same year on 31st December. At that time, the lady was a student of Agriculture at Bukura Agricultural Institute (1983-1985). Later Owiti remarried and wedded his second wife Winnie Julia in 1985. The officiating minister was one of his best friends from Finland, a veteran missionary, the Reverend Ake. H. Soderlund. They are blessed with one son whom they named after televangelist Tommy Lee Osborn.

Owiti received salvation miraculously. It was his first wife Phenny who wanted to be saved first but Owiti was reluctant since he did not understand what salvation was all about. One day as Phenny was from the anti-natal clinic for her first pregnancy, she encountered some people preaching the gospel of salvation in a market place. She listened to them and longed to give her life to the Lord. However, because of the attitude Owiti had, she had to go home to ask for permission from her husband in order to be saved. Owiti only gave her one condition: for her to be saved, they had to get a divorce. Despite the response, Phenny was still determined to receive the Lord (Owiti O.I 4/1/2011).

One evening, in their house, Owiti heard some people praying in pure English in the neighborhood. This was from the home of his cousin Ex-chief Washington
Owiti Omori. What was perturbing was that Omori had not gone to school hence could not speak English. Therefore, Owiti and his wife argued over this, doubting that it was his cousin. The following day, as Owiti was heading to his work place riding a bicycle, he passed by his cousin’s place to inquire about guest his cousin an family had hosted the previous night and who was praying in English. His cousin told him that they did not have any visitor.

On the contrary, it was he and his family who had an evening prayer and was praying in the Holy Spirit (by this time, Owiti’s cousin had been saved and joined a revival movement). Owiti requested if they could have another prayer session so that he could join them just to confirm that indeed Omori was able to pray in fluent English. However, Omori told Owiti that it was the Holy Spirit that directs their tongues in prayer hence he could not give him that assurance. Owiti however, insisted that even at another prayer session, the Holy Spirit would be present. They agreed that he would join them for prayers the following evening (Owiti O.I 4/1/2011). With a lot of curiosity, Owiti attended the prayer meeting. When the prayer session started, miraculously, this time it was the wife of Omori who was singing a hymn in English. It was number 259 in the Golden Bells Hymn Book titled Lord, I hear of Showers:

Lord I hear of showers of blessings
Thou art scattering full and free;
Showers the thirsty land refreshing;
Let some drops now fall on me,
even me, even me,
let some drops now fall on me.
The sweetness of this illiterate Luo woman singing this beautiful English hymn broke down every barrier in Owiti’s heart. God was surely in their midst, Owiti thought, as tears ran down his cheeks. If an altar call had been called, he would have given his life to the Lord that night. Owiti could not believe that the lady was singing exactly the hymn they used to sing at Maseno School. The miracle part of it was the fact that the woman was more illiterate than the husband. Owiti was dumbfounded and saw that there was something in this salvation. He was again invited to attend their Sunday service.

Omori (O.I 8/6/2012) observed that it was the Sunday service which Owiti attended, in Edward Osako’s home in Apondo, that made a dramatic turn in his life. When the sermon was being delivered, tears came out of Owiti’s eyes. For Owiti, the tears seemed like a big crowd going forward to be prayed for. He did not want to be left behind, so he went forward to be prayed for in order to be saved. He claimed to have seen a flash of light. Then he saw Jesus on the cross, and the blood was streaming from His side and dripping on Owiti’s head. It seemed cold, penetrating to the core of his being, and as it did so, it cleansed every sin and then vaporized. He tried to confess his sins, but fell to the ground with heavy weeping. Phenny had joined him. They both accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour that day. Later, he was baptized in the Holy Spirit. After conversion in 1954, Owiti confesses,

Everywhere, I saw an opportunity to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. On many occasions I went out of my house at night and preached to the neighbours. Those within the reach of the sound of my voice heard it. I preached to relatives, friends and even to the enemies, as well as to my superiors at work. Both my parents accepted Christ.
Owiti (O.I 4/1/2011) admits that the call to step out into full-time evangelistic ministry came to him when he was already busy winning souls to Christ. His, call therefore, was not so much the beginning of a new ministry as such, but rather continuing with a ministry which had already began. Owiti’s passion for souls and love for Christ was such that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to perform both his clerical office duties properly as he desired and simultaneously satisfy the urge to proclaim the Good News of the Savior of the world.

Owiti (O.I 4/1/2011) recalls that one time, in 1954 he was praying and fasting. At 3 O’clock, God gave him a vision. He saw that he was preaching to a large crowd of people completely unknown to him. A more clear confirmation that God had a plan for Owiti came during an evangelistic meeting conducted by brother Joseph Ochieng’ (Ja Muma). He was an anointed servant of God with a gift of prophecy and the gift of the word of knowledge. In 1956, Ochieng’ stood up in one meeting and gave a prophetic utterance about the life of Owiti. He said God was calling Owiti to serve Him and that He would take him to many places around the world and cause him to mediate between their church and the government. He also prophesied that God would take Owiti before great leaders of the world and that He would make him to be one of his blessed people around the world.

Though Owiti felt the call, it was not easy for him to join the ministry and leave the job he had which was paying well. This was even more difficult as he was not affiliated to any established church denomination. Despite all these circumstances,
Owiti still felt God was calling him into a venture of faith. He had to face some tough questions; where he would live and how he would provide for his family.

Owiti did not go to any Bible school or theological seminary to prepare himself for ministry. Instead, he attended short courses offered by visiting televangelists such as T.L. Osborn, Oral Roberts, Morris Cerullo, Mattson Boze, John Vick, Charles Weston and others who also influenced him much in his faith. Mostly, before and after the crusades, these evangelists conducted courses for upcoming African evangelists. The courses were short but very helpful, but those alone could not prepare one adequately for mission of God. In his own words, Owiti (O.I 4/1/2011) emphasizes that the most important training came as he lived a life of faith, depending entirely on God for his needs. Thus he trusted God for his provisions at home and in ministry. He calls it "The School of Hard Knocks"(meaning a life of faith). He came to realize later that nearly all powerful servants of God went through that school in one way or the other. Owiti did not have any sponsor when he stepped out in faith to serve God. Living by faith to him means exactly that; depending on God and expecting Him to meet his needs. Owiti admits that from the time he met the Lord, it has always been his desire to preach and live up to the New Testament faith in its fullest content and extent. This means seeing sinners come to Christ and exhorting Christians to live for God.

In his ministry, Owiti has presented the unchangeable gospel of Christ in a diversely changing world. He planted many VOSHC’s and facilitated many conferences. He facilitated many local missions in various parts of the country
such as Asembo, Yimbo, Awendo, Migori and Kabondo among others. He preached in many high schools such as Ogande Girls’, Alliance Girls’ and Butere Girls’ among others. He also preached the gospel in colleges and universities in Kenya and overseas such as the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University, among others. Moreover, Owiti had many overseas missions in Finland, Norway, England, Scotland and USA (Owiti O.I 4/1/2011).

Owiti worked very closely with Allen Ojwang’ Iro especially in the beginnings of their Christian ministry. Let us look at him briefly too. Ojwang’ was born in Rae, Nyakach, Kisumu County to the late Joseph Iro and Maria Aol Nara. His father was a polygamist and he was the fifth born in the house of the elder wife.

Ojwang’ (O.I 12/5/2012) narrates that he attended Rae Primary School before he proceeded to Onjiko High School in 1949. He then proceeded to Aggrey Memorial College in Kampala in 1952. Ojwang’ became a born again Christian in 1948 when he was preached to by some revivalists who were passing by their home. He received the call to serve God while he was at Onjiko High School. He preached to fellow students the gospel of salvation. He finally came back to Kenya. He then proceeded to Angoro Hill near Awasi where he prayed and fasted for forty days. (9th December 1953-18th January, 1954). Having looked at the registration and main leader of VOSHC, let us look at how the church consolidated and spread in the next section.
5.12 Consolidation and Spread (1956-1960)

With the registration in place coupled with proper steady leadership, the church experienced unity of purpose. It was more focused on its mission. Through the leadership, members had missions to go and preach the gospel in various places and churches locally. Such places included Migori, Awendo, Alego Kamser, Siaya and Asembo, among others. Through this, the church expanded beyond Kano, Nyakach and Siaya.

Misuku Awendo and Ondong’a Deborah (O.I 3/2/2012) observe that the initial expansion of the church in the Southern Nyanza is majorly attributed to Joseph Ochieng’ Ja-Muma who went to Ramula-Kabondo in the late 1950s. Like the early apostles in the early church, he was able to witness to some people who accepted the faith. The result was an establishment of a group of believers which later transformed into a church- Ramula VOSHC. At times, they could be given letters signed by the leadership to travel with for the purposes of identification.

The branch church at Kimori grew with time. The members were able to witness to other people within their reach. They fellowshipped together in their homes and had Sunday fellowships under a tree. Due to their zeal to spread the good news of the Kingdom, Kimori brethren also started witnessing to other people. They did this despite the difficulties in acquiring means of transport. Many times, they could trek long distances and also use bicycles occasionally to attend missions.

Awendo (O.I 3/2/2012) observes that zeal in their preaching enabled the church to grow to other parts of South Nyanza particularly, Migori, Awendo and along Lake
Victoria in the late 1950s. Similar passion was also witnessed in other parts of Luo Nyanza. Due to the proximity with the islands in Lake Victoria, they were able to expand in their missions to several islands within the Ugandan and Tanzanian sides of Lake Victoria such as Mfang’ano and Rusinga islands.

The VOSHC has extended its branches beyond the areas where it originated. However, even in such areas, majority of the members are from the Luo ethnic community. For instance, in Kisumu City where the headquarters is based, the church has experienced considerable growth. A part from the main town church at Ondiek estate, there are three branches of the church at Migosi, Manyatta and Nyalenda estates with a membership of over two hundred adults. The branch has a modern structure that is well furnished.

Secondly, at the Apondo church branch, despite being located in the rural set up, there has been numerical growth. The branch church has ‘given birth’ to many other sub-branches around the place. This explains the numerical number of membership of one hundred. Though there is a church structure at Apondo, it has been constructed using mud; a state that does not befit its status considering that it was the first place where the pioneers hailed from. In the same compound, a nursery school has been initiated in memory of the current leader since that is where his home of origin was. Majority of the membership are semi illiterate and aged, evidenced by the fact that very few were able to respond to the questionnaires administered by the researcher.
Thirdly, in the Nyamori VOSHC branch in Kabondo, Homa-Bay County, the first station of the church in South Nyanza, there has been numerical growth of two hundred and ten members. They have a permanent church structure. Majority of membership are equally aged and semi illiterate. This is evidenced by the way they responded to the questionnaires administered by the researcher. Thus only a few were able to write on their own in responding to the questionnaires.

