HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies
ISSN: (Online) 2072-8050, (Print) 0259-9422

Reimagining ubuntu and human solidarity in decoloniality: A missional reading of Luke 10:25–37 in the context of woundedness, inequality, and homelessness in the City of Tshwane

Authors:
Thinandavha D. Mashau[1]
Moses S. Maponya[2]

Affiliations:
[1]College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa, Tshwane, South Africa

[2]Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology, College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa, Tshwane, South Africa

Corresponding author:
Thinandavha Mashau,
mashatd@unisa.ac.za

Dates:
Received: 26 Mar. 2026
Accepted: 16 May 2026
Published: 03 July 2026

How to cite this article:
Mashau, T.D. & Maponya, M.S., 2026, 'Reimagining ubuntu and human solidarity in decoloniality: A missional reading of Luke 10:25-37 in the context of woundedness, inequality, and homelessness in the City of Tshwane', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 82(1), a11417. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v82i1.11417

Copyright:
© 2026. The Authors. Licensee: AOSIS.
This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Read online:
Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

Three decades after the dawn of the democratic dispensation, South Africa's urban spaces continue to bear the brunt of the aftermath of colonial and apartheid past, that is, racialised exclusion, socio-economic inequality, and homelessness. These conditions have left many wounded and vulnerable, and some also left to die, as in the case of Luke 10:25–37. In the City of Tshwane, these realities continue to manifest through unemployed and homeless people who live under bridges, along riverbanks, in parks, and some have to find refuge in established shelters or homes. This article seeks to address the question: How can a missional reading of Luke 10:25–37 reimagine ubuntu and human solidarity in the context of homelessness in Tshwane? Having conducted a Contextual Bible Study with approximately 25 homeless participants in the City of Tshwane, this article advances an argument that a decolonial missional reading of Luke 10:25–37 reinterprets ubuntu as an essential praxis that restores dignity through embodied solidarity and spatial, social, economic, and epistemic justice in urban contexts.

Contribution: Through embodied solidarity, this article proposes a missional-decolonial praxis that empowers the agency of a church to be transformative, that is, to achieve spatial, social, economic, and epistemic justice for wounded, vulnerable, and homeless people in the City of Tshwane. This is meant to address both structural exclusion and lived experiences of marginalisation.

Keywords: ubuntu; human solidarity; decoloniality; missional ecclesiology; Contextual Bible Study; inequality; homelessness; City of Tshwane.

Introduction

Martin Luther King Jr's reflection on neighbourliness provides a theological and ethical framing for this study:

> 'The ultimate is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. The true neighbour will risk his position, his prestige, and even his life for the welfare of others. In dangerous valleys and hazardous pathways, he will lift some bruised and beaten brother to a higher and more noble life.' – Martin Luther King Jr

South Africa's new dawn of democracy and Nelson Mandela's rainbow vision remain riven by wounds, inequality, and homelessness that continue to manifest in urban spaces such as the City of Tshwane. The stark contrast between gated communities and informal settlements, complemented by homeless people who live under bridges, along riverbanks, in parks, and those seeking refuge in established shelters or homes, is a glaring reality that continues to remind us of the wounds of the colonial and apartheid past. The situation is further exacerbated when homelessness is criminalised, and human dignity is denied in urban spaces such as Tshwane. These ways of living perpetuate social ills, such as economic, social, and spatial exclusions, which lead to assaults on human dignity and vulnerability (cf. De Beer 2015a:3, 2015b:2; De Villiers 2014:209; Mashau 2014:198; Ribbens & De Beer 2017:4).

It is against this background that this article seeks to challenge the agency of the church and faith-based organisations to move beyond moralistic advocacy to action by grounding its ecclesial praxis in the *missio Dei* [mission of God] (Bosch 1991; Maponya 2018; Wright 2006). Using a decolonial missional lens and a Contextual Bible Study (CBS) reading of Luke 10:25–37, this article

advocates for an ecclesial praxis that re-centres ubuntu and human solidarity as drivers of social justice and the liberation of the dehumanised poor and wounded. The opening quotation by Martin Luther King Jr underscores the ethical demand to act decisively in the face of injustice. While King foregrounds the dignity of the human person, this article appropriates his insight to emphasise that such dignity is realised through embodied solidarity with those who suffer. Thus, human dignity constitutes the missiological foundation, while human solidarity represents its practical enactment.

