

**The spiritual weakness of Western Missionary Founded Churches as the cause of  
the rise of Africa Independent Churches in Zimbabwe with special reference to the  
Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa.**

**By**

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## **DEDICATION**

To all the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa members in Zimbabwe especially the generality of the populace affected by their church's spiritual weaknesses and are seeking full humanity.

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an attempt to analyse and investigate ways of responding to the poor UPCSAs missional approach to Zimbabwean society. The desire to write this dissertation was born out of the experience of working for the past six years as an ordained minister of this denomination in the Presbytery of Zimbabwe, there are six congregations with the right to call a minister, thirty grant receiving and fifteen preaching stations in the whole country which is serviced by thirteen ministers, including probationers. The UPCSAs has a total of four thousand five hundred and ninety seven members not counting Sunday school children. The dissertation seeks to survey the history of how the people in the Presbytery of Zimbabwe came to be some of fewer memberships as compared to other denominations in the country. It will focus on colonial and post –colonial events, which led to evangelizing the nation.

The spiritual weakness which the people of Presbytery of Zimbabwe (POZ) experience is a product of the evangelism mode of missional approach to society and the failure to contextualize the Good-News. This dissertation considers the possibility of how to correct this state of affairs.

Spiritually weak people have been destroyed precisely because they have reduced them to products. How to understand the context and achieve that change is the central issue which the writer addresses in this dissertation.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thank you all, God bless you abundantly.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

*AIC*: African Initiated/ Independent Churches.

AIC have many variations and meanings to include the following:

a) *African Independent Churches* - The question could be Independent of what?

Theologically it is nonsense because the church is the body of Christ. African Independent Churches; independent, I presume from the WMFC's assumptions and control. These churches are growing in numbers very rapidly mostly in Africa (including Zimbabwe), giving emphasis on the authority of the spirit of God over tradition. They keep looking for fresh evidence of God's power and new, spontaneous leadership.

b) *African Indigenous Churches*: Churches which are locally and self-propagating, theologizing, governing and supporting. They are churches that are producing, growing and living naturally in their own region and environment, in-culture expressions of Christianity.

c) *African Initiated Churches* – The Universal Church was initiated by Christ including that in African soil. There are African initiatives in praise and determining everything in Christianity. This implies that Christianity has become relevant to an Africans' many cultures. These are churches found in Africa for Africans and by Africans. There are certain churches which are not relevant to the African contexts, whose structures and theology do not help the African worshippers. Such non-AICs are churches or denominations commonly referred to as the “main-line” churches, “historical churches” or even “mission churches”. These titles are also problematic because they are misleading too.

*Historical churches:* It implies that other churches have no history, which tantamount to misconception and fallacy.

*Mission Churches:* It is sad to refer one denomination as a Mission Church yet all churches have missions. A better understanding of this would be the Western Missionary Founded Churches because they tend to glorify and embrace Western Culture as part of their worship.

*Mainline Churches:* the term “mainline” has come to indicate churches in the mainstream of traditional Christianity in Zimbabwe, yet without the same commitment to basic beliefs on salvation and Scripture as evangelicals or AICs would hold. This term implies that others are on the wrong side – posing a judgment on other churches, yet we know that its theology and structure did not help the cause of the African Churches.

*P.O.Z:* The Presbytery of Zimbabwe. It is one of the nineteen (19) Presbyteries in The Uniting Presbyterian in Southern Africa denomination and the only Presbytery in Zimbabwe. It is the only Presbytery covering the country Zimbabwe and serviced by fourteen (14) ordained ministers and 31 Evangelists and laypreachers.

*Syncretism:* The attempt to amalgamate, combine and blend elements of different religious systems into a single body of belief and practice. Some African Indigenous Churches have sought to fuse elements of Christianity with pre-Christian traditional beliefs; the results of translating the Christian message into native forms without preserving the meaning; the mixture of the old meanings with new, in such a way that the essential nature of each is lost.

*UPCSA:* The Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa. It is a denomination born of the union between two denominations “Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa” and

Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa”. ‘Uniting’, a continuous tense implying that it is a process of coming to be one and open to future unions.

*WMFC*: Western Missionary Founded Churches.

*ZCC*: Zimbabwe Council of Churches; a mother body of Reformed churches in Zimbabwe.

*Zimbabwe*: Geographically, landlocked, forested Southern African country. Its population is approximately eleven (11) million people. Harare is the capital city. She gained political independence from Great Britain on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 1980 and ever since President Robert Gabriel Mugabe is its Head of state and the Chief Army Commander. The country is divided into ten (10) provinces drawn mainly along tribal lines. She has tolerance of religions. Christianity and African traditional regions share the same ground with many others to include Islam, Hinduism, and even Satanism to name but a few. The country is named after Great Zimbabwe Ruin – now a monument – once a shrine were the *Rozvi* and or *Karanga* people would worship *Mwari* or *Musikavanhu* (God the creator).

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## **CHAPTER 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Area of Investigation**

Human beings hunger after satisfaction and fulfilment in every sphere of life. Failure to find this gratification compels them to venture where there are signs for such gratification. The quest for contentment is remarkable in religious life. In this regard this dissertation seeks to discuss the missional spiritual weaknesses of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA). These weaknesses have caused people to seek satisfaction in African Independent Churches (AICs) such as Johane Masowe and Johane Marange churches and the newly formed inter-denominational communities such as the United Family International Church (UFIC) of Emmanuel Makandiwa and the Spirit Embassy of Elbert Angels, churches in Zimbabwe.

The African Independent Churches (AICs) take advantage that there are certain points or areas in Western Missionary Founded Churches (WMFC), of which the UPCSA is an example where they differ in understanding or interpretation but which Africans feel are fundamental, such as witch-craft and avenging spirits. This is expected for the simple reason that the WMFC/UPCSA are either silent or do not give sufficient details on such matters like witchcraft.

The WMFC should regard African religious beliefs as a foundation for faith in Christ. The African beliefs are not “dead works”, but an inauguration, a foundation, an inspiration and stimulation for the Christian faith. The African religious life is not just a

scaffold, but contains ingredients that qualify it to be a model religion for the Christian (Nyirongo1997:1).

Africans are religious in all aspects of life; hence failures in one sphere of life demand a religious answer. The UPCSA has tended to ignore some of the crucial cultural and religious issues that an African worshipper faces such as *kurova guva* (cleansing rituals to integrate the deceased's spirit into ancestor-ship). These weaknesses leave the African worshippers in a spiritual dilemma hence the move towards a search for spiritual contentment in new independent churches resulting in the growth of AICs. The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) is a good example of a WMFC displaying such weaknesses in Zimbabwe.

Desmond Tutu (1978:366) spoke of redeeming the “hidden treasures”, (the riches of the African culture, that which is yet to be tapped and made to good use in cultivating African Christianity, the likes of *rukwa* (practice that secures one's property and acts as magnet to trap a thief from going away with the intended stolen item(s)) and *barika* (polygamy) among many others, contained in the African religion and making them a scaffold for our new faith. It is reassuring to know that we have had a genuine knowledge of God and that we have had our own ways of communion with the deity, ways which meant that we were able to speak authentically as ourselves and not as pale imitators of others. It means that we can fashion new ways of speaking to and about God and new styles of worship reliably with our new faith. That which will address our African-ness

and that's where the African Independent Church address or fill the gap left vacuum by Western Missionary Founded Churches.

## 1.2 Justification

In scholarly circles the subject of independent churches has been dealt with by many scholars but I find myself forced by a pressing quest for knowledge to engage on the same issue with a view to raise some salient, outstanding and relevant factors that can still help the church to be more relevant today in its serving contexts. The number of Western Missionary Founded Church members who secretly seek help from independent churches is phenomenal, evidenced by the people who seek assistance in the AICs. Up to this present moment the WMFC have not come up with satisfactory solutions to issues of *ngozi* (avenging spirits) and *huroyi* (witchcraft) which are most feared by the African worshippers in Zimbabwe. It is also noted that an African person is a religious being day in and day out yet the WMFC are concerned with certain special days for religious activities. This is a challenge to the WMFC in terms of ministering to Africans in a holistic framework today.

African Independent Churches continue to increase; that includes the number of splinter groups within each denomination while the WMFC dwindle in support. This is a fact proved by the mushrooming of the African Independent Churches in various places of the country and a continuous numerical escalation in duration of a few days. It is also important to point out that the approaches of WMFC have for many years failed to

contextualize, thereby do not meet the core needs of the natives. It is from this context that this piece of work seeks to find room in continued scholarship.

This dissertation aims at identifying and addressing the spiritual weakness of the WMFC, in the context of continued loss of membership to African Independent Churches. Evangelists Mukombingo and December (pseudo-names) started their interdenominational gatherings from Presbyterian Church and went with a great number of following, just to name but a few. Proposals will be presented aimed at making the WMFC more relevant to African worshipers at all times in all situations of life in Zimbabwe.

### **1.3 Aim**

The major thrust of this dissertation is to identify and explore the spiritual weakness of the Western Founded Mounded Churches (WMFC) in the context of continued loss of membership to African Independent Churches (AICs) in Zimbabwe.

### **1.4 Objectives**

- 1.4.1 To trace briefly the history of UPCSA from Europe to Zimbabwe.
- 1.4.2 To identify the missional weaknesses of the UPCSA in Zimbabwe.
- 1.4.3 To discuss the mission work of AIC in Zimbabwe.
- 1.4.4 To discuss what UPCSA can learn from AICs.



1.4.5 To analyze critically and propose possible solutions that can help the UPCS/POZ to be more relevant in missional outlook in the African environment.

## **1.5 Methodology**

This dissertation is going to employ various methods:

### **1.5.1 Historical Method**

It is often used to designate the sum total of human activities and a more common usage is that which regards history as the record of the events rather than as the events themselves, in a sense of a record of the activities of the human race. It is the study of past and present experiences of the people, in this case with the gospel, both during and at the end of the missionary period (Kalu 2005:21). History has been regarded by some particularly in earlier periods as primarily an art (O'Collins *et al* 2004:140). By a continually increasing number of authorities it has tended however, in its modern form, to be considered as in the main generic social sciences which is concerned with reconstructing the past thoughts and activities of humanity. In this dissertation the historical method will help us to trace Zimbabwean Presbyterian church in general and in particular the history of how its members come to be victims of spiritual weaknesses.

### **1.5.2 Theological Method**

Theology is argued to be and always has been a human work (O'Collins 2004:263). It emerges out of and interprets human historical events and experiences, utilizing humanly

created and shaped terms and concepts. It is carried out by human processes of mediation, reflection, speaking, writing and reading. This method will seek to grasp plausibly the notion of God's self-revelation in the life of the people. One major discovery is that the repentant (believer) claims to have experienced God in their lives and have in a way received similar opportunities as the missionary or preacher. It is religious experience, an expression of the notion that all our language and thought is rooted in experience and is essentially the articulation and interpretation of experience. The end result of this interpretation of the experience will be a somewhat theological construction and reconstruction because the experiences and cultures will vary.

This aspect will help us in this dissertation to contextualize the discussion at hand from a theological point of view. Human experience and the Christian tradition are to be read together dialectically. As theology becomes more of a reflection on ordinary human life in the light of the Christian tradition, one might ask whether ordinary men and women might not be the best people to theologize. This method will be very useful as we make an exploration by helping in moving to a reflection in faith of God's revelation to the poor believer. Theology, therefore, can never be understood as a finished product produced by experts, which is merely delivered to a Christian community.

### **1.5.3 Pastoral Theological Method**

Theology inasmuch as it is concerned with and reflects on the care of people facing special problems, struggles for justice and peace and the care of people of different life situations, just like the people in the Presbytery of Zimbabwe who are struggling for their

spiritual gratification. The method will fulfil critical reflection on the church's manifold mission in the world (O'Collins 2004:196).

#### **1.5.4 Sociological Method**

In the study of human societies it is the branch of social science (with which it is often synonymous) that uses various methods of empirical investigation, and critical analysis to develop and refine a body of knowledge about human social structure and activity, often with the goal of applying such knowledge to the pursuit of spiritual welfare. Its subject matter ranges from the micro level of face-to-face interaction to the macro level of societies at large. Its traditional focuses have included social stratification or classes, social relations and interaction (O'Collins 2004:140). This method will help us analyze spiritual gratification or the spiritual weaknesses of UPCSA to determine their faith or belief.

#### **1.5.5 Interviewing Method (Questionnaire and Responses)**

Interviews were conducted with selected members because they theologize and explain the question at hand with critical minds. The targeted members were those that had a great influence in the question at hand and also those that have taken over leadership positions. Initially the questionnaires were targeted at the church and non-church people who broke new ground in the community rather than randomly. (*See appendix for questions asked*).

### **1.6 Literature Review**

The spiritual weakness question is not a virgin area in the academic circles. A lot of research has been done on this area; therefore the writer admits he is not the first person to deal with the topic.

There are several publications that deal with the exposition of the weaknesses of the church at large; however this writer selected a few of such literatures to help in suggesting ways that the UPCSA can be more relevant to African Christians. The literature under review was used according to focus on the logical arguments of the dissertation.

**1.6.1 Turaki Y. 1999.** Turaki in writing '*Christianity and African Gods: A method in theology*', is of the opinion that there is need to indigenize Christianity with the objective to strip and rid Christianity in Africa of all its Western striplings and coverings and replace that with what is African. These advocates had a strong belief that Christianity in Africa was brought under the cover of Western culture and for that reason, African culture should be made to replace western culture. Further this book provokes the desire to see Africans being incharge and control of the church and Mission policies that affection their destiny (Turaki 1999:17-19). In concurring with Turaki's philosophy this author will use his ideas toI would pursue his idea in trying to bring home the areas where the UPCSA fails to understand the early church in the Roman community used specific vocabulary, metaphysical methods and African spirituality. Focus mainly on personnel, administration and church structures urging the POZ mission to be Africanized, taken over by Africans.

**1.6.2 Nyirongo L. 1997.** *The Gods of Africa or Gods of the Bible? The snares of African traditional religion in Biblical perspectives.* Nyirongo is of the opinion that AICs take advantage that there are certain areas in WMFC where they differ in understanding or interpretation but which the Africans feel are essential, such as polygamy and witchcraft. For him, this is expected for the simple reason that the WMFC is either silent or do not give sufficient details on these matters. He further argued that WMFC should regard African religious beliefs as a foundation for faith in Christ. The beliefs are not ‘dead works’ but a beginning, an inspiration for the Christian faith. In this book he views African Religious life not just as a scaffold, but ingredients that qualify it to be a model religion for the Christian. This book will help the writer to relate the relations between the AIC and WMFC in Zimbabwe in resulting in the weaknesses of POZ.

**1.6.3 Tutu D. 1978.** *Whither African Theology?* Tutu speaks of redeeming the ‘hidden treasures’ contained in the African religion and making them a scaffold for a new faith. It is reassuring to know that Africans including Zimbabweans had a genuine knowledge of God and that Africa has its ways which meant to speak authentically as theirs and not as imitators of others. ‘Zimbabweans’ have a great store from which to fashion new ways of speaking to and about God and new styles of worship consistent with new faith. This thinking the writer will pursue in addressing the Africanness through which the AICs fill the gap left vacuum by WMFC.

**1.6.4 Bourdillon M. F. C. 1977.** *Christianity South of Zambezi Volume 2*. This book is taken as the direct helper for anyone who seeks to understand the spread of Christianity in Zimbabwe. African-ness was ignored by the missional church. “They (missionaries) refused to understand Africans and characterized their religion as non-existent or at least devilish” (Bourdillon 1977:25).

**1.6.5 Brain S. 2005.** “*African through European Christian Eyes: The world missionary conference*” The inhabitants of Africa were regarded as primitive, childlike and at the bottom of the evolutionary hierarchy relatively unimportant for the future of the world church. This negative attitude in the propagation of Christianity gave rise to the African Independent Churches in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Brain 2005:166). The author will pursue Brain’s idea in trying to bring home the areas where the UPCSA/POZ fails to understand the Zimbabwean.

**1.6.6 Comby J. 1984.** *How to Read Church History Volume 2*. In the propagation of Christianity, African culture was not considered argues Comby. “It seems as if the concern for civilization was meant to force Africans to accept the western culture, norms, values and life style” (Comby 1984:172). These points helped me to understand the way, propagation mode and approach in which the Gospel was spread in Zimbabwe.

**1.6.7 Idowu 1969.** *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs*. In this book regards the traditional African experience of God to be the same as that of the Christian.

“Africans (Zimbabweans) believe in and worship of one supreme deity; is universal among all really primitive peoples. ... we deny this primary revelation only when we rob the created order of its revelatory quality and relieve man of his inherent capacity to receive divine communication”. Elsewhere in same book he writes: “Evangelism in Africa has been based on the notion that Africa has nothing to offer as a cultural or spiritual basis for the Gospel” (Idowu 1969:18). In fact he regards all lesser deities or intermediaries as “refractions or diversions of the supreme God” or “diffused monotheism. This will help me scrutinize and evaluate the weaknesses of the UPCSA in Zimbabwe in which the Independent Churches had since gained ground and win membership spiritually into their newly founded denominations.

**1.6.8 Hood R.E. 1936.** *Must God Remain Greek*, wrote about the concepts that appealed to an intellectual circle in the Greek speaking Roman Empire. The argument implies that language of the native blacks in *Zimbabwe*, which is an important cultural aspect, was not considered in the propagation of Christianity in Africa.

