



# A Study on the Role of the Church in Violence in Zimbabwe

July 2012



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# SUMMARY

The church's work on violence cannot be divorced from its work on peace and justice. For decades, the church in Zimbabwe has been engaging both the colonial and the post-colonial state in an attempt to avert violence that has claimed many lives, destroyed valuable property, fuelled hatred and divisions within the nation. Church action and initiatives have to a large extent demonstrated that the mission of the church is not merely to preach the gospel, but to stand with ordinary people in their hour of need.

As an institution entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, the church has promoted a lot of conflict resolution and peace building work at community level. At national level, the church and its sister organizations have promoted the use of dialogue as a means of transformation and settling differences between political parties, especially of late between ZANU-PF and MDC. However, given the political polarisation, complexity and dynamism of the Zimbabwean political developments especially in the past 10 years, the church greatest challenge now is to maintain its unity and remain an honest neutral peace broker. Some sections of the church (both clergy and laity) have been grossly compromised and have ended up speaking on behalf of some political parties. In the process they have either wittingly or unwittingly supported violence which they are suppose to condemn.

Generally, the church in Zimbabwe has made commendable gains towards the promotion of a non-violent political culture, against a background where violence has been glorified as a credible and heroic means to settle political differences. The church in Zimbabwe shares many similarities with the churches in Kenya, Uganda and Malawi in terms of its contribution to nation building, especially reconciliation, national healing and violence prevention. However, the church in these four countries tends to differ in what weakens it. In the other three countries, the church is weakened by issues of regionalism, patronage and ethnicity, but in Zimbabwe the church is weakened by polarization-the difference between those for regime change and those for the status quo. Quite a sizeable number-if not the majority of Zimbabwe's church leaders –clergy and laity have chosen to give more allegiance to their being either ZANU PF or MDC members before their church roles. Besides this, church unity among the clergy especially at national level is not easy to come by as the infiltration of the church by state agents has made the situation worse. On the other hand church –civil society collaboration and complementarity has been handicapped by differences in strategy, suspicion and mistrust.

The church needs to be apolitical, non-partisan and re-strategize so that it gives the violence –challenged Zimbabwe another ray of peace. What the church needs most are not strong men and women, but strong institutions that speak to politicians and political violence without fear or favour. Zimbabwe needs men and women of the cloth who are neither greedy nor in search of political favours but are well able to pay the price of speaking prophetically to the current political leadership on matters of violence.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

AIPPA	Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
EFZ	Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
FTLRP	Fast Track Land Reform Programme
HRC	Human Rights Commission
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NCA	National Constitutional Assembly
NCKK	National Council of Churches in Kenya
NGO	Non Governmental Organizations
NVDD	National Vision Discussion Document
ORO	Operation Restore Order (also known as Murambatsvina)
POSA	Public Order and Security Act
SCMZ	Student Christian Movement of Zimbabwe
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
WCC	World Council of Churches
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front)
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZCA	Zimbabwe Christian Alliance
ZCBC	Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference
ZCC	Zimbabwe Council of Churches
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZHRNGOF	Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum
ZNPC	Zimbabwe National Pastors' Conference

# CHAPTER 1:

## INTRODUCTION

In Africa in particular, churches apart from their role in service provision have played a key role in speaking out against violence, abuses of human rights, social injustice and poverty. However, the relationship of the church and violence remains a subject of controversy because some of the church's core teachings advocate peace, love and compassion while other teachings have been used to justify the use of violence. Throughout history-using Christian theology derived from both the old and new testaments- the church has struggled with the question of when the use of force or violence against heretics, sinners and external enemies is justified.

“Faith inspires violence in at least two ways. First, people often kill other human beings because they believe that the creator of the universe wants them to do it... Second, far greater numbers of people fall into conflict with one another because they define their moral community on the basis of their religious affiliation...”<sup>1</sup>

Christian theologians point to a strong doctrinal and historical imperative within Christianity against violence, particularly Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, which taught non-violence and “love of enemies”. It is against this backdrop that the church is thought to be opposed to violence and a force for peace and reconciliation even though the history and scriptures of the world's religions (including Christianity) tell stories of violence and war as they speak of peace and love.

In both colonial and independent Zimbabwe, the churches have sought to avert violence and promote peace using various mechanisms of engaging with both the perpetrators and victims of violence. The three major church groupings of the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) and the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC)<sup>2</sup>, as well as their partner organizations have denounced violence against a background of state leadership and media that have always felt that the clergy are playing a dangerous game that they should not indulge in. Church action and initiatives have to a large extent demonstrated the church's courage to confront government on violence matters as well as confirmed that the mission of the church is not merely to preach the gospel, but to stand with ordinary people in their hour of need.

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1 Collins John J (2004) *Does the Bible Justify Violence?* Minneapolis: Fortress.

2 EFZ represents denominations, churches, Para-church movements and individual Christians of the Evangelical persuasion, ZCC represents the historic Protestant churches, UDACIZ and all the African Churches of the apostolic (Vapostori) sects and ZCBC represents the Catholics.

The existence of different forms of violence does however include some members of the church<sup>3</sup>. The mass media is full of stories that illustrate the penetration of violence into the heart of family and social relationships. The violent activities of various groups such as the Mbare-based Chipangano militant group backing Zanu (PF) in Harare and the presence of war-veteran leader Jabulani Sibanda in some provinces such as Masvingo in 2011 and the party violence that rocked the MDC during its 2011 Congress in Bulawayo, all include church members. In areas such as Mashonaland West and Mashonaland Central, the presence of political “bases” which were later dismantled accounted for the presence of violence as they served as places of torture and violence where gross acts of human rights violations were perpetrated. People have been assaulted for reading newspapers that has been regarded to carry a regime-change agenda. Politically-motivated violence continues to rear its ugly head with alarming regularity, despite the fact that Zimbabwe is a signatory to the AU Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and the SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections<sup>4</sup>. The country still needs media, constitutional, electoral and legislative reforms to be free of violence.

Given that the majority of Zimbabweans, almost 80% are church members<sup>5</sup>, it must be hastily mentioned without any shadow of doubt that certain sections or personalities of the church have either wittingly or unwittingly supported violence. Some of these church members are either imminent political leaders or ordinary members who have for one reason or the other given a higher value to their party affiliations than their Christian values of love and peace. The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) noted in its various election monitoring reports that increased polarisation, hate language, simmering violence have always characterized Zimbabwean polls. The language of politics itself has been seriously debased by the deployment of a range of discourses around coercion, exclusion and retaliation<sup>6</sup>. The state therefore becomes challenged for the failure of national reconciliation and violence.

The church blueprint, the ‘Zimbabwe we want’ document makes reference to the 1980 national reconciliation announcement as an unfulfilled promise that remains necessary for national transformation and ending violence. Sachikonye (2011, p40) argues that informal immunity in form of the reconciliation policy of 1980 that has been enjoyed since independence is to blame for the continued political violence in Zimbabwe. He further argues that the policy of reconciliation did not

3 Focus group discussions in Mbare revealed that St Peter's Catholic Church being pastored by Fr. Wertmer mirrors Zimbabwe's highly polarized community with strong members of Chipangano, ZANU-PF, MDC and the non-Partisan. These groups do not only clash outside the church but sometimes bring their differences and antagonism into the church.

4 These emphasize political tolerance, non-violence, freedom of association, freedom of expression, proportionate media access by all political parties etc. which are all anti-violence.

5 Munetsi Ruzivo, (2008) “A Mapping of the Church Groups in Zimbabwe”, *The Role of the Church in the Struggle for Democratic Change in Zimbabwe*, 4-14.

6 Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, *Their words condemn them: The language of violence, intolerance and despotism in Zimbabwe*. May 2007.

prevent *Gukurahundi*<sup>7</sup>, nor has it prevented the re-emergence of hate speech, racism and violence today. Instead, it encouraged the use of violence as a problem solving device, with the perpetrators knowing full well that they are untouchable. The police and the army and intelligence agencies consciously turned a blind eye when violence has been used against opposition parties and civil society organizations.

The most common contributions of the church in independent Zimbabwe to ending violence include the CCJP & LRF report on 'Breaking the silence on the disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands', 'The Zimbabwe We Want: Towards a National Vision discussion document'; opposition to Murambatsvina and the NGO bill, Pastoral letters on National reconciliation and healing -(the most famous being the 2005-*A Call to Conscience*<sup>8</sup>, 2007-God Hears the Cry of the Oppressed & the 2009-God can heal the wounds of the Afflicted), HOCD press statements, the Troika Bishops Dialogue with political parties, meetings with President Mugabe, meetings with the GNU principals among many others. Church leaders also played another critical role in helping to internationalise the Zimbabwean crisis given the church's global links. All these efforts were meant to encourage politicians and their followers to shun divisive attitudes and to promote a shared national agenda. Pius Wakatama and Prof. Makumbe argue that it must be recorded in history that apart from all the good mediation that the church leaders have done, they are heavily compromised and they have deliberately avoided doing anything that attracts incarceration and pain for standing against violence, especially that which is state-sponsored. It seems they are ready to be persecuted for evangelism and not nation building.

Chitando (2010) recognizes that beyond the efforts made by the major church groupings certain church figures/ individuals have stood against the government and openly denounced state violence and terror on its own citizenry. Bishop Levee Kadenge and Sifiso Mpofu of the Christian Alliance, Bishop Anselm Magaya of the Zimbabwe National Pastors' Conference and Archbishop Pius Ncube of the ZCBC have been the church's top fearless champions in denouncing violence and government's shortcomings in servicing its citizens. These individuals and their organisations endured a lot of harassment and persecution in their quest to end violence.

Despite the church's efforts to mediate for peace, violence has sadly become an accepted culture affecting present day Zimbabwean politics, particularly when the country is facing an election.

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7 A Shona term for the after harvest rains that wash away the chaff. Here it refers to a military operation executed by the Zimbabwe national army's North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade between 1982 and 1987 and was responsible for the death and disappearance of an estimated 20 000 innocent people in Matabeleland and Midlands. In this context, the Ndebele are regarded as ethnic chaff that needs to be washed away. Literally it refers to ethnic cleansing.

8 ZCBC, ZCC, EFZ and HCD. *A Call to Conscience: Zimbabwe's Silver Jubilee 1980-2005*. Harare: April 2005.

## 1.2. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The church can simply be defined as the people of God<sup>9</sup>. The word ‘Church’ normally designates a local congregation of Christians who have trusted, by faith, in the true Lordship of Jesus Christ in their lives. The visible church contains both believers and non-believers; the invisible Church is the actual body of believers. Its mission is to reconcile people with God and with their fellow men<sup>10</sup>. The church in this study appears in three dimensions-one as an institution represented by its networks/ denominations, second as represented by its leaders/ luminaries and thirdly as represented by its congregants/members. Theology teaches that Christians are not of this world but they are in the world and have to confront that world, head on, whatever the consequences.

**“The Study of church and violence in Zimbabwe is incomplete if it does not speak of how the violence has been institutionalized, that it is now being run by state institutions. Surprisingly, the majority of church leaders are petrified to say this. They fear spending just a couple of hours in a police cell for standing for justice and against violence” - Interview with Prof. J. Makumbe.**

It is important to note that the church is complex and not homogenous. It is a very diverse institution, encompassing both the holiest Christian and the worst sinner. The Church is composed of people who support different political parties which are wrong in some things and right in others. By studying its three dimensions (institutional, luminary and ordinary membership), this study hopes to paint a picture of what the church is and how it has handled violence. The church as a human institution is made up of those who are in it for what they get out of it and those who are sincere to adhere to its values and principles. As such it does not come as a surprise that the polarization in the country has greatly affected the church. Some members of the church shun violence while others fuel it. Given its diverse nature the church is enriched with persons from all walks of life, professions, political affiliations and classes. The composition, nature and membership of the church was best described by its Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, when he said that it’s like a field that the master

<sup>9</sup> John F. Thornton and Susan. B. (eds-undated) *The Essentials of Pope Benedict XVI, Pope: Central Writings and Speeches*, Harper Collins-eBooks pg 130.

<sup>10</sup> Hans Kung (2008) *A critical study of his Ecclesiology*, Macmillan, Palgrave, New York.

deliberately allowed the crops to grow together with thorns and thistles till harvest time-which implies mingling both the good and bad until the end of times.

A number of congregants contacted during this study on violence agreed that it would be wrong and disastrous for the Church as an institution to say we support this or that political party. However, it is the prophetic duty of the Church to loudly denounce violence, injustice and oppression wherever and whenever they occur. The three Church umbrella networks of EFZ, ZCC and ZCBC jointly and separately have developed secretariats that include various spiritual, social, relief and governance Commissions. They advocate for peace and justice using the following platforms: for the ZCBC it's the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace Zimbabwe (CCJPZ), EFZ through its Peace and Justice Commission (PJC), and ZCC through a Commission called Church in Society (CIS). For collaboration and giving a unified position ZCC, ZCBC and EFZ grouped in 2003 to form a loose ecumenical alliance under the banner of the Heads of Christian Denominations (HOCD). Prior to the formation of the HOCD, the three separate bodies have spoken to national issues which include voicing against the Rhodesian torture, resettlements and violent evictions. In post-independent Zimbabwe, the church addressed the violent issues of the Gukurahundi atrocities that occurred between 1983 and 1988.

The first major visible joint acts of the HOCD were the fight against the introduction of the NGO Bill in 2004, the call on government to stop Murambatsvina<sup>11</sup> and the assistance of thousands of displaced people because of the state-sponsored violent operation Murambatsvina. The NGO Bill was meant to circumscribe the powers and participation of the NGOs and the Church in political issues and ensure that they would not delve into politics. As a counter to the legislation, a signed petition denouncing the NGO Bill, by the Bishops of ZCC, ZCBC and EFZ, was sent to President R.G. Mugabe<sup>12</sup>. Since then, the HOCD has produced quite a number of joint pastoral letters, statements and documents calling for non-violence, justice and peace. These include the famous pastoral letters, 2005-*A Call to Conscience*<sup>13</sup>, 2007-*God Hears the Cry of the Oppressed* and *the 2006 Zimbabwe we want do document*. In February 2012, the leaders, under HOCD, prepared a report entitled "The role of the church in nation building in Zimbabwe" which identifies media, security and electoral reforms as a must if the country is to hold a credible violence-free poll. They have since lobbied SADC leaders to ensure that this are implemented before the next elections.