However, current research suggests that ecclesial responses remain constrained by the lingering effects of colonial and apartheid legacies, as well as missionary syndromes – manifested in ecclesiocentric, Sunday-cult clericalism (as demonstrated by the priest and Levite in the selected biblical text), economic dependency or prosperity elitism, and a romanticised hope that delays the realisation of a just, equitable, and sustainable life for all (Goheen 2008; Mashau 2020; Saayman 2010). Based on the foregoing, this research seeks to answer the following question: *How can a missional reading of Luke 10:25–37 reimagine ubuntu and human solidarity within the context of homelessness in Tshwane?* To answer this question, this article will focus on the following: An overview of the conceptual framework, the research methodology grounded in the CBS, a theological reading of Luke 10:25–37, a synthesis of CBS findings, and a proposed missional-decolonial praxis for the City of Tshwane, an approach that could be adapted and applied to other contexts globally.

Conceptual framework: A missiological discourse in decoloniality

Ubuntu and human solidarity

The clarion call to reimagine and re-centre the African philosophy of life, ubuntu [humanness], as a guiding ethos of human dignity and solidarity is essential if the church is to journey alongside those on the margins, wounded, and vulnerable. In this article, ubuntu is understood as a relational ontology that affirms human dignity, mutual interdependence, and communal flourishing. It is critically appropriated through a theological lens, recognising both its emancipatory potential and its limitations, particularly regarding gender justice and power relations.

Writing in the context of homelessness in the City of Tshwane, De Beer (2015b) opined:

> I argue for the recovery of an *ubuntu*, precisely in the face of and in solidarity with homeless communities, and, in a different sense, in acknowledgement of our universal longing to be 'at home'. (p. 2)

This calls for 'urban solidarity' (Chabbi-Chemrouk & Driouèche 2011:707). Urban solidarity is enacted through concrete practices such as shared resource mobilisation, institutional partnerships (e.g. shelters and clinics), and advocacy for equitable urban policies that restore access to space and dignity. This article makes a similar call premised on our understanding that humanity must stand in solidarity to solve human challenges and, therefore, affirm the ubuntu philosophy that we are because of others.

This, however, calls for a radical shift from a mere anthropological understanding to a more holistic approach '… in the quest for the fullness of life, and the affirmation of the integrity of creation, wholeness and wellbeing' (LenkaBula 2008:375). While opting for *botho* and not ubuntu because of linguistic variations and nuances, LenkaBula (2008:375, 378) further unmasks that elements of 'relationality and respect for humanity' must be evoked to achieve justice both economically and ecologically. *Botho* or ubuntu, as used above and in this article, serves as a shared vision for collective dignity, involving a triad ecosystem of God, humanity as *imago Dei* [image of God], and ecology (cf. Ngcobo 2014:126). Therefore, values such as '… respect, empathy, respect and compassion for others' (LenkaBula 2008:380) must undergird the human solidarity we seek in our approach to dealing with inequality, woundedness, and homelessness in urban spaces.

The foregoing suggests that ubuntu is a rich resource that enriches the discourse of neighbourliness; however, its deployment in ecclesial praxis must critique the ongoing communal gender biases in some ecclesial communities that disregard the agency of women. Women continue to experience marginalisation and gender-based violence perpetuated by patriarchal structures, both in African families and churches (Anofuechi & Klaasen 2024:2–3). Therefore, this article proposes a critically engaged ubuntu attentive to gender justice and social inclusion in solidarity with vulnerable and wounded female bodies in the city.

Missional ecclesiology

Missionary or missional? This question, raised by Saayman (2010:5), remains relevant in our continued efforts to reimagine the church's agency in addressing issues of woundedness, inequality, and homelessness in the City of Tshwane. Like the ecclesial praxis of the priest and the Levite in Luke 10:25–37, the unholy marriage between the imperial and missionary agendas has done more harm than good in elevating church agency in the public square, particularly in journeying with those in the margins (Mashau 2020:44). The church in the democratic dispensation is still suffering from the colonial and apartheid hangovers and suffering multiple missionary syndromes. The following serve as examples:

Missionary conversion syndrome: Pietistic approach to Christian spirituality – with a narrow understanding of mission to mean evangelism and conversion (winning of souls and planting churches) as the end-goal of mission as we await to be rewarded in the end times (Goheen 2008:57; Kritzinger 2000:93). Anything beyond that is considered a social gospel.

Sunday-cult syndrome: This refers to an inward-focused ecclesial practice limited to Sunday worship service, which centres around the clergy to the exclusion of laity (Jentile 2020:1; Maponya 2018:1; Mashau 2024:1). It is in this instance

that the priesthood of all believers and their missional mandate and agency in all spheres of life are marginalised in favour of clerical professionalism.