**1.6.9 Daneel ML. 1987.** *Quest for Belonging*. Daneel stresses that the Christian religion is for Sundays only and have little bearing on Monday events (Daneel 1987:78). This suggests that a daily religious world-view of Africans was ignored and unfortunately continues to a certain extent, to be taken for granted in this day and age. This philosophy will help the writer analyze how the missionaries evangelized the country Zimbabwe.

**1.6.10 Mukonyora I. 1993.** *Rewriting the Bible*. “Release the word of God from its timeless neutrality and ideological perception” (Mukonyora 1993:147). This argument suggests that the word of God is bound and there is need for it to be preached in its multifaceted magnitudes.

**1.6.11 Hunter G. G. 1996.** When writing the book, *Church for the un-churched*, states that we are called to un-wrap the Gospel’s meaning from the cultural form in which we received it and rewrap it in the cultural forms of the targeted population (Hunter 1996:65). This statement means that local culture is the locus that the Gospel should be preached in, making it speak to, with and through the recipient. This idea I will develop showing the effects of culture in preaching the gospel.

**1.6.12 Moltmann J. 1982.** *Theology of Hope*. In this book he argues that, “...the mission of the Church is more than just mere propagation of faith and hope but also historical transformation” (Moltmann 1982:7). This suggests practical activities for the Church to respond to the needs of the people in their historical set up and culture.

**1.6.13 Anderson B.W. 1986.** His approach to the Old Testament in *Understanding the Old Testament, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition* helps in this paper to depict that the actions of God take place within concrete situations and actual crises and should be relied upon (Anderson 1986:55).



**1.6.14 Steward C.F. 1994.** In his book *African American Church Growth*, “The importance of prophetic ministry – the process of calling the people of God into an awareness of individuals and communities in spiritual, social and personal transformation” (Steward 1994:22). This clearly reflects the strength of the Church to influence the cause of events by offering prophetic ministry in practical context.

**1.6.15 Paas S. 2006.** *The faith moves south, A history of the church in Africa*. In Chapter 18 of this book Paas analysis how the Church came to Zimbabwe and raised the circumstances for spreading the Gospel in Zimbabwe were much favourable than before the 19th century. This writer will pursue this line of thinking in analysing the ground which the WMFC operated.

**1.6.16 Mwazha P. M. 1997.** *The Divine Commission of Paul Mwazha of Africa; Part 1*. Paul in this book is the opinion that the Holy Spirit has the task to detect that believers forsake the practices of witchcraft, wizardry and pagan sacrifices. Worshippers are advised to desist from harking on and using magic portions in food and drink. His idea of the centrality of the Holy Spirit will help this dissertation’s discussion and conclusion on what POZ can learn from AIC.

**1.6.17 Mwazha P. M. 1998.** *The Divine Commission of Paul Mwazha of Africa; Part 2*. “... Church arranges regular meetings to worship together preach the gospel and care for the sick through faith healing. Special sessions that allow those with gift to prophecy are permitted. Days of prayers are set for each Wednesday, Friday and

Sunday of every week." This is an area which the writer will be analysing in comparison to a one day service for the POZ/WMFC.

**1.6.18 UPCSA General Assembly. 2000, 2007, 2010 and 2012.** *The papers and minutes* of the denomination will be consulted and referred by this author for the purpose of tracing where, when, who, why and how UPCSA came to Zimbabwe.

**1.6.19 The Presbytery of Zimbabwe (POZ). 1997, 2006, 2010 and 2012.** *Committee Reports, Council minutes and Decisions.* These are essential documents for the writer to give the flow of this discussion in order to analyze the work and life of the UPCSA in Zimbabwe thereby enabling the author to draw conclusion.

**1.6.20 Gaybba B. 1987.** *The Spirit of love.* He says that in 1960 a new phenomenon appeared on the Pentecostal scene: experiences of ‘baptism in the spirit’ and tongue-speaking within traditional hierarchically structured church (the likes of Masowe churches in Zimbabwe), when he was quoting Sullian (1984:1040); “*Pentecotisme*” in *Dictionaire de Spiritualite (ParisBeauchesne cols 1036-1052)*. This will help me to compare and contrast the spirituality of UPCSA against the indigenous churches in Zimbabwe.

In my argument, I shall refer to the above mentioned authors as they help me present the weaknesses of the WMFC and suggest practical ways that can help the Uniting

Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa especially, to be more relevant to the African people and in African context.

### **1.7 Chapter Outline**

- Chapter 1: Trace the history of UPCSA from Europe to Zimbabwe.
- Chapter 2: Identify the missional weaknesses of the UPCSA in Zimbabwe.
- Chapter 3: Discuss the mission work of AIC in Zimbabwe.
- Chapter 4: Discuss what UPCSA can learn from AICs.
- Chapter 5: Critically analyze and propose possible solutions that can help the UPCSA/POZ to be more relevant in missional outlook in the African environment.
- Chapter 6: Conclusion

### **1.8 Conclusion**

The above named and arrayed issues are the framework on which the researcher will construct the ideas on which the WMFC, especially The Uniting Presbyterian Churches in Southern Africa (Zimbabwe), will know herself better and manage her children from eloping, abandoning and decamping to the African Independent Churches mash-rooming in Zimbabwe and a general survey to the historical nature of UPCSA will help in such endeavour.

## **CHAPTER 2: A historical Survey of the coming of Uniting Presbyterian Church to Zimbabwe**

### **2.1 Introduction**

History in Christian perspective is about human beings who are like God yet habitual wrong doers, who have immense creative potential are enmeshed in a web of circumstances and who are the shapers and yet also the victims of history (Bebbington 1990:18). History is an account of what people do and the consequences of their actions. People shape history but they are victims of what they shape. Thus people should shape history in a way which will help them to have confidence in themselves and to have hopes for a better future. In shaping history people must remember that God is guiding history forward and at the appropriate time God will bring history to its end or its final goal.

When we go by the discussion above, history means two things, what the historian writes about the past and the historical process, that is, the actual experiences of people. What the people did and what they suffered in their actual life. The two are closely knit together. What the historian writes about the past must correspond to the historical process; otherwise it will not be history. Therefore the historians must check with the people being written about so that they confirm the writer's facts as much as possible.

From a historical observation, one can consider generally the sending of the spirit at Pentecost as the origin of the church. Pentecost was not the absolute beginning of the

activity neither of the spirit nor of the Word of God. These rose above the temporal limits of the history of Christianity. The righteous of the Old Testament are made righteous by the spirit, who filled the believers' hearts with justice.

Missionaries had operating assumptions. Zimbabwean society was believed to have been left behind in the process of development. It needed civilization and religion for it to catch up with the outside world. Second, local people were believed to have no religion or culture at all. The traces of religious and cultural experiences among them were dismissed as mere paganism. This chapter seeks to evaluate the operating assumptions by looking at Zimbabwean society prior to Christianity and hence resulting in members leaving the UPCSA.

WMFC rightly noticed that the Zimbabwean society needed purification. Their approach, however, fell short of the purification process because instead they aimed at destroying the society, thereby creating a totally different one. The local people failed to feel that Christianity was their religion as it was taken as part and parcel of the forces which tore apart their society and religion.

At this point it is worthy to make a survey of the Zimbabwean society into which Christianity in general and Presbyterianism in particular was to be planted. A lot has been written about the pre-Christian Zimbabwean society (Bourdillon 1973:11-24; Magava 1986:5-12). The writer's attempt is to investigate some fundamental elements central to this discussion without reconstructing the complete society. Zimbabwean society is dynamic and changes as it encounters new circumstances and challenges. Zimbabwean society at the time of the introduction of Christianity was already in the process of

transformation, refinement and progress due to its encounter with traders. In trying to examine this society the writer chose three elements which are religion, politics and economy which intertwined and inseparable for local people.

## **2.2 Zimbabwean Society**

### **2.2.1 Religion**

In Zimbabwean society religion permeated all aspects of life. People believed in God, who was above all things (Mahoso: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2012; Interview). God was believed to be a spiritual being that could only be communicated with through spirits. So spirits were viewed as members of society. The society was composed of physical and spiritual beings. The two forms of beings were expected to be in sound relationship for the sake of the good life. God was believed to be approachable only through the spirit. God was also believed to be immanent through ancestors. This provided good foundations for evangelism if missionaries started from what the local people knew.

God's commands were conveyed to people through spirits. The belief was that spirits sanctioned or blessed people on behalf of God. Ancestors were viewed as mediators between God and people. As such this shows a strong belief in life after death, and hence it was very important to perform the correct burial rituals and to cleanse and integrate the deceased parent's spirit in the ancestral world.

Worship was communal; people participated in worship through drumming, singing, dancing, clapping, whistling and ululating. People felt being part and parcel of religious activities so they supplied the required elements for rituals and ceremonies the likes of *rapoko* to brew beer and goats or cattle for sacrifice. The religions were very valuable

although some negative elements were evident. The value can be seen through *kurova-guva* rituals (cleansing rituals to integrate the deceased's spirit into ancestor-ship). They freed spirits from wondering status and opened the way for the spirit to come back to the home and family.

The value of the religions also consists of ancestral mediation between God and their descendants, which two parties are believed to exist in complete separation. People felt some sense of incompleteness which could only be removed through being in sound relationship with God through ancestors. Ancestors and other good spirits were believed to be capable of bridging the gap between God and people. This whole process gave life shape, hope, meaning and direction. Everybody was born into this religion and the religion became the foundation of one's life. Negative aspects within this religion included the killing of twins, witchcraft and sorcery. These and others need to be discarded.

### **2.2.2 Politics**

Local people's political life was very much linked to the religion. The king or chief was respected, feared and unapproachable to ordinary people (Mupepereki. 4<sup>th</sup> August 2012: Interview). How people related to the king expressed their concept of God. Just as the King or chief was expected to protect his subjects, because he was believed to be vested with powers to ward off enemies, the same was expected of God. People approached political matters in the same way they would for religious matters. Obedience was a very central concept in political life and without which there was political anarchy (Mahoso 4<sup>th</sup> August 2012: Interview)

Political life cemented society by providing order, protection and continuity. It created a strong feeling of belonging to a particular clan or tribe. More-so, it articulated the concept of God in a real life situation. The way that people revered the political leader expressed their understanding of God. Politics and religion could not be easily separated.

### **2.2.3 Economy**

Accumulation of wealth and the size of family enabled one to attain status in a society, so large extended families were an economic advantage. Local people felt proud because of what they possessed. Ownership of property became a central concept in economic life. The economy was based on livestock, crop cultivation and trade. Economic life supplied the religious life with necessary religious objects and ritual elements like beads, beasts, millet and *rapoko*.

Economic life had its values for society for it was a sign of independence, dignity and self support. It sponsored traditional religions. It cemented society through practices like the practice of borrowing as a means of empowering one another economically.

The above discussion shows that religion, politics and economy went hand in glove in the way they stabilized a society.

This WMFC could not and did not take any of this into consideration. They could not because they were from a different context and had no briefing on the complexity of the African life style. The local people's behaviour also contributed to the problem. They were and still are good in pretending, which misled the missionaries. A good example is



that for more than a century now Presbyterianism has not yet managed to break through into the inner life of most Zimbabweans. Outwardly they are good Presbyterians but inwardly they are typically traditionalist. This is exposed during times of crisis and important matters like marriage and or death. In such times Christianity appears to be inadequate or unappealing.

As a result of difficulties and or deliberate moves, missionaries started from the zero point as though local people had nothing good which bound them together. Christianity was to displace the local people's traditional heritage for them to take up the missionaries' faith. This led to some tragic failures in terms of appealing to local people and hence with times WMFC began to lose their membership.

WMFC first and foremost missed the mark. Instead of purifying what people knew and building on that foundation they aimed at destroying everything. Christianity was presented as though its objective ways to destroy the African's heritage. WMFC could have utilized the already existing religious concepts and use the Gospel to refine and redirect them. The condemnation of African traditional religions and Zimbabwean society completely, brought about some discontinuity in the life of some converts as they were expected to have a complete breakaway from their former way of life.

There was also the impact of education. Good as it was formal education brought about book politics. This created educated elite from which African nationalists emerged. Among the nationalists arose leaders of political parties. This created competition for political legitimacy between chiefs and political party leaders. In due course chiefs were displaced. Those who valued traditional politics felt that disobedience to the chiefs

brought about mayhem in the society. The disobedience to chiefs could be associated with Christianity. This led some royal families to resist the spread of Christianity. During the liberation struggle for Zimbabwe (1960s to 1980 war), many Christians suffered because they were accused of disobeying the African cause (Mahoso 4<sup>th</sup> August 2012: Interview).

WMFC viewed local people as poor and unable to sustain the life and work of the church. The mission work was and is still funded by the South African church, outreach foundation organization, Scottish and Denver churches. The type of church which was being founded was a receiving one. This crippled local people in all aspects of economy. Up to this day people would like to live by handouts from donors. Local people were not as poor as missionaries had assumed they had given birth to their baby, the church, and assumed responsibility for financing it. Local people were not the owners of the church so they had nothing to worry about or comment about either. This was worsened by the lack of teaching on stewardship in the church. Only a few converts felt that the church was theirs and served it accordingly.

WMFC's assumptions therefore were inadequate, crude and misdirected. They operated as though they were in Europe. This resulted in presenting Christianity as though it was at war against all that is African. This is wrong and needs to be corrected. Localization of Christianity in this sense is corrective.

### **2.3 The Historical Nature of Western Missionary Founded Churches.**

The church was brought to Southern Africa (Zimbabwe) from European countries by the missionaries. It is from this context that the term Western Mission Founded Churches is a

result. This chapter is a discussion of the background of the WMFC and a theological reflection on the 19<sup>th</sup> century missionary movement in Zimbabwe. In the context of this dissertation, by church the writer means Christianity.

### **2.3.1 Church as the body of Christ**

The expressions “the church as the house of God” or “the church as the temple of God” indicate a relationship between God and community of the faithful. This is the relationship between the inhabitant and his domicile; thus referring to the presence of God in human-beings. But there is no stronger qualification of the church than to call it “Christ’s body”. Augustine’s interpretation of the church is primary Christological and in a twofold way. The whole salvific ecclesiastical activity based on the works of Christ and the interpretation of Matthew 16<sup>18</sup>; “... and on this rock I shall build my church...”. Upon occasion of this great confession made of Christ, which is the church's homage and allegiance, Christ signed and published this royal, divine charter, by which that body politic is incorporated. Such is the communion between Christ and the church, the bridegroom and the spouse. God had a church in the world from the beginning, and it was built upon the rock of the promised seed (Gen. 3<sup>15</sup>). But now, that promised seed having come, it was necessary that the church should have a new charter, as Christian, and standing in relation to a Christ already come. Now here we have that charter. Christ established the being of the church. It is Christ who is the church's Head and Ruler, to whom all judgment is committed, and from whom all power is derived.

This body politic is incorporated by the style and title of Christ's Church. It is a number of the children of men called out of the world, and set apart from it, and dedicated to Christ. The church is Christ's peculiar people, appropriated to him. The world is God's, and all that dwell therein; but the church is a chosen remnant, that stands in relation to God through Christ as Mediator. It bears his image. The Builder and Maker of the church is Christ himself. The church is a temple which Christ is the Builder of (Zech. 6<sup>11-13</sup>). The materials and workmanship is his. By the working of his Spirit with the preaching of his word he adds souls to his church, and so builds it up with living stones, 1 Pet. 2<sup>5</sup>. The building is a progressive work; the church in this world is but in the forming, like a house in the building. It is a comfort to all those who wish well to the church, that Christ, who has divine wisdom and power, undertakes to build it.

The church is built upon the foundation of the apostles (Eph. 2<sup>20</sup>). The first stones of that building were laid in and by their ministry; hence their names are said to be written in the foundations of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21<sup>14</sup>). Christ is both its founder and its foundation; he draws souls, and draws them to himself; to him they are united, and on him they rest and have a constant dependence. Christ here promises to preserve and secure his church, when it is built; 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it'; neither against this truth, nor against the church which is built upon it. The church is primarily the active gathering of new humankind into communion with Christ. Apart from Christ the church loses its significance and essence. Christ is acting in the sacraments (Baptism and Holy Communion) of the church.

### 2.3.2 The Church and Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit keeps the church together. The unity of the church comprises all the different languages in the world (Acts 2<sup>4-11</sup>). The true church has to remain faithful to tradition. By analogy with the physical human body, in which the soul or the mind keeps alive, moves and coordinates its many members, the Holy Spirit makes the church a living body. When a member is cut off from the body, it retains its shape, but it does not retain life. All members have to be united with the universal body of the church. The church performs its important functions: working miracles, proclaiming truth etc. the church does not live outside this body, because who-so-ever is an enemy of unity is an enemy of love.

The WMFC was born out of the modern missionary movement. This 19<sup>th</sup> century movement was a product of the passion to fulfil the Great Commission of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28<sup>18-20</sup>) by the European Christians. 19<sup>th</sup> century Zimbabwe was opened up for mission through various routes from the south to the north. The main route ran from Kurumann (South Africa) to Bulawayo (Zimbabwe). Through it hunters and explorers approached the north. It was called “the missionary road” because it was originally used by missionaries like Robert Moffat, David Livingstone and Mackenzie. The circumstance of spreading of the Gospel in Zimbabwe was more favourable than ever before. Paas says that “there was preparedness on the part of marginal people of leading men and women to break with the guardians of the ancient cult”. He refers to “territorial cults”, the likes of *Mwari* and *Mhondoro* cults in Zimbabwe (Paas 2006:218). He, views these as parallel to Christianity and or as a stepping stone to it. The focus of the movement was to plant

Christianity in the newly established colonies. Many of those who were involved in the movement were faithful and honest Christians who were tired of being part of the so-called assertive Church in Europe (Baur 1994:103).