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11 An 'urban clearance' clean up operation also called Operation Restore Order that displaced thousands of people from their places of dwelling in Zimbabwe's cities. This 'urban clearance' represented according to one analyst (Deborah Potts, 2006), came as state violence to its people, the desire to punish the urban electorate for its support for the opposition as well as a desire to decrease the presence of the poorest urban people, by driving them out of the towns, because of an incapacity to provide sufficient and affordable food and fuel for them.

12 HOCD: Concerns of the Church on the NGO Bill. 20 December 2004.

13 ZCBC, ZCC, EFZ and HCD. *A Call to Conscience: Zimbabwe's Silver Jubilee 1980-2005*. Harare: April 2005.

All forms of violence are said to relate to power. Thus violence can be defined as ‘the commission of destructive, cruel, pitiless, unsympathetic and forceful acts motivated by a desire, conscious or unconscious, to obtain or maintain power’<sup>14</sup> Defining violence is typically contingent on a typology that separates the politically motivated from economically and socially motivated forms of violence. In this sense, political violence takes place in the collective sphere where acts of violence are typically committed by a multitude of individuals from one group against individuals from another group, primarily because the targeted individual happens to belong to this group. Political violence typically takes the form of murder, assaults, sexual abuse such as rape, forced pregnancy or sterilisation. Economic violence, on the other hand, is characterised by an individual (or a multitude of individuals) illegally pursuing financial enrichment by means of violence (or threats of violence), and typically manifests as street crimes such as robbery, drug related crimes or kidnapping. Social violence is said to pursue the empowerment of one individual over another, for example through domestic violence<sup>15</sup>. This study will speak more to the issues of political violence in Zimbabwe in relation to the church. It is worth keeping in mind that political violence refers to both non-state actors’ use of violent means to further a political agenda and the state’s exercise of force, both against its own citizens and against other states and their citizens.

As Kaulem (2011) noted, violence is not something that one wishes to experience. When most people find themselves using violence they are at pains to explain and justify their actions because such use of violence is in need of moral justification. It is always *prima facie* wrong to use violence. Liberation movements referred to the intransigence of colonial governments as justification for their resorting to violent struggles for freedom. NATO and the Libyan movements claimed to defend the people of Libya in their violent attack and overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi’s government. Post-colonial black governments (mostly victims become killers<sup>16</sup>) justify their own violence in terms of their need to defend the gains of independence, sovereignty and fight neo-imperialism. Anyone seen as opposing the regime becomes a non-citizen, an enemy subject to violent attack and beyond any protection by the state. Any violent project is defended in moral terms yet its consequences are wicked and dire<sup>17</sup>. African leaders have a challenge not to defend but to kill the culture of violence and avoid allowing themselves to become like the system they opposed yesterday.

14 Aolin.F.N. (2006) Political violence and gender during times of transition, *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 15(3), 829–849.

15 Moser and Clark (1973) ‘Victims, perpetrators, or actors?’ In D A Hibbs Jr, *Mass political violence: a cross-national causal analysis*, New York: John Wiley and Sons, p36.

16 Mamdani.M (2001) *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism and the Genocide in Rwanda*, Kampala, Fountain Publishers.

17 Amanda.H; Raftopoulos and Jensen (2003) ‘Zimbabwe’s unfinished business: Rethinking land, state and nation’ in the context of crisis, Harare, Weaver Press p28.



### **1.3 THEORIES OF VIOLENCE**

Most conventional explanations of violence remain partial and incomplete as they separately emphasize different yet related phenomena of violence, without ever trying to provide for a comprehensive explanation or framework. Some theories maintain that humans are naturally inclined to act violently, requiring little in the way of stimulation or motivation, and that violence is, ultimately, the product of a failure of constraint or control. On the contrary other theories maintain that humans are naturally inclined to conform to the rules of custom and order, requiring much in the way of stimulation or motivation, and that violence is, ultimately, the product of unusual or “deviant” impulses. In fact, most of these one-dimensional explanations of violence underscore the behavioural expressions of persons to the relative exclusion of the institutional and structural expressions (Barak 2003).

Social theories of violence can be grouped into several categories; only a few of these categories will be reviewed in this study. The common categories are the Functional Analysis, Social Constructionism and Systems theory. Functional Analysis considers violence to be a necessity that comes into play when the various mechanisms of society do not address social needs. Functional Analysis begins from the premise that families, communities, and nations often evolve in ways that benefit some of their members and work to the disadvantage of others. Likewise, societies have created a variety of mechanisms including elections, courts, and mediation with the intent of facilitating change and eliminating injustice. But such mechanisms have their limitations. Violence is in this perspective explained as the only alternative for individuals and groups who do not see a nonviolent way to break out of a position of disadvantage and limitation. Linsky, Bachman, and Straus (1995) argue that when stress management fails, either through decreasing effectiveness of familiar approaches or through increases in stress beyond the group’s capacity, it seems that violence is among the likely outcomes. Lacking the support of concerned others, disputants may use violence in an attempt to achieve resolution.

Constructionist theories of violence focus on discourse themes—shared meanings—that either justify violent acts or else redefine violence so that it is acceptable behaviour. Violence is strongly associated with gender; males not only commit more violent acts, they also are the primary consumers of entertainment with violent themes (Kruttschnitt, 1994). Young men’s stories revolve around potential if not actual violence, and violent episodes are a necessity if one is to really validate one’s masculinity. Violent means to success are portrayed as highly effective and have the additional advantage that violent acts bring social recognition. Violence also seems to be more common among groups who are excluded from the mainstream where



success and opportunity are described in other terms (Reiss & Roth, 1993). Systems theories predict the nature of interactions among the individuals, families, or groups that make up the system that is being studied. A complete systems analysis of violence (see Straus, 1973, for a partial example) would locate sources of violence (a) in the individuals; (b) in dyadic interactions as varied as infant/caregiver and teacher/student; and (c) in family subsystems, neighbourhoods, communities, ethnic and religious groups, and the larger society. Subsystem contributions would be seen as organized in ways that both encouraged violent acts and imposed limits on violence.

From the three perspectives, it seems Functional Analysis explains better the Zimbabwean violent culture given that violence has been used as a means to get out of colonial disadvantages and limitations and similarly in post independent Zimbabwe it is used for certain advantages for those who cannot be sustained by following the proper legal, democratic and legitimate political, economic and social systems. For instance, the use of 'jambanja' (violence) in Zimbabwe's land reform and other redistributive policies is a departure from what the global village would expect a nation to use in addressing its historical inequalities and imbalances.

## **1.4. CCSF AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The Church and Civil Society Forum (CCSF) is a coalition of church and civil society organizations which was formed to facilitate national reconciliation and healing in a coordinated and harmonized manner. CCSF in collaboration with other stakeholders would like to carry out lobby and advocacy work aimed at influencing the violence prevention and national healing framework in Zimbabwe. The CCSF work involves commissioning research to gain an in-depth understanding of and generate information on the church's role in conflict prevention, peace building and national healing in Zimbabwe. This research report will be the basis for multi stakeholder dialogue and for both state and non-state actors to develop strategies for strengthening their capacity to positively engage with the church as a strategic partner in violence prevention, national healing and peace building.

The key objective of this research is to investigate the role of the church in violence in Zimbabwe and to generate information on possible strategic partnerships and linkages between the church, civil society, government and other key stakeholders to promote a peaceful coexistence. Specific Objectives are:

- To generate information on the current and potential future role of the church in sectoral and political violence and how the church should respond to violence in conflict situations.

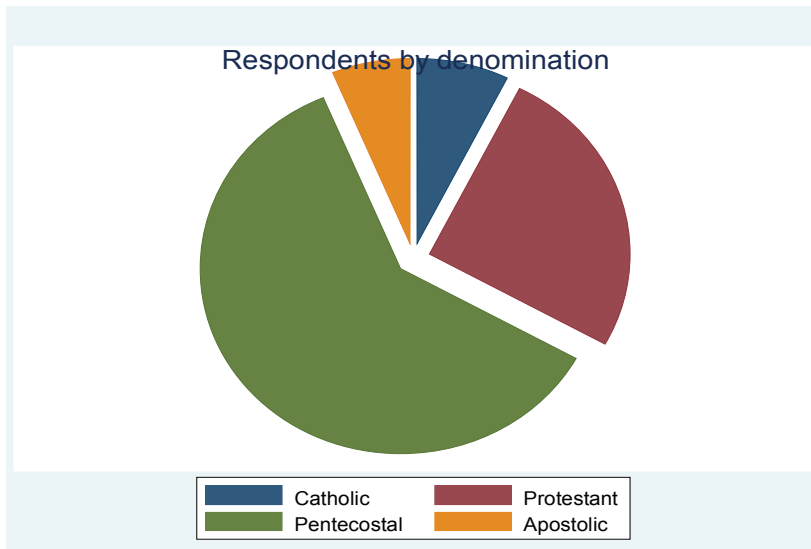
- To gather information that will assist churches better understand the nature and character of violence in Zimbabwe
- To offer strategic recommendations on how to improve collaboration between the church civil society, government and other stakeholders including the government in responding to violence more constructively

## **1.5. METHODOLOGY**

The study employed a participatory approach with special emphasis on respecting research participants' views and building on their knowledge and experience. The researchers examined the work related to peace building of individual and key informants within the church, government departments and civil society. The following research methods and approach were used:

- a) Review of relevant literature
- b) Key informant interviews with sampled church leaders and key secretariats persons from the Heads of Denominations (HOD), the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), Christian Alliance and the Catholic Commission on Justice and Peace (CCJP).
- c) Interviews were also held with representatives of government structures established to facilitated peace and reconciliation in the country. This included the organ on National Healing and Reconciliation, the Joint Monitoring Committee on Zimbabwe's Government of National Unity (JOMIC)
- d) Interviews were also held with civil society representatives that work in the area of peace, national reconciliation and healing.
- e) The researchers also conducted 11 focus group discussions in Epworth, Chitungwiza, Mbare, Buhera, Zvimba, Bindura, Murehwa, Nkayi, Bulawayo, Masvingo rural and Gutu Mupandawana.
- f) A snapshot survey of 203 church members mostly in areas where focus groups were held was carried out by the research team and presented under tables in various sections. This was done through a self- administered questionnaire given to the respondents. The distribution of the respondents are shown in the pie chart below showing that the majority of the respondents were Evangelicals/ Pentecostals, followed by Protestants, then Catholics, then those from the apostolic sects (vapostori).

CHART 1: RESPONDENTS INTERVIEWED BY DENOMINATION TYPE



Quotes which represent the opinions collected during interviews and from relevant literature are included to support many of the points made in the report in small boxes adjacent to the text. For literature reviewed, interviews & FDGs see references section.

The time and budget allocated for this study limited the breadth and depth with which it could be tackled. A list of those interviewed, literature reviewed and focus group areas visited can be accessed in the appendix section of this report.

## 1.6. STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The report has five chapters. Chapter one dwells on the introduction and background of the study and defining key terms and methodology. Chapter 2 covers the subject of the church and violence, focusing on the expected role of the church, church activities related to combating violence, politics and church relations, the significance of the Anglican Church saga and a comparative analysis of the church in Zimbabwe and other countries. Chapter three traces church relations with other key stakeholders and the initiatives taken by the church. This includes the production of the National Vision Discussion Document, the work of the troika bishops, the Pastors' National Prayer Network, the Save Zimbabwe Campaign, Christian Alliance and the notion of the prophetic voice in the nation. Chapter four takes an evaluation of the church activities and efforts bent on preventing violence. It also draws lessons learnt, challenges met and the successes of the church. Chapter five is the conclusion and recommendations.

## KEY FINDINGS

## CHAPTER TWO:

# THE CHURCH VIS-A-VIS THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF VIOLENCE.

The church as an institution is concerned with the total well being of the people, their salvation and peace. The church (whichever one) wants control over not only the lives, but also the actual minds of its followers. Its role is flexible: when people are traumatized the church becomes healing, reconciliation, peace, justice and so forth. In Zimbabwe, the church's greatest challenge is living out of violence, not being an accomplice of violence but plugging the conduits that fuel violence. In some instances, it is a question of having the 'good men' does something to prevent violence, because when 'good men' do nothing evil prevails.

### 2.1. THE GLOBAL CHURCH IS NO STRANGER TO VIOLENCE

The history and narratives collected from the church leaders and communities worldwide, tell stories of violence and hatred as they speak of peace and love. The painful truth to be accepted and dealt with head on is that the church as well as its values and institutions thereof, is no guarantee for peaceful existence, love and of doing good. Some of the church teachings and practices bred violence and must be stopped.

History has shown that the church as a global institution in many instances has used violence to defend its teachings

Martin Luther King Jnr as an advocate for non-violence dismissed violence no matter the reason behind it; "It is my hope that as the Negro plunges deeper into the quest for freedom and justice he will plunge even deeper into the philosophy of non-violence.... 'We will match your capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure suffering'." (<http://quotes.dictionary.com/search/Martin%20Luther%20King%20on%20Violence%20#aDuZCarhrVPESF1B.99> retrieved 24th June 2012)

and values. During the 14th and 15th centuries, witch-burning was, in fact, a phenomenon fuelled by the culture of Christianity itself. While the church ultimately assisted in trying and burning people alive, it was often ordinary, country folk who took to the burnings most enthusiastically<sup>18</sup>. Beginning at least with Constantine's conversion, the followers of the Crucified have perpetrated gruesome acts of violence under the sign of the cross. The Dutch Reformed Church was pretty much the official church of the apartheid regime. Not only did it spread the word about the governing principles of apartheid, but it also endorsed the whole programme as God's will. Sunday after Sunday, the faithful Afrikaner flock would listen to preachers telling them they were a superior race<sup>19</sup>. The horrific recent sexual molestation scandals inside organised churches are just one symptom of this. In recent years the world has seen how Protestants and Catholic Church members crashed in sectarian violence in Belfast in Northern Ireland climbing church durawalls and local homes attacking each other with petrol bombs, stones, bricks and paint bombs<sup>20</sup>. Needless to mention, that in Zimbabwe, many are quite familiar with the politics of stone-throwing that has characterized the Anglicans rift.