Systemic relational violence syndrome: This refers to the justification of the violation of black bodies by the apartheid church and post-apartheid religious establishments which reflects a theological complicity in systemic oppression that normalised violence and exclusion (Kobo 2018:6). In this article, the woundedness of the marginalised city dwellers not only refers to a theological category of disfigured *imago Dei* [image of God] but also an exposition of a wounded social order, with roots in the colonial and apartheid past, where violence against previously disadvantaged blacks was normalised and their abandonment became structurally encoded to produce spatial, social, epistemic, and religious marginalisation and homelessness within the urban space.

To resolve issues of inequality, woundedness, and homelessness, informed by a decolonial missional reading of Luke 10:25–37, there is a need to shift from mission theology to missional theology and missional ecclesiology. This marks a drastic shift from a denominational church to a missional church, which is captured as follows:

> The denominational church had a functional self-understanding, established to do something on behalf of God in the world. The missional church understands itself to be missionary by nature – called, equipped, and sent into the world by the Holy Spirit to participate fully in God's mission. (Van Gelder 2005:24)

It is further concluded, 'In this approach, ecclesiology comes to expression and identity in relationship to God's mission to the world' (Van Gelder 2005:24). Deeply founded and rooted in the *missio Dei*, the church's role extends beyond salvation and advocacy but is characterised by relationality and witnessing. It is opined, 'The missio Dei presupposes mission communities that witness to the work of God being carried out' (Niemandt 2012:7).

A missional hermeneutic in decoloniality

Perhaps the biggest misconception in African missionary hermeneutics is the selective reading of the biblical text or proof-texting syndrome to authenticate the narrow 'geographical movement from a Christian nation to a mission field to win converts and plant churches' (Goheen 2008:57). Selected scriptures were used to validate this approach, and in the end promoted an ecclesiocentric approach to mission. However, '[*t*]he development toward a missional hermeneutic has appropriated the insights of Bosch and has continued to move toward a more consistent expression of the centrality of mission in Scripture' (Goheen 2008:60). In this instance, mission is projected as 'a focus of hermeneutical coherence', as articulated by Wright (2006:40), and the Scripture serves as a record of God's mission (Goheen 2008:61). Accordingly:

> … the whole canon of Scripture is a missional phenomenon in the sense that it witnesses to the self-giving movement of this God toward his creation and us, human beings in God's own image, but wayward and wanton. (Wright 2006:48)

In addition, a missional hermeneutic informed by decolonial critique seeks to read Scripture in conversation with historically marginalised communities, exposing colonial distortions and recovering liberative meanings aligned with the *missio Dei*. In the context where dehumanisation persists (Kritzinger 2025:6), the decoloniality lens and decolonial praxis are not optional but remain an urgent matter that seeks to re-centre ubuntu, the human dignity and solidarity, and the urgency of the African church in pursuit of epistemic justice, spatial justice, and institutional conversion within urban spaces. The institutional conversion is about intentionality in transforming ecclesial praxis, in particular, re-centring the *missio Dei* and indigenous knowledge systems that are redeeming, such as ubuntu, human dignity, and solidarity, while dismantling biblical interpretation that uses particular texts to legitimise ecclesial elitism that mirrors colonial exclusions.

The City of Tshwane as a missional context

This article is located within the context of more than 30 years of democracy and the remaining challenges of woundedness, inequality, and homelessness in the City of Tshwane (Modise 2024:13). While the towering hills of Tshwane such as Meintjieskop (the Union Buildings and symbol of political power), Thaba Tshwane (the centre of military power), Monument Hill where the Voortrekker Monument is located (reminder of the power of the past apartheid regime), South African Reserve Bank (centre of economic power), the high buildings of University of South Africa, University of Pretoria, and Tshwane University of Technology, among others (centres of intellectual power) (Mashau 2014:1), seem to be projecting a successful story, life in the pavements of the city tell another story – not everyone is at home in the Capital City (Mashau 2017:414). Drawing on a biblical metaphor from Psalm 23, this article contends that life in the City of Tshwane is like a journey through 'the valley of the shadow of death'.

The reality is that the socio-economic-political and religious landscape is on a slippery slope for most city dwellers, particularly individuals from previously disadvantaged or marginalised groups. With these disparities, the City of Tshwane remains a tale of two cities (Cameron & Krynauw 2001), both metaphorically and in reality. It remains a relic of the colonial and apartheid city. It is opined:

> During the apartheid years, the City's spatial development approach was directed by the segregation-oriented removal of 'non-whites' from the city; an economic, spatial, social and political exclusion of this population group from urban life. (Clarke & Lourens 2015:39–40)

Tapping into the violence and woundedness of a Jewish man on the road to Jericho, homelessness in the City of Tshwane, is one of the many examples of wounded and bleeding communities that remain in squalor and merely fight for survival. Homelessness in the City of Tshwane must be understood as a multidimensional and structurally embedded phenomenon, deeply rooted in the legacies of

colonialism and apartheid, and exacerbated by the current socio-economic inequalities. It entails housing insecurity, social dislocation, and existential displacement beyond 'street homelessness'. Homelessness, in this context, is driven by a complex interplay of structural factors, which include poverty, unemployment, shortage of low-cost housing, migration, family breakdown, substance abuse, and systemic violence, among others.