The Presbyterians missionary movement to Zimbabwe mainly emphasized personal or primary conversion. They also emphasized personal commitment to God and His Church (Weller 1984:10). An important aspect is that these mission societies were interested in the three “Cs” that is Christianity, Civilization and Commerce (Machukera. October 29<sup>th</sup> 2010: Interview). By Christianization the aim was to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the Africa people; Civilization meant that Africans were to have a similar life style to that of the missionaries’ home countries; and Commerce was an attempt to promote trade. Missionary expeditions encompassed the training of African groups, especially the Buys clan in Transvaal, to enter the land north of Limpopo River, spreading the gospel, thereby Christianizing the land now named Zimbabwe. Missionaries of various denominations, among them the Presbyterians, came as chaplains to the settlers or invaders. Colonialism and mission came with and/or saw new missionary groups being offered large plots of land in Zimbabwe.

The WMFC successfully continued their evangelization in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The settlers put natives into villages through a programme called resettlement exercise. The method of villages seemed to work well. They were active in agriculture and health and education. In the early stage of the church Zimbabwe the WMFC planted mission stations such as Morgenster – (near Great Zimbabwe Ruins by the Dutch

Reformed church) and training of black ministers. The Dutch Reformed Church produced the first black pastor, Reverend Mandebvu while the Presbyterian Church came up with the late Reverend Timothy Kanyowa.

The mushrooming of African Independent Churches can be seen as a nationalistic and political development, stressing the usefulness of Christian mission for modernization and the political independence of Africa. This approach neglects the deeper religious reasons why Africans found Christianity “appropriate or useful in their campaign with the new and wider world that was intruding upon them” (Paas 2006:218). The change in African religious concept was not only brought about by the advent of Christian mission, but also by changes in the African traditional religious systems that had begun before the coming of the missionaries and by which these systems retained their vitality. The vitality of African traditional religion, as expressed in the new emphasis on super-natural healing, witchcraft cleansing and spirit-possession (often denounced and neglected by the missionaries), partly expressed itself in anti-mission protest, as can be seen in the ridiculing of Christianity by the *Nyau*-society and their *Gule-Wamkulu* by adopting pseudo Christian forms.

Many black converts became disappointed at the inability of mission Christianity to meet African needs for explanation, predication or control and practical problems like life-healing, unemployment, sterility and casting off evil as a real and personal power. This disappointment contributed to an ongoing interest in aspects of traditional religion and to the growth of independent churches that gave room to traditional approaches. Christian

mission (WMFC) in Zimbabwe was extremely successful and churches grew in influence and number at the expense of traditional religion and AICs. There are a number of reasons for this; which include:

- a) **Adaptation:** The WMFC continuously revisited their approach to evangelization into the black communities, thereby engraving the blacks into ministry. This made easy in translating the bible and liturgies.
- b) **Functions in society:** Christianity took the central position in African societies. The pastor took the leadership position replacing the traditional headman of the community, on funerals and custodian of the community rites.
- c) **Mediations of modernity:** The WMFC became the agents of perpetuation of modernism in Zimbabwe which includes type of dressing, homes to live in and ways of farming which were being taught mainly in the churches by missionaries.
- d) **Position towards the state:** The church (WMFC), took a leading position in drawing up legislative policies. As such, the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches were built close to the Parliament of Zimbabwe or in the centre of the District Development Centres in the case of other cities and towns.



- e) **Agents of cultural and social change:** The church was an instrument of change of the Zimbabwe African ethos. Zimbabweans were used to transforming their culture to suit that of the missionaries.

The WMFC used two methods of transmitting the Christian message. The major method was diffusion; whereby the culture of the recipient was not considered but that of the Gospel transmitter - missionaries' and European culture. The second method was translation, which was used to a minimum level and also at a later stage. Mission translation means the process whereby the culture of the recipient is considered to be the true and final locus of proclamation (Mukonyora 1993:147). In their mission and concern for the Christianization of Africa, the WMFC rarely used the local language, to proclaim the Gospel. Speckman (2000:9) says:

“... One significant thing which the Christian missionaries of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to Africa did for African Christians south of Sahara was translating the Bible into African languages and teaching them to read it. Thus, they were able to read the bible in their languages and “with their eyes” that is from the perspective of their own culture world view and life experience and appropriate its message, Africans Christians were now set on a journey, of discovery which has played a great role in the rapid and widespread embrace of the Christian faith in sub-Saharan Africa today”.

At a later stage they subscribed to produce catechisms in the vernacular languages and made the Bible available in Shona (Karanga, Ndau, and Zezuru etc.), Nyanja and Ndebele the local languages. It was the prime duty of the elite group trained by the

missionaries to translate the holy book into the native languages. A good example is the installation of the printing plant at Gokomere (Roman Catholic Mission) and Morgenster Mission (Reformed Church in Zimbabwe Mission) both in Masvingo province. By so doing such missionaries had indigenized Christianity in the best sense of the term rather than culture imperialist. The missioners also used the local agents who played a crucial and major role as interpreters of the message.

In this endeavour through their systems, especially their educational systems, they had an impulse towards freedom, development and emancipation (Mukonyora 1993:158). The education system enlightened the African people in technological knowledge and other information such as reading and writing, they were not exposed to before, and hence the gospel brought civilization from the European perspective. As the Africans were educated it became an eye opener to realize that the Westerners greatly oppressed them culturally. Through education, Africans were fortunately equipped with knowledge of how to deal with their oppressors more effectively to fight for their rights and preservation of their culture.

Presbyterian Church missionaries were aware of the material sphere as a result they equipped people to help themselves. These missionaries promoted a church of the people and by so doing some local people attained greater responsibilities in the Church. To promote civilization the missionaries established hospitals against *sangomas*' (African traditional) medication, Western life-styles, industries and many other western infrastructures. In the area of agriculture they introduced instruments and chemicals to

ease labour and promote more production. To enhance civilization, works of charity were intensified. Ministers would organize hand-outs in the form of clothes and or foodstuffs. As a result most of the poor Zimbabweans would come to church in order to be given goodies and not for the missionaries' primary goal of receiving the word of God. Their teaching was based on the religious and natural law of the basic equality of all beings before God. They taught and fought for human-rights. In the Zimbabwean context this included, cheap labour by the masters, where parents are employed as farm or domestic labourers, it also follows that the children were also taken as labourers. Again the children of farm and of workers would receive basic education within the farm.

As the missionaries promoted civilization, they also promoted commerce. As the industries progressed the local people were able to trade what they had with what the foreigners brought. The local and native people were farming small grain crops mainly sorghum and *rapoko*, but the missionaries taught them to produce long grain and cash crops to include tobacco, cotton and maize. The enhanced production enabled trade among the local people. Local people's economic life improved and resulted in better welfare, as they were able to get products they did not produce themselves. This alone resulted in Zimbabwe becoming the bread basket of Africa.

Unfortunately, in the process of Christianization the major method of evangelization used by the missionaries to propagate the Gospel message was the diffusion method. Diffusion takes place when the culture of the missionaries is made the inseparable carrier of the Christian message (Mukonyora 1993:158). The missionaries considered Africans as not

having religion, morals and being ignorant and backward. Thus, they wanted to bring God and true liberation to Zimbabwe, to Christianize the Africans. They classified African culture as full of fetishism, idolatry and syncretism. In their task they wanted to Christianize everything African. They erred by refusing to understand Africans and characterized their religion as non-existent or at least devilish (Bourdillon 1977:25). They did not pay any attention to complex and highly organized systems of religions among Zimbabweans. They erroneously believed that the Africans had no concept of religion. In the context of evangelizing the African, Christianity was presented enveloped in Western culture. A very good and clear example is when they saw blacks revering *Musikavanhu* or *Mwari* (the creator) through their ancestors they (whites), took it that the blacks worship the dead people. Sacred places and features are viewed just as monuments and deserving reverence, such as visiting Mount Inyanga, Manna-pools better known as *Chirorodziva* and animals or reptiles like lions, pangolin and python to name but a few.

It would seem that the concern for civilization was for the blacks (Zimbabweans) to accept the Western culture, norms, values and life-style. The missionaries took with them the ways of life they were used to in Europe and considered their culture and way of life as the Gospel standard. Anything opposite or different was considered to be devilish and uncivilized. The civilization to which they belonged was one of written text hence their introduction of European educational system. Their education was a package; it was based on the pouring of the opinion and knowledge from the teacher into the empty pupil (Banana 1982:30). The few educated were to work for the missionaries and were poorly paid for their labour. The missionaries were concerned with creating an elite group of

convinced believers. As a result some aimed at evangelizing a whole society or region but the deepening of faith was left as an urgent pastoral task to a future generation (Baur 1994:107). They were more concerned with the number or quantity of converts at the expense of quality of converts. The WMFC were given areas to evangelize by the Rhodesian government and as such strong-hold varies according to these regions. The Dutch Reformed Church was given the Fort Victoria (Masvingo) while United Methodist Church, United Congregational Church in Zimbabwe, was assigned the Manicaland and Chipinge areas respectively. The Anglican (Queen's Church) and the Roman Catholic Churches were given freedom to evangelize the whole country.

The Western missionary societies were closely linked with traders who exchanged their goods with valuables found in Africa. Missionaries like Charles Helmore are a good example of the collaboration between the missionaries and traders; Charles Helmore's scheming led to the colonization of the local people (Bourdillon 1977:34). The trading was unfairly done and it later led to fake trading deals, which saw Zimbabwe under colonization. One wonders how Christian were these deals; where vast land, farming implements, labour, the live-stock, minerals resources all in-exchange of clothes and sugar.

In this process, as seen in the previous argument, the missionaries added a forth "C", colonization (Zvobgo 1996:1). The relationship between the missionaries and the white settlers came about as a result of the missionaries' failure to make converts in other areas. It forced them to look for military support from the white settlers. The missionaries as

men of the bible could not be in a position to overthrow the local African governments hence they sought support to sign collaborative deals with the settlers: they needed protection and material support in order to proselyte among the Africans without fear of being molested by hostile tribes. On the other hand the settlers needed moral support of missionaries and deliberately involved them in order to head off humanitarian and philanthropic suspicion and criticism of their plans (Zvobgo 1996:1). The Jesuit Fathers were even attached to the expedition, which reflects the close link between the two.

The missionaries built schools and churches where people were taught to be acquiescent rather than violent. Through Euro-centric teaching Africans were silenced while their land was being taken. The missionaries acquired all the productive land from the local people. Eshmal Mlambo is of the opinion that the missionaries were after all settlers themselves with much the same interest as other settlers (Weller 1984:201). At the acquired land the missionaries used Africans as cheap labour. The view of Mlambo is substantiated by the fact that some missionaries blessed the contemplated punishment of the locals. They were pleased to see the blacks under torture and being denied their rights in their own country. It is in this environment that Christianity was being promoted. As such the black inhabitants received the Good News in a way of pleasing their white masters and not at all as a means of envisaging the faith into Christ as their Saviour and Lord as intended by the missionaries.

The missionaries did not study the psychology of Africans. They were not prepared to compromise their cherished way of life. They refused to understand the Africans; the

“rules and rubric of church life transplanted from Europe to Africa created a familiar way of life in a strange and disturbing environment” (Weller 1984:201). The missionaries were judgmental of Africans; they failed to pay sufficient attention to traditional African culture and religion. Their lack of trust in Africans was also the reason why they did so much for the people and so little with the people. They did what they thought was appropriate without considering what the people really wanted done for them or with them. They did not incorporate the concerned people into decision making. Their self-satisfaction with their civilized mission tended to rest on their ideas; they forgot that God loved people in their own context and culture.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century period was a period of rivalry not only between great powers seeking their place in Zimbabwe but also between the church denominations (Weller 1984:201). The missionary boards after all represented particular denominations from Europe. It means there was division between them as they scrambled for converts and material benefits in Zimbabwe. This led to particular church denominations being planted in particular areas more than the others. The Africans joined or converted to a denomination not out of choice because there was no choice at all. The Gospel was denominationalised and conversion as well. This was not a genuine move at all.

### **2.3.3 The inclusive Church**

The Presbyterian Church of South Africa was constituted at its first General assembly in Durban in 1897 and in 1959 the name was changed to The Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa (PCSA), taking into account the nature of work in Zambia, Zimbabwe and the denomination's regional nature. Parallel, however, to this was that the majority of the Free Church of Scotland mission did not join the PCSA. The Scottish missionaries of the Free Church decided that in the interest of the African mission they would remain separate. They then formed what was called the Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa (BPCSA) in 1923 but the relationship still remained apparently harmonious to the level where black members of the BPC could be taken care of by PCSA if they moved into the cities, where their denomination could not be found. In 1979 the name Bantu was changed because it was a derogatory and dehumanizing term to mean African instead of people. The Bantu Presbyterian Church then became Reformed Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa (RPCSA) (UPCSA General Assembly Papers 2000).

In 1999 September, however, the names of the two changed again to “Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa” (UPCSA) following the union of the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa (PCSA) and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa (RPCSA). The Rev. Cliff W. Leeuw became the first Moderator of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa at its first meeting held at Port Elizabeth in South Africa. The UPCSA is a multi-racial church with nineteen (19) Presbyteries made up of ministers and elders from every congregation who elect commissioners to the



bi-ennial General Assembly which is the supreme council of the church (UPCSA General Assembly Papers 2000)

The Presbyterian Church in Zimbabwe is not sovereign but a part of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. It has one Presbytery under the General Assembly which covers Zimbabwe. The nation is geographically divided into six regions namely; Harare East, Harare West, North West, South West, Eastern and Central regions. Strategically these regions operate under the leadership of a chairperson who is either a minister or an ordained elder; an elder representing each session within that area; all ministers and evangelists; the presidencies or chairpersons of all church associations as prescribed by their denominational constitutions, forms the regional leadership. The Regional Executive works through committees similarly to those of the Presbytery and through its Nominations Committee it appoints members to be members of various committees at Presbytery level. The various members from the six regions form the committees together with the appointed convener of the Presbytery.

## **2.4 Missionary Presbyterianism In Zimbabwe**

By missionary Presbyterianism the author refers to the period when Presbyterian expatriate missionaries were responsible for planting the church in Zimbabwe. This period covers from 1896, the inception of Presbyterianism in the country, up to 1960, a decade before the first local clergy were appointed to lead a congregation (Chikomo 25th June 2012; Interview).

The bone of contention in this section zeros in on an analysis of the type of Presbyterianism introduced into Zimbabwe. How much was Presbyterianism, which was introduced in Zimbabwe as a replica of Western Christianity, was modified by circumstances and events in the country.

### **2.4.1 Church Growth in Zimbabwe**

The first Presbyterian Church was formed in Bulawayo ([Matebeleland in the western part of Zimbabwe) in 1896. The existing old church today in Zimbabwe is the Makokoba Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa which was dedicated in 1916. It is much older than any other structures. The church which followed is the Ntabazinduna Presbyterian church which was established in 1938 following the establishment of a school in 1933 (Nkumalo. 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2012: Interview)

The school was given the name of David Livingstone after receiving funds from the erection of the memorial statue of David Livingstone at Victoria Falls. The fund was given after the members of the church felt touched by the plight of children who were

learning under trees in the Ntabazinduna community area (Nkumalo. 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2012: Interview). In Matebeleland Region a number of schools grew from this project to more than thirty; some of which the church during the trying times of the quota system, where the church was supposed to raise funds to pay part of the teachers' salaries of the late 1970s had to surrender them to the government and councils to manage. To date there are seven schools remaining.

In Harare the first church to be established was in 1903. During the period 1950s to the 1980s under the ministry of Rt. Rev. Dr. James Kennedy Grant, minister at the City church in Harare (from 1932-1967), and Miss Monica Robinson several suburban churches were built. The Highlands church hall was built on the same year the late Rev. Timothy Kanyowa was ordained. Later a new and larger church was dedicated at Highfields followed by the churches in Hatfield, Chitungwiza, Kuwadzana, Mufakose, Mabvuku and many other stations. Further north we have the Lomagundi [Chinhoyi town] and Mhangura [Mhangura mine] and also Rhimbiki (Bindura mine) (Chigwida. 10<sup>th</sup> October 2011: Interview). In the east in Manicaland we have St. Columba's, Sakubva, Dangamvura, Chikanga and newly born Chigodora.

We have the Trinity, St. Peters' Mkoba, Zhombe and Gokwe and newly Ntabamhlope in the lower Gweru area. We have Masvingo Uniting Presbyterian Church and other stations surrounding the city such Zimuto and the other one in Maliphati bordering Mozambique and South Africa.

## **2.4.2 Regionalization**

The POZ divided the country into six geographical regions for easy administration and coordination of the church. Small committees coordinate the work and life of the Church regionally, with the Chairperson acting in the capacity of the Moderator as at the level of the normal church council. Since February 2006 Presbytery Council meetings also saw the inception of a new level of associations in the order of the normal line within the denomination. All such association committees take the structures of the Branch level, though with more authority than the branches (Zimbabwe Strategic Planning Report and Presbytery Minutes: 24 -25 February 2006 at Chitungwiza Church)

### **a) Harare East Region**

It is comprised of all the eastern churches of Harare, these include; Mbare, Hatfield, Mabvuku, Highlands, Chitungwiza, St. Stephens and Sunnyside M'toko, Epworth and all their Preaching Stations and out-stations.

### **b) Harare West Region**

Congregations here cover all the remaining area of Harare including City, Trinity Greencroft (and its preaching stations at Rheinarm farm and Darwedale), Kuwadzana, Warren Park, Kambuzuma, Rugare and its Mrewa station, Highfields, Mufakose, Budiro, Dzivarasekwa and Mhondoro (including its Marondera stations).