In Kenya, VOSHC has spread with branches in both rural, towns and cities where it has members from varied ethnic communities. In the VOSHC AGM of 2011 it was confirmed that the Church had a number of church branches, assemblies and nineteen regions. According to the 2012 convention, VOSHC’s total membership was over ten thousand in Kenya; not commensurate to a church organization which started over fifty years ago. This stagnation has been contributed by its confinement to Luo Nyanza region and Luo speaking communities. This is evidenced by the nature of their preaching which is dominated by Luo language and the top leadership which mainly comprised individuals from the Luo ethnic community. Most of the members are drawn from the rural areas while a considerable number are urban dwellers in various towns like, Migori, Homa-Bay, Oyugis among others. The average membership is below ‘O’ level of education. Economically, majority are average income earners. Regrettably, in the top leadership, there is no graduate though a few enrolled for diploma courses in biblical studies from colleges such as Impact Bible College in Nairobi affiliated to world evangelist Peter Youngren, Africa Ministry Network Leadership Institute based in Nakuru town and Voice International College in Kisumu among others.
Having leaders, however, acquiring training from different colleges may bring discord especially when such colleges subscribe to different doctrines and philosophies different from VOSHC. It could have been better if VOSHC strengthened its own Bible College at Kajulu in Kisumu County, by having it accredited to offer credible courses to its ministers. VOSHC has a retirement benefit scheme which assists in its church ministers who retire from active ministry. Furthermore, the church unlike in the early beginnings, is able to sustain its missionary works and outreaches. Owiti (O.I 1/4/2011) notes that the major source of income has been the members’ contributions in terms of offerings and payment of tithes.

VOSHC has several ministries which assist in nurturing the members. It has home cell groups. These are smaller congregations within a clan, village, estate or institutions. In such groups, the members have weekly fellowships under the leadership of a cell group leader. The fellowships are rotational from house to house of the members. Within the local church, there are women and youth ministries. These ministries have their office bearers who spearhead their activities. They also have monthly and quarterly meetings and outreaches.

Interestingly, in all these aspects of growth and expansions, majority of the members of VOSHC are from the Luo ethnic community. Despite having seen the group’s unity of purpose, with time, certain issues came up which brought disharmony and conflict of interest, more so in the 1960s and 1970s. This finally led to schisms which are discussed in the next section.
5.13 The Schisms (1964, 1974)

Barrett (1968) observes that in the ecumenical age, it is unfortunate that African Christianity should experience the pains of schism. Despite the fact that the World Wide Salvation and Miracle Healing Revival was a church with the features similar to the early apostolic church, it did not escape division and differences among the members. Interestingly, there are many theories about the split of this church advanced by different individuals depending on the camp one belonged to during the split. In fact, during the various interviews with a few pioneers, all of them had their own versions as to why the church split. The study has tried to document the possibilities that could have necessitated the schisms.

5.13.1 The First Schism (Early 1960s)

The first schism came due to the differences in two personalities. Blasio Oking’ Mbara (1906-1991) who was the chairman and Silas Owiti who was the secretary. Blasio hailed from Miwani in Nyando District, Kisumu County. He was married to Julia Okech Oking’. With his young family, in his youthful stage, he went to look for a job away from their home. He landed in a sisal plantation called Kakuzi in Mitubi just before Makuyu near Thika town. Ojwang’ (O.I 12/5/2012) notes that Blasio was very fluent in Kiswahili language and used to dress neatly. Most importantly, he had passion for the Lord and was a powerful composer of hymns (wende chuny).

In the early 1960s, Silas Owiti prayed for Ake Soderlund's wife- Pirkko, from Finland and she was miraculously healed. Brother Soderlund invited then him to
his home country in Finland. Owiti was later invited for a mission in Finland after the miraculous healing of Soderland’s wife. This invitation and return was the greatest turning point that had never been witnessed again. Owiti (O.I 4/1/2011) recalls that on his return to Kenya in the early 1960s, he bought a car, a Volkswagen make.

Ojwang’ (O.I 12/5/2012) narrates that considering that Owiti was younger than Oking’, a pastor from another church denomination incited Oking’ to demand the car from Owiti since he was the chairman. He accepted this ill advice and demanded that Owiti should give him the car. When he refused, Oking’ began to incite the church members against him. In addition, when Owiti came back from this first overseas mission and joined his colleagues, he was accused of being dishonest. In particular, Oking’, accused Owiti of not being open and honest with them. He believed Owiti came with a lot of material wealth from Finland which he was supposed to hand over to him as the chairman of the organization.

A series of committee meetings were held by the top leadership. The last meeting which was held in Apondo ruled that Blasio was wrong but ironically, most preachers supported him. Another meeting was convened by the top leadership to resolve the impasse but no agreement was reached. In time two rival camps emerged one in support of the chairman and the other of the secretary. The situation became very hostile and complicated with lots of accusations from both parties. When Blasio noticed that he was judged as the aggressor, he decided to move away and started his own church. Thus “Power of Jesus Around the World”
was began by Blasio Oking’ Mbara but is currently headed by Archbishop Dr. Washington Ogonyo Ngede. Silas Owiti (O.I 4/1/2011) confirmed that Blasio passed on, but before his death, he went and asked for forgiveness from Owiti which he happily accorded him in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Onga’ny (O.I 30/3/2012) also gives another version of the story as to why the first split occurred. It was on the basis of the accountability of the top leadership: one faction of leaders and church members felt that another faction of the same was not transparent on the basis of the donations that were coming from overseas. Thus preachers could be asked to have their photographs taken and sent overseas. They were told would be used to solicit sponsors for them. However, there was no accountability of the sponsorship. A section of the members felt that this was an act of betrayal considering the trust they had on the leadership.

Ombewa (O.I 30/3/2012) adds that pride played a central role equally in the first schism. In the early 1960s, in a prayer meeting, demons came out shouting the name of Wachara Onga’ny (a man God used mightily in performing miracles). Just like in the days of Jesus, this brought arguments of who was the greatest among the members. This brought division between the first generation of preachers (pioneers) and the second generation where Onga’ny belonged. The second generation of preachers wanted to be the ones preaching all the time, claiming it was them that the demons could listen to.

Ombewa (O.I 30/3/2012) alleges further that a problem arose when Owiti came back from Norway. Together with some of his confidants, they felt the name of the
church organization as per the registration was not properly written. Consequently, they secretly changed that name of the church to “Voice of Salvation and Healing Church”. This brought protests among the top leadership which was not informed of the changes. After the first split, Silas Owiti became the chairperson, a position he has retained. Allen Ojwang’ became the secretary. It was after this first split that the church was rebranded and acquired the new name, “Voice of Salvation and Healing Church” in 1964.

5.13.2 The Second Schism (Early 1970s)

The second major schism again occurred due to the differences in two personalities: Owiti who was the chairperson and Allen Ojwang’ who was the secretary. The splinter group was led by Allen Ojwang’ Iro (1927-2012). Angura (O.I 3/7/2010) recalls that in 1972 there was a by-election in Kisumu East. Hon. Dennis Akumu from Nyakach was a candidate. He was Ojwang’s schoolmate at Onjiko High School. Akumu wanted Ojwang’ to persuade the VOSHC members to vote for him. In return, he promised to take Ojwang’ overseas to preach and open more branches of his church. Owiti (O.I 4/1/2010) notes however, within the by-laws of the VOSHC that there was no provision of working with or affiliating to any political party’s activities. Non-religious meetings or organizations such as political gatherings or welfare societies were, of course out of question. Therefore, the church leadership and members told Ojwang’ that the God they serve was able to open for him an avenue to travel overseas without going through a politician. In
spite of the advice, Ojwang’ did not accommodate the advice of the elders. He trusted the politician more than the elders whom he felt were against his progress.

Moreover, Ombewa (O.I 21/7/2012) recalls that during the same period, there were allegations of corruption and misappropriation of funds by the then chairman’s office, meant for construction of a church building in Kisumu. The secretary discovered that a certain amount of money they had received from a missionary by the name John Vick from USA for the purpose of building the church structure was missing in the church’s bank account. Together with a section of church leaders, he felt that the money had been misappropriated. Therefore, they saw no need to continue with such corruption and ‘corrupt’ people in their midst. The case was taken up by the police. This became a regional affair. The people of Kano where Owiti hailed from and of Nyakach where Ojwang’ came from had different camps in support of their person.

A missionary by the name Cas Knoester from Canada who was working under VOSHC agreed with Ojwang’ that he should move out of VOSHC. Finally, Ojwang’ and those who supported him decided to move out in order to start their own church. Thus the “World Wide Gospel and Deliverance Revival Fellowship Church” was formed in 1972. Ojwang’s group moved away with a few people from VOSHC. Ombewa (O.I 21/7/2012) observes that this second split was worsened by the fact that the civil authority was dragged into it. This was done through accusation letters which were written by both parties to the register of societies over the allegation of misappropriation of funds and many other
accusations. After this second split, the leadership position changed again as follows: Silas Owiti who was in the faction that retained the name of the church (VOSHC), remained in the chairperson’s position, Joseph Agutu and Erick Olo both from Kabondo in South Nyanza became the vice chair and secretary respectively and Vitalis Angura from Muhoroni Scheme retained the position of the treasurer.

5.15 Conclusion

The chapter has traced the origin of VOSHC from the East African Revival which spread across the region including the Luo Nyanza in Kenya. It has traced how the Revival Movement arrived in Luo Nyanza, its impact and spread. The chapter has brought out how the revivalists in Luo Nyanza were excommunicated from the mission churches under the CMS and AIM. It has shown how the various revival groups emerged and came together which eventually led to the formation and registration of the church under study. The chapter has discussed the two major schisms of VOSHC which occurred in its early days of establishment. Numerous causes perceived to have contributed to both the schisms have been highlighted. The chapter has discussed the geographical spread and demography of VOSHC. It has been observed in this chapter that VOSHC expanded beyond its initial areas of establishments to other places and also in membership. This was possible due to the presence of an organized and stable leadership which the next chapter discusses.
CHAPTER SIX

6.0 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF VOICE OF SALVATION AND HEALING CHURCH

6.1 Introduction

Since the second major split in the 1970s, VOSHC has enjoyed stability under the leadership of Owiti. It has experienced numerical growth and expansion in other areas beyond Luo Nyanza where it was founded. It has tried to retain its identity despite the challenges it has experienced over the years. This chapter discusses the system of leadership in VOSHC and the organizational structure as per the third objective of the study.

6.2 The Organizational Structure and Leadership of VOSHC

VOSHC has a background of ordered church government, of liturgical worship and of a theology. This is majorly because most of its founders were once members of churches sponsored the missionaries such as the CMS and AIM, which had systematic structures in their administrative organizations.

The present study has demonstrated the importance of the role played by the pioneers. How they went out unreservedly preaching the gospel to people. How they were determined to see more people joining their faith. Church leadership has developed at various levels in VOSHC. The leadership has been influenced by two main factors. First, there are certain resemblances of the Anglican Church of Kenya style of leadership in terms of administrative units and titles for church
leaders. This is attributed to the fact that most of the pioneers had a background in the Anglican Church. Second, is the Luo traditional style of leadership which is male dominated probably because the founders were drawn predominantly from the Luo ethnic community. Moreover, VOSHC started and established itself first in Luoland. However, the former factor appeared more dominant than the latter.