Research methods and design

Contextual Bible Study

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive, and participatory research design, which is grounded in a transformative missiological paradigm (Bosch 1991). Methodologically, it uses CBS as its primary analytic tool. Contextual Bible Study is used as a liberative, dialogical, and praxis-oriented hermeneutical approach that facilitates critical engagement between biblical text and contemporary social realities of those from marginalised communities (Mashau & Mangoedi 2021:3; West 1993:11).

Epistemologically, this study is framed within a decolonial and liberationist hermeneutic, challenging the persistence of colonial epistemologies in biblical interpretation. This allows space to foreground marginalised voices in theology as part of advancing epistemic justice (Anofuechi & Klaasen 2024; Kritzinger 2025). This approach aligns with missional hermeneutics that locates Scripture within the broader framework of *missio Dei*, tracing God's redemptive acts in history as captured in the biblical narrative (Wright 2006). The Bible, as read together with ordinary readers, is thus used as a liberative tool to advance lasting solutions to their socio-economic, political, and religious challenges, especially for the homeless folks in the City of Tshwane.

The foregoing conditions, which are rooted in colonial and apartheid legacies, provide the socio-historical backdrop for engaging Luke 10:25–37 as a text addressing issues of woundedness, vulnerability, and neighbourliness in the context of homelessness in the City of Tshwane as our interlocutor. A CBS session was conducted at Tshwane Leadership Foundation with a group of 25 participants drawn from marginalised urban communities, including individuals experiencing poverty, unemployment, gender-based violence, and homelessness, among others. Participants ranged in age from 19 years to 50 years old, with 17 females, 8 males, and 2 foreign nationals. The inclusion of diverse participants ensured a multiplicity of perspectives in the engagement and interpretive process.

The researchers prepared a set of 12 semi-structured questions to guide engagement with the selected biblical text (Lk 10:25–37), and all participants were given the opportunity to respond to the questions. To adhere to ethical standards and requirements, participants were requested to sign an informed consent form, with the understanding that the knowledge generated would be used for advocacy and a scholarly article. The collected data and findings were validated collaboratively with participants at the end of the CBS to ensure we had accurately captured their views.

Theological reading of Luke 10:25–37

The theological reading of Luke 10:25–37 in this context, focusing on matters related to woundedness, inequality, homelessness, ubuntu, and human solidarity, requires a reading of the text beyond the moralistic agenda, but the re-centring of issues of ubuntu and human solidarity in pursuit of social justice for the wounded. The emphasis is on being neighbourly rather than on advocacy without action (Gardiner 2023:31). The following three issues are critical in the process of unmasking the message of this pericope:

Violence, woundedness, and vulnerability

The narrative captures an event in which a man was travelling on the dangerous road from Jerusalem to Jericho (Milne 2005:169). According to Jemali (2025:3), 'the traveller is attacked by robbers, beaten, and left for dead'. This incident reflected a deep-seated societal challenge of systemic violence and vulnerability that speaks to a lack of security on this road, and therefore, becomes a symbolic geography of colonial urbanism, where violence and woundedness are not accidental but systemic. Consequently, the man 'left half-dead' represents racialised bodies rendered disposable, economically excluded subjects, and urban poor subjected to state neglect and social abandonment. Thus, the road from Jerusalem to Jericho serves as a symbolic space of vulnerability and systemic neglect, reflecting the lived experiences of violence and marginalisation in contemporary urban contexts.

Inequality and an unjust religious system

The narrative further exposes not only the social ills of poverty and inequality but also the structural failures that sustain marginalisation. The Levites and Priests in Luke's time represented ecclesial elitism, in which religious leaders exploited those in the squalor of society and sustained social inequality, and also excluded the vulnerable from accessing care. And therefore, the parable exposes a theology of abandonment in which wounded bodies are produced and sustained by religious and socio-political systems.