### **c) Central Region:**

The region is more concentrated in the Midlands region and all its congregations are in this vicinity. These are namely St. Peters (Mkoba), Trinity Gweru, Mkoba, Gokwe, Ntabamuhlope, Zhombe, Mathetha and Kwekwe.

**d) Eastern Region**

This is the biggest geographical region because it covers the whole of Masvingo and Manicaland provinces. However it has fewer congregations than the rest.

St Columba's, Sakubva, Chikanga, Chigodora and Dangamvura are found in Mutare while Masvingo, Zimuto and Maliphati are in Masvingo.

**e) North West**

Lomagundi, Chakache, Mhangura Norton and Kadoma make this region in the northern part of the country of Zimbabwe

**f) South West Region**

Bulawayo has five congregations that include Makokoba, Njube, St. Andrews, Ntabazinduna and Sigola, together with preaching stations namely Robert Sinyoka, Khayelitsha, Mbembesi, Circle Cement, Fiso and another one in Gwanda (Zimbabwe Presbytery Council Minutes at City Church:2006 February 25).

**2.5 Contextualization And Relevance of UPCSA in Zimbabwe**

The historical and biblical message is not bound by time, space or culture. Therefore the UPCSA, if as she claims, is guided by the biblical scope in their mission they can be

more relevant to Africa. The UPCSA can be a source and resource place for African Christians' spiritual, physical, emotional and intellectual gratification and satisfaction.

It is important to note that the UPCSA as a WMFC has some very positive elements within her. However for the positive elements to be meaningful and enable the gospel message to be contextual to Africa observable weaknesses needed to be addressed. The major failure on their part is their failure to consider important African cultural values and norms, hence the need for the church to dialogue with the African culture and tradition to enable the African worshipper to grow in the context of the Holy Scriptures without losing his/her identity.

The UPCSA in her quest to be more relevant in Africa needs to consider African culture and tradition seriously. The church must contextualize the culture of the native of Zimbabwe, by listening to the local people and allowing them to be masters of their own destiny rather than dictating on them, the good and bad ethics being addressed in light of the bible. The UPCSA should take time to study and understand Zimbabwean Tradition Religion(s) as opposed to disregarding them as non-existent or not relevant. The Black people came into contact with God first in their culture. Dr. I. Mukonyora in *Rewriting the Bible* argues that African culture is the '... seed ground of the eternal logos and Africans' Old Testament for Christian Africans is not a replacement of Israel's Old Testament which has a universal function with a special position because the Christian religion has historical links with the prophetic tradition of the Jewish covenant (Mukonyora 1993:223). The argument is that God revealed Himself from the beginning

in the African culture hence the need to take that culture into consideration. It therefore means that like any other culture it is part of African theology. The Christian gospel message has to be interpreted within the African theological context. The interpretation of the biblical message within different contexts and from different perspectives leads to different understandings which "... release the Word of God from its timeless neutrality and theological abstraction that helps to bring out its multifaceted concrete and novel dimensions (Mukonyora 1993:223). The multifaceted dimensions underline the true catholicity of the bible as a unity in diversity.

African theologians must take a lead in exploring how to blend the Western missionaries' theology with that of Africa. The danger however is the fact that even Black African scholars are students of the westerners and as such they mostly think likewise. More often where they tend to correct their tutors' philosophies they become judgmental in reaction and at the end miss the mark. What Western scholars view as wrong, issues such as the veneration of ancestors, buying and selling of women in marriage, Africa must come in to teach her colleagues that *lobola* is there to strengthen the bond in marriage between the two families and not the couples. The 'veneration of ancestors', is a point and belief of the resurrection, that there is life after death. It also creates an environment and good life so that one would attain the status of becoming an ancestor. It is only those who died in good standing and did not take their own lives who would have such a rite performed after death, those who had lived an exemplary life and had lived a full life. Full life in the sense of passed from the childhood, puberty, adolescence and adulthood.

The UPCSA needs to consider African culture and tradition so as to address some crucial issues that affect the African worshipper. An African is affected by *ngozi* (avenging spirit) and *huroyi* (witchcraft). These two most feared aspects are addressed in African Traditional Religion(s) as the WMFC seems to have failed to provide an answer to them. The UPCSA acknowledges the presence of the two and their effects but has no answer to them. There is need for the UPCSA to find a God-talk that is practical on the two and dialogue with African culture and tradition and come up with practical solution.

The UPCSA should accommodate African spirituality in order to be more relevant to African Christians (Zwana. 29<sup>th</sup> October 2010: Interview). This calls for the UPCSA to engage acculturation, enculturation and adaptation in regard to African culture and way of life. As pointed out in the preceding chapters an African is a religious person in the totality of his life. There is therefore need for the UPCSA to move away from the Sunday only religion. The vacuum created by ‘one day per week and special occasions religion’, has to be scrapped as this leaves an African Christian within a religious vacuum. The UPCSA has tried to cater for midweek activities by providing home groups and home visitations by elders and/or pastors. This is affective in certain areas but in rural setups it proves not to be practical. The ratio of clergy to laity is a hindrance as also is the geographical area that one pastor is required to cover. For the home groups to be effective there is a need for the pastor to attend regularly, teach, nurture and give guidance to each home group. According to Moltmann, suffering and death are all enemies of life as is tune with as illness, and lack of material needs (Moltmann 1993:65). This is what an African faces every day and needs daily religious guidance, especially in Zimbabwe at



the present time. The UPCSAs should lessen clergy-laity ratio for effective daily guidance to be effective from clergy to laity and vice-versa.

To cater effectively for African spirituality there is a need to promote the priesthood of all believers (Zwana, 29<sup>th</sup> October 2010: Interview). The most important Christian service is Sunday service. On the Sunday service it is mainly the pastor who participates with one or two lay-persons. There is need for the UPCSAs to make everyone feel to be part of the worship service. The issue of African instruments has so far been addressed but minimally. The mainly played instruments are *hosho* (rattles) and *ngoma* (drums), the rest are considered as evil and as a result no other is currently used by the church. Western instruments are continuously being introduced into the UPCSAs in African services but not more African instruments.

In the UPCSAs a new phenomenon of all-day prayers is being promoted across the church in Zimbabwe. The church had earlier on adopted an African cultural element of all-night prayers but now she is backsliding and calls for all-day prayers, to avoid meeting in the dark where many of the evil deeds normally happen. The background an African Christian is coming from is one of *pungwe* (all-night) and it is where the strong belief conquering evil spirits associated with darkness emanates from. When an African attends an ‘all-night’ prayer he/she feels drawn closer to God. In order for the UPCSAs to continue catering for African spirituality there is need to maintain the cultural custom of ‘all-night’ prayers that satisfy an African worshipper. To an African ‘all-night’ prayers

are like fasting on sleep hence their importance to African spirituality (Zwana 29th October 2010: Zimbabwe Council of Churches; Interview).

The UPCSA should critically look into the issue of Holy Communion elements. Many congregations are in rural areas and struggle to raise funds to buy wine and bread for the service yet there are locally available elements like *sadza* and *mahewu*. The issue of ordination and preaching gowns should be replaced by African styles. In some areas like the Lowvelds of Triangle (Masvingo) and Kariba to mention only two the climate does not allow one to wear gowns as they are too hot. There is need for the church to design a dress that suits and is African in nature. There is still a lot to be done on the issue of translating liturgy into local languages. The WMFC has to revise the liturgy and make necessary adjustments and adaptations like the cancellations of prayers for foreign rulers. It also applies to new songs being added to their hymnals. In cases only choruses are introduced of which according to tradition of the UPCSA during main service choruses are sung to a minimum but hymnal songs are the norm or essence.

Spiritual healing is an important aspect that is associated with religion. An African in all his/her endeavours strives for his/her wellbeing here and now. That wellbeing includes the whole person emotionally, physically and spiritually. “Western found medicine alone does not exhaust the African condition of sicknesses because of socio-cultural dimension” (Methodist Church Hymnal 1972:327). In the case of psychological illness the vacuum left by western medicine calls for a true African spirituality to come into play. It demands that the UPCSA have a healing element in all worship services. The

healing service from an African perspective is associated with something corporeal or tangible. The tangible part is when one expects to be laid hands on, have oil or water prayed for and anointed with such. Failing to find such elements, members move to the African Initiated Churches, such as the Masowe Churches where such praxis is being exercised. In the case of psychological illness the vacuum left by the western medicine calls for the true African spirituality to come to play.

As part of healing is issue of rites of passage. It is typical of African culture that one is protected and assured success in the coming stage of life by the rites of passage. In his book, *Theology of Hope* (1993) Moltmann stresses that the “mission of the Church is more than mere propagation of faith and hope but also historic transformation of life” (Mukonyora 1993:233). This suggests that practical activities for the Church must respond to the needs of the people. The UPCSA has to transform the life of the African Christian and provide complete healing in all spheres of life. The UPCSA must show that the actions of God take place within concrete situations and should be relied upon (Moltmann 1993:64). The UPCSA should give hope and trust to Christians in all situations that God will help them.

The UPCSA should offer a prophetic ministry to the African Christian. “Prophetic ministry means, the process of calling God’s people into an awareness of God’ saving liberating and redemptive act so as to compel radical participation of individuals and communities in spiritual, social and personal transformation” (Anderson 1986:55). The importance of prophetic ministry serves as both a critique of the existing order and an

energizer of persons and communities. The UPCSA should be able to move people back to central issues of faith; that is to exist for God who is able to help and answer them. Prophetic ministry will give believers a new vitality and understanding of their wholeness and possibilities. The efficiency of the prophetic ministry has four basic elements, which are passion-compassion, conviction, investment and vision (Stewart 1994:21).

Passion-compassion is concerned with “the ability to sense, interpret and spiritually articulate God’s Word. That is the ability to feel, sense the Word of God and to respond with heart, head and soul in the context of community (Stewart 1994:21). It has to do with the heart and commitment. The Old Testament is a good example of compassionate prophets. They had the zeal, which the UPCSA must adopt. In their prophetic ministry the second aspect should be applied-prophetic convection. This is the irresistible desire or will to live the Word through human experience. It is the persuasion that empowers human action and is strongly based upon faith and belief (Stewart 1994:21). Conviction involves courage to stand on the convictions of love, truth and justice. The UPCSA should have a prophetic conviction in order to proclaim the gospel truth without fear. The UPCSA should also be able to convince the world to change and back to God in a non-confrontational spirit to people’s awareness of the divine.

Personal investment is also the key in order to make prophetic ministry feasible. This is the desire to invest oneself fully and unequivocally in serving the Lord (Stewart 1994:21). The UPCSA should self-invest to serve the Lord. This demands self-sacrifice. Lastly the UPCSA should have an eye for the future, which is vision. Such a church will

take people and move them to a higher reality (Stewart 1994:23). This implies the movement of their hearts, minds and spirits into an alternative consciousness of their value and worth as liberated people. Through prophetic ministry people should have a glimpse of what the future has and a clear picture of where they are going. For the prophetic ministry to be effective the UPCSAs need to move away from academic sermons to healing ones. The church's message must incarnate a true God who will take hold of the zeal of the people and fulfil the needs of a counsellor, guardian, sustainer and healer. Prophetic ministry will enable the UPCSAs to attend to the needs of African Christians holistically.

Rev. Forbes Matonga is of the opinion that the WMFC should call for moratorium on foreign missionary personnel and funds (Matonga 1996:8) and it is to this writer's opinion that POZ must think and act like wise. The call for moratorium is especially crucial to churches like UPCSAs which are transnational in nature. The first call is to enable the African Church to achieve the power of becoming a true instrument of liberation and reconciling African people as well as power for the African Church to make its own decisions if there is need for the moratorium. By moratorium it means withdrawal of foreign personnel and funds. The foreign funds have strings attached and these strings take away power and authority from the local church. By calling for the moratorium UPCSAs will be theologically ready for it is a protest against anything that brings about disability to her local mission and setting. It is a vision to produce a self-propagating, self-governing and self-supporting Church. The UPCSAs need to call for moratorium in

order to indigenize the church and make her more relevant and self-sustaining without strings attached that tend to avoid dealing with local issues in the right framework.

The UPCSA should contextualize its social setting. The gospel values calls for cultural flexibility. At Athens Paul, (Acts 17 16-32) did not condemn the local people's cultural values but it was his starting point to proclaim the gospel. Each people's culture is the natural medium of God's revelation. The African people received the gospel in the 'earthen vessel' but they often mistake the vessel for the treasure, then they confuse faithfulness to the gospel with perpetuating and attending the cultural forms in which they received it. As such the WMFC are called to upon unwrap the gospel from the cultural forms in which they received it wraps it in the cultural forms of the targeted population in its indigenous cultural values and traditions.

The UPCSA can be more relevant to Africa through dialogue with African culture and tradition as this will enable African spirituality to blossom in the biblical context without dividing the worshipper between church and tradition. When healing and prophetic ministry becomes part of the UPCSA's gospel message the church will be relevant to the African spirituality. The UPCSA should call for moratorium on foreign funds and personnel so as to limit foreign influence on the potential to cater for the African spirituality.

## **2.6 Theological Reflections in the 21<sup>ST</sup> Century UPCSA in Zimbabwe**

Every religious movement in its endeavours will be based on a particular theology. This was no exception to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century missionary movement as it came to Zimbabwe. The missionary movements had theological declarations, confessions and beliefs it subscribed to and these were based on the social contexts, the biblical traditions and ecumenical councils. It is the thrust of this sub-section to analyze the theology of Presbyterianism in Zimbabwe from an African perspective.

The word “theology” is derived from two Greek words ‘Theos’ and ‘Logos’ meaning God and Word respectively therefore theology is a talk about God (Weller 1984:201). According to Macquarie, “Theology may be defined as the study which through participation in and reflection upon a religious faith, seeks to express the context of this faith in the clearest and most coherent language available,” (Macquarie 1977:1). It emphasizes participation and reflection upon a religious faith and seeks to express that faith. Christian theology is an organized discipline expressing faith of Christians in Jesus Christ through their words, actions and from a practical social context.

The theology of the 19<sup>th</sup> century missionary movement was based on the Orthodoxy Councils of the Early Church Fathers. They regarded the Ecumenical council of Nicaea as the ancient symbol of authority for dogmas and doctrines (Hood 1936:108). It reaffirmed the ancient Christian message as found in the apostolic witness. The theology was grounded in scripture, informed by Christian tradition, enlivened by experience and tested by reason (Macquarie 1977:1).

A critical analysis of the missionaries' theology of the 19<sup>th</sup> century movements in Zimbabwe shows that it was very much rooted in capitalism (Makamure 25<sup>th</sup> September 2010: Interview). It was a theology based on individualism and a superiority complex within Western culture. In the African context the missionary movement tended to ignore the God-talk of African people. The culture of the local people was taken for granted such that the manifestations of *Musikavanhu's* (the creator's) providence was considered as pagan and profane yet the same is true of the Bible's providence is considered as sacred (Sanganza 11<sup>th</sup> September 2011: Interview).

This writer noted that the missionary movement's theology was deductive (Makamure 25<sup>th</sup> September 2010: Interview). This means that it was built from established Western principles, which were considered as faith itself. It was a theology that was dogmatic such that everyone had either accepted the principles or be considered not a Christian. The principles though applicable to Europe could not apply to Africa. As a result the African people's problems had to fit into the Western principles. The set principles were based on the Graeco-Roman worldview and culture. The WMFC used specific vocabulary, metaphysical methods and concepts appealing to intellectual circles in the Greek speaking Roman Empire (Hood 1936:109). Terms like *ousia*, *homoousia* and *hypostasis* were preached in Zimbabwe in case of the relationship of the Father and the Son. These terms delimited experiential faith in other cultures including Zimbabwean cultures.



The missionary movement's theology was biased because of the superiority complex of the Western (Gondongwe 20<sup>th</sup> September 2010: Interview). As such it failed to address many questions and did not solve problems faced by an African worshipper thereby resulting in a hopeless theology. This was evidenced by the fact that missionaries failed to give answers to theodicy as it posed a great fear to Africans. Their theology reflected Anglo-Saxonism. It imposed the English culture on Africans at the expense of their own culture. Their theology was not hundred percent God-talks directed to people who had their own culture. It was a theology diluted with cultural perspectives coined with Western norms and values.

Abstract principles and dogmatic assertions were part of the missionary theology (Banana 1982:57). A static theology was presented which maintained Christianity tied to Western mind-set. This theology was a result of a few selected scholars and it maintained the authority of ancient theologians and church Fathers. It is from this view that God in the Christian doctrines have increasingly become an object of speculative and philosophical discourse (Hood 1936:108). The result is that God was presented as un-African because for an ordinary person this theology was not easy to understand, especially due to the language and philosophy used from the Western context. The missionaries presented the God of law and not of love. The theology raised more questions as to the nature of salvation. The grace and love of God were questioned, as the theology was divorced from the two.

It is the belief of UPCSA that in Christ, God created the earth and everything in it good and blessed human beings with life, meaning and purpose. Human-kind, nevertheless has fallen into sin and so under divine judgement. In this predicament our only hope and comfort, in life and in death, is Jesus Christ; for in Him God has acted to redeem and sanctify us. Through the Holy Spirit Christ reveals God's nature, grace, will and promise of final victory over sin and suffering (UPCSA Manual of Faith and Order 2007 Chapter 2). The purpose and predicament of humankind is the reason why Christ came to liberate us although we often turn to false gods to find meaning and hope of life. "It is this divergence which causes the church to lose meaning and appeal to her community today" said Rev. Chigwida (Interview 10 October 2011). A false god (anything people put final trust and make it an idol), enslaves its worshippers into further bondage and as such, such relative and absolute value are subjective. People may view it differently because of their upbringing and hence split of gatherings.