The violence, murder and the more than 800 000 onslaughts of human lives that characterized the Rwandan genocides of 1994 were master-minded and fuelled by some members of the church clergy. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda found some Catholic priests like Father Athanase Seromba and Father Wenceslas Munyeshyaka guilty of being ring-leaders<sup>21</sup>. On the other hand, church members like Colonel Theoneste Bagosora, rose from being a church choir boy to a colonel and only to mastermind the 1994 genocide<sup>22</sup>. Apart from using peaceful means to achieve independence, a number of African countries had to resort to the use of violence. It is violence through sporadic guerrilla sabotage acts or a prolonged armed struggle which forced the colonial settler to the negotiating table. Some church leaders, like Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole and Rev Canaan Banana were part and parcel of such liberation movements.

This section of the study report does not serve to condone violence but to underscore the fact that despite its central tenets of love and peace, the church—like most religions—has always had a violent side. Organised religion's role in and responsibility for hate crimes ensues as a direct result of its dogmatic teachings according to which homosexuality is an abomination. No one can deny that, with very few exceptions, church condemns homosexuality. When one condemns a practice as wrong, the logical implication is that the practice stands in need of punishment and correction.

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18 <http://www.thoughtleader.co.za/burningpaper/2008/04/03/christianity-owes-us> retrieved 8th June 2012

19 <http://www.thoughtleader.co.za/burningpaper/2008/04/03/christianity-owes-us> retrieved 8th June 2012

20 <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-06-24-belfast-stunned-by-violence> retrieved 12th June 2012

21 <http://www.thoughtleader.co.za/burningpaper/2008/04/03/christianity-owes-us> retrieved 8th June 2012

22 Ref/: <http://mg.co.za/article/2008-12-18-from-choir-boy-to-rwanda-genocide-mastermind> retrieved 16th June 2012

And the truth is that (having been told by their church that homosexuality is sinful and abominable) some people take the punishment and correction into their own hands, justifying their actions on the basis that they were acting as God's committed soldiers. Against the background of the atrocious violence that has, in the modern age, been perpetrated in the name of religion all over the world, it is simply naive to assert that religion consistently teaches peace and tranquillity. When the church marches against gays or homosexuality- does not that lead to violence- intolerant and homophobic & corrective rape??

## 2.2. VIOLENCE IN ZIMBABWE

In Zimbabwe, violence was essential in gaining political independence, but has also being a divisive force since then. The use of violence to subdue political opponents is not only found in presidential, parliamentary and local government elections, but in both ZANU (PF) and MDC primary elections, meetings and even congresses that have to do with leadership selection. Clear evidence

There are those who now believe that the power which establishes a state is violence; the power which maintains it is violence; the power which eventually overthrows it is violence.

of the use of violence in nationalist politics is found in songs such as, "*Zimbabwe ndeyeropa*" (Zimbabwe has a history of blood) and slogans like "Pasi ne..." (Down with) suggesting that someone has to be buried. Labelling someone as a 'puppet', 'stooge' and 'sell-out' invokes people's anger against such and the consequences is violence and death.

As Sachikonye (2011) observed in his book "When the state turns on its Citizens", violence has been 'a method of choice' of regimes seeking to maintain their grip to power while counter-violence has been a preferred option by groups aspiring to power. The Zimbabwean church leaders and membership are no strangers to this environment and many congregants find themselves in a difficult position to disentangle themselves from such a background and history. Thus, when certain members of the church engage in violence, it is part of their human nature which the gospel has not yet erased, for others they are dragged into it and still for some church members; they just find themselves circuitously and implicitly sanctioning it.

The origin of Zimbabwe's culture of violence emanates from both its pre-colonial and colonial history. One group of people have always exercised violence on another justifying their acts either as God-sanctioned or that they were naturally entitled to

harass and enslave others as the superior and privileged group. On ethnic grounds the Shona were raided by the Ndebele before 1890 and during the colonial period, hate and violence were used by whites to subdue the blacks. In present day Zimbabwe, ethnic divisions of the 1980s seem to have been replaced by political party differences. Many times politicians remind people of the memories of the violent past to deliberately rekindle people's anger against their opponents on racial, tribal or party differences. David Moore (2008:25-39) argues that Zimbabwe's liberation movement and long-time ruling party ZANU-PF has never achieved total hegemony and inclusivity, it always needed coercion, and sometimes even violence, against internal dissent and external challenge. He further argues that some people have always been regarded as 'dirt' to be cleaned (*murambatsvina*), or 'chaff' to be washed away (*gukurahundi*). Nevertheless, it must be mentioned that ordinary and peace loving Zimbabweans including the Church have made commendable gains towards a non-violent political culture, but with a background of violent politics around them, it is tempting to be lured into violent confrontations.

Although there is an Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration (ONHRI), not much has been done to either end violence or deal with wounds and bitterness associated with an unreconciled citizenry after the bloody 2008 elections. The state –church relations have not improved to the level of being able to effectively collaborate and make the organ effective. The failure to do so can be attributed mainly to the half-hearted approach or resistance by some members of the Government of National Unity (GNU) to issues of transitional justice, especially the compensation of victims of violence. Secondly, given the polarization in the country, categorizing church leaders as either for the status quo or for regime change with no-go between, the church remains divided and lack a unified approach to dealing with a state that is famous for political violence and militancy. It must however, be acknowledged and appreciated that despite its internal weaknesses; the church has been able to stand resolute and in unity with civil society organizations in emphasizing that the next presidential and parliamentary

Churches can either be blamed for promoting the spirit of docility and uncommon submissiveness in the face of extreme difficulties that Zimbabweans have faced in the last decades or on a lighter judgement be perceived as the ones rallying people to promote peace, removing violence and fears-  
Dewa Mavhinga from Crisis Coalition in Zimbabwe (The Zimbabwean, 3 May 2012)



polls must be held after the country is guaranteed of a fair, non-violent and peaceful environment backed by a new constitution.

### 2.3. THE EXPECTED ROLE VIS-À-VIS THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF THE CHURCH

Given the violence, economic and political problems facing the country, the questions that many people ask are: what do churches in Zimbabwe see as their role? Do they engage in anti-violence advocacy work? Do they have the capacity to be effective in peace building and conflict resolution work? These questions are asked in order to establish where the church's priorities and major focus lie. Mutume (1988:463) argues that at the heart of the church's business is human dignity. "Rather, her (church) function is to be the moral conscience of the nation, the sign and safeguard of the supreme value of a human person". This implies that the first institution to speak against violence, disappearances and murder should be the church. The church through its clergy must speak against violence, no matter what the fears, what the opposition, what the criticism. When the church goes silent in these circumstances, it means it has failed in its mandate<sup>23</sup>.

There is consensus among different church leaders that the apostolic mission of the church is reconciliation, facilitating people to talk about violence and enmity that emanates from both the pre and post independence era in a way that brings forgiveness and reconciliation. The mechanism that the Government of National Unity (article 18) requires to achieve national healing and reconciliation especially for victims of violence is found in the church<sup>24</sup>. In line with this, the church must enable critical support and rehabilitation for offenders in a way that does not demonise them.

According to CiM<sup>25</sup> (2006), the church's role is to exert a strong ethical influence upon the state, supporting policies and programmes deemed to be just and opposing policies and programmes that are unjust and violent. In so doing the church should not be the master of the state, or be the servant of the state, neither should it be the instrument of the state. It should not be the conscience of the state, which implies that the state should not attempt to control the church, nor should the church seek to dominate the state.

There is a general feeling that the church is heavily compromised and has failed to

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Rev Useni Sibanda, Christian Alliance Director.

<sup>24</sup> CiM, (2006), *The truth will make you free: a compendium of Christian social teaching*, Mutare: Churches in Manicaland

<sup>25</sup> Church in Manicaland is an ecumenical grouping of church groups and institutions in Manicaland province aimed at promoting tolerance in society, giving guidance to policy makers and enable people to live by gospel values and principles.

stand up to the state on issues of violence. If the church does not take sides with the victims of violence it may be unintentionally promoting the cause of the perpetrator. Rev. Wakatama expressed worry that the infiltration of the church by state agencies has made it useless and greatly compromised, making church leaders experts in addressing the symptoms rather than the causes of violence. Church leaders out of fear or co-option are dodging confronting politicians that happen to be fuelling violence and only coming in to help the victims of the violence<sup>26</sup>. Wakatama further argues that there is a tendency among church leaders to sup with politicians and pay a blind eye to the evil that they do especially the fuelling of violence and bad morals. He went on to cite the case of Tsvangirai's love life going out of control without church leaders publicly condemning such behaviour, making Tsvangirai "a faithful Methodist and a play boy"<sup>27</sup>. Thus, the public perception is that when church leaders keep silent on certain issues especially those related to violence, they are either afraid to speak out or they silently condone such acts.

## **2.4. POLITICS AND CHURCH RELATIONS**

Gundani (2008) and Chitando (2010) noted that President Mugabe and his ZANU PF colleagues have been able to identify some church leaders who could stand with them in their campaign for redistributive policies on land and other resources and gave them wide (state-controlled) media coverage, preferential treatment on state occasions, and at times the opportunity to officiate at national events, and thus dividing the church into the camp of those in support of government and others opposed to its mode of governance and militancy. Church leaders who have directly or indirectly supported Mr. Mugabe's regime and its militancy approach to land and other national issues in recent years are understood to have done so because they ideologically share his sentiments on resource redistributive policies, indigenization, sovereignty and African pride which they in turn believe they have come head-on and wrestled with somehow within the church both during colonialism and in post-independent Zimbabwe. Others have done so purely for what they get out of it and have no sincerity in their support for Mugabe. Nonetheless, it is important to mention that the church leaders who have been privileged to work close to Mr. Mugabe on this basis have not been able to influence his government for non-violence, but have been comfortable with invitations to say opening and closing prayers, while the political figures deal with the important business.

For church leaders who have openly supported Mugabe's sovereignty and anti-imperialism stance, Pentecostal church leaders such as Rev. Wutawunashe fall into

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<sup>26</sup> "Can the church be neutral" in *The Zimbabwean*, 22 February 2012.

<sup>27</sup> See also *The Zimbabwean*, Thursday, 3 May 2012 "Tsvangirai's love life: A series of disasters" by Pius Wakatama.

this category. Others have capitalized on Zimbabwe's crisis and violence for personal gains, using these as a means to get themselves economic benefits and favours such as land as well as a way to settle their 'perceived' differences with their mainstream Protestant churches' leadership. Bishop Norbert Kunonga of the Anglican Church is a case in point (see Gunda 2008)<sup>28</sup>. There is still a group of clerics who strongly cherish their autonomy and independence from Imperialist forces which they also believe Mugabe is violently fighting and as such they find themselves supporting his ideals. The likes of Archbishop Paul Mwaizha of the African Apostles belong to this category. Chitando (2010) argues that Church leaders such as Manhanga and Obadiah Msindo of the Destiny of Africa Network can be categorized as church leaders who see Mugabe as a God-given leader who can help restore African dignity in a world where bible teachings have been misinterpreted and distorted in favour of white supremacy. The emergence of Mugabe-aligned church leaders has enabled ZANU-PF to dismiss church leaders and civic leaders who criticise state violence – just like the MDC politicians who oppose it – as 'puppets of the West'. Due to their international connections, some churches continue to be suspected of promoting a 'regime change agenda'.

According to Dulles (2002) and Healy (2000), there are four different theological models that theologians have been using when it comes to Church's involvement in socio-economic and political issues namely the separation model, the prophetic theology model, the identification model and the transformational model. Theologians who hold on to separation model when it comes to politics believe that Christians are not of the world, but strangers on earth therefore should totally abstain from politics. The identification model recommends the participation of the Church in matters considered to be secular, but not taking a confrontational stance against the state or the powers that be, but working as part of the system.

The transformation model is based on the belief that if the Christian is involved in secular issues (politics, economics and social services) and act in a Christian manner, then things can get better. The prophetic theology believes in the church confronting the state and speaking out the injustices just like the prophets in the Old Testament who spoke boldly on injustices. Prophetic theology always sides with the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized and the voiceless in the society; thus it sides with the victims of injustice but at the same time it draws enmity between itself and an oppressive state. Nevertheless the models above can be used in different times at different situations by the church. It can be too ambitious to think that one model is perfect and can be applicable to all situations.

28 Kunonga has formed the 'Anglican Church in Zimbabwe' - a breakaway - separate from the mainstream Anglican church ran by Bishop Gandiya under the auspices of the Diocese of Harare, Church of the Province of Central Africa (CPCA), part of the worldwide Anglican. In the process he has forcibly grabbed Anglican Church property and used police to violently target parishioners not loyal to him.

Quite a number of churches in Zimbabwe find the separation model appealing, and thus have both clergy and laity completely shutting themselves out of politics. They view politics as for those in the world as such it is dirty and evil. The Jehovah's Witnesses (the Watch tower) constitute a majority of those who adhere to this model. However, a number of evangelicals also feel that indulging in politics is enmity with Godly life and as such they encourage their congregants just to pray for the good of the country and not meddle in its politics. Snapshot survey, table 1 bellow filled mostly by evangelicals indicated that over 71% of the respondents believe that the church should keep out of politics and just pray for the nation and its leadership.

TABLE 1: MOST CHURCHES PREFER KEEPING THEMSELVES OUT OF POLITICS AND JUST PRAY FOR THE NATION'S GOOD AND WELFARE

Responses	Number	Percentage
Strongly disagree	17	8.6
Disagree	34	17.2
Not certain	6	3.0
Agree	96	48.5
Strongly agree	45	22.7
Total	198	100

The notion that the Christian should just pray is not new as many clergy interviewed indicate that most Christians were spoiled by the colonialists who taught them to just pray for their oppressive colonial regime and never revolt against it. Others personally feel that they do not understand much about politics and the safe thing to do is to keep away from it. These notions also influence how the different churches have responded to political violence in their neighbourhood. Some have just found it safe to comply with whatever party demands that come their way. They vote but they are not active participants when it comes to political rallies and campaigns. They spent most of their time in church activities and even the violent party youths tend to understand them and afford them such space. This is true for a number of protestants, evangelicals and some sects of the vapostori.