Homelessness and neighbourliness

It is opined, 'The parable of the Good Samaritan revolves around the concept of neighbour' (Falcetta 2025:410). The question 'Who is my neighbour?' is asked by a lawyer who opted to excuse himself from acting justly in the context of woundedness, inequality, and homelessness. In his intervention, Jesus did not only confront the unjust and corrupt religious system because of its entanglement with issues of religious purity and self-preservation, but demonstrated how God's intervention favours 'the helpless and those stricken by suffering' (Bedoya Bonilla 2022:10;

cf. Pandiangan, Purba & Marmidi 2023:72). Hence, it is concluded, 'the good Samaritan pericope in Luke 10:30–37 functions as a command to exhibit immeasurable love to one's neighbour as oneself regardless of status, origin and gender' (Oyewole 2022:28). The parable foregrounds the Samaritan not only as a marginalised outsider from outside the Jewish religious environment but also the ethical agent who transcends social and religious boundaries to restore the dignity of the violated and wounded individual.

When 'a nameless fellow along the wild and dangerous road, found himself the object of murderous attack, leaving him stripped, beaten, and half-dead', the Samaritan never turned a blind eye but assisted the stranger, while risking his own life. The Samaritan crossed the existing and established boundaries in the efforts to stand in solidarity with the wounded by the roadside. When the Samaritan, a religious outsider, acted to help where the priest and the Levite failed, it signalled a profound shift in ecclesial praxis, one that re-centres love and solidarity in addressing woundedness, inequality, homelessness, and other social injustices. The shift is moving the moral and legal authority of religious leaders from a system that prioritises religious purity and self-preservation (Hughes 1998:390) to one that prioritises love, mercy, and justice for all, irrespective of their racial, economic, and religious status in society. It is for this reason that '… Luke situates this episode within his broader concern for redefining righteousness as relational and practical rather than formalistic' (Saleh Jnr & Hombane 2025:4). Consequently, 'Being a neighbour is a choice to provide real help to those who need it regardless of ethnic, religious, cultural, or racial difference' (Pandiangan et al. 2023:73). It is asserted, 'The choice of a Samaritan, therefore, would be intended to convey the message that ethical boundaries should be transcended' (Falcetta 2025:414).

Contextual reading of Luke 10:25–37: Synthesised findings of the ordinary readers

In reading, interpreting, and applying Luke 10:25–37 in the context of woundedness, inequality, and homelessness in the City of Tshwane, 25 participants in the CBS found that the text is about Jesus's teaching on compassion, prompted by a lawyer who tested him with a question about eternal life. In their analysis, they highlighted the weaknesses of religious establishments, as represented by the priest and the Levite, who failed to show mercy and compassion to the wounded, vulnerable, and marginalised in society. They acknowledged that the Samaritan, while perceived by the Jews as a religious other, is the one who practically showed neighbourly love, even though it was costly.

When invited to identify different characters and their roles in the text, ordinary readers consistently mentioned the following people: the *Lawyer* (who tested Jesus on his understanding of the concept of a neighbour), *Jesus* (who was a patient teacher who never avoided the lawyer, but answered all his questions), *God* (who is love and expect those who love him to also show it by loving others – their neighbour), *Robbers* (who acted in a cruel or violent way when the badly hurt, robbed, stripe naked, and left the man they robbed half dead), *Robbed man* (who was hurt, robbed, and left dead, but helped by the Good Samaritan who took him to the Inn-keeper with the request to accommodate and take care of him), *Neighbour* and *Samaritan* (the Good Samaritan who risked his own safety to stop and help the robbed man, exemplifies that a true neighbour is one who assists others with love and compassion, and that such a person embodies the virtues that contribute to a fuller, longer life), *Priest* and *Levites* (They did not have compassion at all, and, by so doing, failed to practice what they preached. They worked with their mouths, not with action, and it showed that they did not want to be part of the problem and accordingly, they wanted to protect their lives), *Donkey* (It was used as a transport, and it belonged to the good Samaritan), and the *Inn-keeper* (He gave them a place to stay, and he trusted the good Samaritan who promised to pay for whatever as he offered to nurse the robbed man).

In our interpretation of the voices of ordinary readers of the text, four interrelated themes emerged from their responses, namely:

Violence, woundedness, and vulnerability as urban realities

Ordinary readers identified the road from Jerusalem to Jericho as a reflection of their current challenges in the City of Tshwane. These realities include hunger, sickness, robbery, assault, and abandonment. Acts of violence, woundedness, and vulnerability are a current reality for some city dwellers, who are left to fend for themselves in the streets and, at times, sleep on pavements and under bridges, as reflected in previous research (Bedoya Bonilla 2022; cf. Pandiangan et al. 2023).