In adopting the Confession the UPCSA recognizes that its members have different (for some overlapping) views on the relation between the Word of God and Scripture, with some fully identify the Word of God with Scripture, regarding it as verbally inspired and infallible. Others distinguish between the Word of God and Scripture as its inspired and normative but fallible human record and witness, while some emphasize that the Word of God is strictly Jesus Christ, the living Word, and see Scripture as the normative and authoritative witness to Christ that by the power of the spirit becomes and is the Word in bearing such witness (John 5:39ff., 2 Corinthians 3-4:6).

An individual, however, confesses that Jesus Christ is the living word of God, and that the Scriptures are inspired by God and have unique authority and hence seen in preaching and personal witness through testimonies.

The UPCSA believes that Christ ordained only two sacraments; baptism and Holy Communion (Manual of Faith and Order 2007: Chap. 2, Section 7.1). These two respectively succeed circumcision and the Passover in the old covenant. Both are a means of saving grace and hence no reason to be denied the sacraments and ordinances of the Church. The Holy Spirit is the source of their power. The sacraments identify the church and by participating in them we profess our identity in Christ and our faith before the world.

In UPCSA, it is the Holy Spirit who gathers the family of God to glorify God together. The church gathers not so much to seek God as to celebrate and proclaim that God has first sought and found her. Members respond to God's grace by faithful worship and daily prayer. Corporate worship, meditating on Scripture and private prayer are all integral to Christian life. Through them God arouses and preserves our faith, transforms our lives, stirs up the gifts of the Spirit and sustains discipleship.

God is the creator of all earthly matter, man and woman share in the image of God, and called men and women to every office in the church. God created all people equally in that image and Christ gave his life to restore it after the fall, every person's life is

sacrosanct. God through his son Christ calls us to minister to one another, in particular to the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick and those in prison as Christ himself and to the widows and orphans.

The church exists wherever the gospel is preached in accord with Scripture and heard with faith and the sacraments are celebrated according to Christ's institution. It is not the religious or moral purity of its members that defines the true church. In its communion with God she is called to mirror its life holiness, unity love and mutual self-giving of the Trinity into whose name members are baptised. A community of people called to exist and act for others rather than themselves. The church needs to be reformed always, in order to witness more faithfully to Jesus as Lord and Saviour, failure of which its members would leave for other gatherings and hence AICs are born.

The final redemption that God's final victory; Christian faith looks beyond the present to the future. To live by faith in the crucified and risen Christ means to hope in his coming and universal rule.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

The UPCSA has a history of building up unity in its body. In 1973 the then Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa (PCSA), approved the Declaration of Faith for Southern Africa for use. It adopted an amended version as a subordinate standard in 1986 (and amended it again in 1993 and 1994). The declaration was not meant to replace the traditional ecumenical creeds or to be a summary of the whole Christian faith, but to

express the Christian response to two contemporary problems in the church and society. The first problem was racial discrimination and segregation and the ideology that underpinned this. The second was the way of thinking that excluded political issues from the concern of the gospel and the Church and from Christ's sovereignty. In that the privatization of the gospel and racial prejudice still disfigure Church and society, this historic declaration remains. The Declaration is cast in the Trinitarian form of a brief creed, longer than the Apostles' Creed but shorter than the Nicene. It helps the congregation to use it as a common statement of faith in response to the Word of God, read and proclaimed, in services of worship, as an alternative to the traditional ecumenical creeds (Manual of Faith and Order 2007: Chap. 2.5)

Human history does not of itself inevitably progress towards a better state of things. Some people cause great suffering, even claim to be raised up by divine providence. Despite all these the faithful stand firm. No wonder why the UPCSA still stands under great exodus of her membership to the rampant AICs in Zimbabwe.

Despite the failure to manage, interpret the Scriptures or to uphold the declaration of standards and the declaration of faith for the church in southern Africa by its leadership mainly the clergy as seen in the next chapter, the UPCSA is still in operation in Zimbabwe. Leadership of UPCSA mainly the elders (both ruling and teaching), tend to forget easily the vows they take when taking up their office at ordination or induction. They vow that "with God's help they will commit themselves to study the scriptures faithfully, to give themselves to daily prayers, to live holy lives, to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, to be diligent in pastoral care and to respect the confidentiality of

personal confessions and confidences shared ...build up the body of Christ (Manual of Faith and Order 2007:Chap. 2.6.1-7)

## **CHAPTER 3: Missional Weaknesses of the UPCSA in Zimbabwe**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The saying ‘wine tastes better with age’ should be applicable to the UPCSA as it has been in Africa for a very long time. A critical analysis of the UPCSA’s message and missional outlook reveals some strengths and weakness. It is the crux of this chapter to discuss and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) and its repercussions in the Zimbabwean context today.

### **3.2 The Strengths Of The UPCSA Message In Today’s Context**

The fact that UPCSA has been in Africa over 200 years clearly shows that this church has strengths, which has helped it to stand and deepen its roots in Africa. Some of the strengths to be discussed include provision of education, social activities, promoting peace and order and its approach to life. The UPCSA came to Africa a very long time ago and in Zimbabwe, made its impact during the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Weller 1984:10). The fact that since the 19<sup>th</sup> century up to date the UPCSA is still in existence in Zimbabwe represents strength in terms of durability. The UPCSA has the stamina and power to draw converts and expand its base despite competition from other Christian movements and religions. There is great competition for members as AICs and Pentecostal churches have greatly manifested challenges but the UPCSA has to a certain extent stood its ground. The local people with a few exceptions now lead UPCSA in Zimbabwe.

The UPCSA has strength in its message of love (Makamure 25<sup>th</sup> September 2010: Interview). A closer look at Zimbabwe shows hatred between different tribes especially the Ndebele and Shona people. The church has been able to preach the gospel of love and reconciliation. In its membership it has brought together people of different backgrounds. The UPCSA is able to encourage open communication and tolerance between different peoples. The UPCSA is to share and discuss as equal partners in the ‘vineyard of the Lord’ despite their different tribal and church traditions. The UPCSA has crossed political boundaries and spread throughout the country (Makamure 25<sup>th</sup> September 2010: Interview). Denominations like the UPCSA were dominated by ‘white’ leadership but it now has an open leadership. On the message of love the UPCSA is actively involved in promoting love without boundaries and limitations. This includes non-discrimination of people due to status, gender, disability or any other reason. In UPCSA the number of women clergy is increasing, which was unacceptable in the past. This applies also to other Western Missionary Founded Church denominations. Empowerment programmes for single parents are held and organized to help them. The people in prisons are not abandoned by the UPCSA through Prison Fellowship, which works closely with the Uniting Presbyterian Women’s Fellowship (UPWF).

The other strength of the UPCSA is its holistic approach to life (Makamure 25<sup>th</sup> September 2010: Interview). The holistic approach to life means catering for the physical, mental, spiritual and economic needs of an individual. The UPCSA has a holistic approach to life through boards or committees. The key areas are economic, intellectual, physical and spiritual. The UPCSA pays attention to the material needs of the people



such as health, education and charitable support of the dispossessed hence becoming the church for the poor (Banana 1982:30). Most people associate Church with the poor because of its holistic approach. The holistic approach to life demands that the Church caters for the needs of the poor and the outcasts. The prisoners, orphans, widows, disabled and street children have their needs and problems addressed by the UPCSA /POZ as they are considered for aid and relief in terms of the Church's social responsibility. The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, through its Christian Aid Committee or Justice and Social Responsibilities and ZCC under the Christian Care as its service arm (Assembly Papers 2012:225-228).

The Church is involved in many programmes which empower people to become economically independent. The UPCSA promotes a theology of development which is a strategy to encourage the church to be in the forefront of the battle against structural poverty and injustice. The basis of the UPCSA in this is Luke 4<sup>18-21</sup>. The strength lies in the fact that the UPCSA promotes self-sustaining projects among their members and the community at large. The UPCSA is involved in many economically equipping programmes for both church and non-church members. Good examples are the programmes offered by the City and Kuwadzana churches training department such as garment making, horticulture and project proposals and management. To the elderly, orphans, widows, single parents and disabled the UPCSA has programmes to lessen its material and financial burdens. Likewise, the UPCSA takes care of vulnerable children with centres such as Lovemore Boys-Home (Harare); Children's Club at City church (Harare); Jesus Walks in Mutare and After School Lessons at Lomagundi Church in

Chinhoyi, all under the auspices of Children at Risk Committee of the Presbytery of Zimbabwe.

Most important, the UPCSA has several mission schools. This shows how the UPCSA has gone a long way in promoting education. Schools belonging to the UPCSA are highly regarded institutions in terms of their educational and moral standards. There is also Mhondoro and Chinhoyi Clinics for the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. All these and many other institutions are there to promote educational standards and professionalism (Makamure 25<sup>th</sup> September 2010: Interview). For the disadvantaged, scholarships are awarded for further studies within and outside the country. Not only that, in the UPCSA, there is also the Children at Risk Committee which is paying school-fees, providing books and food and uniforms for the vulnerable children countrywide. The UPCSA is doing a lot to promote the educational standards and many highly ranking people obtained high qualifications through these programmes.

In catering for the total person the UPCSA including other WMFC has hospitals and clinics and other health facilities. As physical health of a person is important the UPCSA is catering for that. In nearly all the provinces of Zimbabwe there is a mission hospital for the WMFC. These mission hospitals are of advantage to the local people as they are cheaper to attend compared to non-missional ones including government institutions. Even in terms of public relations, patients are properly treated through Christian values and ethics at the mission hospitals. At these hospitals more than physical health is catered for through Church values, the spiritual aspect as well as the provision of hospital

Chaplains. At the local church information and advice are distributed through health committees. The church is doing a good job in training caregivers in this day of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Most non-governmental organizations promoting health and social welfare of the people are related to the WMFC organizations or care groups such as CHRISTIAN CARE and FACT.

The UPCSA has also strength in promoting peace and order in the country (Makamure 25<sup>th</sup> September 2010: Interview). The UPCSA is promoting political tolerance among people from different political parties. As conflicts arise mainly due to association with different political parties, the church is promoting tolerance. This comes through civic education by the Justice and Reconciliation Commission from Christian boards such as Zimbabwe Council of Churches, especially the Church and Society Desk where UPCSA is a member. With regard to tolerance the UPCSA is encouraging tolerance of other religions so as to maintain peace and order; this is a big change from the Early Church's attitude. Through the media the UPCSA makes its stance on issues of non-violence, free constitutional making processes, free elections and justice very clear. Any form of justice is openly condemned by the WMFC through different interdenominational organizations such as Zimbabwe Council of Churches (Chikomo 25<sup>th</sup> October 2012: Interview).

The UPCSA has in its message and missional outlook that includes a long history, the message of love, holistic approach to life, provision of educational health, spiritual and economic needs of the people and promotion of peace and order in the country. These

issues are to a certain extent addressed and catered for thereby making UPCSA relevant to their socio-historical setting today in Zimbabwe.

### **3.3 The Weaknesses of UPCSA in the Present Day Context**

At the 1995 Presbytery Council meeting ‘evangelism’ was given first preference to other programmes of the church. The first step was to revive the members then engaged on the outreach campaign, with a target to plant fifty (50) new stations in ten years. The revival aimed at cementing the UPCSA community through spiritual revitalization (POZ-Hatfield Minutes 1995). According to Rev. Mutonganavo (Committee Convener) the evangelism was designed to revive and foster the church life. However some outreach was expected since the programme was divided into two schemes, which aimed at cementing the UPCSA community in Zimbabwe and is geared towards outreach (Mutonganavo 18<sup>th</sup> June 2011: Interview).

The evangelism, however, lacked and still lacks a sound theological basis. The church relied much on borrowed literature, cooked for different contexts and cultures without analysis or contextualization. Most of the literature used is from the Pentecostal circles which most of the Presbyterians feel is not in agreement with their ethos. This is why the majority of UPCSA in Zimbabwe shun evangelism programmes. It has become a programme of a few individuals rather than the whole church. Also the same material which was used in as late as 1990 is still being used today. Some members are now fed up with the repetition of the same lessons which makes the programme outdated (Mavhuka 11<sup>th</sup> October 2011; Interview).

The evangelism programme has become foreign and unappealing for many members. It has remained corrective, challenging members to repent and reconcile. There is no material developed for disciplining members. The worst element of this evangelism programmes is its strict, militant and crusading approach towards African Traditional Religions, cultures and others religions. This has led some members to think that what is taught in the programmes is artificial, not practical while others feel that just closing their doors to it all will be the best way of responding.

The evangelism approach has brought about confusion as the church tries to effect two policies, one exclusive and militant, the other one tolerant towards others religions and cultures. It was and still is exclusive while the Doctrine and Ethics Committee is expected to be tolerant, a platform for dialogue. In practice it is clear that the two are not in harmony. This confusion still confuses members as they fail to understand the relationship between the Evangelism Committee and Doctrine and Ethics Committee.

With all this confusion on important matters in church life, one wonders whether there are no theologians in UPCSA to clear the confusion. One important thing the writer has noted which has become a permanent weakness in UPCSA is acting in response to a crisis. This leads to solutions which contradict or undermine what has been done. There is no deliberate move to sit down and plan for the future ministry of the church. As a result there are a lot of clashes of committees and certain individuals appear to be running the programmes while others are just spectators. Whether the clergy are confident or not, in

terms of clarifying the mission of the UPCSA in Zimbabwe and coming up with programmes which benefit members is not clear.

One other weakness of the UPCSA in Zimbabwe is that it is failing to make the Church in Zimbabwe a Zimbabwean church, which is not merely an extension of the churches in Europe. To this effect this writer proposes some levels of operation namely the academic and practical levels (Nyanga. 20<sup>th</sup> September 2011: Interview). Academically the scriptures must be seen as word of God and words of men. Also in this reflection academics must make use of African Traditional Religions in order to discover the value that can be accorded to African religious beliefs and practices. Lastly the church needs to take seriously the dynamics affecting the development patterns of Africa and relate them to the gospel in terms that will be best understood to specific African communities (Mupepereki. 4<sup>th</sup> August 2012: Interview).

Practically the church needs to learn the role of symbolism in African worship and how she can use it and the African concept of the church which includes the African view of family and community, a communal church. Also the liturgy of the church will quench the African's religious quest (Mupepereki. 4<sup>th</sup> August 2012: Interview). This will express the life of the Christian community in Africa and then create a basis for an acceptable ethic.

### 3.3.1 The Eldership in the Presbytery of Zimbabwe

From the time of Paul thus we read that he set apart *ELDERS* (the Greek word is *PRESBUTEROS*, which means simply ‘a mature man’) (Douglas 1990:313-314) to exercise oversight over the congregations. The eldership therefore is a very ancient office, but largely fell away in the early church with the introduction of the Episcopal system – government by bishops, and the office did not really come into its own until the Reformation (Henderson 1967:10-13).

In fact, the eldership is the distinctive contribution of Calvinism to the Reformation. It is as much a product of the times of its origin, the Reformation, as is the episcopate. The task of *EPISCOPACY*, or oversight, which Christ committed to His Church, has been discharged in various ways in different times. The eldership must be seen as the attempt by one group of Churches in Christendom to deal more effectively with commission than was being done at the time preceding the Reformation. The character of the eldership arises both from the nature of the ministry and of the church at that time. It achieves prominence particularly because of the concern with church discipline characteristic of the reformers, and was an element in their effort to restore ‘the faire face of the church’ in the sixteenth century (Henderson 1967:11-15). In Calvin’s thought, the eldership had both an external and internal reference. Elders ruled within the church over the congregation; they also had power that they have to exercise upon church members.

The Reformation was basically a revolt against the corruption in the Roman Church and the power vested in the hands of the bishops. With the breakdown in the authority of the

Roman system and its form of government, it was necessary to institute a new type of government. This could not be done by the clergy alone, and so the eldership came into its own, a system which gave rise to Presbyterianism with its government by ministers and elders meeting on an equal footing, elders having the dual function of pastor and ruler. This is with its own weaknesses affecting the church in Zimbabwe.

### **3.3.2 Election of the elder**

In many Sessions, little or nothing is done to train elders for the work that they are expected to perform in virtue of their office. It is a sad fact that in many congregations, elders are ordained to office having had little or no training in the work that they are expected to do quite contrary to what even the secular world would do.

The collapse of “Eldership Training Committee” at Presbytery level aggravated the slackness in this endeavour, and Sessions should not ordain and induct elders before necessary training of such candidates. Such courses would be designed for not only prospective elders, but also for existing elders as well. The Presbytery as an overseeing body must make sure that such measures are implemented least the church will continue losing her members due to ignorance of its leadership.

### **3.3.3 The work of the Eldership**

From the very first, one of the chief functions of the eldership was discipline. It is true that for centuries, discipline was one of the chief functions of the Session, and this included not only discipline in the strictest sense for members, but general spiritual



supervision of the whole community. The Session records of the 19<sup>th</sup> century indicate severe punishments and penances for sexual offences, witchcraft, and drunkenness, slander, swearing and breaking the Sabbath. Church attendance and the behaviour of members in church were carefully monitored. Elders were appointed as searchers to go out during the service and see who was breaking the law. Elders themselves were not exempted from discipline – they were sworn to secrecy and there were special rules for the punishment of elders who divulged Session affairs (Henderson1967:11).