2.5. THE PROPHETIC VOICE

Among the famous church leaders, there have risen at least two main different groups. There are those who have openly criticised the regime of President Mugabe as corrupt and violent and those who have declared their unwavering support for President Mugabe. The most outspoken two personalities worth looking into detail about are Archbishop Pius Ncube and Prophet Andrew Wutawunashe. The two are extreme opposites especially when it comes to their views on violence in Zimbabwe,

government strategy on land, indigenization, and empowerment of the local citizens. They all claim to base their reactions to government administration on faith and Christian teachings. They are vilified or praised by other church leaders and members for what they are and what they stand for.

### 2.5.1. Archbishop Pius Ncube

Pius Ncube is a Catholic trained priest who rose through the ranks to become an Archbishop in the Roman Catholic Church. He is a member of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference. Pius Ncube will always be remembered as the church's top fearless champions in denouncing violence and government's shortcomings in servicing its citizens. He went further to inform the public that he was praying for Mugabe's death. For some time, counter-accusations were traded between Mugabe and Ncube until Ncube was finally exposed by the central intelligence of indulging in some sex scandals. The exposures of the sex scandal become the silencing of Pius Ncube. What Ncube did, said and what happened to him has become a subject of controversy not only among the public but also within the church. Others still question whether Ncube was really what was exposed or he was framed. Nonetheless, there are a number of lessons and implications on church and state relations, violence, and how the church should handle politicians in the Ncube case.

His pastoral letter, 'A Prayer of Hope for Zimbabwe: a concern on the present situation in Zimbabwe', issued on 26 April 2000 'strongly deplored the lawless invasion of the farms' and condemned racism (CCJP 2001: 101-3). Ncube denounced the use of violence and reminded Mugabe of his earlier policy of reconciliation. He consistently called upon the law-enforcing agents to deal with the perpetrators of violence, and encouraged Mugabe to ensure the civic rights of the opposition.

A majority of respondents to the snapshot survey, almost 87% think that Zimbabwe needs men of cloth of a prophetic voice like Pius Ncube. He is an example of the very few fearless church leaders that the churches need to confront the state on matters of state-sponsored violence. Using him as a yardstick, some key informants to the study also felt that most clergymen of the day are petrified, selfish and do not want to risk for the sheep and for the good of the nation. Still for some, Ncube demonstrated leadership that was required at the time but he fall short of being an example of what he preached. Thus, he is a lesson to other church leaders that when you stand up to speak against state-sponsored violence and poor governance, you as an individual should be vigilant and make sure you do not have skeletons in the cupboard. Others feel despite his failing when the moral card was raised, he also had become misguided and ending up settling personal scores with President Mugabe via the media.

Still there is a strong feeling among others that Pius Ncube's demise is an example of how the church fails to stand with its own when it is polarized or afraid of state reprisals. Yet for others, the question is whether it was wise for Pius Ncube to take a confrontational approach or use dialogue for transformation in engaging President Mugabe in what he considered to be state violence and bad governance.

### **2.5.2. Apostle Andrew Wutawunashe**

Andrew Wutawunashe is the founder and overseer of the Family of God churches in Zimbabwe. Wutawunashe has a strong background in nationalist politics possibly derived from both his days as a university student in Rhodesia in the 1970s and what he could have learnt from his father who was heavily linked to and contributed to the armed struggle. His father, the late Apinos Wutawunashe, joined politics at a tender age after being a National Democratic Party (NDP) member and then the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU)<sup>29</sup>. Apart from serving the nation in the education sector he was a fervent supporter of ZANU PF. This must have influenced his son, Andrew's stance and support of ZANU-PF.

Andrew Wutawunashe is regarded as an articulate proponent of African identity and renaissance, challenging black people to study their own history and to learn its lessons, and by so doing they should be able to map their way forward through advancing themselves on all fronts, social, spiritual, economic, political and otherwise. Wutawunashe founded and chairs the Faith for the Nation campaign, which is the churches platform for godly nation building. At one time he was the president of the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe.

On several occasions, Wutawunashe has strongly supported Mugabe's land reform programme, endorsing the view that it is 'biblical' and that it restores the dignity of blacks. At another occasion, Wutawunashe claimed that economic sanctions slammed on Zimbabwe were a sign that Zimbabwe is an important country in the global village that some people are trying to suppress<sup>30</sup>. His Faith for the Nation campaign chimes with ZANU PF's ideology of African cultural authenticity, although he brings a distinctively religious flavour to it. His own background in nationalist politics as a university student in Rhodesia in the 1970s might help to explain his support for the ruling nationalists<sup>31</sup>.

A number of church leaders interviewed during this study have expressed concern in what they viewed as Wutawunashe's open support for violence and partisanship.

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<sup>29</sup> The Herald, 'Provincial hero status for Wutawunashe', Saturday, 5th February 2011.

<sup>30</sup> Daily News, 'Sanctions an 'honour' to Zimbabwe-Wutawunashe' 11th August 2012

<sup>31</sup> See Gundani 2002: 161

They have argued that even if Wutawunashe is pan-African, it will really never be befitting for a man of the cloth entrusted with the gospel of reconciliation to support vengeance and violence against the white supremacists. They argued that two wrongs do not make a right. There is a strong feeling that men of the cloth like Wutawunashe should be helping the country and its leaders to shun violence and not to shower praises on ZANU PF. A number of church leaders also felt that Wutawunashe as a leader should not have declared his affiliation to ZANU (PF). The implications of the declaration may send the wrong signal that as a church leader, he may not be in a position to accommodate congregants who are MDC or sympathetic with other parties. In any case those who are anti ZANU-PF may not want to be helped by a partisan pastor and feel safe.

## **2.6. THE ANGLICAN CHURCH SAGA- IS IT A CASE OF SECTARIAN VIOLENCE?**

The Anglican Church in Zimbabwe has been divided since a breakaway bishop Nolbert Kunonga was excommunicated in 2007 for inciting violence in sermons supporting Mugabe's party. But Kunonga says he left the Anglican Church because of its position on same sex marriages<sup>32</sup> (refer also to Functional analysis under theories section above). The crisis deepened with Kunonga's followers seizing property including the country's main cathedral and bank accounts. His followers also took control of an orphanage, and evicted nuns and priests who did not recognise Kunonga. The saga in the church has left mainstream Anglicans without places of worship, displaying acts of intimidation and violence mainly fuelled by what many perceive to be the loop-sided role played by the police. Bishop Bakare explained the unfortunate sectarian violence that followed in his own words:

'In actual fact Zimbabwe today is a lawless state where the perpetrators of violence and even murder are never arrested or brought to book. The judicial system itself is manipulated and leaves a lot to be desired. The police are feared by the public because of their ruthlessness and brutality as we in the Anglican Diocese of Harare continue to experience'<sup>33</sup>

The saga is also a litmus test of how best the entire church community, especially the ZCC and the HOCD can diffuse tension and avert violence within its own rank and file. It also gives a snapshot into the working relationship between the state and the church in Zimbabwe when it comes to issues of preventing violence; and where politics meet faith or cross paths. For some the saga's significance is that by

32 Archbishop of Canterbury meets Mugabe by Gillian Gatora Harare, Zimbabwe - Oct 10 2011 21:17. See <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-10-10-archbishop-of-canterbury-meets-mugabe/>

33 Bakare S (2008) The Role Of The Church And Its Voice In Zim Today. An address to a Human Rights Conference in Lulea, Sweden



supporting Kunonga, President Mugabe and his cronies are demonstrating that if mainline churches become too critical of his regime and fail to embrace it as it were, then he has the option of doing without them and to relating to those that are supportive of his regime.

What baffles ordinary Christians and the Zimbabwean public in general is the silence of top clerics especially at ZCC and HOCD on the sectarian violence matter. Many believe that whatever the circumstances behind it, these bodies should have courageously taken a stance and let the public know who they stand with and for what reason. The dead silence casts doubt as to whether the same church leaders who are silent when things are violently going wrong in their own household would in any way be able to courageously rebuke or restrain politicians who may resort to using violence to solicit votes. The grapevine has it that, the issue is all about the divide and rule tactics of the ZANU-PF government which makes the clerics fear treading in troubled waters that may attract the much-dreaded state reprisals via security agencies. Focus group discussions with congregants sampled in this study indicate that If ZCC or HOCD is doing some 'quiet diplomacy' to resolve the matter; it should at least let the bigger Christian community know that their leaders are doing something. Otherwise, the case demonstrates the greatest failure or weaknesses of the church in confronting violence head-on and whoever is behind the saga. In fact the saga is not a case of sectarian violence neither is it a church split but a misnomer within the church that has been allowed to go to extremes.

## **2.7. ANALYTICAL COMPARISON WITH OTHER COUNTRIES**

The church in Zimbabwe shares many similarities with the church in Uganda, Kenya and Malawi. The church in the mentioned countries has its roots in Missionaries churches and all 3 countries went through a liberation struggle where missionaries and local clergy were active in the liberation of the country from the colonialists. Despite the threats of arrest, death and deportation for some of the priests, they stood united against the oppression of the black majority.

In post-colonial Kenya, the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) and Evangelical Fellowship of Kenya (EFK) demonstrated their willingness to raise resources to reach out to the disenfranchised and those on the margins of society. Given this scenario, the church managed a broad dissemination of its moral doctrines and social political views. When civil society was repressed by a state, churches remained 'zones of freedom' and tend to take up the political functions of the repressed organisations (see Saber-Friedman, 1997:26). The church advocacy role took mainly the form of confrontation with the state. The Kenyan church criticised



excesses in the exercise of state power. It protested against change in electoral law, which removed the secret ballot replacing it with a queuing system, denounced brutal evictions of squatters in Nairobi and the state-engineered ethnic clashes in the Rift valley, which had turned it into the 'unhappy valley' (Berman and Lonsdale, 1992). As Throup (1995:151) puts it, the church couldn't compromise theological issues with secular or temporal matters'. The church was urged to protest 'when God-given rights and liberties are violated. The church had a special duty to 'give voice to the voiceless'.

While the church contributed tremendously to democratisation process in Kenya, there are limitations in that much of the political stances taken during the process of political liberalisation were largely a function of ethnicity and political patronage. Much of the church based opposition to the Moi regime in Kenya has a distinct Luo and Kikuyu ethnic basis, while many of the churches giving strong support to the government come from the same ethnic groups, particularly Lalenjin and Kamba that uphold the regime. The EFK represents a feeble Luo-Kalenjin alliance with Kalenjin faction assuming a preponderant position. The NCKK is a multi-ethnic institution with strong Luo, Kikuyu, Embu and Meru presence (Ngunyi 1995:126).

In Uganda the historical rift between the Anglicans and the Catholics compounded by ethnicity and religionalism stunted the church's ability to contribute significantly to the discourse of democracy and humans rights in the country. Perhaps the context, particularly the character of Idi Amin's regime, conditioned any response. As Ward (1995:82) correctly observes, to protest was to risk some definable punishment which could be calculated in advance. Rather it was to risk unspecified ills involving loss of property, torture, imprisonment and death, not to mention reprisals on one's family'. Anglican Archbishop, Junan Luwum, who was murdered and several Bishops who had to flee to exile during Amin's regime exemplify the fate of any protest. Survival became paramount to the struggle for human rights. Patronage and corruption compounded the situation. The increasingly dwindling sources of donor funds have resulted in Church leaders and even Muslim leaders to succumb to patronage from the state. For instance, all religious leaders, Christian and Muslim have received donations of four-wheel drive vehicles from the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government through President Yoweri Museveni. As a result, the Church in Uganda has more often than not blessed the wishes of the power holders. This is clearly illustrated by the stand of the church on the so-called no-party system of governance.

Timpunza (2001) argues that in Malawi the period from independence in 1964 up to 1992 is 'the period of a silent Church' as the clergy silently watched state violence against its own citizens. In the first 28years of Kamuzu Banda's regime, the church

was too close and loyal to government to criticise its injustice and oppression at the cost of the suffering of the masses. The church also lacked a sense of consciousness of its mission in the social and political spheres and was paralyzed by political fear. Ross (1993) stated that of all the churches, it was the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) in particular that formed the closest relationship to government after independence and it became so assimilated with the government's activities. One could classify the churches' proximity to Banda, as after CCAP, was the Catholic Church, then the Anglican Church, then follow the Seventh Day Adventists and others. Apart from the political fear, the Church had a policy of non-interference in politics which was the basic vision of the first missionaries in Malawi; the White Fathers and their counterparts, Montfort missionaries who viewed the involvement in secular matters as being outside the role of the Church. The church was just there to save the soul. i.e. for spiritual and not secular matters (Timpuzza 2001).

Some of reasons that stunted the church's ability to stand against the Kamuzu regime dictatorship and the killing of opponents were lack of unity among Churches and this prevented the Church from confronting Kamuzu. Churches did not make attempts to work together to confront Kamuzu due to fear, suspicion and lack of trust for each other. It was the Malawian Catholic bishops' pastoral letter that was issued on 8th march 1992 that marked the end of the church's silence as the bishops called for far-reaching economic and political reforms. It was this prophetic voice of the Bishops that challenged the Kamuzu regime state and spoke out on violence and the sufferings of people. "More than 16,000 copies of the letter were printed and read in all 130 Catholic parishes in Malawi" (See Gibbs, 1999:57). This signified unity, commitment, and sacrificial quality of great leadership that went beyond looking at their lives and focused on the people they lead in order to confront Kamuzu's regime. Malawi got its first democratic government in 1994.