Initially, the founders of VOSHC preferred a system of church government which perceives only Christ as the overall leader. It was mentioned earlier that none of the pioneers wanted to be a leader. After the formal registration and consequent schisms, VOSHC embraced a combination of Episcopal and Pentecostal form of church government, where the overall head of the church is an archbishop. On the Pentecostal system, a bishop is the chief lead minister of the church. In this case, the lead ministers of the church are bishops. Other ministers are priests/clergy and deacons who are appointed and regulated by the directives and rules of the executive governing council of the church called the Mission Board (MB). The MB is the national executive office of the church.

This system of church government has enabled VOSHC accountable to the central authority. Owiti, the current archbishop of the church, have supervised the missionary activities of the church. He managed to harmonize leadership from the national level down to the grassroots level by delegating responsibilities to other members of the clergy hence decentralizing of power.

VOSHC especially from the year 2000 started embracing training of its ministers. It pioneered this by starting a Bible Training College (currently called Voice
International College) in Kajulu, Kisumu County where the church trains its church ministers to date. The training of its church ministers has been anchored in the by-laws of the church.

According to Article 4 of the VOSHC Constitution (2009), the administrative structure is as follows: The archbishop is the supreme head of the church followed by an assistant archbishop. There are presiding bishops who head the church in various regions in Kenya. John Abong’o (O.I 3/72010) confirmed that there are nineteen regions in Kenya. Every region is subdivided into smaller units called assemblies, headed by senior pastor or assembly leaders. From the assembly, there are the local churches which are headed by the local pastors. At all the levels of administration, there are women and youth representatives. An archbishop is the overall head of the church worldwide. Among other functions, an archbishop have the following duties: presiding over all meetings of International Council of Elders (ICE), providing appropriate leadership and Christian foresight of all spiritual affairs of the church. The archbishop is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and spokesperson of the church. In addition, he is an ex-officio member of all standing boards, delegations or any other such bodies or committees which ICE shall create. The archbishop further has the power to direct disbursement of all funds generated, subject to the approval of the National Council of Elders (NCE) and ICE. Again, he/she authorizes in writing, the opening of all bank accounts at regional levels, signs certificates of all ordained ministers at regional and national levels of the church.
Within the by-laws of VOSHC, the succession of an archbishop is through an Electoral College. In the event of the death of archbishop the assistant will act in his place for not more than sixty days. The Electoral College consisting of fifteen senior elders, including five senior retirees votes. Under an adhoc chairperson, the Electoral College votes in an archbishop. There are also regional bishops, heading regions (an equivalent of the political administrative structure of Kenya). A bishop is answerable to the presiding bishop. A regional bishop provides appropriate leadership and Christian foresight of all spiritual affairs of the church at the regional level. He/she is also the CEO and spokesperson of the church at the region. Again, he/she has sole authority to determine Christian ceremonies, baptism, marriages and funeral rites, forms of worship and sacred services of the Holy Sacrament, among other functions. A member of VOSHC qualifies for the position of a regional bishop by having a diploma in Biblical Studies or equivalent, having served as Pastor/Overseer for five years and be 35 years old and above.

6.3 Administrative Structure

Administratively, VOSHC has a flow of authority and decision making. Though centralised, VOSHC has variety of subdivisions in its administrative structure. The constitution mentions National Council of Ministers (NCM) and the EC/MB as the main organs of government of the church. The power structure of VOSHC consists of several gradations. First, the supreme and the final authority is the EC commonly known as the Mission Board. The EC is authorized to act in the general administration, management and direction of all spiritual and business matters and
other affairs of the church. The CE has a duty to convene regular council meetings. The CE also has the authority and power to appoint, assign, commission or direct any and all persons, groups, committees, councils, boards or other action bodies deemed by them to appropriate or expedient to the discharge of their duties on behalf of and subject to the NCE. VOSHC Constitution (2009) states that the members of the CE are nominated from VOSHC members of maturity, experience and ability, whose lives and ministry are above reproach. Such nominees must have been ordained church minister for at least five years.

There is the NCE. This is the decision making organ of the church. It is composed of the Presiding Bishop and his/her assistant, the Secretary General and his/her assistant, the National youth and women leaders. All the regional bishops are also members of this organ. The NCE holds full council meetings at least twice a year before the Annual General Meeting (AGM). It may, however, convene at any other time found necessary for effective running of the church affairs. VOSHC Constitution (2009) also stipulates the NCM. The NCM has the largest representation of the church. It comprises NCE members, pastor overseers, regional women leaders, national youth leaders, assembly secretaries/ treasurers, representatives of evangelists, elders and retirees from regions. The NCM’s major role is to meet annually, receive and deliberate on reports and recommendations of the NCE with or without amendment or rejection and ratify, facilitate and implement the policies formulated by the NCE.
VOSHC’s mission and administrative headquarters in Kisumu City, Ondiek Estate. Once a year, VOSHC holds a national convention at Moi Stadium in Kisumu. The church also runs a women’s wing known as the Women of Faith (WOF) and also a youth department. All these do have their office bearers from the local churches to the national levels. Ongunya (O.I 8/2011) adds that VOSHC runs a Bible College (Voice International College) where other secular courses are in the process of being introduced.

VOSHC however, has a number of challenges. Though the constitution of the church has clear requirements for church positions, there is no strict adherence of the same. Many church ministers do not have the appropriate academic qualifications as per the constitution. The aspect of engaging ‘full time’ ministers and their support has been a challenging task to the church. In many instances, the remuneration of the church ministers is not commensurate to the tasks they have. There is also still no clear cut line between preachers/evangelists and pastors and their place in the ministry of VOSHC. Their roles overlap hence an individual can be an evangelist and a pastor at the same time. The church has not yet come up with clear records of its assets too. Consequently, accountability of the church property have become cumbersome.

6.4 Conclusion

It can be concluded that the leadership structure of VOSHC has borrowed much from the mainline churches especially the Anglican Church where most of its founders came from. Owiti has remained as the top leader of VOSHC since 1964.
Under his leadership, the church has spread to other regions other than Luo Nyanza region. However, even in such regions, majority of the followers are from the Luo ethnic community. More administrative units have been created, enabling decentralization of power. The church has been raised up to be independent economically by teaching and encouraging the members to give their material possessions in support of the church ministerial needs. Women and youth have places in leadership in women and youth VOSHC departments.

Significantly, as per the objective, this chapter has given us an overview of the leadership of the church under study, in terms of structure and levels. The chapter has given us the idea of why VOSHC has managed to retain its identity in Luo Nyanza. We have also learnt that it is through the leadership structure that has enabled VOSHC to remain consolidated over the years. The leadership has equally remained custodians of its beliefs and practices, which are discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER SEVEN

7.0 BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF VOICE OF SALVATION AND HEALING CHURCH

7.1 Introduction

The task of the chapter is to discuss the beliefs and practices of VOSHC. It focuses on the basis of the beliefs and practices and how they are applied in VOSHC. As was observed in chapter two, since the inception, VOSHC has been a body of believers with a difference in terms of its distinctive beliefs and practices. Most of these doctrinal beliefs and practices emanate from the Bible, which VOSHC take as the infallible Word of God (VOSHC Constitution 2009). However, some beliefs and practices have been intertwined with the Luo culture, where most of the founders came from.

7.2 Beliefs

Hornby (2000) defines belief as an opinion about something as per a person’s religion or faith. The church under study has a number of beliefs. However, the study captured four major ones which include salvation, eschatological expectation, belief in the Holy Spirit, divine healing and deliverance.

7.2.1 Salvation

Obudi (2006) defines soteriology as the branch of Christian theology that refers to salvation of an individual. It is derived from Greek word σωτηρίαν which means salvation, a core Christian doctrine that relates to how human beings can be
reconciled to God. In Christian theology, atonement refers to the forgiveness or pardoning of one's sin through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, which made possible the reconciliation between God and creation. Alan Richardson (1958) observes that Christ’s gospel of the reign of God is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes. It is the proclamation that God’s purpose of salvation. Thus salvation of humankind is fully anchored on the gospel of Christ.

VOSHC adherents believe that salvation comes only through being washed in the blood of Jesus Christ which was shed on the cross at Calvary. Thus, salvation of sinners comes by the grace of God through repentance and faith in the perfected sufficient work of the cross of Calvary. The members of VOSHC emphasize that one accepts that he/she is born from a sinful lineage. The only escape from eternal destruction is by believing in the heart that Jesus is Lord. It does not stop at believing but also confession of one’s sinful acts.

A similar belief was observed among other AICs in the 1960s within the Luoland. Ogot and Welbourn (1966) observe that the Tukutendereza followers (where most VOSHC pioneers emanated from) believed that salvation was only through repentance and confession of sin. They argued that there may be backsliding. When however, a sinner repents to the Lord, he/she could be restored and forgiven. Though one may be saved, the Kututendereza followers believed that a person still lives under the power of sin hence can not help sinning more. This latter argument is the popular view of salvation held in VOSHC.
Basically, their arguments were more psychological. To the *Kututendereza* brethren, confession was obligatory. However, since no person can remember all his/ her sins, the individual must from time to time offer a prayer of confession. Thus, whenever one starts to pray, both known and unknown sins are to be confessed. In most of the services attended, salvation was one of the frequent themes that ran through. A service could not end without calling people foreword, for an opportunity to receive salvation. Salvation was one of the major emphasis for admission of membership into VOSHC. No one was accepted as a member unless he/she confesses salvation.

The church believes that the experience of being saved come through a deep awareness of one’s sinfulness. In this awareness, all hypocrisy and self justification are done away with. It is, therefore, essential to make a full and open confession before the congregation. The claim to be saved was not likely to be taken seriously unless one confesses ecstatically which includes loud cries, shedding of tears as a sign of remorse for his/ her sins. In criticism, people feel under pressure to confess sins they had not committed, in order to be accepted in the church as really saved. Munala (O.I 5/2010) notes that confession and repentance of sins is key since sin is an abomination to VOSHC adherents. The church does not tolerate any form of sin as stipulated in Galatians 5:19-21:

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are: Adultery, fornication uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (KJV).
VOSHC understands the passage that its members are expected to shun away the evil works of the flesh as listed in the passage above. Thus on receiving salvation, certain sinful manifestations, including the listed, should not be exhibited by the saved members. The life of a saved person should be the reflections of his/her inner faith. Christian discipline and holy living are strictly observed. If one has a grudge with a fellow believer, it should be solved amicably.

Ong’any (O.I 30/3/2012) asserts that it is expected that a personal confession be made to whoever was wronged; and that restitution be made where property is stolen. To VOSHC members, one’s salvation goes beyond the word of mouth but the actions are the gauge. Thus, salvation of an individual is reflected in his/her daily operations which include personal life, family life and even the businesses one does.