Before every communion, elders had to make up a roll of the people in their districts or sections who were entitled to participate. The character, conduct and knowledge of members were very carefully reviewed and a ticket or token of fitness was issued. If a member did not receive such token he/she was not permitted to attend and take part in the communion service (Chikomo. 25<sup>th</sup> June 2012: interview).

Almost as important as discipline, was the elders' task of providing poor relief. It was the duty of the Session to see that the poor of the community received suitable aid. They appointed special collections which were always taken by the elder at the church door. It was felt that the Session, with its intimate knowledge of the congregation and their needs, was the best body to do this work. Special meetings for discipline and the distribution of money to poor were held regularly (Chikomo. 25<sup>th</sup> June 2012: Interview).

Probably the most important of the many other functions of the eldership was education, and particularly religious instruction. The Church was the driving power of education.

The education of the poor children was invariably paid for by the Session which encouraged parents to send their children and imposed fines on those who failed to do so (Nkumalo 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2012: Interview). Reverend Nkumalo added that, along with the minister, the elders had the supervision of the whole religious life of the community and the word of the Session was law as far as the spiritual life of the members of the congregation was concerned, which included moral and social considerations.

### **3.3.4 The work of the eldership today**

Today, although theoretically there has been no change from the early days of the eldership, there have been many alterations in the functions of an elder. The church has not discarded any of the Reformation teaching on the eldership, nor has it decided that any of the things that elders have habitually done are to be discarded, yet as far as outward duties are concerned, the modern elder has lost a great deal of the status of his/her forefathers. When the person in the pew thinks of the elder today, he is inclined to associate him/her with the man/woman who takes the collections better known as offerings or distributes the elements at a communion service or comes into church with the minister.

Discipline, for which the office was principally intended, has become no more than a very formal thing. Community discipline has been taken over by the state and church authority has been scorned, and as such the church spiritually weakens by day. Any interference with conduct simply drives individuals to other congregations if not to the AICs or newly formed charismatic inter-denominations.

The elder has only the most formal say in the admission of new communicants. A certificate of transfer or attendance at a confirmation class is usually all that is required. With finance having been taken over by the Stewardship Board and the state controlling education and social services, the modern elder has lost many of the duties that he would have been required to undertake in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This however does not mean that the office of any elder is becoming obsolete. One of the main problems of the eldership today in Zimbabwe is the heavy demand on one's time and energies that his/her secular employment and other commitments impose upon the elder. The eldership is a great responsibility and today the elder is finding it more and more difficult to undertake the responsibilities which are of ruling the church and looking after the members in one's district and play a vital role in the work of the Session. As the result of failure in this the church in Zimbabwe grows weak spiritually and continues losing her membership.

A Session can claim to be vital when each elder on that Session realizes one's own duties to the Session and seeks the grace of God to fulfil them. The Presbyterian Church in Zimbabwe claims to lay great emphasis on the work of layman, but this work is of little avail because the chosen as office-bearers do not realize their responsibilities in setting an example to other members of the congregation. Therefore it is imperative that an elder realizes that he should set an example to the rest of the congregation of how a member should act without which the whole church will grow dry and risk great exodus of members. An elder should, for instance, be regular at the church services on a Sunday. This is important, not only for the sake of one's spiritual life, but for the encouragement

which one's presence gives to one's minister and to fellow members. It cannot be expected that the congregation will be faithful in its worship and grow spiritually if elders are absent from services without due cause. Spiritual growth must be visible in the Session. The Session must show a good example. Ministers owe much to elders for the help that they give at services especially Communion Sunday where they help with the distribution of the elements and for the reverent way in which they behave.

Another duty of an elder is the supervision of a district. It is the duty of the session to arrange for the division of the congregation into convenient sections and to appoint one or more into its members to have spiritual oversight of each section or district. It is the duty of an elder to visit the families as their spiritual overseer, to deal with those in need of help or who are neglecting public worship.

The work of an elder is undoubtedly an important part of the elder's responsibility to the church, and a great privilege. Unfortunately most of the elders in nearly all Zimbabwean Presbytery congregations regard themselves as postmen and, rather than knock on the door and make conversation, they creep stealthily at the door and pass information. The elder's visit can be of a great blessing both to people visited and to the visitor personally. The church in Zimbabwe (UPCSA) relies much on this mode owing to fact that minister/congregation ratio is too high. The elder is both the spiritual advisor and a friend. This is however lacking in UPCSAs and the church is growing dry spiritually resulting in its membership opting for mushrooming AICs. The great thing is for the elder to enter the house and speak with the people naturally and if the elder is asked or

feels led, to pray with the family. Many elders feel that they cannot pray in public adequately, and for this reason the writer encourages the ministers as teaching elders to equip their elders in this area. An elder's own enthusiasm and obvious spiritual concern do much to rekindle the spark of interest that has almost faded out in the heart of many members.

In conclusion, the eldership is a spiritual office, and therefore only a man or woman who has the Spirit of God can fulfil in it any worthy way. Unspiritual elders in the sessions of the UPCSA in Zimbabwe lower the spiritual temperature of church and destroy its power resulting in the move of its membership to quench their thirsty with AICs.

All elders ought to be conscious that as ministers they are not worthy of this high office and responsibility. They are all sinful in dire need of God's help and forgiveness, but, realizing this can learn on God for His help forgiveness. It is no easy task to take upon oneself the responsibilities of the eldership. It is not easy to live up the demands on our time and our energy. The Church in Zimbabwe is lacking elders of devotional life of supreme importance for its life and growth. Elders must have certainty about Christ being Saviour and Lord, and must possess a singleness of purpose which will give an inner peace. Only then can one hope to be a successful elder.

The Christian life is a continuing life and the elder's life has a very special place in the life of the church and thus the elder would do well to consider the means of grace which God offers, Bible Study, prayer, worship and self-discipline, for unless a man grows

spiritually he cannot hope to advance the kingdom for God's sake, and as an elder of the church this is inescapable duty and privilege.

What then is the problem with the eldership being experienced in the UPCSA – Zimbabwe today? It is that no role model for Sessions is universally accepted any longer. Over the years and especially in the rapidly changing time and contexts in which we live today different models have developed and are at work. For example: Most Sessions retain their members until they die; others rotate theirs on 3 or 6 years cycle, whereas, some Sessions exercise only a spiritual supervision; others include material supervision of their congregations in a unicameral system. In some cases Sessions ask all their elders to visit, while some delegate pastoral oversight to a committee on which only some sit. Some Sessions however run an effective system of ruling and shepherding in districts, cells or sections; some have districts but do little visiting, and others have abandoned the system altogether and leave the whole duty of visitations to the minister alone.

The reason for the variety of ways in which Sessions are structured and function today are manifold; different traditions in different population groups, personal choice, plain default, the difference between rural and urban environments and pressures of work and time on people in cities all play their role. This in essence has weakened the church in Zimbabwe as the Session is losing its core values and duties of spiritual oversight of the congregation and as such the result is obvious that her membership dwindles. Care reflects the state of flux in the way Sessions function in Zimbabwe. The writer, however, would like to stress that in his view; the POZ generally retains a biblical understanding of

the eldership, and in circumstances the variety of ways in which Sessions function is a sign of the vitality of the Holy Spirit at work within our Church and strength.

While we may accept a wide variety of styles of eldership, however, some styles can also drive an unhappy wedge between ruling and shepherding, government and care, as if they were two different and even opposing functions. What is important is that Sessions take very seriously that in terms of Scripture their members are meant as elders to be spiritually mature, overseers to exercise spiritual oversight and rule and shepherds to see to the pastoral care of the flock.

It is also necessary that they (elders) exercise all these roles both with the authority and spiritual power that the Holy Spirit gives them for their task and in true diaconal humility.

In an unpublished paper dated 10<sup>th</sup> February 1993, on the eldership written by the late Rev. Harold Munro described the Session as a body that makes decisions on all matters affecting the life and welfare of the congregation and represents the congregation on the higher courts of the church. The emphasis is on the pastoral function of eldership as a central task of the Session. This needs to be captured today. The malfunction in Sessions translates to a break up in Presbytery and as a result a weak church in all aspects which rates the growth of the church to include numerical, financial and spiritual. Spiritually impoverished elders will translate into a weak session cascading down to Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly. In this case the weakness of the spiritual leaders (elders) mirrors a fragile Presbytery.

Many elders today are better equipped for making decisions than making visits. Good decision making is essential, also for good pastoral care. This, however, does not absolve Sessions from seeing to it, if their own members do not visit, that some system of adequate “face to face” pastoral care functions in their congregations. This researcher is of the opinion that the elders and their role could be helpful to the church in Zimbabwe and beyond if preaching is not part of the duty of an elder as such. For that the church has an Order of lay-preachers, which elders can join. Also the elder has no necessary connection with distributing the elements at Holy Communion. The minister is the one who administers Communion, and he is entitled to call on any member not necessarily an elder, to serve the elements. Moreso, Holy Communion does not take place within a Session meeting. There is, then, no need to constitute the Session before a Communion service. The members of the congregation elect its elders, but this does not automatically admit anyone to the eldership. The Session must always sustain the election.

### **3.4 Koinonia In The Session**

The church is *Koinonia* (Greek for ‘fellowship’) of the Holy Spirit. The local congregation is the Church in miniature. The Session is the microcosm of the local congregation. The Session that is, must be a *koinonia* – a fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and must, in its own life express and embody *koinonia*. The spirit within the Session in the Zimbabwean church is not one of close fellowship; this is reflected in the life and spirit of the congregation, of resorting to have their issues solved by AIC Prophets,



thereby leaving the denomination. Where there is peace and harmony spiritual energy in the session, these same qualities are as well likely to characterize the congregation.

The life and work of nearly all the sessions in Zimbabwe are harmonious because all the work, all the thinking and all the talking is done by the minister. The minister is a benevolent despot, a spiritual dictator, convinced that he has a monopoly on Holy Spirit that God deals with him only in the congregation, and is convinced also that it is unwise to let the elders think or talk or decide for themselves. This type of harmony defeats the noble cause of Presbyterian system and hence where members realize the danger they resort to stop coming to church and subsequently join other churches mostly AIC or charismatic ones.

Sessions within the Presbytery of Zimbabwe meet frequently and regularly, with most of them meeting once every month, and others quarterly. At a council meeting, however, which was held on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2010 at Chitungwiza, it was revealed that in at least one congregation, the session never met. It would be as well to begin this session, therefore, by stating what to most of us is an obvious fact of life – that *koinonia* has little or no chance of developing unless the session does meet regularly and frequently. A minister needs to develop a culture of cultivating the spirit of fellowship within the Session. A minister knows every elder, but very often, especially in a large Session, the elder does not know one's fellow elder. In such a situation, it is extremely difficult to build up *koinonia* within the Session. In a sense, *koinonia*, "common life" in the original Greek, is that which forms our whole premise. The church should be the centre of a community life

in which the lonely find friends, the sinful find understanding and forgiveness, the believers find the support of those who believe the same things. If the Session is, as the author preserves, the congregation in microcosm, this should be true of the Session and Presbytery and all other councils or courts above. The Session should be a community of concern of reconciliation, of forgiveness and support and essentially a brotherhood, not a fighting ground as it all turns to be in such meetings.

### **3.5 Retirement Plan**

Most Ministers, when they are called to a new congregation, move into the church manse. That is fine while they are still of an age to proclaim the Word. But what happens when they retire is another cause to weaken the church in Zimbabwe. Most of them, on retirement, do not have any place to go to, as they have stayed in manses most of their lives. There is pension fund in which every serving clergy contribute towards, however this writer is of the opinion that it is not enough and the Presbytery can do much better. The writer is of the opinion that it would be a good idea for the POZ to look into the matter of having a 'retirement plan (village or a home of one's choice)' for its ministers. The village does not necessarily be in one place, like army barracks, but up to the minister's preference. This will motivate the ministers and their families in addition to the existing pension fund of which many years were eroded during the Zimbabwean dollar regime.

### 3.6 UPCSA In Contextualization Mode

The POZ is lacking in the provision of a universal methodology to deal with issues that confront it, hence the weaknesses and its repercussions in the present day context are to be explored. The weaknesses to be discussed in this section include failure to dialogue with important African cultural aspects such as rites of passage, African instruments and worshipping style. To be discussed also are the issues of prophetic ministry, liturgy, failure to penetrate tribal grounds and ratio of clergy to laity.

An individual's life cycle, as believed by Africans, is punctuated by rituals from birth, puberty, maturity (marriage) and death. To move from one stage to the next an African performs rituals called rites of passage. Rites of passage create fixed and meaningful transformations in the life cycle (Makamure. 25<sup>th</sup> September 2010: Interview). The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa is ignoring these rites of passage. The UPCSA is not clear on its position about this issue hence people secretly carry out rites of passage. The UPCSA has failed to theologize on these important African *religio*-cultural values. This is especially evident on the issue of initiation rites but the UPCSA is silent. The UPCSA is causing a religious dilemma for the African worshipper because the issue of rites of passage is not being properly dealt with. It is worsened by the failure to provide an answer to *ngozi* (avenging spirits). As a result, Africans end up carrying out rites of passage that they think will protect them from *ngozi*, which is most feared by Africans, outside the church.

Some churches such as the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe worsen the situation during baptism of infants as they say, *tumidza mwana uyu zita*, (give a name to the child)

(Methodist Church, *Nziyo dzeMethodist Neminamoto* (Methodist Church Hymnals and Prayers) 1972:32). One wonders as to whether it is renaming or confirming the name. It implies that before baptism the child had no name or the name was not valid. This is contrary to African beliefs and rites of passage. The name given during birth rites of passage is of great value to the parents and the child yet the UPCSA/WMFC takes this for granted, because they think the name is unchristian as long as it is African. Everything African is evil. The change of name at baptism (Biblical naming), has a colonial connotation either due to the reason that missionaries could not pronounce the native names or they tie the African names to fetishism of the nation (Mwazha 1997:1). The Holy Spirit arouses the hearts of many people. She guides believers in the ways that God so desires. Solitary places of prayer for quest repose with God are paramount in the apostolic church in Zimbabwe - a thing which is scarce in the UPCSA, a resort to gatherings outside to pray.

The UPCSA has also failed to recognize African marriage. Any marriage not solemnized by a Christian minister is considered as temporary (*kubika mapoto*). The UPCSA tends to put its emphasis on the reception than the ceremony where marriage vows are pronounced. The reception is given more time and great preparations and without which the ceremony is called 'blessing of a marriage' and not wedding. What is now being defined as Christian marriage resembles Western marriage or a 'white wedding'. The marriage minister encourages payment of *lobola* (bride prize), which is the chief aspect of African marriage and payment of a cow given to bride's mother (*mombe yeumai*). At the same time they condemn the maturity ritual, which gives meaning to *lobola* and

initiates one into married life. The UPCSA fails to provide solutions or openly discuss these issues. As such, some people end up adopting Western culture and losing their identity in the process while others leave the denomination.

The use of most African instruments is taking ages to be implemented. The UPCSA tends to promote the use of most Western instruments, which are very expensive and yet there are those cheap locally available African instruments. In the POZ *Mhungu* congregation (a suede name for its sensitivity) tried to introduce *mbira* and was attacked from all angles, but when they tried Western instruments it was considered as a development. African-ness is associated with evil spirits. It therefore means African-ness is looked down upon. African identity is overshadowed by Western styles, which are considered as Christian. When the Africans failed to find space to worship they move to find places of comfort in AIC communities.

### **3.6.1 Language and Translations**

In previous pages the writer established that language was a serious issue when related to participation in the councils of the church. There are many who do not feel comfortable to speak in English and therefore do not enjoy the freedom to participate. This writer is of the view that the POZ should invest in the purchase of translation equipment but in the meantime if church documents can be written in vernacular languages in this case to start with Shona and Ndebele. Of course, with limited facilities for translation POZ is not able to cater for more languages but believe that, for now, these three languages would help

most speakers to communicate at a Presbytery meeting. This attempt will create space and opportunity for meaningful and empowering participation.

The liturgy used by the UPCSA is a direct translation from missionaries' liturgy. The WMFC has so far failed to improve and contextualize the missionary provided liturgies. The Methodist Church in Zimbabwe still contains a liturgical prayer, which reads *tinokutetererai kuti mururamise nekudzivirira madzimambo...kunyanya Mambokadzi Elizabeth* (literally meaning; we ask you to guide and protect monarchs ... especially Queen Elizabeth) (Kadenge 15<sup>th</sup> October 2010: Interview). The presence of such a liturgical prayer clearly shows that the POZ has done nothing to improve the liturgy brought by missionaries to bring to local Zimbabweans.

The UPCSA is a transnational church. The General Assembly controls the church leadership of a respective nation. In their endeavour churches outside tend to be helping with funds. The problem is that the external funds are given with strings attached. Rules as to how, when and where the funds are to benefit are the norm. The needs of the Zimbabwean Church are ignored as the Assembly strives to control the local church. The UPCSA African churches, especially in Zimbabwe are failing to stand on their own resulting in them being oppressed and hence weakened. The African church lacks power and authority to make important decisions due to constitutional strings tied to her. Responsibility is stripped off, as accountability is not for the African Church. The UPCSA in Zimbabwe has maintained strong relations with the General Assembly, which

limits her power, control, responsibility and contextualization of her Africanness in liturgy and focus (Chikomo. 25<sup>th</sup> June 2012: Interview).