Failure of the agency of religious formalism

Participants found that the priest and Levite failed their religion by 'working with mouth but not action'. This is a sign of a religious system that is inward-looking and self-preserving, as demonstrated by the priest and Levite who did not want to defile themselves, or at least were protecting their lives. Their understanding can be found in this text and Luke's interest in shifting righteousness from a mere moral obligation that requires formal compliance to a relational act of mercy and compassion (Saleh Jnr & Hombana 2025; cf. Gardiner 2023).

Social ills as causes of homelessness

Participants identified several social ills as drivers of homelessness in the City of Tshwane; they listed poverty, greediness, harmful peer influence, a lack of knowledge of God and immorality, crime and violence, and migration, among others. Their analysis points to structural factors that speak to economic injustice and spatial exclusion. Previous research alluded to this reality by calling for a total restructuring of the city from an apartheid city to one where all citizens living in Tshwane have the right to it (De Villiers 2014; Hamann & Horn 2015; Ribbens & De Beer 2017).

Neighbour(liness) as embodied solidarity while crossing human-created boundaries

Being a neighbour was defined not in terms of geography, but acts of mercy, love, and compassion towards anyone who needs help, including strangers, religious others, and those who are victims of social circumstances such as crime and violence (Oyewole 2022). The acts of a good Samaritan, a donkey, and the Inn-keeper are a necessary embodied solidarity that all human beings should share with the marginalised. This aligns with the proposed missional ecclesiology and the necessary missional coherence of the agency of the church that serves the *missio Dei* (Goheen 2008; Wright 2006).

When participants were asked to summarise the story in their own words, they agreed that it shows what we need to do to inherit the kingdom of God. It further explains who our neighbours are. In conclusion, this text emphasises that our neighbours are people we encounter in our daily routine, those we meet at different points in our lives, who may need something we possess. The story encourages us to love everyone we encounter, regardless of how long we have known them. God brings people into our lives for a reason. Consequently, this narrative becomes Jesus's teaching model for inheriting eternal life by becoming a good neighbour through acts of mercy and compassion. This is the agency required of a missional church that is faithful to the *missio Dei*, as highlighted in the theological interpretation by learned readers of Luke 10:25–37 (cf. Gardiner 2023).

It is clear from the foregoing that the voices of the homeless participants not only disrupt theological narratives but also offer an embodied decolonial hermeneutic of survival, resistance, and hope in the contexts of inequality, woundedness, and vulnerability in urban spaces.

Implications for a missional-decolonial ecclesial praxis

The readers, both ordinary and learned, call for a reimagined praxis to address inequality, woundedness, and homelessness in the City of Tshwane. This praxis re-centres the *missio Dei* in the ecclesial praxis of the church agency. Using a missional-decolonial lens in reading Luke 10:25–37 calls for an ecclesial shift from a gathering church that focuses on the formality and rituals of the Sunday-cult and its clerical dominance to weekday human solidarities, activating the priesthood of all believers as agents of care in urban and wounded spaces. Based on the emerging voices stemming from their interpretation of the Good Samaritan narratives, both ordinary and learned readers commend a missional-decolonial ecclesial praxis as follows:

Re-centring ubuntu, ubuntu theology, human dignity and solidarity

Mission is living out ubuntu in solidarity with wounded human beings. Ubuntu theology is life-affirming and, therefore, missional in its commitment towards life as we journey in the context of death and dying. Therefore, the church's agency is more than mediating salvation; it also mirrors God's mercy, love, and compassion in pursuit of social justice and advancing sustainable human development.

Mediating institutional hospitality

Church agency is about emulating the Good Samaritan, whose agency was not only to provide temporary relief but also to work with an established entity, such as the Inn or hotel, to provide shelter and further interventions aimed at the healing of the violated and wounded. This missional praxis is costly, as demonstrated by the Good Samaritan who risked his life to help another human being. This is a 'Mission praxis in (voluntary) vulnerability' (Kritzinger 2025:2). In essence, woundedness in the urban space becomes a locus of divine revelation, where the *missio Dei* unfolds in the margins rather than centres of power.

Embodied solidarity

Sharing of material resources should constitute part of the ubuntu or koinonia culture of the church agency, following in the footsteps of the Good Samaritan and the early Christian church in Acts 2:40–47. As part of their agency, churches should lead the campaign to establish their own shelters, clinics, counselling, and rehabilitation centres to facilitate sustainable care for the wounded and vulnerable, including the homeless. This should constitute part of the church's reimagination of an embodied solidarity as dwelling-making. The Good Samaritan becomes a model of counter-spatial and human solidarity in search of a theology of a home, where everyone is human [*umuntu*], by not only interrupting systemic violence but also restoring the dignity of the wounded by creating a temporary home in the hotel as a space of belonging – relationally, socially, and spatially.