The members of VOSHC take seriously the necessity of bearing one another’s burdens and being one another’s keeper. They termed this as ‘walking in the light’. This involves being completely open and honest about one’s attitude towards fellow believer. This was evidenced in the testimonies that were shared by members of VOSHC during the services attended in Apondo. For instance, Masela Olela (O.I 3/2/2012) admitted,

Beloved, for a long time I have not been free with co-wife at home. Despite being a member of our church, I have held grudges with her. All these have emanated from our domestic misunderstanding. Unfortunately, this has extended in the church here where we all attend. However, from today, I want to ask her for forgiveness. I also ask God to forgive me for having such attitude. Be blessed.
Thus members of VOSHC share with one another whatever they find offensive. They do not allow grudges to foster. This involves giving counsel and correction about a person’s general conduct. This is done in love and received with a humble spirit and without resentment (Ondong’a O.I 2/2/2012).

In VOSHC, salvation is by the grace of God that has appeared to all humankind through the preaching of repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. A person is saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. One is justified by the grace; through faith, an individual becomes an heir of God according to the hope of eternal life as outlined in Titus 3:5-7:

… but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life (KJV).

The outward evidence of salvation to everyone is a life of righteousness and true holiness. There is also the inward evidence of salvation to an individual which is the direct witness of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Holy Spirit himself bears witness with one’s spirit, that they are the children of God (Romans 8:16) by being saved.

### 7.2.2 The Holy Spirit

In Christianity, the Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost) is the Spirit of God. Within Christian beliefs, He is the third person of the Trinity. As part of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit is equal with God the Father and Son. The study of the person of the Holy Spirit and the works of the Holy Spirit is called Pneumatology. This latter category would normally include Christian teachings on new birth, spiritual gifts
(charismata), Spirit-baptism, sanctification, the inspiration of prophets and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Oguta 2007).

VOSHC agrees with Walter Hollenweger (1976) that the baptism of believers in the Holy Spirit is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the spirit gives utterance. Speaking in tongues is the normal and biblical manifestation of the Holy Spirit, the external proof of an inner fulfillment. Christians believe that the Holy Spirit leads people to faith in Jesus and gives them the ability to live a Christian lifestyle. The Holy Spirit indwells every Christian, each one's body being the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16). In one of His teachings, Jesus illustrated the role of the Holy Spirit as a comforter and teacher (John 14:16):

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you (KJV).

Jesus described the Holy Spirit as Comforter, Counselor, Teacher, Advocate and one guiding people in the way of the truth. The Holy Spirit's action in one's life is believed to produce Fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23): “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” Moreover, the Holy Spirit enables Christians, who still experience the effects of sin, to do things they never could do on their own. These spiritual gifts are not innate abilities by the Holy Spirit, but entirely new abilities (1 Corinthians 12:8ff),

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of
miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues (KJV):

VOSHC teaches and believes that all the spiritual gifts as outlined above are for anyone who has accepted Christ as Saviour. Thus members are expected to exercise at least a gift of the Holy Spirit. VOSHC members believe that through the influence of the Holy Spirit, a believer sees more clearly the world around and can use his/her mind and body in ways that exceed initial state of not knowing Christ as Saviour. The Kututendereza followers held a view that a belief that the gifts of the Holy Spirit were given and operated only in New Testament times. Interestingly, VOSHC which has roots in the Kututendereza movement embraces the Holy Spirit with his manifestations. In VOSHC it was believed that certainly, spiritual gifts are still in effect in the present age, including the gifts of ministry, teaching, giving, leadership, and mercy as outlined in Romans 12:6-8:

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness (KJV).

In relation to the above, VOSHC members are urged to pray that God may give them the grace to exercise the various gifts of the Holy Spirit that indwells them. VOSHC believes in the absolute and essential deity and personality of the Holy Spirit. The church believes that it is the Holy Spirit who convicts people of sin, regenerates, sanctifies, illuminates and comforts those who believe in Jesus Christ. In VOSHC, being filled with the Holy Spirit is determined by the manifestation of the fruit of the Holy Spirit as was taught by Apostle Paul. Thus, if one claims to have the Holy Spirit, then the person should exhibit the fruit of the Holy Spirit.
addition, the church believes in speaking in tongues. It is believed in VOSHC that speaking in tongues is an outward evidence of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as was on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:2-4

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance evident of one baptized in the Holy Spirit (KJV).

In his preaching in Apondo, Pastor Joseph Otieno emphasized that in VOSHC they believe that the tongues are ‘heavenly language.’ Thus when one speaks in tongues, he/she speaks to God directly. Indeed, in the church services attended, especially during prayer sessions, congregants could be heard speaking in tongues.

Ondong’a (O.I 3/2/2012) observes that in VOSHC, there was emphasis on the need and priority for one to be baptized in the Holy Spirit immediately after receiving salvation. Thus a person is not accepted as a believer/ member until such a person has been baptized in the Holy Spirit evidenced by speaking in tongues.

Such acceptance include among others, the privilege to serve in church leadership.

In VOSHC, there is a belief that one does not belong to Christ without being filled by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:5-9):

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his (KJV).

The text is, however, selectively picked and applied in VOSHC, without looking at the context. The text is taken literary. Here, Apostle Paul was admonishing the
church in Rome to be cautious about carnality as opposed to spirituality of a Christian. In VOSHC, no one is allowed to be in leadership position without having ‘received’ the Holy Spirit. VOSHC holds the view that only those who are full of the Holy Spirit are fit to hold an office in the church. They base this on the practice set by the early church in Acts 6:3-8:

Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people (KJV).

In VOSHC, the Holy Spirit endowment, evidenced in speaking in tongues is one of the most important condition for the office of pastor and any other leadership position in the church. Consequently, having baptism of the Holy Spirit is a perquisite for leadership in VOSHC.

**7.2.3 Eschatology**

Hollenweger (1976) observes that eschatology is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of the Christian faith and as such, the key in which everything in it is set, the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day. Broadly speaking, it is the doctrine of the last things, the destiny of human beings and universe as it is revealed in the Bible, the primary source for Christian faith. VOSHC believes in the end times. Meaning, all that are said to happen at the end of this age. The return of Jesus, the resurrection of the dead, the rapture and tribulation. Following these things, the millennium, or thousand years of peace,
which has been interpreted both literally and symbolically. VOSHC equally believe in the last judgement, the banishment of death, hades, Satan and his followers to the lake of fire and the creation of new heaven and earth.

Angura (O.I 3/7/2010) observes that VOSHC members majorly concerns with their spiritual destination- heaven which they often call home. It is sinful, they believe, to take interest in things of this world at the expense of Christian faith. They believe that God has no concern with society and cares only for the salvation of individuals. Therefore, members of VOSHC abandoned anything they perceived to deter them from experiencing heavenly blessings.

Ojwang’ (O.I 14/7/2010) confirms that at the initial stages, education, for example was not a priority to the members of VOSHC. Those who had children did not bother to take their children to school. To them, parousia was in the offing hence they did not embrace any form of bodily beautification. Women are to wear veils on their heads all the time, irrespective of whether it was in the fellowship or at home. Plaiting of hair or blow drying was not allowed. At initial stages, even having a wrist watch, reading a newspaper or listening to radio was seen as embracing the world. Their faith was more important to them than any ‘worldly’ thing (Ondong’a O.I 3/2/2012).

Due to the eschatological expectation, VOSHC members had very little to do with accruing worldly possessions. This was evidenced by virtue that in many instances, they condemned the wealthy in their preaching. Awendo (O.I 3/2/2012) declared in his preaching in one of the services attended,
The world with its entire pleasures will pass away but the word of God will remain forever. It is needless and worthless for one to struggle acquiring the wealth of this world at the expense of seeking God. Beloved, we better remain in our poor state, but rich in our faith.

As a result of the eschatological expectation, members of VOSHC take most of their time praying and fasting individually and congregationally, reading their Bibles, meditating on it lest the day of the Lord catches up with them unaware (Ondong’a O.I 3/2/2012). Nothing shows how the lives of VOSHC members are set upon the world to come as clearly as their songs such as one titled *Gig pinyny biro Rumo* (things of this world will vanish).

Today, this has changed. This is in agreement with Hollenweger (1976) who observes that as social conditions improve, the fervent expectation of the imminent Second Coming disappears. It is still taught in theory, but is no longer a matter of experience. Pension funds are set up for pastors, and building and training programmes which take years to complete are carried out. A number of the members take their children to school, own and listen to radios and read newspapers, among others. This was not the case at initial stages of the establishment of VOSHC.

7.2.4 Ecclesiology

Munai (2007) describes Ecclesiology as the study of the Christian church, including the institutional structure, sacraments and practices (especially the worship of God) thereof. Wand (1960) defines church as the society of Christian people, a visible organization with its distinctive rites of initiation and membership.
Ecclesiology (from Greek ἐκκλησία, ekklēsiā, "congregation, church"; and -λογία, -logia) is the study of the theological understanding of the Christian church. Specific areas of concern include the role of the church in salvation, its origin, its relationship to the historical Christ, its discipline, its destiny, and its leadership. In addition to describing a broad discipline of theology, ecclesiology may be used in the specific sense of a particular church or denomination’s character.

Importantly, Munai (2007) adds that ecclesiastical polity (study of doctrine and theology relating to church organization) on the other hand is the operational and governance structure of a church or Christian denomination. This denotes the ministerial structure of the church and the authority relationships.

Owiti (O.I 4/1/2011) understands that there needs to be a revival of the church. The church advocates to its members to return to the church of the NT which is viewed as the ‘host redeemed by the blood’, the ‘church of the regenerate’ and ‘those guided by the Holy Spirit’. In VOSHC, the church is basically an organized body of believers in Christ. Church is a community of those who recognize themselves as members of a fellowship. It is intended to meet the needs of human nature. Thus the church brings people together in a common purpose. It is recognition of a family relationship, a relationship both to the head of the family and to the fellow members. Thus the idea that one can be perfect Christian by keeping to oneself is quite erroneous.

Ogot and Welbourn (1966) note that just like Joremo, VOSHC believes that a church should consist only those people called by Christ to be His followers,
God’s elect. Thus church must be confined to the few who had truly taken up their crosses, those who deny themselves the worldly pleasures for the sake of Christ. In agreement, VOSHC believes that the Church is the body of Christ, the habitation of God through the Spirit. Each believer, born of the Spirit, is an integral part of the Church.

Wand (1960) views church as the Bride of Christ. On this view, the members of VOSHC emphasize on the ideas such as purity and beauty. Baptism is an obligation and the prerogative of each member of VOSHC. The view is informed by the Pauline conception of the personal unity brought about between bride and bridegroom by their marital consummation (1Corinthian 12:12-14, 25-27):

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.

That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular (KJV).

The above text understands church as a unified body with many parts. Despite the differences in function, the parts must co-exist with one another. A similar belief is taught in VOSHC. Each member is recognized as a vital part of the church system.

One outstanding feature of members of VOSHC is their fundamental loyalty to the church as the body of Christ. Despite numerous challenges and obstacles, members of VOSHC are regular in attendance of Sunday worship and actively
participate individually and as a group. This could be seen in the attendance registers, where individual member weekly offerings are recorded.

VOSHC is, however, adamant that sacraments such as Holy Communion and water Baptism, among others, do not have the power to mediate one’s salvation hence are not practiced frequently. This is due to much emphasis on the final work of redemption of Christ on the cross, which they believe is a superior summary of all other sacramental ordinances (Awendo O.I 3/2/2012).