The church is there to offer prophetic ministry to her members but this is lacking in POZ. They tend to be more academic than prophetic (Moyo 29<sup>th</sup> October 2010: Interview). People are suffering and have many questions and problems that need prophetic messages and answers. The Church has professionalized Christianity to the extent of failing to link the believer with God. The African is expecting God to do miracles and answer one's prayers but nothing is forth coming. The loving and forgiving God is questioned in the POZ as forgiveness is preached but not practiced. For example if one converts in the context of a polygamous relationship that person will remain a sinner, not allowed to receive Holy Communion. The fact that he married many wives before conversion is not valid. The forgiveness of God is now conditioned yet the church preaches the unconditional love of God. What a contradiction this is (Zwana 10<sup>th</sup> October 2010: Interview).

In her prophetic ministry love is the central point that the Church should preach and practice. However the UPCSA is found wanting as it fails to cross tribal grounds. Geographically, churches limited to one region are now found in all regions but they are still meant for the people of the region of their origin. If one attends a UPCSA service one will think he/she is either a Zambian or Malawian. The church is full of people usually nicknamed *maBlantyre*, those whose origin is in Malawi or Zambia. It implies that the gospel of unrestricted value is not put into practice. As a result people are driven

to *Masowe* (holy places) and other Christian groupings where they feel the love message is practiced.

An African is ‘a day in day out’ religious person. Every act, movement and event is religious and an African considers all places as sacred; for Europeans “The Christian religion is for Sundays and has little bearing on weekday events” (Daneel 1987: 78). The Church has tried to put in place programmes during the week but all other days are not as sacred as Sunday. The mid-week days leave a great vacuum in the spiritual life of an African compared with the AICs where all days are religious and equally important with mid-week days as days for personal encounter with God in *Masowe*. People stay with the prophet daily. The UPCSAs Sunday services occupy just one or two hours or so and midweek services are only for half an hour or so. The UPCSAs are failing to cater for the daily religious expectations of the African worshipper resulting in people venturing to faith communities where they get daily satisfaction, which the writer in his term *extra-lessons*. Extra lessons in this sense, a member would attend AIC services on their spare times and on usual times would go to UPCSAs services.

The African is steered more towards God through music, rituals and liturgy. If hours of services are limited the time for being steered towards God is limited as well. Unfortunately in UPCSAs tradition is so ingrained that to change it is unacceptable. Spontaneous prayers and big revivals of more than three days are part of African spirituality. All-night prayers leave an African feeling satisfied and closer to God. The UPCSAs in Zimbabwe is now encouraging all-day prayers discouraging all-night prayers



in-response to unfavourable political environment to move during the night. As the emphasis shifts an important spiritual aspect is ignored as the all-night prayers have a fasting element within them that quenches the African spirit.

The elements used at Holy Communion, which is an important Christian sacrament, are not user friendly as argued by Rev. Kenneth Gondongwe. Why not use locally available elements like *sadza* and *mahewu* because they mean more to an African than bread and wine (Gondongwe 20<sup>th</sup> September 2010: Interview). Is this not also what Jesus did when he established the sacrament? The Holy Communion elements are from an external perspective hence the need for the UPCSA to contextualize Holy Communion within the African context. This applies also to ordination and preaching gowns, which are suitable to other continents with different climates

Duncan has this to say when commenting on the Ministerial Dress for Worship in the UPCSA. “The present situation with regard to dress for worship in one particular branch of the Reforming tradition, Southern African Presbyterianism, is sufficiently fluid and inclusive to allow a variety of approaches and viewpoints to be considered inclusive” (Duncan 2006:2-8). Any attempt to define narrowly what should or should not or may or may not be worn is likely to be divisive and to disturb the order, peace and unity of the Church. Sprott (1882:244) makes an apposite comment: ‘Since 1688 the General Assembly [of the Church of Scotland] has issued no regulations on the subject of ecclesiastical costume, and nowadays it would probably be thought beneath the dignity of that venerable body to occupy its time with such matters’. An awareness of scripture,

theology of worship, symbolism, history, tradition and current practice can lead to sensitivity on this non-essential aspect of the life and witness of the Church (Duncan 2006: Article on Ministerial attire to UPCSA Assembly Papers).

The African climate does not require those gowns, which are Western culture anyway. There is need for African attire that clearly shows that God reveals Himself within the African background, norms and values. The cultural values of African Christians should not be downgraded and taken for granted by the UPCSA is such that one becomes a member for status purpose but true Christian religion is lacking. The UPCSA leaves a lot to be desired in terms of African spirituality. Members are not fully gratified hence they end up being UPCSA by day but by night they belong somewhere else in alternative church communities. The spiritual thirst and hunger is forcing African worshippers to venture into all corners in search of satisfaction. It is also reason why some move to *Masowe* churches in hope of spiritual gratification. These actions mean that the UPCSA is indirectly a cause to the continued increase of *Masowe* churches or interdenominational gatherings due to their failures.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

The UPCSA has survived a lot of challenges and obstacles. They have done a lot for African Christians in many spheres of life. However, there is still much more to be done by the UPCSA, so as to truly satisfy the African spirituality. In some aspects little if not nothing has been done to make Christianity more relevant to African context. One would expect that with the long history the UPCSA should have been more contextual now but

alas they have failed. Their missional weaknesses cause a spiritual thirst that forces people to roam around for gratification thereby leading to many new Church movements.

‘The WMFC provides a holistic approach to the whole person’, is a statement that the UPCSAs associate with. The question is, is this statement true? A critical analysis reveals that such churches are lacking in the provision of the holistic approach to a greater extent hence the UPCSAs weaknesses and its repercussions in the present day context are to be explored. The weaknesses to be discussed include failure to dialogue with important African cultural aspects such as rites of passage, African instruments and worshipping style. To be discussed also are the issues of prophetic ministry, liturgy, failure to penetrate tribal grounds and ratio of clergy to laity.

## **CHAPTER 4: Independent Churches' Mission Work in Zimbabwe**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Mr. Mukubvu a Bishop of Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe has this to say in an interview in a few words that people can call us what they want, judge us, and put us in a pigeon holes if they wish. We exist and are growing fast (Mukubvu. 12<sup>th</sup> May 2012: Interview). Daneel (1987: 140) has observed that the terms used to describe the AICs, depends to a great extent on the premises of the researcher and the field of study. For instance, some political scientists refer to them as resistance movements, while some missiologists use terms like sectarian, syncretism, messianic or prophetic movements. According to Daneel, such terms carry a negative connotation and often put the AICs at risk of being named as not “genuine churches”. This author is aware that there are several variations of the short forms for AICs. For the sake of consistency, AICs in this study refer to African Initiated Churches, because this term emphasizes the creative initiative of African Christians in establishing and developing their own churches.

Turner (1979:12), a well-known researcher of AICs, has defined an African Initiated Church as “a church which has been founded in Africa, by Africans and primarily for Africans”. Much as this writer agrees, however, that the forebears of the AICs are Africans, shares the sentiments of Oduro (2002:17) that it is inadequate to assert that they were founded “primarily for Africans”, as if churches founded by Westerners in the West were primarily for Westerners. The origins of a church and the race of its founders do not always exclude people of other races from membership of that church. For instance, the

missiological activities in Africa of churches founded in the West attest to this fact. In this regard this writer finds the definition of African Initiated Churches by Oduro (2002) very refreshing and, more importantly, it echoes with the spiritual weakness in UPCSA debate. He defines African Initiated Churches as congregations and or denominations planted, led, administered, supported, propagated, motivated and funded by Africans for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and worshipping the Triune God in the context and worldview of Africa and Africans (Oduro 2002:17). In other words, even though African Initiated Churches attempt in their worship to locate the Triune God within the worldview of Africa, evangelization is not restricted to Africans. Equally, Westerners cannot claim monopoly over evangelization, even though there are many traces of the Western worldview and philosophy in the life of Western-founded churches, even those in the non-Western world. In the continent where Christianity is undergoing its most swift intensification, a great deal of this increase is taking place in churches instituted by Africans for Africans. Such communities are often referred to as “independent” or “indigenous” churches, to differentiate them from the “historic” or “mission-founded” churches set during the colonial phase by Evangelists from Europe and North America.

“Diverse as they are, the charisma of these African initiatives in Christianity (AICs) grow out of the stern endeavour they make to put across and live out their conviction in irrefutably African cultural outline and methodology” (Phoebe 1998:vii). That Christianity is growing more swiftly than the world population is due to the churches in the third world and in particular to the African Initiatives in Christianity (AICs) and their

relatives, the autochthonous Pentecostal Churches in many parts of the world. The centre of gravity of Christianity is shifting to the South—certainly numerically but also, I would suggest, dogmatically and theologically.

## **4.2 The Historical Nature of AICS**

AICs proclaim a theology of liberation based on the biblical text of Psalm 68<sup>31</sup>, meaning that at an early date Africa came to the Lord. The focus of the AICs was to nurture the hope of salvation of the African souls without denigrating them or opposing them, simply they provide a faithful and honest environment of worship where no one feels like a slave to the other brother. AICs, as such became self supportive, self governing and self extending, with their own Bishops. AICs enjoy the biblical freedom in worship. In Zimbabwe, AICs began to be manifested in the 1930s being pushed by the zeal to restore biblical prophets during worship (Machukera. 29<sup>th</sup> October 2010: Interview)

## **4.3 Reasons for the Emergence and Growth of AICS in Zimbabwe**

The origin and growth of the churches is directly related to the work of the Holy Spirit. Despite the fact that AICs reacted to the basic religious issues of such movements, Turner (1979:12) describes the Church of the Lord as a vital development at a point when the African past is confronted with the challenge of the new world of the Bible. This is true of the Zimbabwean situation where the independent churches are interpreting the holy book in their context in opposite to what the white man used to when he brought the Christian belief in the country.

When Oosthuizen (1968:7) studied the AICs in West Africa, as did Turner, he put-forward the idea that the deepest motive of many independent movements has been religious.

One of the essential points is the transferring to the spiritual and ecclesiastical plane of the “opposition to white authority” which could be made effective only by reconstructing the African communities under African leadership. Reflecting on this gives the real truth of the position in Zimbabwean soil, where there are misunderstandings about discipline (people disciplined for drinking African brewed beer, while white people go free when they take clear beer); ineffective catechism and reluctance to encourage indigenous leadership or lack of opportunity for the laity to serve. Catechism material and approach denouncing the local customs and limited promotion of local ministers justifies schism to a greater extent and hence the formation and growth of AICs we see in the country. The other cause was due to the standard of living (of the white elite), which was and in some corners of the country are still high; the percentage of literates was rising by day and so on. On the other hand the black majority were looked upon and neglected with their tribal customs denounced.

The missionaries’ attack on polygamy is a conditioning factor whose effects are mainly at an unconscious level. Drastic condemnation of the ancestor cult implies an onslaught on the very foundations of the Zimbabwean tribal and family structure. Such attacks by missionaries were experienced as a direct threat to a fundamental aspect of Black society and could not but provoke strong reaction. Thus Barret concludes that independent churches represent a reaction to mission rather than to colonialism (Barret 1968:116).

The publication of the Bible into local languages (which the previous chapter refers to as a merit), increased the community's spiritual independence. Earlier on the WMFC had control over scriptures and their interpretations were final and binding. The era of translation gave the blacks access to an independent source of reference and more-so that its close relatedness to their own society than to the white person's. The discrepancy between missionary practice and biblical norms did not pass unnoticed (Daneel 1987:74).

A failure in sensitivity, the failure of missions at one small point to demonstrate consistently the fullness of the biblical concept of love as sensitive understanding towards others as equals the failure to study or understand African society, religion and psychology from the vernacular scriptures of the catastrophic nature of this failure and of the urgent necessity to remedy it in order that Christianity may survive on Zimbabwean ground (Barret 1968:156).

David Bosch (1973:33ff), in his researches cited nine factors as the causes of the origin of the AICs including, poor communication, superficial impoverished gospel, black and white relationships, disillusionment, denominationalism, translation of the bible into local languages and traditional structures amongst others, and this writer has chosen these to describe the situation in Zimbabwe.

**4.3.1 Poor Communication** was and is still a cardinal cause of the church schism. As a result of failure to communicate and understand the local people, the western missionaries put up a stereotypical pattern of the west. There was little understanding of



the very real belief in witchcraft and evil spirits. Missionaries labelled it “childish”. They also ignored the role which ritual ceremonial and symbols can fulfil. They suppressed the emotions of the black local people as something coming from the lower order. In support of the black Zimbabweans’ life, polygamy makes a lot of sense in many respects, as it was simply equated with un-chastity; beer was dismissed as “abuse of liquor” without realization of these roles in ritual or fellowship and brotherhood and wealth. As a result of these and similar symptoms of lack of communication the gospel began to sound a negative note for many of the Zimbabwean hearers. It becomes rather a new set of taboos (Nida 1971:97). Communication is a two way thing. The native blacks are also to blame for they did not seek for a common ground to explain their reason why they acted the way they did. To react by moving out and start a new movement is not justified. Nevertheless, all these indications of lack of communication created a favourable climate for schism. When other factors were added the whole “atmosphere” becomes ripe for secession

**4.3.2 Superficial Impoverished Gospel:** The preaching of the Gospel did not touch on many facets of the life of the struggling to hear, comprehend and relate or equate Zimbabweans. The gospel was and in the present time is (*munya*) sterile. It is basically full of do’s and don’ts. There is lack of attempts to show that one’s daily work is also a form of worship. The gospel of “soul salvation instead of salvation of the entire man” (Makamure 25<sup>th</sup> September 2010: Interview) is proclaimed and people are shunning it now for AIC which addresses such needs and fill the gap.

This inability was most clearly expressed in the sphere of illness were the church simply had no message and it was precisely this vacuum that was later filled by AICs with the message of deliverance, dealing with the whole human-being. This state of affairs prepared the way for the rise of the AICs. There was a silent, as yet inarticulate yearning for a religion which would embrace all of life and would fill the whole day and not Sunday only neglecting Monday to Saturday life to be ruled by taboos. AIC came addressing social, political and economic implications. There are various reasons that motivated the formation of the AICs in Zimbabwe; I however choose to focus on the following four, namely: Colour-bar, missionary domination, cultural colonization and a general desire for African freedom in worship.

**4.3.3 Colour-bar:** The whites thought and some still view themselves as superior to the blacks. They despised the chocolate brown or black skin and language, arguing that to be black was and is a curse. They see no difference between black and slave to an extent that a black pastor is for black people and hence there is no hope of promotion. Their white counterparts would be awarded more remuneration because they want it for entertainment, holidays and blacks will not like that. To this day white dominant congregations within Zimbabwe UPCSA, the likes of Highlands (Harare) and St Columba's (Mutare) stayed for a longer time than the twelve months prescribed by the *Manual of Faith and Order 2007: Chapter 16.56* without a minister. St Columba's went to the extreme of calling a minister from Scotland, a process which took the congregation more than ten years. The congregants are not ready to call a black minister, even defying the urging of the General Assembly of September 2010 at Lekoa Presbytery through the

Ministry Committee Report that the church needs to encourage cross cultural appointments and callings.

**4.3.4 Missionary domination:** White pastors still cling to “*social darwinism*”, blacks viewed as being part of the darkness that characterized the “Dark Continent” and as such an uncivilized African cannot lead a civilized white man. As a result black pastors were less educated and most of them were just trained to be assistants to white pastors or simply evangelists. This led to the African agency and or need for AICs in the soil of Zimbabwe.

**4.3.5 Cultural colonization:** Black culture and tradition were condemned as demonic religion. This means that to be a Christian one needs to renounce one’s culture and to embrace the white man’s culture. As such it meant that Christianity was preached in a cultural context of the preacher, “*mission by diffusion*”. Such a gospel did not help the native Zimbabwean since it implied that to be African is a sin because God condemned all that is African.

**4.3.6 General desire for African freedom in worship:** Africans during worship were made to behave like whites in singing and posture. Dancing and clapping were considered demonic and those who did were expelled from the church. Worship was formalized in a Western context and did not help the true spirit of Christianity. In such a religion blacks were in Babylon Captivity and they needed to be freed to exercise their

spiritual freedom. The orders of service, liturgies are made by the knowledgeable white and are out of the context of the Zimbabwean church. Even the recently revised edition, “Word and Worship”, which suggests sermons outline and liturgies (*Based on the Revised Common Lectionary: Year B, 2011-2012*), edited by many authors including Rev. Neil Meyer (a UPCSA minister), is nowhere closer to help the Zimbabwean Christians.

Succession did not lead to thorough structural change. The new churches retained the replicas of the mother church in terms of ecclesiastical organs and dogma, more so that some new churches tended to relax the canon laws. A good example is the Sengwayo’s church which allows divorce whenever necessary, while the Zvobgo’ African Reformed church is stuck to the old church. Reverend Nyabadza’s Anglican Church however relaxed canon laws in terms of leadership arguing that this way is true of the Old Testament structure (Levites - in the Davidic lineage). Bishop Kunonga’s Anglican Church in Zimbabwe is just a name that differentiates it from the other Western Missionary Founded Anglican church today in Zimbabwe.

#### **4.4 Contextual of Motivation towards AICs**

It is characterized by division inspired by those who wish to move out and start their own denominations. They tend to promote the independent scriptural interpretation and this leads to splits and hence are fashionable being a denominational founder, something to be proud of, a scramble for titles. AIC have a desire to provide for Africans’ needs, such as

in the area of rituals which the AICs respond positively such as birth rites, puberty, adulthood and burial among others.