Standing where God stands in mediating justice for all city dwellers

The church's agency must be at the forefront of seeking spatial, social, and economic justice for those in the margins. Therefore, questions of access to the city, land, and the right to property ownership are missional, including access to the city and its renewal (ecological justice) (De Villiers 2014:206, 208; Hamann & Horn 2015: 39). Church agency should extend beyond advocacy to include initiatives, such as economic empowerment, leading to sustainable livelihoods and prosperous living in the city.

Ubuntu-centred discipleship

This vision encapsulates an inclusive dispensation that extends beyond the racial and class binaries that we have created for ourselves as human beings. The tribal and religious binaries that generated intense animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans to a level of denying any ecumenical partnership must be dismantled, as did the Good Samaritan. A missional-decolonial praxis of the church in the service of the *missio Dei* requires the intentional crossing of frontiers, accompanied by ubuntu's communitarian ontology in efforts to treat the wounds of those who are hurting and left to die in city spaces such as Tshwane.

Conclusion

This article contends that inequality, woundedness, and homelessness are not incidental social conditions but constructed realities of a city shaped by coloniality, marginalisation, and structural violence. In reading Luke 10:25–37 through a decolonial missional lens, the wounded body on the road to Jericho becomes a representation of the homeless and marginalised in the City of Tshwane who are rendered vulnerable by systemic injustice and religious indifference. However, the disruptive praxis of the Good Samaritan calls for a missional ecclesial imagination that recentres ubuntu in the efforts to reimagine a theology of a home where everyone is a human being. This defines a church's participation in the *missio Dei,* where the violated *imago Dei* is not only restored but also actively participates in creating a home where the wounded are healed and given space for belonging in the urban landscape.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

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

CRediT authorship contribution

Thinandavha D. Mashau: Conceptualisation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. Moses S. Maponya: Conceptualisation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. Both authors reviewed the article, contributed to the discussion of results, approved the final version for submission and publication, and take responsibility for the integrity of its findings.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the University of South Africa College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee (No. 2018_CHE_CE_01).

Funding information

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

Data availability

The authors declare that all data that support this research article and findings are available in the article and its references.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and are the product of professional research. They do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder, agency, or that of the publisher. The authors are responsible for this article's results, findings, and content.

References

Anofuechi, B.O. & Klaasen, J.S., 2024, 'A critical analysis of ubuntu as the nexus of identity development in present-day Africa', *HTS Theological Studies* 80(1), 7. https://doi.org/10.4102/HTS.v80i1.8507

Bedoya Bonilla, D.F., 2022, 'God, an event of proximity, narrated in Luke 10:25–37', *Collectanea Theologica* 92(4), 5–37. https://doi.org/10.21697/ct.2022.92.4.01

Bosch, D., 1991, *Transforming mission: Paradigm shift in theology of mission*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, NY.

Cameron, J.W.M. & Krynauw, M.N., 2001, *City of Tshwane: Development challenges*, SATC, Pretoria.

Chabbi-Chemrouk, N. & Driouèche, N., 2011, 'Urban solidarity, a key issue to sustainable human settlements', *Procedia Engineering* 21, 707–710. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.proeng.2011.11.2068

Clarke, N. & Lourens, F., 2015, 'Urban planning in Tshwane: Addressing the legacy of the past', in N.J. Clarke & M.C. Kuipers (eds.), *Re-centring Tshwane: Urban heritage strategies for a resilient capital*, pp. 39–51, Visual Books, Pretoria.

De Beer, S.F., 2015a, 'Reading Psalms, and other urban poems, in a fractured city', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v36i1.1472

De Beer, S.F., 2015b, 'Ubuntu is homeless: An urban theological reflection', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36(2), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v36i2.1471

De Villiers, I., 2014, 'Tshwane 2055 and the (im)possibility of spatial justice', *De Jure* 47(2), 202–217.

Falcetta, A., 2025, 'Becoming a neighbour: A process-relational reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan', *Journal of Theological Studies* 76(2), 405–419. https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/flaf061

Gardiner, J., 2023, 'A theological reflection on the parable of Samaritan Luke 10: 25–37', *Journal of Contemporary Ministry* 8, 29–44.

Goheen, M.W., 2008, 'Continuing steps towards a missional hermeneutic', *Fideles: A Journal of Redeemer Pacific College* 3, 49–99.

Hamann, C. & Horn, A.C., 2015, 'Continuity or discontinuity? Evaluating the changing socio-spatial structure of the city of Tshwane, South Africa', *Urban Forum* 26(1), 39–57. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12132-014-9231-7

Hughes, R.K., 1998, *Luke: That you may know the truth*, vol. 1, Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL.