7.2.5 Healing and Deliverance

Accordingly to Hornby (2000), healing is the process of becoming or making something better in the physical body or mind while deliverance refers to the state of being rescued from danger, evil or pain. VOSHC on the other hand, believes in the restoration of one’s health from various kinds of ailments and freeing people who are oppressed by evil forces. Hollenweger (1976) observes that sickness and death could be conquered in the life of a sanctified Christian.

The belief in healing and deliverance in VOSHC is traced from the view that Satan exists as an evil personality, the originator of sin and the arch-enemy of God and humankind. It argues that just like in the times of Jesus, people (young and old) are victims of demon possession directly or indirectly. As a result of this, people are tormented and VOSHC explains that certain conditions of unwellness such as epilepsy or dropsy are attributed to demons inside such victims (Ong’any 30/3/2012).
In the African view, the causes of severe illness are diverse. In the Luo society, the complex cause of illness includes visible natural and spiritual causes such as the activities of enemies, sorcerers, witches or spirits. In VOSHC, which is embedded in the Luo culture and traditions, once one seeks for healing, the comprehensive deliverance from such majorly commences by confession of any wrong doings. Healing is progressive while sometimes it is instantaneously. All the healing and restoration of health depends on a person’s faith in the healer.

Moreover, VOSHC believes and teaches that whenever one is in a crisis, the individual seeks for faster, readily available and affordable remedy. To members of VOSHC, it is only Jesus who has all the traits mentioned above. The motto of the church is taken from Hebrews 13:8 which states, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” It is an assurance to them that as Jesus healed people with infirmities during His earthly ministry, He has the same power to date to do the same. Ondonga (O.I 3/2/2012) recalls that in VOSHC, there was no seeking services from native or modern medical personnel or use medicine of any kind. She claimed:

We in VOSHC church trust in heavenly healing. The power of herbs has been ended and the power of medicine reduced to vanity. Christ is all in all. Most of us were in different denominations yet tormented with various body illnesses. It was until we heard the message of heavenly healing in VOSHC and embraced it fully, that we trusted God for our health henceforth.

Oginde David (O.I 6/10/2013) also recalled that:

I do remember vividly in early 1980s when some members of VOSHC came to our homestead in Alego. They held prayers and fasting for three days. Their fast was a dry one where none of them tasted any form of food. They also remained indoors for the days they were in the prayers. On the last day, when they broke the fast, something happened and I witnessed. My step mother who had a
paralyzed leg, and was unable to walk straight, was completely healed after these people prayed with her. We were alerted by jubilation when everyone at the scene was praising God.

In most cases, healing such as the one cited above could occur when the victim had consulted other alternatives ranging from traditional to modern medicine. Prayer would always come as the last resort.

In VOSHC, demons and evil spirits are cast out by invoking the name of Jesus Christ. They do this in line with the command and authority that Jesus gave to his disciples in his commission in Mark 16:17-18:

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover (KJV).

In this approach, prayers and invocations are done in the name of Christ and the Holy Spirit. In exorcism sometimes, visible physical treatment includes the laying of hands or the use of oil. In some of the services we attended in Apondo and Kabondo VOSHC branches, people were prayed for and what was believed to be evil spirits could be heard speaking as they get out of the victims. In VOSHC, there is a belief that deliverance from the forces of darkness is provided in the atonement. Healing is therefore, a privilege of all believers. Most members of VOSHC respondents confirmed that they joined the church due to divine healing and deliverance they experienced in their own lives or their relations. The theme of deliverance and divine healing is prevalent in most of the worship services. In one of the church services in Apondo, George Adongo (O.I 3/2/2012) narrated:

I grew up as a Catholic till I got married. We did not have children for quite a while. Many doctors told me that I was not able to sire children due to a
complication on my private part. I travelled in many places looking for a solution. The worst came when a medicineman prescribed for me to chew raw leaves of euphorbia plant. To my dismay, the situation worsened. There was pain in my private parts. Purse could ooze out daily. I had no peace. I was frustrated and hopeless. But when I heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, of His power of deliverance from some members of VOSH C in their preaching, I believed and was prayed for. Since then, I experienced full deliverance from the bondage of sickness and suffering. I became a full member of VOSH C to date.

All in all, divine healing and deliverance is core in the church under study. One would not miss to hear the themes mentioned in any VOSH C meeting. With the beliefs come the practices which the next section has equally discussed.

### 7.3 Practices

According to Hornby (2000), the term practice refers to a way of doing something that is the usual or expected way in a particular organization. In religion, practices are customs that identify a particular religious group. Thus they bring coherence within a particular religious society when members adhere to them in action. As a religious group, VOSH C has a number of practices. The study captured four major ones which include fasting, testimony, baptism and giving of offerings.

#### 7.3.1 Fasting

John Bowker (2000) observes that fasts express the public recognition of unworthiness. They may also express a human desire to move beyond a present circumstance into some better outcome. In Christianity, fasting is meant to strengthen the spiritual life by overcoming more immediate attractions of the world, the flesh and the evil. It is primarily an act of willing abstinence or reduction from certain or all food, drink, or both, for a period while in prayer.
Fasting may also preclude sexual intercourse. Fasting is done with the aim of seeking a closer intimacy with God, as well as an act of petition.

There are various types of fasting. An absolute fasting is normally defined as abstinence from all food and liquid for a defined period, usually a single day (24 hours), or several days. Other fasts may be only partially restrictive, limiting particular foods or substances. Before launching into His public ministry, among other reasons, Jesus Christ fasted to strengthen his faith (Luke 4:1ff):

And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing …(KJV).

In VOSHC, fasting is practiced at both individual and communal levels. It was observed that every VOSHC holds prayer and fasting every last weekend of the month in the church. Fasting is also organized at regional and assembly levels. Sometimes, collective fasting is held at any given time whenever there is a crisis. Individually, members of VOSHC also practice fasting for personal edification (Ondong’a O.I 3/2/2012).

VOSHC members believe that fasting empowers one’s faith in God. This is because it is a time of reading the scriptures, reflecting on them and communicating to God in prayers. Though the practice weakens the physical body, it builds up the spiritual part of a person. In VOSHC, fasting is practiced over an issue(s) believing God for a solution. For instance, at individual level, one can decide to pray and fast over an item in his/her life or family. The fasting period also varies depending on an individual or group practicing it at a given time and the matter at stake.
There is no restriction on the venue; it can be in the church building, one’s house in the homestead, in caves, hills or forests. VOSHC adherents usually believe God for protection in any venue of the fast. Ondonga (O.I 3/2/2012) adds that during the fasting period, there is also Bible study. Members of VOSHC believe that in such moments, God is able to give a revelation over certain scriptures. If it is a group fasting, people do offer encouragement or challenge from the scriptures.

Members of VOSHC know the secret and power behind fasting. They practice fasting voluntarily but rather with a lot of passion and dedication. Munala (O.I 5/2010) notes that:

I have observed Silas (the leader of VOSHC) frequently join us at table but not to partake food. Praying, fasting and meditating on the Bible have been part and parcel of the lifestyle of Owiti. In the 1960s and 1970s when I was frequently with the team, eating less while praying and studying the Bible more became the pattern for VOSHC top leadership. Even when special meals were laid on the tables, church ministers were extremely slow to partake the food, concentrating instead on Bible Study! Miracles of healing and deliverance from demons were common place and especially during meetings and conventions! Before annual conventions, VOSHC preachers would spend days fasting and praying. Faith in God was so high that it was unusual to find a VOSHC member in a clinic or a hospital. Going for human assistance when Jesus paid the full price for healing was viewed as proof of one having weakened or departed from the faith.

The church does not implement or even involve itself in anything without going into sessions of prayer and fasting. For instance, leaders are not just chosen but getting any leadership position in the church is after sessions of prayer and fasting. They claim, it is through such that God is able to show the rightful person(s) for leadership. Whenever there is an event involving the church such as the annual convention, members of VOSHC do gather together for prayer and fasting for one week at the mission headquarters in Kisumu. Indeed, fasting is a practice that
VOSHC has upheld from one generation to another. It is one of the key identities and pillars of VOSHC.

7.3.2 Testimony

Oguta (2006) gives a definition of testimony. Etymologically, the words "testimony" and "testify" both have a root in the Latin testis, referring to the notion of a third person, a disinterested witness. Christians in general use the term "testify" or "to give one's testimony" to mean "the story of how one became a Christian." Commonly, testimony refers to a specific event in a Christian's life in which God has done something deemed particularly worth sharing.

Like confession, testimony is an important feature of VOSHC members. There is giving of testimonies of what the Lord has done in one’s life directly or indirectly. This could range from accounts of healing to deliverance. This is in terms of how God has enabled one to conquer a persistent sin or weakness or taken one through a life challenge. Onga’ny (O.I 30/3/2012) states that during their fellowship services and in any other place, there are sessions of giving testimonies. On hearing the testimonies a sinner could be convicted. In one of the church services at Apondo, a member (John) gave a testimony of how the Lord rescued his life from the lake:

Beloved, over last weekend, I went to Lake Victoria with my fellow fishermen to fish. When we were in the lake fishing, suddenly appeared a storm in the middle of the lake. To make matters worse, there appeared a hippo who came and knocked our boat. The boat capsized and together with my two colleagues, we were out of the boat. Unlike the two who disappeared, I managed to get hold of the edge of the boat hence did not sink. It took several hours until some fishermen appeared and rescued me. I could not do this with my own strength. It was the doing of the Lord!
In VOSHC, a testimony also involves witnessing to those outside the fellowship. In market places and bus parks, among other places are opportunities of sharing testimonies. Such form of witnessing is done zealously. VOSHC has a stern attitude to those members who do not identify themselves fully with the faith through their testimony. The practice is emphasized to all the members.

Awendo (O.I 3/2/2012) observes that in VOSHC, it is through testimony that a person is ‘known’. They are keen to hear the testimony of any person who comes into the church claiming to be saved. In any testimony, VOSHC members are interested to know how a person became saved, the experience of in-filling with the Holy Spirit. In fact, it is easy to know that one belongs to VOSHC through the testimony since the form and pattern of the testimony is similar. They usually start with how one encountered salvation, was in-filled with the Holy Spirit and how one received any form of miracle especially healing.

7.3.3 Giving of Offerings

In VOSHC, giving is part and parcel of worship. The belief in VOSHC is that the primary responsibility and privilege of all Christians is to preach the gospel to every creature in the entire universe. To accomplish this, Christians are encouraged by the scripture to contribute their material substances (money, farm produce or industrial produce among others) for the ministry.

Among other reasons, the study established some reasons why giving is stressed in VOSHC. First, there is an argument that it is God who gave first His begotten Son as a sacrificial lamb for the redemption of humankind (John 3:16-17):
For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (KJV).

This passage is interpreted in VOSHC to imply that God is a giver. Thus without being compelled, He gave His only begotten son for the sake of lost humanity. Therefore, VOSHC members are urged to develop the art of giving. Moreover, it is more profitable to give than to receive (Luke 6:38):

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again (KJV).