The Malawi Church also exercised its prophetic role during 2001–3 when United Democratic Front government attempted to amend the constitution to allow the then President Bakili Muluzi to stand for a third term in office. The Church played a significant role that led to the failure of such an attempt. The voice of the Churches in Malawi's third term debate stated that Malawi's Churches have come to regard themselves as custodians of democratic values, champions of the constitution and spokespersons for the people (Ross 2004). The church went further to speak against the dictatorial tendencies of Bingu WA Mutharika when he suppressed the 2011 civic demonstrations against his government.

Lessons for Zimbabwe, from these country cases are that the church has the ability to contribute towards stopping political violence in Zimbabwe. The church needs to guard itself against problems of regionalism, denominationalism, corruption and

patronage that politically weakened the Ugandan church's ability to advise the state on democratization and human rights. The church needs to be above the ethnicity problems of the Kenyan church that rendered it politically ineffective in Moi's regime. The church also needs to stand firm like the Catholic Church in Malawi and stand for reforms that can take the country forward by simply putting aside other personal interests, fears, partisan and ethnic differences. Change needs to start with a small sacrificial, committed and courageous group and then the rest can always follow. If no-one starts, the violence and polarization may never end.

What is clear is from this chapter is that the historical role of the church in Zimbabwe, its part in the liberation struggle, its ministry, its presence and its social role today place it at the centre of the search for national solutions in the country.

## CHAPTER THREE:

# THE CHURCH'S ANTI-VIOLENCE WORK AND LINKAGE WITH THER STAKEHOLDERS

The church through its various social teaching institutions and platforms, especially those entrusted with justice and peace has been a long time advocate against violence, torture and all forms of injustice. A number of congregants contacted during this study agreed that it would be wrong and disastrous for the Church as an institution to say we support this or that political party. Rather, it is the prophetic duty of the Church to loudly denounce, violence, injustice and oppression wherever and whenever they occur.

Before independence, the church in Zimbabwe spoke with clarity and authority against a regime which thrived on segregation and violence. As Kaulem (2005) rightly puts it, during the colonial period, the Catholic Church and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches supported by the World Council of Churches had gradually and painfully moved towards taking the “preferential option for the poor” and marginalized.”<sup>34</sup> Quite interestingly, Bhebhe (1988:325) claims that the evangelicals presented the Rhodesian government as a Christian government that merited the support of all Christians. Prayers were made for the destruction of the ‘terrorists’ and safety of the security forces. Bhebhe’s argument is that the EFZ was silent on political issues during colonialism. It did not speak out against the oppressive Government of the Rhodesian Front Party and its violence on the black population.

It is important to note that of the three major church networks, the ZCBC through CCJP appears to have a more elaborate, long-time and well-developed structure of dealing with social teachings on peace and justice than the EFZ and ZCC. The Zimbabwe Council of Churches’ Justice Peace and Advocacy (JPA) established in 1994 is dedicated to training the general populace in civic issues (political, social and economic rights) as well as providing legal assistance to the marginalized. The EFZ of late has a similar structure. It is thus important to look at the CCJP as an example of how the church through its structures have been dealing with issues of nation building including tackling violence.

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34 Kaulem,D (2005)The Role of Religion in Societal Transformation: The Case of Zimbabwe

### 3.1. THE CATHOLIC COMMISSION ON PEACE AND JUSTICE

The Roman Catholic Church's dealings with issues of violence, reconciliation and healing are found in the work of the Catholic Commission on Peace and Justice (CCJP) which is a Commission of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference. The Catholics have been very active and vocal in nation building issues in both pre and independence period. Both the Catholics and the protestants have educated and raised most of Zimbabwe's first nationalist leaders that include Ndabaningi Sithole, Robert Mugabe, Abel Muzorewa, to mention but a few. It is through the teachings of these churches that inspired the nationalists to the need to fight colonialism, its violence and injustice. Before independence the CCJP became a protagonist of justice for Zimbabwe by documenting and collating cases of human rights violations in the country. The CCJP in Zimbabwe is currently expanding its work and coverage to include every parish or church assembly in the country.

The CCJP is affiliated to the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace in Rome and has active contact with Commissions in other countries. The CCJP was created for the local Church to actively give witness to this concern for justice and peace and for the laity<sup>35</sup> to see that the Church is working for justice and peace. One of its major purposes is to educate both laity and clergy to the responsibilities of acting as Christians in the world as well as enable the Church to make positive suggestions for the enactment of just civil laws and their impartial administration. This needs the full involvement of all citizens of goodwill.

The ZCBC is kept informed of national building issues and the economic, social and political status of the country through the CCJP. Through holding workshops and seminars in conjunction with its regional offices and diocesan Committees; by publications, and articles in the press; participating in meetings or seminars organised by other groups, and by carrying out research, the CCJP seeks to achieve its objectives. The objectives include among many others the promotion of the Church's social teaching, and to investigate allegations of injustice, violence and human rights violation which it considers to merit attention, and to take appropriate action.

A number publications bear testimony to the factor that the Catholics have always stood against the oppressed and violence. They have either engaged themselves in diplomatic shuttling or supporting initiatives bent on ending violence, bringing peace and justice. This includes assisting refugees. Prior to independence, the CCJP was

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<sup>35</sup> the laity consists of all people who are not a part of or are independent of the clergy

instrumental in highlighting the violent land evictions and plight of the Tangwena people in Nyanga. The Catholic Bishops denounced the new constitution that was introduced by the Rhodesian government in 1969. This led to some Catholic priests expressing support for liberation movements. Such action brought the wrath of the Smith regime against them. Bishop Donal Lamont was arrested, charged for supporting terrorists and then deported. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it was the Catholics that provided the nationalist leaders with suits as they headed for the Lancaster House conference which ended the violent liberation struggle and ushered independence to Zimbabwe. The CCJP has engaged itself in a number of initiatives that have in one way or the other addressed economic, social and political violence. Its work on the Rindell commission and the Churu farm are just but few examples of such.

The most remarkable Catholic Church work on violence at national level in post independent Zimbabwe was its chronicle and analysis of the atrocities of Gukurahundi, in the report, *“Breaking the silence, building true peace: a report on the disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands (1980 to 1988)”*. The publication of the report done with the Legal Resources Foundation is said to have strained CCJP relations with government and costed Mike Auret, the CCJP Director his job. The document gave chilling evidence of the horrific massacres that took place in Matabeleland. After 1987, the CCJP and the ZCBC were viewed by the state as reactionary bodies. A number of church leaders believe that the post-Auret transitions that followed at CCJP ensured that the vocal institution was silenced or compromised as the government through some friendly bishops negotiated the need for CCJP to desist from raising unnecessary dust and annoying some political leaders. Nonetheless, more trouble was to come later with the utterances of Archbishop Pius Ncube against President Mugabe’s regime. Quite surprising and to a large extent, some congregants both within and outside the Catholic Church still associate Pius Ncube’s confrontation with government as the face of the CCJP.

At local level, the CCJP has had its own problems associated with speaking truth to power and standing against violence. With the polarization engulfing the country, its advocacy for peace and justice has been seen as siding with opposition politics and supporting regime change. In both Chipadze (Bindura) and Mbare (Harare), discussions with congregants were quick to point out that associating one’s self with the church’s commission for peace and justice has been regarded as standing with the MDC. In Bindura, some congregants pointed out that the CCJP local structure/sub-committee was struggling to find a complete number of leaders as most people feared been associated with leading this ‘new political structure’ which can easily attract reprisals from state agencies and party youths. There is in fact need for the Catholics in some politically challenged areas such as Mashonaland provinces to educate their local flock on what CCJP means and popularise its work against violence.

### 3.2. NATIONAL VISION DISCUSSION DOCUMENT - ‘THE ZIMBABWE WE WANT’

*The Zimbabwe we want: towards a national vision for Zimbabwe* commonly referred to as the “National Vision Discussion Document” (NVDD). The NVDD is a discussion document that was written by churches in 2006 through three church bodies- ZCBC, EFZ and ZCC. The document written in 2006 chronicled the reasons why Zimbabwe was suffering politically, socially and economically. Its theme is to provide a vision for social justice, peace, and reconciliation (*The Zimbabwe We Want 2006*, 7–11). The document makes an attempt at rebuilding the economy, society, and the state, and to restore destabilized achievements. The Church began a process to solicit responses on the same issues from the general population of Zimbabwe and forced the government to allow people to dialogue on issues affecting them.

Muchechetera (2009) argues that because of the gag on the freedom of association through laws enacted in parliament called Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), it was an impossible feat to attempt, as there would be political and statutory instruments to stop such a process. Despite these conditionalities the Church found a way out and was able to go to the people (70% coverage of sampled population) except in three Mashonaland provinces- Mashonaland West, Mashonaland Central and part of Mashonaland East. This process generated a lot of hype in the media and the streets and created a lot of hope for the people of Zimbabwe. ‘Whereas many politicians constantly advised Christians to stay away from politics, consultations on the national vision document reminded Christians that they had an obligation to participate in political processes’<sup>36</sup>

As the process unfolded it also raised the ire and wrath of the State and created new enemies in some parts of civic society who felt the Church had no mandate to delve into political discourse and tried to discredit the process in one way or other<sup>37</sup>. The process sought to elicit responses through a national exercise from the people as to how they would want to be governed and establish a new vision for Zimbabwe. The process was financially supported through a Trust Fund established by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Other support came from World Vision; ICCO and Norwegian Church Aid (NCA). The document was published on 15th September 2006 and launched at the national day of prayer by President Mugabe

36 Chitando E (2011) Church increasingly playing political role. August 26, , published in In the Churches Blog by William Matsvimbo <http://relzim.org/category/forum/in-the-church-blog>

37 Muchechetera. A.A. (2009) A Historical Analysis of the Role of the Church in Advocating for Good Governance in Zimbabwe: Heads of Christian Denominations (HOCID) Advocacy in Zimbabwe’s Political, Social and Economic Impasse from 2003 to 2008. Dissertation on Master of Arts in Leadership and Management Degree, Africa Leadership and Management Academy (ALMA), Harare.



who was guest of honour. The NVDD was widely spread and read, with reprints that were made on soft recycled paper.

The NVDD clearly states, “At the moment national reconciliation is indeed the key to nation building and development in Zimbabwe”<sup>38</sup>. The NVDD expresses the visible unity of church in responding to national problems, and one of these is lack of reconciliation. The NVDD makes a clear analysis of Zimbabwe’s lack of reconciliation, and the church willingly offers to help bring reconciliation in Zimbabwe. The NVDD articulates, maturely, its intent to see leaders who respect human dignity through the use of binding laws. The dialogue among churches and Christians begun by the NVDD has led to the formation of the Ecumenical Peace Initiative of Zimbabwe (EPIZ), supported by the United Nations’ division for peace in Africa. For the HOCD, the NVDD serves as the church’s rallying point in two main aspects; first it unites the churches and second, it’s the church reference document when dealing with national issues including violence<sup>39</sup>. One can also argue that comparing the 2000 and 2002 parliamentary and presidential elections respectively with the March 29, 2008 elections, the NVDD significantly contributed to political tolerance in the first round, although ZANU PF resorted to more violence in the second round of elections in the June 27, 2008 presidential runoff (Makumbe, 2002:94).

There are those who argue that compromises reached between ZANU-PF and MDC were temporary signs of the document’s success, especially reports of successful negotiations in the run up to the 2008 elections. Still others think that the opening of space by the NVDD allowed various stakeholders to discuss sensitive political issues openly. This they claim includes the free organization of the Save Zimbabwe campaign under Zimbabwe Christian Alliance.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, there is a strong feeling that the NVDD process was infiltrated by the state agencies as government did not want the church to be powerful and expose its failures. Resultantly, the ownership of the document was an issue at stake, putting the church under political pressure to say statements that were not negative towards the ruling party. The document’s initial message and tone was torn down to suit government perspectives, thus rendering the document of less impact.

The document fails to name and to outline, succinctly, the nature and cause of the Zimbabwean economic and political crisis, the lack of reconciliation and the problems fermenting violence. Of noteworthy is the violence against civilians in Matabeleland and Midlands between 1982 and 1987 to which Prof. A. Mutambara states, “Gukurahundi cannot be a footnote in a National Vision of Zimbabwe”

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38 *The Zimbabwe We Want* 2006, 38

39 Interview with Dr. Shana, president of HOCD and EFZ.

40 Makumbe, Lucia, (April 13, 2007), “Govt, opposition still mum on the ‘Zim We Want’ document”, *The Independent (Zimbabwe)*



(Mutambara, 2006). Interviews with Rev. Pius Wakatama suggests that the NVDD was spoilt by President Mugabe and ZANU PF whose rhetoric of sovereignty in the document indicate that ZANU PF's ideas took prominence in the publication. In the whole process, the church appears to have taken the blame of state failure in national reconciliation as its own sins. By failing to set targets and deadlines to deal with the key causes of violence, the constitution, land reform, the supremacy of party politics over national issues and lack of media reforms, the NVDD failed to reconcile the nation and foster peace. The church is pinning much hope on the COPAC constitutional process and the holding on free and fair elections at the end of the GNU as a means of ensuring a violence-free Zimbabwe. The NVDD shows that a broad based constitution, written out of consultation, is of a higher priority if reconciliation can be achieved. The SADC road map to free and fair elections which includes repeal of POSA and AIPPA, security sector and media reforms remain the hope for a violence-free Zimbabwe.

The NVDD indicates an awareness of the problems of the media and the polarity the state had with critical media houses and journalists. The inability of the media and journalists to operate independent of state control and surveillance means that important issues that can upset political leaders are suppressed, and violent tendencies continue to negatively impact the nation. The state controlled media fails to bring forward the needed truth and this affects national transformation as well as the provision of justice and other liberties to ordinary citizens.

Focus groups with pastors in this study indicate that the clergy at grassroots level have no clue as to what is the church's next step with the NVDD. The divisive issues which are also causes of violence- Gukurahundi, Murambatsvina, the land question, election violence and redistribution policies such as the indigenization policy still remain unfinished national business in need of the church's guidance. The land for which the liberation war in Zimbabwe was fought remained the centre of racial and ethnic struggles, picking up "new" versions in the process.<sup>41</sup>

A key question put to the clergy in this study was on the implementation progress of the NVDD-what's happening with it while violence still continues unabated in present day Zimbabwe? The answer has been, the NVDD process ended with its launch as there was no implementation game plan and resources to take it forward. One gets the impression that the momentum that the church started NVDD with is not the same as the one it had with at the launch and even now. The NVDD must have lost ownership in the process.