Jemali, M., 2025, 'Moving beyond boundaries: A sociological-theological reflection on the parable of the Good Samaritan', in *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Education, Humanities, Health and Agriculture (ICEHHA 2024)*, Ruteng, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, December 13–14, 2024.

Jentile, T., 2020, 'ICawa ivaliwe: The church during the pandemic', *Pharos Journal of Theology* 101(1), 1–15.

Kobo, A.F., 2018, 'Black women's bodies as reformers from the dungeons: The reformation and womanism', *HTS Theological Studies* 74(3), a5015. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i3.5015

Kritzinger, J.J., 2000, 'Mission in the new South Africa. Need for a renewed enquiry', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 21(1), 93–114. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v21i1.1185

Kritzinger, J.N.J., 2025, 'Mission in vulnerability', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 81(1), 10679. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v81i1.10679

LenkaBula, P., 2008, 'Beyond anthropocentricity-Botho/Ubuntu and the quest for economic and ecological justice in Africa', *Religion and Theology* 15(3–4), 375–394. https://doi.org/10.1163/157430108X376591

Maponya, M.S., 2018, 'Called to worship, sent to witness: A missional perspective on the reformed theology in South Africa today', *HTS Theological Studies* 74(3), 1–7. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i3.5003

Mashau, T.D., 2014, 'Reimagining mission in the public square: Engaging hills and valleys in the African City of Tshwane', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 70(3), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i3.2774

Mashau, T.D., 2017, 'Unshackling the chains of homelessness in the City of Tshwane: A critical appraisal of the current policy in the light of national and local policies and strategies', *Development Southern Africa* 34(4), 414–427. https://doi.org/10.1080/0376835X.2017.1310025

Mashau, T.D., 2020, 'Pushing the naked envelop further – A missiological deconstruction of the empire and Christianity in Africa', *Missionalia* 48(1), 41–57. https://doi.org/10.7832/48-1-384

Mashau, T.D., 2024, 'Reorientation of mission and its action plans for a reformed missional ecclesiology in Africa', *In die Skriflig* 58(1), 9. https://doi.org/10.4102/IDS.v58i1.3129

Mashau, T.D. & Mangoedi, L., 2015, 'Faith communities, social exclusion, homelessness, and disability: Transforming the margins in the City of Tshwane', *HTS Theological Studies* 71(3), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i3.3088

Mashau, T.D. & Mangoedi, L., 2021, 'From a pit to a palace: Deconstructing the economics and politics of labour migration in the City of Tshwane through the lenses of Genesis 41:41–57', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 77(4), a6289. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i4.6289

Milne, D.J.W., 2005, *Let's study Luke*, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh.

Modise, L.J., 2024, 'An evaluation of the South African Democracy on its 30th anniversary: A distribution of power and wealth perspective', *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 10(1), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.17570/stj.2024.v10n1.22

Ngcobo, T.E., 2014, 'Homelessness and human dignity in the City of Tshwane: An encounter with personhood', *Missionalia* 42(1–2), 120–133. https://doi.org/10.7832/42-1-2-51

Niemandt, C.J.P., 2012, 'Trends in missional ecclesiology', *HTS Theological Studies* 68(1), 9. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v68i1.1198

Oyewole, O.J., 2022, 'The Good Samaritan's parable in Luke 10:30–37 and its relativity to the characterisation of the Yorùbá Episteme of Ọmọlúàbí', Doctoral dissertation, University of Ibadan.

Pandiangan, L., Purba, B.P. & Marmidi, F.X., 2023, 'Fellow human beings in Luke 10:25–37 and humana communitas: A picture of true brotherhood in the time of pandemic', in *International conference of Omnibus Omnia*, Medan, February 13, vol. 1, pp. 72–79.

Ribbens, M. & De Beer, S.F., 2017, 'Churches claiming a right to the city? Lived urbanisms in the City of Tshwane', *HTS Theological Studies* 73(3), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4690

Saayman, W., 2010, 'Missionary or missional? A study in terminology', *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 38(1), 5–16.

Saleh Jnr, J. & Hombana, M., 2025, 'The parable of the merciful neighbour: A dialogic reading of Luke 10:25–37', *HTS Theological Studies* 81(2), 8. https://doi.org/10.4102/HTS.v81i2.10688

Van Gelder, C., 2005, 'Rethinking denominations and denominationalism in light of a missional ecclesiology', *Word & World* 25(1), 23–33.

West, G.O., 1993, *Contextual Bible Study*, Cluster Publications, Pietermaritzburg.

Wright, C.J., 2006, *The mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's grand narrative*, InterVarsity Press, Nottingham.