However, this passage of the scripture has been abused. Sometimes it has instilled wrong attitude in some members on giving. Such, give with higher expectation of receiving more than they offered. In some cases still, they stop to give when quick return of what they had given out is not forthcoming.

Another reason why giving is emphasized in VOSHC is because, it is the main source of income to the church. A worship service is not concluded without members of the congregation giving their sacrifices. VOSHC teaches that it is through giving that one has the surety of being blessed materially. In most of their services, giving comes at the end of the sermon though sometimes, certain forms of offerings come before the sermon.

VOSHC has different types of offerings. First, there is what they term as sadaka, (Kiswahili word for free will offering). This kind of offering is weekly. It is practiced during Sunday services either at the end or in between the service. It is
given out depending on a persons’ ability. It may be in form of monetary or material value. There is also tithe. This is ten percent of a person’s income or profit. It is therefore given weekly by those operating businesses, monthly for those in formal employment and seasonally by those involved in farming. Tithe is the most emphasized form of offering in VOSHC. In all the Sunday services, giving of tithes must be emphasized by referring to the book of Malachi 3:6ff:

… Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts (KJV).

In VOSHC, the text cited above are viewed and interpreted differently. Some of the members had reservations on tithe that the text reiterates. Such members felt it is abused as was claimed by one of the members- Susan Odero:

Malachi refers to those who do not give their tithes as robbers, God will curse them and that if tithes are given then the Lord will keep away the devourers. In most cases, these sentiments have enabled us to give our tithe offerings out of fear. We give because we fear being cursed by God. Again, it has made many of us to give in expectation that no form of destruction will come near us. This in many instances has not been the case. Therefore, with such conditions attached to tithes in the book of Malachi, some of us view tithe as an Old Testament idea hence do not give it much attention.

As such, sections of VOSHC members have reservations on tithe as outlined in the above text. In addition, there is the end year offering. This is another major source of financial boost for the church. It is given annually by the members of VOSHC. It is given on the basis of thanking God for what He has done for each individual member throughout the year. It is offered on an individual basis, on behalf of
oneself, spouse or any other family member. There is a programme for it towards the end of the year. It is done at regional levels; thus it is upon each region to ensure it is collected in the local churches under their jurisdiction. In most cases, it is given in form of pledges. This ensures that payment is done before the end of the year. Preachers and evangelists are sent to various assemblies to follow up on the same. After the collection, each region is merited (depending on the amount each has managed to collect). This is made public during the Annual General Meetings (AGM) to all the members of the church. All these monies are used in the church. In VOSHC constitution, there is a table showing percentages on how all the monies are spent in various areas. Such areas include the church headquarters, Bible School and women ministry, among others.

7.3.4 **Baptism**

Richardson (1958) defines baptism to a ceremony by which a person is initiated or purified. In the New Testament times the ceremony of baptism was the only and the indispensable means of becoming a member of the Christian community. Consequently, baptism was a way of ordination and coronation in the family of God. In some traditions, baptism is also called christening, but for others the word "christening" is reserved for the baptism of infants. Baptism has been called a sacrament and an ordinance of Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity who also underwent baptism.

Obudi (2007) observes that the usual form of baptism among the earliest Christians was for the candidate to be immersed, either totally (submerged
completely under the water) or partially (standing or kneeling in water while water was poured on him or her). Other common forms of baptism now in use include pouring of water three times on the forehead, a method called effusion by VOSHC. There is also jumping over fire as it is in the case of Roho (Spirit) churches. The difference can be found in the manner and mode of baptizing and in the understanding of the significance of the rite.

Many AICs practice baptism by threefold immersion and is preceded by a rite of the uncovering of sins and a full confession (Hollenweger 1976). VOSHC practices baptism by immersion in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit in order to fulfill the command of Jesus Christ in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20):

> Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (KJV).

VOSHC members argue that it is better to perform the rite of baptism with regard to the command of Christ, as outlined in the above scripture, since He is the founder of the Christian faith. However, some insist on total immersion or at least partial immersion of the person who is baptized. To others, so long as water flows on the head, it is sufficient.

Ondong’a (O.I 3/2/2012) observes that there are diverse views about the effect of baptism for a Christian. Some Christian groups such as the SDA assert that baptism qualifies one for salvation. In VOSHC, this is different. The practice of baptism introduces a person into the spiritual community. It thus authenticates
membership to a certain church community. It is a way of commitment that one has decided to be part of such a communion fellowship.

In the Apostolic church, baptism was the universal and unquestioned method of initiation to the church (Richardson 1958). Baptism was also a way of making covenant with God to be a committed follower of Jesus Christ. To be baptized is an opportunity to emulate Jesus Christ who was also baptized before venturing into His public ministry (Luke 3:21-22):

Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased (KJV).

One striking view of the practice that VOSHC holds is the symbolic nature of baptism. In VOSHC, baptism symbolizes the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus, the moment one is immersed in water, it symbolizes that one has died with Christ. When one is removed from the water, it symbolizes that one has resurrected with Him again. Baptism is also a symbol of repentance and cleansing of one's sins. It is on this basis that in VOSHC, there is no infant baptism. The argument is that if the practice of baptism is symbolic in nature, how then can an infant understand the hidden meaning of the practice? Thus in VOSHC, only adults are baptized after going through a series of teachings on the necessity of the practice and its implications on one’s life.

VOSHC practices baptism using the Trinitarian formula but also requires a threefold immersion of the candidate. Baptism is preceded by a rite of the repentance of sins and a full confession in a series of prayer sessions led by a
senior pastor. In VOSHC, only ordained church ministers are allowed to preside over the baptism ceremony. It is performed periodically depending on the number of candidates available for baptism. There is emphasis on the spiritual commitment of a person before he/she is baptized. Meaning, baptism is observed by all who have confessed and repented in their hearts having believed in Jesus Christ as Saviour. In so doing, such believers have their bodies washed in water as an outward sign of cleansing, while their heart has already been symbolically sprinkled with the blood of Jesus as an inner cleansing. Thus they declare to the world that they have also been raised with Him to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4):

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (KJV).

Therefore, baptism is practiced in VOSHC as a sign of inner experience. In this regard, it is a practice which is still relevant to the members of VOSHC.

7.4 Conclusion

From the chapter, it emerged that most of the theological understandings on the beliefs and practices of VOSHC were based on the Bible. In VOSHC, members have it that when the Bible speaks, they speak and when it talks they talk and when the Bible walk, they walk too (Owiti O.I 4/1/2010). Meaning, the Bible is the final reference point in all matters of their beliefs and practices. Thus, in any dispute or doubt on beliefs and practice of the church, the Bible is the final authority. The beliefs identified included salvation, the Holy Spirit, eschatology,
ecclesiology, healing and deliverance. Practices on the other hand included fasting, testimony, baptism and giving offerings.

The beliefs in VOSHC shaped the kind of Gospel message preached and upheld by the pioneers and members in the present day. The message was relevant to the immediate needs of the people in their surroundings. The dedication, zeal and determination motivated the members in their mission. VOSHC holds prayer and fasting with consistency and persistence. The Holy Spirit is central in VOSHC as part of the trinity. Therefore, it can be concluded that the beliefs and practices of VOSHC have remained relevant to the adherents since they have been passed on from the founders. This has also contributed to unity of purpose in the church.
CHAPTER EIGHT
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study. It sums up the whole work in view of its objectives. It also summarizes the major findings and suggests areas for further research. Despite attention given to AICs in Western Kenya by scholars such as Welbourn and Ogot (1966), Barrett (1968) and Hinga (1980), the VOSHC which is a contemporary of CCA and AINC has not been studied. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the historical background and establishment of VOSHC in Luo Nyanza. Furthermore, it aimed at examining the leadership structure, beliefs and practices of VOSHC.

To carry out the objectives, the study laid down some research assumptions. First, that there are certain religious, cultural, economic and political reasons that led to the rise and establishment of VOSHC in Luo Nyanza. Second, that there are distinctive beliefs and practices of VOSHC which are probably influenced by the Christian convictions and beliefs of the founding leader. Third, that VOSHC has a hierarchical system of government in its leadership structure.

The study was informed by the theory of David Hesselgrave (1978) on causes and growth of RMs. Historico-anthropological analytical design was employed in order to unveil the history, beliefs and practices of VOSHC in a descriptive approach. These have been summarised as follows.
8.2 Summary

8.2.1 The Origin of VOSHC in Luo Nyanza

With regard to historical formation and establishment, the study found out that VOSHC originated from the need for religious awakening which was preceded by the East African Revival Movement. This urge was felt and pursued by African Christians who were in the mission churches especially the CMS but embraced the teachings and beliefs of the Rwanda Revivalists. Amidst challenges, the VOSHC emerged under the leadership of charismatic African personalities. It was registered by the colonial government in Kenya in 1956. The church is majorly established in Luo Nyanza region because most of the founders and current leadership are from the region. The spread has also been limited due to the nature of presenting the gospel. The preaching in VOSHC is mainly done in Luo language with a Luo worldview mentality. Though there has been attempts to spread to other areas, however, the membership is majorly the Luo peaking nation.

8.2.2 Beliefs and Practices of VOSHC

The study also identified and described some of the salient beliefs and practices such as salvation, the Holy Spirit, baptism, healing, ecclesiology and giving. It was established that most of the beliefs and practices of the church were derived from biblical texts. The beliefs and practices have been retained by the leaders and passed on from one generation to another. It was noted that though the beliefs and practices were Bible based, some were taken literary and selectively. As such there
is lack of theological and wholesome approach to particular belief and practice as it runs through the entire Bible.

8.2.3 The Leadership and Organizational Structure of VOSHC

The study examined and established that the leadership structure of VOSHC is organized into various levels of decision making. VOSHC has embraced a combination of Episcopal and Pentecostal forms of church governments. The archbishop has the final authority in the church. There is also decentralization of the powers of the church up to the local level; there is a clear flow of authority. This form of leadership has remained for years and seems to have enabled the church to remain consolidated.

8.3 Conclusion

From the findings, it can be concluded that VOSHC originated and established in Luo Nyanza before Kenya earned her independence in 1963. It was evident that the formation of VOSHC was influenced by charismatic personalities who believed in the Bible. The founders were able to go forth and preach what they had believed. Their persistence and insistence on prayer and fasting coupled with studying the scriptures enabled them to stay focused in their mission. The determination and fervent zeal of the founders enabled them to preach the gospel in a cultural background that prevailed at that time. Love was evidenced in the way they treated one another with humility and respect. Pride however, found its way in their midst. Two major schisms crept in, rocking the church. With the challenges, however, VOSHC has continued to move on.
On the beliefs and practices, biblical teachings seemed to play a major role. VOSHC believed the Bible as the infallible word of God. Faith in the God of the Bible is viewed as the ultimate answer to circumstances of life, ranging from poverty to spiritual and to physical sickness. Eschatological teaching and expectation enabled VOSHC adherents to live a distinctive lifestyle; full of humility and prayers lest they be left out in the second coming of Jesus Christ. The study therefore, concludes that VOSHC members have carried on with the same beliefs and practices their founders embraced and followed from the time of its origin, enabling this church to remain united in purpose and true to its mission.