41 Sachikonye, Lloyd, (2005), Political parties and the democratization process in Zimbabwe, Johannesburg: EISA, Promoting credible elections and democratic governance in Africa

### **3.3. ZIMBABWE CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE**

One part of the church that has risen up to the challenge of dealing with violence is the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance (ZCA). The ZCA is a network of Christian leaders that came together to form a national platform to engage government in meaningful dialogue about the root cause of the nation's multiple ills. Its aim is to speak, influence and transform the social, economic and political situation in Zimbabwe. The ZCA initiative brings together Christian bodies in Zimbabwe among others the Zimbabwe National Pastors Conference (ZNPC), Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA), Zimbabwe Christian Students Movement (ZCSM Ecumenical Support Service (ESS), Churches in Harare (CIH), Churches in Bulawayo (CIB), Churches in Plumtree (CIP), Churches in Gweru (CIG), Churches in Vic Falls (CIV) and Christians Together for Justice and Peace (CJP).

The formation of the ZCA arose from the churches' realization that apart from sheltering victims of Murambatsvina, they needed to organize themselves in a way that they can speak to the powers that be. In 2006, the ZCA issued a statement, "Give Peace a Chance" in which it warned government of repeating the same violence that has been used by the colonial regime:

Since its launch in February 2006 at the Anglican Cathedral in Bulawayo, the ZCA organised civic society and political formations and a campaign that has been called the Save Zimbabwe Campaign. This is the campaign that on March 11 2007 called for a prayer meeting at Zimbabwe grounds. That meeting was disrupted violently by the police and led to the brutal assault of civic and political leadership. People like Morgan Tsvangirai were brutally beaten<sup>42</sup>. The Save Zimbabwe Coalition prayer of March 2007 assisted the church to expose the level of state-sponsored violence. The violence and brutal assaults that ensued in dispersing the prayer meeting did attract the attention of the international community. The escalating level of public violence against high level political and civic leaders indicated the growing repressive response of the regime to the country's political crisis, as well as the sense of impunity it felt about its actions. SADC leaders immediately called for an emergency summit to discuss the political violence in Zimbabwe. It is important to note that, with the March 2007 incident, there seems to be a complementary of the various church structures in Zimbabwe. For instance, when the major network bodies are silent on some key national issues, organizations like ZCA speak out.

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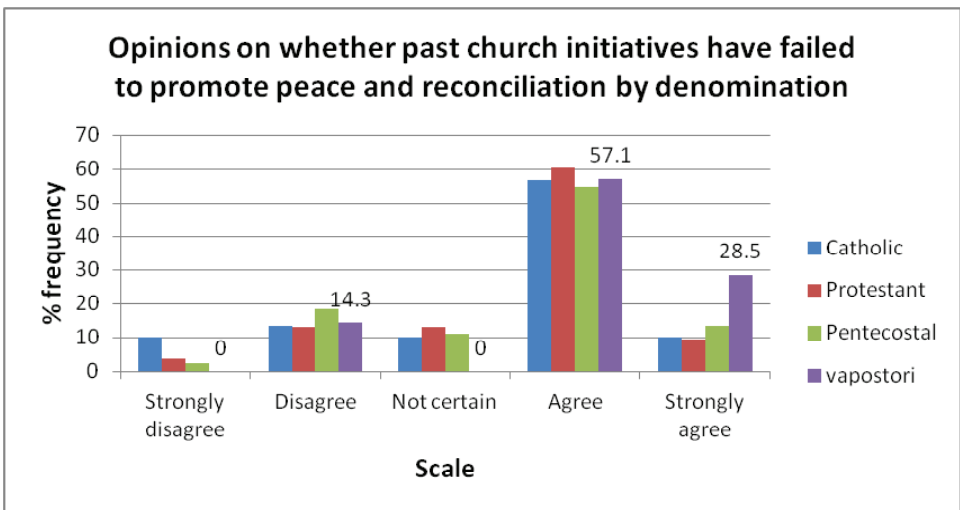
42 Institute of War and Peace Reporting, Issue 1, March 2006, [http://www.iwpr.net/docs/archive/zcr/zcr\\_001.pdf](http://www.iwpr.net/docs/archive/zcr/zcr_001.pdf)

### 3.4. SOME GRASSROOTS CHURCH INITIATIVES

Interviews with different church leaders from different denominations revealed that a lot of conflict resolution and peace initiatives are being undertaken by the church and associated faith-based advocacy groups. The only challenge with these initiatives is that they are done at micro level-very small scale and chances of the churches combining efforts for better, and more significant gains at national level are very low if not non-existent. Jealous, suspicion, lack of trust and at times competition for donor resources and visibility are part of the reasons mentioned. Snapshot survey findings do show that churches alone have not been able to solve the problems of violence. There is great need for collaborative work.

The chart below shows that most respondents (85.6% of 203) to the question of whether past church initiatives have failed to foster peace and reconciliation violence do think past church initiatives have not succeeded in this direction.

CHART 2: CHURCH INITIATIVES ON PEACE AND RECONCILIATION



This response might be caused by the high expectations that the respondents had for the church. Others think the church should not use a soft stance and approach when addressing violence.

Some of church peace initiatives and associated challenges and successes are worth mentioning in this section. Catholics appear to be funding their own programmes, while a number of protestants and evangelicals tend to rely mainly on donor funds and collaboration with NGOs-northern or local. For protestants and evangelicals raising funds from local church congregants for governance and nation building

issues including peace and non-violence seem to be almost a taboo. What is true with their administrative operations is that funds can be raised locally for the core business of evangelism, but anything beyond that has to be donor-funded and also bring per diems to those called upon to spearhead it.

During the peak of the 2008 presidential elections run-off, the St. Peters' Catholic Church in Mbare assisted a number of political violence victims by either sheltering them at the church or transferring them to safe havens where the perpetrators would not continue tormenting them<sup>43</sup>. Likewise, Christian alliance and a number of churches in Bulawayo did also shelter victims of both Murambatsvina and the political violence in Matabeleland. At least 17 churches in Bulawayo assisted people who were about to be killed by cold because of the clean up process. These churches also worked together with the UN in exposing state violence against innocent citizens<sup>44</sup>. Both the ZCC and the EFZ are running community peace programs across the country. The Anglican under Bishop Gandiya are running the "healing the wounds" program in association with some conflict management NGO. Other church initiatives have been the Zimbabwe National Pastors' Conference (ZNPC) running prayer meetings across the nation and engaging politicians in the process.

After the violent 2008 polls, Catholics through the CCJP have been running peace tournaments meant to build bridges between the perpetrators and victims of violence in communities. They have also organized meetings between MPs and their entire constituency. They have also gone to the extent of trying to bring perpetrators and victims of violence to talk, forgive each other and reconcile. This has been difficult with police not committing itself to intervene if violence broke out in the process. In Norton, ward 7 which have been notoriously known for poll violence has some church peacemaking program being run by the evangelicals. ZAOGA has done 'Gospel Explo' deliverance crusades in 28 stadiums across the country. These are said to have reconciled families, and helped heal some bitter and at times people who had developed 'suicidal' tendencies due to the trauma from the 2008 elections violence.

NANGO, the Christian Alliance, the NGO Forum, CSU, WCoZ, other civil society organizations and the HOCD (EFZ, ZCBC and ZCC) decided to partner each other in the Church and Civil Society Forum (CCSF) to facilitate national reconciliation and healing in a coordinated and harmonized manner. Through the CCSF Capacity Building Cluster, trainings in peace building aimed at developing some home grown National Healing and Reconciliation framework through a participatory and inclusive

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<sup>43</sup> Deliberations from Focus group discussions at St. Peters church in Mbare

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Christian Alliance director, Useni Sibanda.

process forming the foundations for violence prevention, peace and a just society in Zimbabwe are underway. The main objective of the CCSF is to advocate for a home grown National Healing and Reconciliation framework developed through a participatory and inclusive process forming the foundations for violence prevention, peace and a just society in Zimbabwe. The CCSF has four projects, namely Community Mobilization Cluster, Violence Prevention Cluster, Capacity Building Cluster and the Public Campaigns cluster.

Some of the achievements of CCSF include the following;

- Bringing the community and its leadership together to dialogue
- Creating awareness for a home-grown solution on peace building
- Informed the community on issues around peace building
- Reinforced the need for the community to be calm and tolerate different political views.
- Encouraged youths to be tolerant & desist from violence
- Upraised community on how to handle political discrimination

The CCSF has its own challenges which include low youth participation. Some key allies and institutions like the Legal Resources Foundation have been unable to participate due to funding problems. Monitoring and evaluation activities have been difficult to schedule and follow resulting in a couple of reschedules from time to time. If the CCSF is to make a marked difference in Zimbabwe's violence-troubled nation it needs to find means and ways of incorporating the youth. It is mostly the youth that are used by politicians to perpetrate violence on the people.

The Ecumenical Church Leaders Forum (ECLF) under the leadership of Bishop Ambrose Moyo in collaboration with local churches is running a nation-wide conflict prevention and peace program across the country. The program is supported by local churches with the objective of bringing reconciliation, healing and peace. The program started with targeting church bishops, then their pastors and currently training youths and women as well as establishing local multi-stakeholder peace committees to handle issues of healing and reconciliation. The program has however suffered from lack of adequate funding to reach the nation at large. It also lacks vehicles and adequate human resources. Although the ECLF is a good and appropriate program for the nation by the churches at this juncture, chances are that with the end of the UNDP funding it is currently enjoying the ECLF might die a natural death. Bishop Kanye pointed out that the program has irked some church leaders and some major church network departments that felt the program has taken over their job.

Christian Alliance apart from collating with the pastors network on national peace prayers, has been working on giving practical assistance to victims of violence-giving shelter and clothing. It has also offered trauma healing for individuals and community healing sessions. A lot is been done by the church around conflict resolution, peace building and promoting a non violence culture. Of later the CCSF programme has brought in multi-stakeholder collaborations especially between CSOs and the church across communities. The cases presented in this section are just but a glimpse of the many programs that the churches and their advocate groups are working on either in alliance with others or alone.

As noted above, these are all good programs coming out of good intentions, but they remain local initiatives, somehow adhoc, mostly addressing the symptoms and not the real root cause of violence in Zimbabwe. There is need for a strong well-coordinated church apex structure to deal with the causes of violence through engaging the politicians in a more structured way. Perhaps national healing and reconciliation will never be complete without a national Truth and Reconciliation commission in Zimbabwe. The church needs to think of this in a broader and bigger picture than zero on the various sporadic initiatives which are very donor dependant and may fizzle out with changing donor priorities. The focus group discussants at Murambinda, Murewa and Gutu felt that the church leaders need extensive training in peace building theories and practices. This will enable the pastors to use effective words in public meetings and be able to influence proceedings at community or district level.

### **3.5. CSOS AND THE CHURCH**

The collaboration between CSOs and the church have not been without its own problems. The two have had accusation and counter-accusations. These mostly emanate from the different approaches that the two use in confronting violence. The church believes in a dialogue and transformational approach while the CSOs have emphasized the need for flexibility and a balance between using dialogue and confrontation in dealing with the state on nation building issues. The church has always emphasized that it is not a pressure group and cannot take radical stances in dealing with government or anyone. As such the church will not use radical approaches which normally close the communication lines between it and those that need its assistance, mediation and reconciliatory role. The church argues that it must and would want to remain accessible to both the perpetrator and victims of violence and it should therefore never demonize or close its doors to either.

Despite the differences in approach, it is important to note that the church and civil society have cooperated in many instances and have achieved great success although

at times suspicion and mistrust between them remains. Opportunities to build better working relations between the two especially in the area of preventing violence still remain available. The church has been instrumental in the setting up of various initiatives including the formation of a number of NGOs. By 1996, just before the publication of *Breaking the Silence* in 1997 by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) and the Legal Resources Foundation (LRF), the Zimbabwe Council of Churches initiated the formation of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA).

The ZCBC, EFZ and ZCC are founding members of the Zimbabwe ElectionSupport Network (ZESN) and the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP). The Church saw the need to have specialist organisations monitoring and studying the patterns of elections and the violence obtaining in the nation. This information would then assist them in their advocacy. The ZESN conducts voter education, monitors and observes elections, advocates for violent free and fair elections and continuous electoral reforms. The ZPP's major area of focus is to document all politically motivated acts of violence. The reports assisted the three Church bodies to advocate for peace and sustainable dialogue in communities. Collaboration between church, ZESN and ZPP is found in the CSOs providing the statistics and analysis that church leaders can then use to engage politicians. A good example of such information provision and analysis for the church can be found in a report like ZESN's 2008 report, "on a negative note, the 2000 and 2002 elections also marked descent into widespread violence, coercion and intimidation, with 150 people killed" ('ZPP Report, 2006' and ZESN Report 2008, 11). When the church leaders confront government on violence or issue pastoral letters such reports and statistics become relevant. Sadly, the ZCC and the EFZ withdrew their membership from ZPP in January 2008, because they felt the organization had deviated from its founding mandate<sup>45</sup>. The ZPP was accused of operating without accountability structures and had diluted the influence of Churches by bringing on board NGOs as members.

The church does not seem to be capable of following through some of its initial projects or initiatives. Most organizations that the church start seem to grow bigger than the church's capacity and as a result the weaning process is like 'secularizing' the once religious body as it becomes too radical and difficult to tame. Funding is one area that seem to separate the church and some NGOs. The church unlike some NGOs cannot be driven by donor agendas; otherwise it finds itself in a very difficult and compromised position. The church cannot take every donor; every program and project on board, it has to be very selective in line with its values and principles. For that reason, the church still has respect in areas where NGOs have long be banned or restricted.

45 Muchechete, A.A. (2009) A Historical Analysis of the Role of the Church in Advocating for Good Governance in Zimbabwe: Heads of Christian Denominations (HOCD) Advocacy in Zimbabwe's Political, Social and Economic Impasse from 2003 to 2008. Dissertation on Master of Arts in Leadership and Management Degree, Africa Leadership and Management Academy (ALMA), Harare.