On its leadership, it was established that at the initial stages, most of the founders of VOSHC were less interested in leadership positions. Their spirituality was more important to them than leadership. They saw such as secondary to the call of God. For any of them to have any position of leadership, stringent measures were adhered to as outlined in the Bible. Every member of the church had equal opportunity and individuals were appointed or elected after sessions of prayers and fasting. VOSHC has remained under the leadership of more or less the same leaders over a long period of time. The top leadership is also comprised majorly people from the Luo ethnic community.

### 8.4 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings discussed, the study recommends the following: First, for the sake of relevance, the VOSHC should try to address the needs of the people by incorporating programmes which are able to meet the social needs of the
people. This can be done by coming up with income generating projects to empower the members at various levels. Thus VOSHC should transcend meeting the spiritual needs of the populace by addressing other aspects of life as well. This is because the kingdom of God is wholesome in meeting all aspects of human life. This approach will enable VOSHC to attract and retain more membership who shall have their needs addressed in the church.

Leadership and power struggles have cropped up in many churches today including AICs such as VOSHC. In their initial stages, many churches and Christian ministries begin on very good grounds with a lot of trust in leadership. However, such trust is short lived. The early church had all their possessions in common and even leaders chosen in very transparent manner and after seeking the will of God through prayers and fasting. Churches should have proper guidelines in their constitution on how leadership vacuums are filled up; without favoritism and any form of corruption. Academic qualification is core in this age where literacy rates have gone higher. Therefore, church ministers who desire to serve the church in any capacity of leadership should be ready to learn. This will sharpen them in their areas of ministry; ensure competence and excellence in all they do.

The study, therefore, recommends that VOSHC needs to embrace theological training of its leaders and ministers by enrolling or sponsoring them in recognized theological institutions. This will sharpen their skills and help them to be relevant in their leadership.
8.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Firstly, among others, the study suggests that further research needs to be carried out on the biography of the leader of VOSHC, who has remained in that position since 1963. This will highlight more of his contributions to the development of AICs and Christianity in totality in Kenya.

Secondly, attempts should be made to determine the contributions of VOSHC to the Luo community and to Christendom. The contribution should perhaps transcend the Luo community, to look at other areas. This may include the involvement of the church in education and other social welfare activities. This will enhance the church to reach out to more people from different places.

Lastly, though schisms are inevitable in churches especially the spiritual AICs, they can be minimized. Following schisms experienced at its earlier stages of formation, this study suggests a research to be carried out on the measures VOSHC has put in place to minimize further schism.
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<td>2</td>
<td>Silas Owiti</td>
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<td>Member</td>
<td>Kimori VOSHC Compound on 5/2/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Musa Odawo</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kimori VOSHC compound on 5/2/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Milicent Otieno</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kimori VOSHC compound on 5/2/2012</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Joseph Obondi</td>
<td>Member</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Caren Olela</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kimori VOSHC compound on 5/2/2012</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Nashon Ogumbe</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kimori VOSHC compound on 5/2/2012</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Florence Ouma</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kimori VOSHC compound on 5/2/2012</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Silvano Okeyo</td>
<td>Member</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>Jorum Otieno</td>
<td>Member</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Anna Oloo</td>
<td>Elder</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Grace Agar</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Kimori VOSHC compound on 5/2/2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Joash Matete</td>
<td>Member</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Thomas Awendo</td>
<td>Evangelist</td>
<td>Kimori VOSHC compound on 5/2/2012</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>Osborn Agutu</td>
<td>Evangelist</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>Kilimentina Akeyo</td>
<td>Elder</td>
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<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Charles Katete</td>
<td>Member</td>
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<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Joseph Okoth</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kimori VOSHC compound on 5/2/2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Isaiah Ochieng’</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kimori VOSHC compound on 5/2/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Martha Adhiambo</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kimori VOSHC compound on 5/2/2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Susan Odero</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kimori VOSHC compound on 5/2/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Janet Owino</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kimori VOSHC compound on 5/2/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Joel Awendo</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kimori VOSHC compound on 5/2/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Winnie Owiti</td>
<td>Assistant Archbishop</td>
<td>Kisumu VOSH Church Compound on 20/5/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>John Abongo’</td>
<td>Pastor</td>
<td>Kisumu VOSH Church Compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Solomon Wachara</td>
<td>Pastor</td>
<td>Kisumu VOSH Church Compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Mrs. Wamae Phoebe</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Kisumu VOSH Church Compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Moses Munene</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Kisumu VOSH Church Compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Brother Bob</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kisumu VOSH Church Compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>George Onyango</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kisumu VOSH Church Compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Syprose Ombok</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kisumu VOSH Church Compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Mrs. Munene Moses</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kisumu VOSH Church Compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Mrs. Wachara Philemon</td>
<td>Women Leader</td>
<td>Kisumu VOSH Church Compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Everline Omondi</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kisumu VOSH Church Compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Anne Anyango</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kisumu VOSH Church Compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Eve Atieno</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kisumu VOSH Church Compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Joseph Otieno</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kisumu VOSH Church Compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Mrs. Washingtone Mbare</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kisumu VOSH Church Compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Munala Mare</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kisumu VOSH Church Compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Mrs. Ngire Mary</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kisumu VOSH Church Compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>George Adongo</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kisumu VOSH Church Compound</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 9.0 APPENDIX I

**GLOSSARY OF LUO WORDS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dini Kowalo</td>
<td>Denomination which belongs to people of Owalo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ja Muma</td>
<td>One who belongs to the Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobilo</td>
<td>Medicine men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jochiende</td>
<td>Evil spirits/ devils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johera</td>
<td>People of Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jojuogi</td>
<td>Night runners/ People who practice in witchcraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joluo</td>
<td>People of Luo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorembo</td>
<td>People of the Blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joroho</td>
<td>People of the spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juogi</td>
<td>spirit/ evil spirits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lang’o</td>
<td>Kalenjins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luwo</td>
<td>Follow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nomiya</td>
<td>I was given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyakalaga</td>
<td>Omnipresent/ everywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyasaye</td>
<td>God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyiseche</td>
<td>traditional gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oganda</td>
<td>A group of people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tipo</td>
<td>Symbol/ Shade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tung’</td>
<td>Traditional Megaphone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wende Chuny</td>
<td>Hymns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The glossary contains terms important to the Luo people, including denominational, religious, and cultural terms.*
10.0 APPENDIX II

10.1 BIO-DATA OF RESPONDENTS

Background Information

1. Personal Details
   a) Names (Optional)………………………………………………………………………………
   b) Gender: i Male [ ] ii Female [ ]
   c) Age: i. 18-24 [ ] ii. 25-34 [ ] iii. 35-45 [ ] iv. 45-54 [ ] v. 55 and above [ ]

2. Highest Educational Level:
   i. Primary [ ] ii. Secondary [ ] iii. Diploma [ ] iv. University [ ] v. None [ ]

3. Occupation:
   i. Unemployed [ ] ii. Casual [ ] iii. Civil servant [ ] iv. Self employed [ ] v. Others
      (specify)………………………………………………………………………………

4. When did you become a member of VOSHC?

5. Which denomination did you belong to before joining VOSHC?

6. What attracted you to VOSHC? ……………………………………………………………

7. Who were the founder(s) of VOSHC and what prompted them to start it?

10.2 AN INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE CHURCH LEADERS

1. What position do you hold in VOSHC?

2. How long have you served in the capacity mentioned above?

3. What were the message(s) or teachings of the founders of VOSHC?

4. Mention some beliefs and practices of VOSHC you know.

5. The message and the church founded may have been influenced by Luo cultural
   beliefs. Explain how.

6. What other factors, besides religion, may have influenced the emergence of VOSHC?

7. What was the church called when it started?
   a) Does it still retain the same name?
   b) What is the meaning of the current name?
10.3 INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR VOSHC MEMBERS

1. When was VOSHC started?

2. Where was VOSHC established first?

3. Who are the founder members of VOSHC?


5. Name the beliefs of the VOSHC.

6. Identify some of the practices of VOSHC.

7. What is the administrative structure of VOSHC?

10.4 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR FGDs

1. When did VOSHC start and establish?

2. What factors led to the formation and establishment of VOSHC in the Luo Nyanza region?

3. What are some of the religious beliefs of VOSHC?

4. Describe some of the religious practices of VOSHC?

5. What is the hierarchy leadership profile of VOSHC?

10.5 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION SCHEDULE FOR THE WORSHIP SERVICES OF VOSHC

1. Time the worship service begins.

2. Draw and show clearly the stages in the order of services.

3. Note use of any religious regalia within the services.

4. Themes addressed in the services.

5. Religious practices and rituals performed within the services.
11.0 APPENDIX III

CONSTITUTION OF VOSHC (2009)

ARTICLE 1: NAME

The society shall be known as VOICE OF SALVATION AND HEALING CHURCH

ARTICLE 2: AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

a) The church shall be non-political whatsoever.
b) To propagate the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as was commanded in the Holy Scriptures as presented in The Statement of faith and our by-laws.
c) To train, license and ordain church ministers, evangelists, youth pastors, pastor overseers, bishops and elders for the furtherance of the Gospel everywhere in accordance with the by-laws.
d) To foster relationships, fraternal love and affiliation with other churches, ministers and organizations with similar objectives both locally and internationally.
e) To establish, maintain branches subject to our supervision and wherever the local people accept the Gospel message.
f) To establish and administer schools, colleges, social welfare institutions and train persons for the purpose of missionary work and for aforesaid institutions.
g) To arrange religious lectures or seminars, crusades, printing of religious tracts, newsletters, magazines, books, radio and TV programs for the furtherance of the kingdom of God.

ARTICLE 3: MEMBERSHIP

a) Open to any born again person above the age of 18 years irrespective of sex and race.
b) Any member desiring to resign from the church shall submit his/her resignation to the secretary which shall take effect from the date of receipt by the secretary of such notice.
c) Any member may be expelled from membership if his/her conduct has adversely affected the reputation of the church or that he/she has contravened any of the provisions of this constitution. A member whose expulsion is proposed shall have the right to address the meeting at which his/her expulsion is to be considered.
d) Any member who backslides and deliberately lives a sinful life shall cease to be a member of the church.
e) Any person who resigns or is removed from membership shall not be entitled to a refund of any money contributed by him at any time.
ARTICLE 4: OFFICE BEARERS

a) The office bearers of the church shall be:
   i. Chairman
   ii. Vice Chairman
   iii. Secretary
   iv. Assistant Secretary
   v. Treasurer

b) All of whom shall be members in good standing of the church. All office bearers shall be elected/ appointed or sustained at the annual general meeting to be held each year.

c) All office bearers shall hold office from the date of election/ appointment until the succeeding annual general meeting subject to the conditions contained herein of this rule but shall be eligible for re-election/appointment.

d) Any office bearer who ceases to be a member of the church shall automatically cease to be an office bearer thereof.

e) Office bearers may be removed from office in the same as laid down for the expulsion of members in Article 3 (b,c,d) and vacancies thus created shall be filled by persons elected/appointed at a general meeting. The vacancies may be temporarily filled by appointment by Chairman until such time as general meeting can be convened.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chairperson</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Assembly</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>International</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>Pastor</td>
<td>Senior Pastor</td>
<td>Bishop</td>
<td>Presiding Bishop</td>
<td>Archbishop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice chairperson</td>
<td>Assistant. Pastor</td>
<td>Pastor</td>
<td>Senior. Pastor</td>
<td>Assistant. Bishop</td>
<td>Assistant Archbishop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>General Sec</td>
<td>International Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant secretary</td>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>Assistant. Secretary</td>
<td>Assistant. Secretary</td>
<td>Assistant General Secretary</td>
<td>Assistant International Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>National Treasurer</td>
<td>International Treasurer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table refers to all departments; thus youth and women.

ARTICLE 5: DUTIES OF OFFICE BEARERS

a) CHAIRPERSON

i. Shall preside over all meetings of the church at their level.

ii. Shall be a signatory to the bank account of the church.

iii. Shall preside over elections/appointments of church ministers.

iv. In event of incapacitation of any office bearer he/she may temporarily perform the duties of the office bearer and shall have powers to delegate such responsibilities to any other member.
b) SECRETARY
i. Shall record and keep records of proceedings of the meetings of the church at all levels and produce such records at meetings of the church for confirmation and approval.
ii. Shall have custody of all correspondence of the church.
iii. Shall, after the consultation with or direction of the chairperson summon of the church.
iv. Shall be a signatory to the church bank account.

c) TREASURER
i. Shall keep custody of the funds and finances of the church.
ii. Shall collect all monies due to the church and issue receipts to that effect.
iii. Shall disburse funds as directed and collect receipts for the church.
iv. Shall prepare budgets for discussions by the committee
v. Shall be one of the signatories to the bank accounts of the church.
vi. Shall present to the General Meeting a comprehensive financial report annually.

ARTICLE 6: THE COMMITTEE

a) The committee shall consist of all the office bearers of the church and two (2) other members elected at a general meeting. The committee shall meet at such a time and place as it shall resolve but shall meet not less than once in any twelve (12) months.
b) Any casual vacancies of the committee caused by death, disability or resignation shall be filled by the committee until the next general meeting. Vacancies caused by members of the committee removed from office will be dealt with as shown in rule 3 (e).

ARTICLE 7: DUTIES OF THE COMMITTEE

a) Shall be responsible for the management of the church and for that purpose may give direction to the office bearers as to the manner in which within the law, they shall perform their duties. They shall have power to appoint such sub-committees as it may deem desirable to make reports to the committee upon which such action shall be taken as seems to the committee desirable.
b) All finances disbursed on behalf of the church have to be authorized by the committee except as specified in rule 12(d).
c) The quorum for the meetings of the committee shall be not less than a simple majority of the members.

ARTICLE 8: GENERAL MEETINGS

a) There shall be two (2) classes/ types of general meetings: Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Special General Meeting (SGM).
b) The AGM shall be held annually at a date agreed upon at the previous AGM. Notice in writing of such AGM accompanied by the Annual Statement of Accounts and the agenda for the meeting shall be sent to all members not less than 21 days before the date of the AGM and where practicable by press advertisement not less than 14 days before the date of the meeting.

ii. The agenda for the AGM shall consist of the following:

- Confirmation of the minutes of the previous AGM.
- Consideration of the accounts
- Electing or sustaining of office bearers, the committee and trustees where necessary in accordance to rule 9(c).
- Appointment of auditors in accordance to Rule 10 (a)
- Designation of a date for the next AGM

iii. Such other matters as the committee may decide or members to the secretary at least four (4) weeks before the dates of the meeting.

c) SGM may be called for any specific purpose by the committee. Notice in writing of such meetings shall be sent to all members not less than seven (7) days before the date of such meeting.

d) A general meeting is to remain open to every member as per our by-laws

e) For eligibility to be voted for as a candidate or in any position, the member must be of proven integrity and must be a member in good standing in the eyes of the committee.

f) Quorum for the general meetings shall be not less than a simple majority of the registered delegates.

ARTICLE 9: PROCEDURE AT MEETINGS

a) At all meetings of the church, the chairperson or in his/her absence, the secretary, or in the absence of the secretary, a member selected by the meeting shall take the chair.

b) All decisions of the church shall as much as possible be determined by consensus.

ARTICLE 10: TRUSTEES

a) All land, buildings and other immovable property and all the investments and securities which shall be acquired by the church, shall be vested in the names of not less than three (3) trustees who shall be members of the church and shall be appointed at the AGM for a period of three (3) years. On retirement, such trustees shall be eligible for re-election. A general meeting shall have the power to remove any of the trustees and all vacancies occurring by removal/resignation or death shall be filled at the same or next general meeting.

b) Trustee may be an office bearer as well.
c) The trustee shall pay all income received from property vested in the trustee to the treasurer. Any expenditure in respect of such property which in the opinion of the trustee is necessary or desirable shall be reported by the trustee to the committee which shall authorize expenditure of such money as it deems fit.

ARTICLE 11: AUDITOR

a) An auditor shall be appointed for the following year by the AGM. All the accounts of the church, records and documents shall be open to the inspection of the auditor at any time. The treasurer shall produce an account of the receipts and payments and a statement on assets and liabilities made up to date, which shall not be less than six (6) weeks and not more than three (3) months before the date of the AGM. The auditor shall examine such annual accounts and statements and either certify that they are correct, duly vouched and in accordance with the law or report to the church in what respect they are found to be incorrect, unvouched or not in accordance with the law.

b) A copy of auditor’s report on the accounts and statements together with such accounts and statements shall be furnished to all members at the same time as the notice convening the AGM is sent out. An auditor may be paid such honorarium for his/ her duties as may be resolved by the AGM appointing him/her.

c) No auditor shall be an office bearer or member of the committee of the church.

ARTICLE 12: FUNDS

a) All property acquired by the church is the common property of the body to be utilized as the body determines for the purposes of preaching, teaching and caring for people, especially orphaned minors and may include the following:
   i. Construction of worship centers and orphanages.
   ii. Schools and hospitals.
   iii. Publishing houses for publications and sales of religious literature.
   iv. Purchase of scriptures and materials for teaching (including printing and costs of translations when necessary).
   v. Staff quarters/ offices and all others such as land, building and equipment that may be needed to carry out ministerial work throughout Kenya.
   vi. Expenses required for the operations of the church such as an honorarium for the auditor, mailing to members etc.
   vii. Material support of the poor and needy widows and orphans.

b) All monies and funds shall be received by and paid to the treasurer and shall be deposited by him/her in the name of the church in any bank(s) approved by the committee.
c) No payments shall be made out of the bank account without a resolution of the committee authorizing such payment and all cheques and such bank accounts shall be signed by the treasurer and any one of two office bearers of the society who shall be appointed by the committee.

d) A sum not exceeding Ksh. fifty thousand (50,000/=) may be kept by the Treasurer for petty disbursements of which proper accounts shall be kept.

e) The committee shall have power to suspend any office bearer whom it has reasonable cause to believe is not properly accounting for any of the funds or property of the church and shall have power to appoint another person in his/her place. Such suspension shall be reported to a general meeting to be convened on a date not later than two (2) months from the date of such suspension and the general meeting shall have full power to decide what further action should be taken on the matter.

f) The financial year of the church shall be 1st January to 31st December.

ARTICLE 13: BRANCHES

Branches of the ministry may be formed with approval of the committee and the Registrar of Societies and such branches shall adopt the same constitution as that of the church with the following exceptions:

a) The aims and objectives will not include the formation of branches.

b) Amendments to the constitution can only be made by the church in accordance with the provisions of rule 13 herein.

c) The provisions of rule 14 shall apply to branches but in addition, branches shall not be dissolved without consultation with the church and notification of registrar of societies.

ARTICLE 14: AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

These by-laws or any other governing documents can be amended by a simple majority vote at any duly convened general meeting. Any changes in the constitution shall not be implemented without the prior consent in writing of the Registrar, obtained upon application to him/her in writing and signed by three of the office bearers.

ARTICLE 15: DISSOLUTION

a) The church shall not be dissolved except by a resolution passed at a general meeting of members by common consent of the members present. The quorum at the meeting shall be as shown in rule 7 (f). If no quorum is obtained, the proposal to dissolve the church shall be submitted to a further general meeting, which shall be held one (1) month later. Notice of this meeting shall be given to all members of the society at least fourteen (14) days before the date of the meeting. The quorum for this second meeting shall be the number of members present.
b) Provided, however, that no dissolution shall be effected without prior permission in writing of the Registrar, obtained upon application to him/her made in writing and signed by three (3) office bearers.

c) When the dissolution of the church has been approved by the Registrar, no further action shall be taken by the committee or any office bearer of the church in connection with the aims of the church other than to get and liquidate for cash and all the assets of the church. Subject to the payment of all debts of the church the balance thereof shall be distributed to a non-profit organization of the office bearers’ choice. In the event that common consent cannot be reached upon such an organization, the assets shall all be liquidated and the monies divided amongst those organizations that the body submits in proportion.

**ARTICLE 16: INSPECTION OF ACCOUNTS AND LIST OF MEMBERS**

The books of accounts and all documents relating thereto and a list of members of the church shall be available for inspection at the registered office of the church by any office or member of the church giving not less than seven (7) days notice in writing to the Secretary.
12.0 APPENDIX IV

12.1 MAPS

Figure 3: Map of Luo Nyanza Counties

Source: Geography Department, Kenyatta University
12.2 PLATES

Plate 1: (1989): The Late Blasio Oking’ Mbara - the first chairman VOSHC. Plate 2: (1968) Silas Owiti who took over the chairmanship from Blasio after the first schism.

Plate 3: (2010): The late Rev. Mzee Vitalis Angura (1925-2013)- the first Treasurer of VOSHC. Plate 4: The late Bishop Allen Ojwang’ Iro - The first leader and pioneer of VOSHC who became the Secretary after the first schism and later led the second schism.
Plate 5: (Late 1950s): A Photo of some of the Pioneers of VOSHC

Plate 6: The current VOSHC headquarters in Kisumu

Plate 7: (2013): Archbishop Owiti congratulating his wife Winnie for being appointed Assistant Archbishop. Plate 8: Archbishop Owiti and assistant bishop of VOSHC, Dr. Julia Winnie Owiti
Plate 9 (2012): Rev. Wachara Onga’ny – one of the ‘second’ generation of fiery preachers who led the first schism, with the researcher. Plate 10 (2010): The late Bishop Allen Ojwang’ - the first leader and core founder of the group with the researcher at his home.


Plate 13 (2012): The researcher with Mama Deborah Ondonga’ and Misuku Awendo after the interview. Plate 14 (2012): The researcher and Mr. and Mrs. Odera Absalom, one of the second generation leaders of VOSHC, at their home in Kambare.