Both CSOs and church approaches are necessary to combating violence and only a complementarity of the two makes a big difference. The church needs the skills that NGOs have in trauma counselling, peace-building and conflict resolution. On the other hand the NGOs need to ride at the back of the churches to reach certain constituencies especially Mashonaland provinces where communities are very sceptical about regime change agents. At national level, churches despite other pitfalls, command a lot of respect from the executive, parliament and the judiciary.

### **3.6. COLLABORATION BETWEEN CHURCHES, GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY**

The hostile relationship between CSOs and the government makes either party incapable of engaging in peace building without raising ire of the other party. On the other hand, the church has the capacity to work with government, CSOs, donors and traditional leaders. They should therefore use this leverage strategically i.e. the function of the church should be at a strategic level as they have the capacity to bring different actors together. The church needs to take a futuristic approach to peace building in Zimbabwe. Their role is that of long term rehabilitation and integration. The aim is to ensure that there is sustainable long term peace in Zimbabwe. The church should then let the specialised actors be they government or NGOs carry out their work in a conducive environment. For example ZESN has the experience in election observation and monitoring. There has been a lot of election related violence. The church will then allow the entry of ZESN into 'restricted' areas. After ZESN has collected and analysed the information, the church should identify the crisis areas and develop intervention from a theological perspective. This may include mediation and arranging forgiveness sessions.

The state through the judiciary is trying those convicted of violence. The church can collaborate with the judiciary to rehabilitate those convicted of violence. This involves going around the country, visiting prisoners, promoting confessions and forgiveness. The church can complement the work of JOMIC in bridging the gap between political parties as well as traditional leaders.

The communities are in need of releasing the pain and sorrow they have been through. So far there has been criticism that ONHRI is not the right organisation to do this. Working in collaboration with the ONHRI, churches can organise memorial events where aggrieved parties attend and undergo spiritual and moral metamorphosis.

The church has limited capacity on issues of training, advocacy and justice. Here the church has the opportunity to work with the CSOs, JOMIC, ONHRI to tap into already existing training programs so that church leaders are equipped with skills in



leadership, the role of church leaders and Christians in fighting against the injustices and violence. Churches have been undertaking prayer meetings and workshops meant for social transformation. Whilst they are important, they further need to engage existing institutions, structures, systems and processes.<sup>46</sup> As a result of polarisation, many church initiatives have failed or achieved limited success because they did not take note of this important fact.

### **3.7. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHURCH**

To their credit, the churches in Zimbabwe in the post independence period have undertaken several initiatives at national level to address the issues of violence and polarisation in Zimbabwe. The first talks between ZANU PF and the MDC was a result of the initiative of the churches. When one looks at any initiative undertaken by the church, the sticky issue is 'to strike a balance between criticism, condemnation and yet leave room for the politicians to reform.'<sup>47</sup> Whilst they made gains, there have been factors which hindered these initiatives. The highly polarised environment has meant that each initiative is viewed with suspicion and processes are infiltrated and hijacked. The church's initiatives have been successful to a measure.

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<sup>46</sup> David Kaulemu, 'The Role of Religion in Societal Transformation: The Case of Zimbabwe'

<sup>47</sup> Reverend Mutungami interview 03.6.2012

# CHAPTER FOUR:

## EVALUATING THE CHURCH

In evangelization, it is unacceptable for the church to disregard areas that concern human advancement, justice, liberation, progress, reconciliation and peace. If the church disregards these it is likewise disregarding the teaching of the gospel about love of one's neighbour who is suffering and in want<sup>48</sup>. It is clear that beyond, evangelism, the church needs to engage in policy debates, policy monitoring and evaluation processes, checking on the politicians and ensuring that the country does not plunge into violence, economic doldrums, political instability, social and moral decay. The question that remains to be answered of the Zimbabwean church is whether it has in any way been able to speak prophetically to the politicians and avert violence and everything associated with it. Has the church been the able stand with victims of violence? Has it spoken truth to power as far as violence is concerned? The answer is yes to an extent and more could and should be done.

The church's theological and analytical skills to respond to national building issues have been tested, stretched and found wanting. The church's response or attempts to grapple with the national economic doldrums that climaxed with hyperinflation in 2008 and political violence characterized by the polarization between ZANU PF and the MDC since 2000 is not the best story to tell .

De Gruchy (2004) argues that in independent Zimbabwe, church theology and social teachings have become irrelevant and impractical in the face of mounting national problems, to the extent that the church returned to "private piety and ecclesial ghettos", while the state celebrated violence.

### 4.1. CAN THE CHURCH STOP VIOLENCE?

Yes, to an extent, but if it is to go on a full scale, it needs to deal with its own temptations and other shortfalls within its rank and file. Besides it needs to strengthen partnership with civil society organizations and the government of the day. From this

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48 See Archbishop Robert Ndlovu on "The role of the Church in nation building" in Mukai-Vukani, No. 59 December 2011 page 14.

study, there is ample evidence, that although the church has played an active role in trying to defuse and resolve the problems associated with violence, the effectiveness of its engagement has been limited by a number of challenges.

The greatest challenges of the clergy in effectively reigning on politicians and halting violence are selfishness and greed coated in poverty. The old adage that said, “As poor as a church mouse” remains true in the Zimbabwean scenario. Many of the interviewees mostly church leaders were quick to point out that the church apart from weaknesses brought about by wolves in sheep’s clothing in its midst, it is greatly compromised by selfish material wants fuelled by economic difficulties that the country finds itself in. Politicians find this an easy way to court church leaders by offering them farms, cars and even cash for their personal needs or that of their struggling churches. Arguments about the church working with ‘the people’s government’ in Africanizing the church, restoring the African identity and empowering the black Zimbabwean, ‘the sons of the soil’ are just but a smokescreens and scapegoats for ending one’s poverty and satisfying one’s greediness. The Secretary General of UDACIZA, Rev. Tsvakai did not mince his words, when he said,

“If you look at our Vapostori membership in UDACIZA, most leaders and their flock are poor and cannot raise a meaningful church offering to meet their church needs. Anyone, especially politicians, who come promising some material advancement is listened to and later discarded when they prove that he is but a joke”<sup>49</sup>

Poverty which has also fuelled the ‘prosperity gospel’ in the country has seen most men of the cloth disregarding the very values of the Christian faith they proclaim in search for riches. Communities are left without vibrant leaders because both church leaders and traditional leaders have been beneficiaries of government support and privileges. As a consequence they are unable to take a stand and rebuke those in government involved in perpetrating violence. As an example, one focus group participant in Gutu was quick to mention that during a church leaders conference in Mutare, Minister Kasukuwere introduced a project called ‘upfumi kuma church’ (wealth to the churches). This resonated well with the church leadership but others saw it as a ploy to attract votes.<sup>50</sup>

Snapshot survey findings indicate that the majority (73.7%) of the respondents feel that some church leaders and their members have allowed themselves to be used by politicians for personal gains. This also resonated with most focus group discussions

49 Interview at Zengeza 2, Chitungwiza on 19th June 2012.

50 Gutu focus group discussion 15.6.2012

where discussants felt that most of the clergy and their laity are in it for what they get out of it and not what they put into it.

TABLE 2: SOME CHURCH LEADERS AND THEIR MEMBERS ALLOW POLITICIANS TO USE THEM FOR PERSONAL GAINS

Responses	Number	Percentage
Strongly disagree	14	7.1
Disagree	26	13.1
Not certain	12	6.1
Agree	104	52.5
Strongly agree	42	21.2
Total	198	100

Running church governance and humanitarian programs have also lured the clergy and their associated faith-based NGOs to succumb to donor funding conditionalities at any cost even what goes against their very core Christian values. This in a great way has meant that the church cannot be a neutral and honest broker when politicians resort to violence. In as much as a number of the Vapostori sects need to extricate themselves from allegations that they are but ZANU-PF, the Christian Alliance also need to do the same with allegations that they are a front for the MDC-T. Until such extractions are made real, it is difficult for all and sundry within the political circles to believe these sections of the church as neutral arbitrators in cases of violence. Recently, Didymus Mutasa dismissed the on-going peace prayer rallies by the Zimbabwe National Pastors’ Conference as MDC machinery at work, “Those are prayers for the MDC, we will have our own prayers and God will hear us”<sup>51</sup>. Thus, there are a lot of suspicions around what some sections of the church are doing as intelligence gathering from either ZANU PF or MDC find some of the men of the cloth biased and pretending to be neutral.

Another challenge of the clergy in tackling violence is the fear of state reprisal through security agents. Focus group discussions in Bindura, Nkayi and Norton as well as a couple of key interview informants have indicated that church leaders more often than not choose not to denounce violence especially if they perceive it to be state-sponsored for fear of intelligence agencies and party militia who may pounce back on them. In places where there are political bases, pastors dare not follow after their sheep who may be wrongly receiving punishment in such torture bases for reasons of personal and family security.

51 Daily News, 21 June 2012.

There is fear that pastors are constantly under surveillance from security agents. Some of the pastors may have shortcomings with regards to women and money. Once this information is in the hands of security agents, one is 'bribed' to keep quiet and not denounce state violence otherwise skeletons in the cupboard will be released. One local pastor argued that it seems like security agents would want to use religious leaders to convert church faithfuls into the party apart from just making them church converts.<sup>52</sup> The way Archbishop Pius Ncube was silenced through CIO work after criticizing President Mugabe and his government is often quoted as what will become of any clergyman who delves into politics. Most church leaders are so petrified to the extent that they would count a day in a police cell as equivalent to a day in hell.

Church unity among the clergy especially at national level is not easy to come by as different church networks, denominations and luminaries are pushing different agendas mostly driven by ulterior motives. This makes it difficult for church to have a unified position in denouncing certain sections of society fuelling violence. Dr. Shana of HOCD likened the task of getting the consensus of the three church networks, EFZ, ZCBC and ZCC to getting three elephants to dance. More often than not one network feels safe to act alone without the others. Extreme polarization in the country has affected the church's ability to tackle violence. Thus, one finds that instead of addressing the structural and fundamental issues of violence, the church finds comfort in addressing the tail end of violence.

At local level, St Peters Catholic church in Mbare demonstrates a case of a divided church. One congregant (anonymous) summarized it as follows; "Our church choir is very sympathetic of ZANU (PF) and our CCJP is considered opposition

"I have noticed over the past three years that politics dominates every conversation. It's as if nothing else matters... but I'm not saying you should ignore politics, but put it in its proper place.... it's these meaningless divisions that have been created that keep people apart, that have built automatic intolerance, that make it difficult for people to reach out to people they don't know or to trust them" Charles Ray, Us ambassador to Zimbabwe in Daily News, 'Zimbos obsessed with politics' on 31st July 2012

52 United Methodist Church pastor in an interview 13.6.2012

and at the extreme end some of the Chipangano members and CIO members keep an eye on all”.

One clergyman bemoaned the scenario by saying, “if we are united as Christians we could change the situation, but we are pushing different agendas to the success of violence and its perpetrators”. Big church networks do not seem to trust some of its advocate institutions. It is not new that there are instances like you have the Zimbabwe National Pastors Conference slamming government on violence in Murambatsvina and the major networks issue a statement distancing themselves from such as not a church position. Bishop Hatendi noted with dismay that Church splits and breakaways are nowadays celebrated as enlightenment, making the church enormously divided, thereby enabling politicians to play cat and mouse with it. Politicians have even gone to the extent of applying the divide and rule tactic and in the process creating their own churches, just as they did with trade unions. It is crystal clear that a united church will not only end violence but will stop some politicians from their evil schemes to obtain or stay in power.

## **4.2. CHURCH SKILLS, INSTITUTIONS AND CAPACITY TO DEAL WITH VIOLENCE**

One of the weaknesses of the clergy in Zimbabwe is the lack of institutional capacity to engage government and politicians on nation building issues including violence. Dr Kadenge, a lecturer at one the theological training centres in the capital was quick to point out that the clergy men of today is not exposed to the nature of the dynamic political situation Zimbabwe is going through neither has he been trained on how to handle it. Most men of the cloth in Zimbabwe, in line with the colonial theological training curriculum have been taught to evangelize only and to view politics as the evil world’s domain. The worst indoctrination has been the colonial sentiments that one just needs to view all authority-no matter how repressive and violent as God given and just pray about it. Thus, in most cases both the clergy and the laity are too heavenly minded to be of any earthly use. Nation building is not a priority to most church leaders and if it comes their way it has to be donor funded and not be part of church internal financing system.

A sad observation has being the weakening of church institutions that seem to promote good governance, nation building, peace and non violence. This has been done by the clergy themselves or through infiltration by state agencies. A number of clergymen interviewed in this study confirmed that any serious church institution which is mostly crowd pulling is not spared from infiltration by state agents. Dr Kaulem noted that institutions like Silveria house at Chishawasha which were popular for critiquing bad economic governance such as the economic adjustment

policies (ESAP) have been seriously undermined and now major on mere recording of events.

There is a tendency among members of the clergy to be reactive than proactive, prompted to act in a way that they play to the state gallery and in some cases unwittingly support those bent on wielding violence. Take for instance, ‘the TB Joshua coming to Zimbabwe story’, in which the Prime Minister, Morgan Tsvangirai as a member of the laity, had no right to invite Prophet T.B. Joshua to Zimbabwe for the national day of prayer. Instead he was reportedly said to have done so, expecting the church leaders to take it as given. This was wrong as inviting such personalities was and remained a domain of the clergy in Zimbabwe. Politicians jumped to capitalize on the incident. ZANU PF and the public media managed to get some clergy men to speak against the idea on behalf of the entire church in Zimbabwe while those who are anti-ZANU-PF and the private media managed to speak for the idea under the pretext of the entire church. Pentecostal Assemblies of Zimbabwe leader Bishop Trevor Manhanga said TB Joshua had no power to change the political landscape in Zimbabwe. Tsvangirai’s political fortunes would not be shaped by TB Joshua or any “artefacts” received from him. Manhanga went on to claim that Joshua should first pray for the “burning” Nigeria before talking of visiting Zimbabwe. When the HOCD finally spoke its mind, most church members and the general public wondered why the HOCD was silent and much quieter when the Anglicans were being tear-gassed and harassed by the police.

Snapshot survey findings indicated that, most church members and the general public were looking forward to hearing the church leadership’s comment on the Anglican saga and surprisingly this never came through. Table 3 below from survey findings indicate that church leaders should be saying more on violence than they are currently doing:

**TABLE 3: CHURCH LEADERS SHOULD BE SAYING MORE IN THE PRESS ON PEACE AND RECONCILIATION**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly disagree	32	16.0
Disagree	11	5.5
Not certain	14	7.0
Agree	86	43.0
Strongly agree	57	28.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

One of the challenges of the clergy in fighting violence has been lack of communication with its congregants. Some churches shun the subject and others demean it as not very applicable to their flock. With POSA and AIPA, it is difficult for church networks to operate community radios that reach their members, especially those in the peripheral areas. This communication problem has made it difficult for congregants to get updates from their leaders on what to do and what not to do with certain scenarios and challenges confronting the nation. It is difficult to guess what the church's position on certain national issues is for most congregants. At times the church leaders at national level have no position and if they have it is never communicated to their constituencies. A good example of such dilemma is the failure by either the HOCD or the ZCC to issue a statement on where they stand with the Anglican saga. The church (save the Catholics and a few others) has been unable to run even small in-house newsletters or magazines to keep their congregants aware and enlightened on certain nation building issues. Most protestants and evangelicals seem not to be able to disseminate their HOCD Joint pastoral letters to their congregants, the way Catholics do. Interviews with most congregants confirmed that some church leaders do not even know what these general letters are for unless they read them in the press.

The scramble for state favours and donor resources has also weakened the church's ability to tame violence. Some members of the clergy now value officiating at state functions as more important than the humble work of preaching peace and non-violence. Getting too close to politicians have costed some members of the clergy, making them irrelevant in terms of rendering powerless their ability to reprove politicians when they turn violent or and assist politicians in resolving national problems especially those related to state violence associated with the land reform, indigenization and elections. Different church organs seem to be entangled in a fight and jealous over donor funds for their social teaching and advocacy work on peace building. Interviews with Bishop Kanye indicate that some church leaders are not happy with the UNDP funding that the Ecumenical Church Leaders Forum received from the UNDP to do peace-building. There are those church

**'As the church we are caught in-between, if we comment on political issues, we are labelled regime change agents and surrogates of the MDC by government bureaucrats. If we keep quiet our congregations accuse us of being ZANU PF sympathisers. So we end up being everything to everyone' - one pastor noted**



departments in the big networks who felt that, they should have been given such a project to run than create a new structure run by Bishop Ambrose Moyo.

### 4.3. THE CHALLENGES OF THE CONGREGANTS

The church as an entity is not involved in violence but some of its leaders and members are deeply engrossed. An exception could be the Kunonga faction within the Anglican church that have declared that it would use force to seize property from the main Anglican faction the way government grabbed land from white settlers.

The challenges of the clergy highlighted above are also in a number of ways the challenges of the congregants. A number of church leaders (elders, deacons and laypersons) seem to be leading both in church and at party level. Some are war veterans, others former war collaborators still in ZANU PF and another lot have defected to MDC and opposition parties. It seems when the church elders leave church they put on a different hat at their political parties.<sup>53</sup> Their problem is that even if they wanted to they cannot easily dissociate themselves with what their parties regard to be a measure of royalty, gallantry and patriotism, even if it means pushing a violence agenda. In some cases, both the clergy and the church leaders throw themselves into the fray by giving comments on governance and violence.

Discussions with congregants in Epworth and Zvimba indicated that many church members feel more obliged to stand with party propaganda than be sincere Christians who shun violence not out of ignorance or fear but wrong prioritization of allegiance. They find it easy to choose mammon than God. Others have never exhibited any signs of character change before and after joining their churches. To them churches are like clubs that they walk in and out as and when they feel like. Thus authorizing the assaulting of someone, killing or kidnapping fellow neighbours for being in another party do not appeal to their conscience because they do not have that conscience at all. Given this scenario, it then does not come as a surprise that, a number of church leaders are reported to be missing church while attending to political bases during elections and others are known as the ‘no-nonsense’ men when it comes to championing violent campaigns. Such church men are part of the problem rather than the solution when it comes to the church putting off violence.

In Bindura and Zvimba discussions with congregants revealed that certain church leaders who are also party leaders normally get some of their fellow church members ‘disciplined’ by party youths by secretly deploying strangers to deal with the perceived party opponents. Cases of church elders beating up people and hosting torture bases in the high density areas have been reported.

<sup>53</sup> Focus group discussion at Murewa

#### **4.4. CHURCH-CIVIL SOCIETY DILEMMA**

The Church and civil society are confronted with some limitations and contradictions in the democratisation processes as well as in their advocacy for anti-violence and peace in Zimbabwe. Their leaders and members are not neutral players in the polarization that has engulfed the country. In comparative terms, CSOs and the church, confront similar problems which limit their capacity to act as agents of peace and honest brokers between the major political parties - MDC and ZANU-PF. Some Church or NGO leaders are well known to be sympathetic to one party or the other. Besides, most of them lack internal democracy for them to be effective in their mission of pluralising society. There is need to evolve an internal culture of adherence to democratic values. Second, both the church and NGOs exhibit extraordinary donor dependence when it comes to nation building work especially when it comes to tackling issues of violence and peace-building. In particular, NGOs are by and large based on charity. They are constituted as benefactors. What they give out is therefore charity and not rights, as a result they are accountable to those who finance them, not to the people they intend to benefit. Therefore, the celebratory accounts of the rise of NGOs and their activities must take note of the fact that the NGO sphere can produce complex political possibilities, democratic and antidemocratic.

# CHAPTER FIVE:

## WAY FORWARD FOR THE CHURCH

### 5.1. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOCD, UMBRELLA ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUAL DENOMINATIONS

- a) *Church, Violence and Politics:* Church leaders must participate in political discourse especially doing everything within their power and means to denounce violence but remain apolitical. Church leaders must desist from practicing partisan politics while still serving as clergy in their denominations. They are encouraged to desist from making public their affiliation by word or deed. It is therefore recommended that the HOCD must put in place a constitution and code of conduct that governs the behaviour of all clergy under their ambit.

Most clergymen need to know that when politicians come to church they need their assistance and not to address the church and lecture it on politics and development soliciting for votes. Similarly the clergy need to desist from addressing political gatherings except if it is to remind people of peace and love and non-violence. Those members of the clergy who normally want to champion both politics and theology more often than not lose their values, ethics and morals.

Church members need to be genuine and avoid paying more allegiance to political parties' violence propaganda than to the teachings and ethics of the gospel of love and peace. Church leaders need to teach and speak more to the issues of non-violence, reconciliation, brotherly love and care than they do prosperity issues.

- b) *Redesign theological trainings to include nation building:* There is great need for theological schools to teach the clergy and current pastor students the subjects that speak of the Christian as a citizen of this world. Many members of the clergy still need some teachings outside mainstream evangelism in the area of how to deal with transitional politics, transitional justice and issues of violence.
- c) *Theological reflection and dialogue:* Constant exchange of views and opinions across the clergy is missing. As long as the clergy is distant from each other and have no platforms to meaningfully engage and debate issues, it will remain difficult for the church to speak to politicians against violence as a united force. There

may be need for the Zimbabwean church to take a leaf from Malawi's Public Affairs Committee that brings together the church leaders, the Muslim imams, civic leaders and political parties-not for partisan politicking but for pushing what they term national issues. The bishops and imams always keep the group focused and not derailed by selfish or personal motives. The spokespersons and leaders of the Public Affairs Committee are the bishops and imams. These are the ones that were able to block the former President Muluzi's push for an unconstitutional third term in office.

- d) *There is need to heal bleeding wounds and traumatic experiences:* Zimbabweans in general have not had time to heal from traumatic experiences of the armed struggle, Gukurahundi, Murambatsvina, violent elections and of late the Anglican saga. The church has a mandate and duty to see to it that such a process of healing and reconciliation is undertaken, most probably under a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The church needs to unanimously press for this. Politicians are likely to postpone this forever, but the church needs to find means and ways of initiating such.
- e) *Improve communication channels with the congregants:* Despite the issuance of Pastoral Letters. The church needs to rethink its communication mechanisms so that the congregants are aware of church interventions and efforts, even what's happening behind the scenes. Quite diplomacy or dialogue with politicians is useful but if the public and especially the congregants are continuously kept in the dark of what the church is doing about certain national problems, they will be forced to unnecessarily condemn the church leadership for passivity.
- f) *Church leaders need to continue being honest neutral brokers,* willing and ready to sacrifice as well as raffle the feathers of whichever party. The ministry of reconciling men to their fellow countrymen in a nation rocked by violence and polarization is easily said than done, many men of the cloth are failing to walk the talk. Along the way they are enticed by gifts and lose their vision and call for duty.
- g) *Develop a proper theology of preventing violence, naming and shaming its perpetrators:* The church can stop creating or sheltering the perpetrators of violence if it stands as one, flash out impostors among its flock and leadership and denounce violence alt-rightly without taking political or ethnic sides.
- h) *Churches should not belittle each other:* The simplest way of dividing the church has been to get one group criticizing the other. Church leaders should not be like politicians fighting for political power through demonizing each other. Church 'democracy' is needed to avoid one group opposing the other and thereby washing

the church's dirty linen in public. A reviled and divided church cannot advocate for non-violence, love and peace.

## 5.2. THE CHURCH AND GOVERNMENT

- a. *Revisit and redesign the organ on national healing and reconciliation:* The configuration, structure and mandate of the organ of national healing and reconciliation needs to be revisited as nothing significant has come out of the structure over the last four years of its existence. The organ needs to be outside the president's office and housed by a non-governmental structure. The church is best positioned to do this under the HOCD.
- b. *There is need for a regular platform for continuous dialogue between politicians and the Church:* Senior Church leaders and politicians especially the principals to the GNU need to meet, may be once in a month or in two months, just to reflect on national events and occurrences. This can assist in conveying messages of what went wrong and what went on well especially in areas of non-violence. Key issues around models of development (land, investments, indigenization and empowerment of local people) and governance systems that do not ignite conflict and violence can also be informally discussed. This enforces some sense of mutual accountability which comes with obligations and responsibilities. Without this, there is a tendency for the church and the politicians to speak to each other through the media and that in itself is a recipe for disaster.
- c. *The HOCD needs to have a liaison person or chaplain in parliament:* the church needs to have some key focal contact clergy interacting with members of parliament both on a personal, family and institutional level. This helps the church to be able to follow and detect early warning signs of violence and behaviour among the politicians. Building rapport with parliamentarians can assist the church in identifying areas that need spiritual guidance, counselling and coaching.
- d. Pick up the "Save Zimbabwe campaign" in a broader and enriched fashion given the existence of a government of national unity. The church needs to continue hammering the value of national pride and ethos over party politics. If Zimbabweans are driven to value their national pride and the 'ubuntu' concept, violence, murder and disappearances during polls become things of the past.

## 5.3. CONCLUSION

Despite problems and obstacles, one gets the impression that the church's engagement with issues of peace and justice is encouraging. Needless to say, more needs to be done for the church to show strong leadership, a clear vision and courage in ending all forms of violence in Zimbabwe. It is not easy to walk this talk in what seems to

be a hostile, polarized and infiltrated space. The church needs to ensure that people's civil liberties are protected at all times and that they live in peace and dignity with one another despite their political affiliation. The church leadership should not be partisan but work for the common good with everyone, in the same manner God lets his rain fall on the good and bad people alike. The leadership of the church- the clergy (bishops and pastors/priests) should not join any political party or participate in partisan politics but individual Christians(including elders, deacons and layman) may join a political party of their choice and campaign for it peacefully (violence free) and democratically. Most congregants in political parties still need to cultivate a violence-free culture that fears God and respects the sanctity of human life mostly inspired by the old biblical golden rule- 'love your neighbour as self ' despite your personal and political differences.

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## Focus Group Discussions

The following FGDs have been held with

- a. Epworth with 14 Women Kuwadzana group (17th May 2012)
- b. Mbare St Peters Catholic Church, 5 women 9 men (20th May 2012)
- c. Zvimba with 9 congregants, 7 men and 2 women (8th June 2012)
- d. Bindura 16 congregants in Chipadze, 11 men and 5 women (9th June 2012)
- e. Nkayi Ministers Fraternal, 11pastors, 9men and 2 women (15th June 2012)
- f. Makokoba, Bulawayo congregants, 17 men and 6 women (16th June 2012)
- g. Murewa 10 pastors, 6 congregants, 7 male, 9 female 9 (13th June 2012)
- h. Chitungwiza 1 pastor, 13 lay people: 3 male,11 female(30th May 2012)
- i. Murambinda 12 pastors, 11 male, 1 female (28th May 2012)
- j. Gutu 10 pastors,5 congregants; 8 male,6female(16th June 2012)
- k. Masvingo 9 pastors 5 congregants, 8 male, 6 female (16th June 2012)





## CCSF MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

African Community Publishing and Development Trust (ACPD)  
Artist for Democracy Zimbabwe Trust (ADTZ)  
Basilwizi Trust  
Bulawayo Agenda  
Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP)  
Centre for Peace Initiatives in Africa (CPIA)  
Counselling Services Unit (CSU)  
Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ)  
Habakkuk Trust  
Legal Resources Foundation  
National Association of Societies for the Care of the Handicapped (NASCOH)  
National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO)  
Non-violent Action and Strategies for Social Change (NOVASC)  
Radio Dialogue  
Silveira House  
Union for Development of Apostolic Churches in Zimbabwe (UDACIZA)  
Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ)  
Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference (ZCBC)  
Zimbabwe Christian Alliance (ZCA)  
Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust (ZIMCET)  
Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC)  
Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights)  
Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (NGO Forum)  
Zimbabwe Liberators Platform (ZLP)  
Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children (ZNCWC)  
Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP)

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