#### **4.4.1 The search for values**

The African is a radically religious person, religious at the core of his/her being (Phoebe 1998:9). Africans' communal activities and their social institutions are inextricably bound up with religion and spirit world. They seem unable to explain life and its mysteries without some reference to the supernatural. Christians, especially missionaries of UPCSA to Zimbabwe, have tended to talk as if Christianity is the best thing that happened to Africa and or Zimbabwe, while there is no doubt that Christianity has a creditable record in Africa, particularly through the contributions missionaries and churches made through the social services Zimbabwe also has other opinions on this. Thus for example, an Asante's prince once said to the Rev. TR. Picot, a Methodist missionary:

“...the bible is not a book for us (Africans). God at the beginning gave the bible to the white people, another to the Muslims and fetish to us... We know God already ourselves. ...We will never embrace your religion, which has ruined the Fanti country, weakened their power and brought down the high man on a level with the low man” (Findlay and Holdsworth 1922:173).

In Zimbabwe the rise of AICs may be seen in part as a protest by Africans against missionary practice. Initially the social services provided by the missions (education and health) attracted people to come to or be near the church. More recently, we may recall

that the support the UPCSAs gave to those struggling against poverty in Zimbabwe. More generally, the humanitarian assistance through UPCSAs from ecumenical bodies (such as CWM) to needy natives has attracted people to the Christian faith. Such activities sometimes encourage people to see the church as yet another non-governmental organization or aid agency. They uphold biblical values, norms and ethos such which the WMFC ignore, the likes of dreams, visions, miracles and healings. The inconsistencies which are maintained by the WMFC also expose their weakness. WMFC teach of the love of one another but they show no love outside the church services. They denounce polygamy and fornication but some of them have children with black ladies whom they did not marry, commonly known as “coloureds”.

The desire to provide needs for African; AICs thrive as a result of meeting the needs in the area of rituals in which they respond positively mainly regarding the birth rites, adulthood and burial rites of the native of Zimbabwe. This resulted in the conception of the tombstone unveiling and memorial services African rites equivalence of appeasing or veneration of the ancestors through ‘*kurova guva* and *manyaradzo*’.

The AICs were influential in the birth and growth of African Nationalism. The movement inspired many nationalists such the late Bishop Abel Tendekai Muzorewa; Canaan Sodindo Banana, Robert G. Mugabe and Joseph Msika and many others who fought for the liberation of Zimbabwe. The title (AIC) is a symbol of power and freedom and has liberation motifs. They are spirit type churches, emphasizing on the activity of the Holy Spirit during worship and in the life of a believer. Emphasis is given to prophecy, healing

and cleansing of the evil spirits. Healing through ecstatic prayer is concerned with spiritual welfare and an alternative worldview is promoted. The AICs are tolerant of Africa traditions and culture such as polygamy, good spirit possession and are opposed to Western traditions, culture and worship, medicine and lifestyle. Respect and value are given to dreams, vision and the Holy Spirit as the loans and interpreters of the word of God. AICs recruit most of their members from the so called “main-line churches” and non-believers. Leadership are mostly of very little or no education who depend on Holy Spirit for divine worship.

#### **4.5 Worship Structure**

Many of these churches have no formal order of worship rather they worship as the spirit leads. The AIC’s major emphasis is their prophetic role during worship. Prophecy enables the worshippers to know God’s will and to guide those who would have fallen into sin. Hymns or choruses are rotational and circular in nature, with words continuously repeated, with one theme constantly maintained and the service rotates that goal. At times the AICs employ the hymns from the WMFC although with an altered melody. A good example is seen in the use of the UPCSA Shona hymn book by Mwazha’s Apostolic Church in Zimbabwe. The AIC in Zimbabwe attracts a huge following at the rise of the prophetic figure or founder, for instance Johane Masowe and Johane Marange of the apostolic churches in the early 1930s to 1950s. Splinter groups mushroom mainly in opposition to hereditary leadership. Many black people found in the AICs (Zionist churches especially), a good replacement of the fading *Sangoma* power (bone throwers).

The groups glorify the concepts of kith and kin. They fully respond to the African world view and traditional structures.

Daneel argues that such churches respond to the “quest for belonging” caused by the uncertainty of World War Two (WWII) and the collapse of the institution of the family (Daneel 1987: 114). Those who returned from the WWII did not want to return to the WMFC because they felt used and dumped by the white race and as a result they sought membership in AICs. This was a search for belonging. The AIC therefore fulfilled the concept of African-ness in the church scene.

#### **4.6 AIC Contributions To Church In Zimbabwe**

In spite of the interpretation many in the western world give to the AICs, they are growing churches with Christian doctrine based on the Bible as their sole authority, a special dispensation of the Holy Spirit, faith in the God of the bible and confidence in its promises. AICs have much to contribute to the church’s life in Zimbabwe. This writer chooses to highlight on a few of such contributions which can enrich, enhance and develop the church in Zimbabwe amongst many others. Firstly, the AICs help the UPCSA to discover elements derivative of Western culture and imported with the gospel into African society. That which enable AICs to revive African culture which had been branded as sinful by missionaries, cause many Africans to discard Christianity as un-African. Secondly, AICs help the UPCSA to develop avenues of being the church in Zimbabwe thereby ceasing to be a Western Missionary Founded Church. Lastly, the



UPCSA can learn that people are not all articulate in written theology, but AICs express faith in liturgy, worship and structures. Their services are alive with warm expressions of joy as they clap and dance in rhythm with the new spiritual and indigenous songs. People come because they feel at home. AICs have contributed to the Christian ideal of diversity in ecumenicity as an example to all churches to be themselves.

#### **4.7 AIC Leadership**

The church leaders in the AICs exercise absolute power, a good example is attaining the position of Jesus Christ, “The ministry of Joshua” (not a real name). Nobody owns the ministry it belongs to God “*Missio Dei*” and not *Missio-Homin*”. Since they have absolute power, they do not see any need to make use of other talents available in the church.

These leaders are misusing their positions, power and talents. Some church leaders have occupied the position of Jesus and acted as if they were Jesus. The name of Jesus has very little reference in the life of a member. Reference is often made to God and the church leader. If things go wrong in the church, it will be difficult to remove such people from positions of leadership. The only alternative is to break away and start a new church. The leader who breaks away would consolidate his leadership and behave in an even worse manner than the leader he left. Such a problem will be passed on from one church to another. The problem of power hunger will remain in the AICs until a teaching ministry has been fully introduced, directing people how they should behave as faithful Christians. As a result of this weakness in the teaching ministry, there is competition among the AICs in and outside Zimbabwe. It is true that each church thinks and believes

that all other churches have missed it all. So these other churches should come back and join the true church. The weaknesses I have mentioned above are not easily noticed by the church members in the AICs (Shank 1991:246).

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

All AICs should introduce and promote teaching ministry, which has been neglected from the inception of the church. Precautions should however be taken on the quality and relevance of the courses. Christian education will enable the AICs to understand the Word of God, to know what He has done in the past. People should be taught repentance and faith towards God through faith in Jesus Christ. In the AICs, the church members do not see the kingdom of God as existing here and now. The kingdom of God is seen as a future thing at the end of times. True happiness can be attained and experienced in the coming kingdom of God. If teaching ministry is going to be introduced and practiced, then it is going to correct the dilemma of the church members by proving that the church, when rooted in true Christian teachings, is a sign of God's kingdom here on earth. The church is God's agent to further His purposes, plan and will. It is in that church where everybody is called to play an important part in Christian service. It is, therefore, important to know our Christian beliefs, convictions and talents to carry out the task before us. Teaching is the only tool to achieve our God-given tasks and responsibilities. Teaching ministry brings order, direction, strength, growth and unity to the local churches. Finally, teaching ministry will combat heresy and prevent schisms in AICs.

## **CHAPTER 5: Can the UPCSA Learn from the AICs?**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter dealt with who the AICs are and how various scholars define them, their origin life and mission. In this chapter the writer is analytically discussing what UPCSA/POZ can learn from the AIC approach to evangelize Zimbabwe.

### **5.2 Lessons from AIC**

For the practical purposes of this study, WMFC/UPCSA have been instrumental in the formation of the AICs. It is this writer's view that, AICs have moved a considerable distance in addressing some of the challenges raised in this debate. This chapter has identified five areas which UPCSA can learn from the AICs, namely: enculturation, community development, how AICs handle the phenomenon of urbanization and leadership training.

#### **5.2.1 AIC and enculturation**

The most significant features of the AICs and particularly of the spirit-type churches are the ways in which they have applied the Christian faith to the African setting (Daneel 1987:229). The AICs have made greater walk than have the so-called WMFC when it comes to the enculturation of Christianity towards Africans. The unparalleled development of the AICs can be attributed, to their successful attempt to make Christianity at home in Africa and an African at home in Christianity (Nyoni. 20<sup>th</sup> August 2012: Interview).

Rev. Nyoni continued suggesting that the UPCSAs can ease the conflict between Christianity and African culture, by fostering the integration of Christianity and the local traditions, amongst other things, playing music that reflected the religious tradition of the local people, preaching Jesus the Christ Son of the Almighty God and not the culture of any community. Ministers of the gospel can be creative relevant to their contexts, using whatever is available for the glory of God. They can contextualize the Good News starting with what the people know and leading them into the unknown world of the salvific acts of Jesus the Christ. This writer believes that if Jesus Christ had been born and raised a *Karanga* man he would have used *sadza* instead of unleavened bread and *mahewu* in place of wine for the sacrament of the Last Supper (Nyoni. 20<sup>th</sup> August 2012: Interview).

### **5.2.2 AICs and traditional religion**

The UPCSAs/POZs can learn from the AICs and provide a picture of how the Africans could address the question of traditional religion outside the WMFC framework; also to take a leaf and put efforts as the AICs into negotiating indigenous African values and customs which the Gospel has, in many respects. The following precepts of the local cultural beliefs of the AICs are given here to exemplify how these churches have displayed the theological creativity necessary to provide Christian answers to African questions. African worshippers live in two worlds caused by the unanswered questions which include the existence of witch-craft and WMFC failing to address it and ancestral

ownership “ancestral veneration”, as it is put by the western missionaries. This writer chose to discuss further on the latter.

**Ancestor veneration:** Pato (1980:73) indicates that, since the beginning of the Christian missions in Southern Africa two centuries ago, the African practice of communication by the living with their dead has been misinterpreted as “ancestor worship” and treated as participation in idolatry. Part of the problem is that missionaries saw their faith as one and the same with the European way of life, and as a result preached against the traditional African ways. Pato has identified two chief postulations underlying the rejection of the African ideas about the ancestors: “ancestor worship” as the basis of the religion of Africa and the Africans had no knowledge of God before the coming of Christianity. However, irrespective of these assertions, some of the AICs, unlike many WMFC/UPCSA, have assimilated this traditional religious custom more or less intact. Arguments advanced for the inclusion of this African practice among the AICs vary. The two most notable ones are the Christian concept of the communion of saints and the biblical fifth commandment to honour your mother and father, which is applied to the dead as well as the living. It is against this background that the double existence of the AICs in relation to this practice as a non-issue. In this respect the local clergy are to blame because they fail to explain or teach their fellow counterparts on what, how and why Africans behave as such, but join their master and teacher in condemning all that is African.

Pato (1980:75) has observed that many Christians, including full church members, are often committed to ancestor veneration (syncretistic practice). Even though some admit it openly, others try to conceal it for fear either of being labelled heathens or even excommunicated. Members of the UPCSA in Zimbabwe, of whom the majority happens to be blacks, are no exception. If we were to take a leaf out of the AICs' book, with special reference to ancestor veneration, the Christian concept of believers, if properly understood, could allow members of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa – Zimbabwe to relate to their own dead in a real and meaningful way.

Is not the father of Reformation, John Calvin, our ancestor, even though he died centuries ago and was not even African, but from Geneva? We still subscribe to his teachings, philosophy and theology. This author therefore advocates that there should be an open space in the UPCSA for members to communicate with their own dead and thereby avoid the dangers of inner conflict and eventually individual split. Moreover, the relationship between the living and the dead encourages the Church to nurture the memory of its predecessors, who are still influencing our own lives by their contributions to the welfare of the Church when they were still alive, to communicate with the dead and not to worship them or to allow the dead to take the place of God. This type of history can shape the POZ into a better future or create space for schism in the church.

The AICs take the African problems seriously. They present Christ as one who can overcome evil as it is understood and experienced in the African context. The AICs followed a traditional and biblical view of humanity, and a world that, according to

Daneel (1987:251), is more inherent and partly a reaction against the dualistic view as a piece of conscious systematization. In doing this, AICs have adopted a holistic approach. One notable example in AICs is the prophet who embraces the entire spectrum of activities performed by the traditional *nyanga* and combines them pastorally and medically in the context of the church is the United Family International Churches (UFIC) led by Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa in Zimbabwe. This comprehensive approach assumes value in addressing salvation in its totality to include sin, disease, sorcery, evil spirits or economic activities. A notable example of the prophet's traditional magic is when he recently performed a miracle of a million people in a church service, some getting cash in their wallets and some into their bank accounts, '*a miracle money*'.

In this respect, the prophets in the AICs have a ministry which the UPCS/POZ would do well to note. Even though some ministers might not have some of these gifts, surely lay people who possess them could be encouraged to utilize them for the benefit of the church and should be encouraged to do so, rather than suppressing them. After all, John Calvin believed in the priesthood of all believers, which for this writer means everyone using their God-given talents, including traditional healing, for the sake of building the Church.

### **5.2.3 AIC and Community Development Projects**

This writer suggests that the UPCS/POZ should be seen progressively in the light of the total economic and structural development of the whole of the country (Zimbabwe). Social maladies, such as joblessness, sickness, homelessness, poverty, and pandemics like

cholera and HIV/AIDS, are of deep concern in the country. Often communities face overwhelming challenges in attempting to address some of these challenges owing to lack of fiscal and human-resources. However, this writer maintains that the UPCSA can learn how AICs have proved that such challenges can present opportunities for churches to be self-reliant without necessarily relying on outside world, donor world, thereby growing spiritually and be effective in their community of mission.

The POZ has, understandably, had a long-standing partnership at different levels with agencies and churches of founder missionaries from the United Kingdom and America, the likes of the Presbytery of Denver (America) and the Presbytery of Greenock and Parsley (Australia). Some of the projects with partner churches in the UPCSA have not yielded positive results, because there is sometimes too much control from outside, and members are often discouraged from taking ownership of such projects.

In this author's view, this is a case in point by which the UPCSA/POZ could benefit from the AICs. In the interests of relevance and progress, the daunting challenge for the UPCSA is evaluating the drivers in terms of what and who of the relationship. In other words, what constitutes this long-standing partnership? The then Moderator Rev. Jonah Masaka (2010) in his speech to address the Presbytery meeting, lamented the fact that financial poverty has turned members of UPCSA into 'cry babies'. When challenged by social issues, their (church members') first reaction is that they do not have sufficient money to respond. However, by means of initiatives by the AICs, of making ware baskets and mats (*tswanda nemhasa*) from local plants and metal steel-sheets, the UPCSA could



learn to use whatever little they have to sustain themselves. After all, Jesus (cf. Matthew 15:32-39) reminded his disciples, with seven loaves and two small fish, that one can make a difference in the lives of the needy.

#### **5.2.4 AIC and Urbanization Trend**

Metropolitan congregations of the AICs are, in a sense, extensions of a primarily rurally-oriented movement, and those which are not extensions of such a trend. The latter are movements that originate and grow in the city. In such a context, the churches are more specifically urban churches ministering to urban dwellers. Despite these distinctions, it is clear that the AICs in urban settings have become places in which to feel at home in the midst of the upheaval and insecurity that accompany city life.

According to Daneel (1987:80), the creation of comforting support systems for alienated individuals is the manifestation of the ongoing *Quest for Belonging*. The kinship structure which shapes the social order in rural communities is absent, and new criteria for a satisfactory social structure are needed. This is where the AICs make an important contribution, because they become “reorientation centres” in their own right and certain characteristics of *hunhu* (good-moral behaviour) are manifested. It to the opinion of this writer to suggest that the POZ could do better if it learns better evangelistic approach and begin with the people from the rural areas and when they come to town they would look for their church and find home.

This can be depicted in their fellowship whereby individuals refer to one another as *madzibaba and madzimai* (referring to male and female members respectively), an expression showing a sense of communalism and solidarity. The idea of extended family is also expressed in the common use of the terms “brotherhood and sisterhood”, even between people who are not necessarily related by blood. Through social networks the AICs provide scope for forming networks. In the impersonal cities, there is a great need to form strong social bonds with a network of friends whereby the individual can receive recognition and feel at home (Daneel 1987:134). The problems of urban life can be unbearable, so such networks are important in helping individuals to survive. The AICs offer protection to those caught up in urban life, which is fraught with competitiveness and uncertainties. For instance, in some parts of urban areas of Zimbabwe, Zionist and Apostle Prophets are constantly giving advice and help in business matters on how to find jobs and the like. In this regard, witness and proclamation are interwoven, in which God’s help, protection and healing become central to people’s daily lives. AICs have played an important role in the urban areas in maintaining social control, which tends to be lacking on account of the absence of the kinship structure and tribal authorities (Daneel 1987:135). The church leader performs this function by setting up a set of behavioural codes, such as prohibition of liquor and extramarital sex. Discipline is maintained by means of regular pastoral interviews or by the church council.

The UPCSA can learn from the AICs on how to make inroads in ministering in a complex, diversified urban context. The AICs in Zimbabwe are not run on predominantly ethnic lines providing an opportunity for people of different languages and cultural

backgrounds to get to know one another and associate at a meaningful level. The contribution of AICs in this arena is crucial, given the impersonal nature of the urban environment. The UPCSAs have a lot to learn in this regard for AICs are overtaking the mainline churches in the way they are growing even in the urban areas which the former viewed as its strong holds. During church services, new members are given useful information such as the workings of the transport system and where to apply for housing. In addition to spiritual assistance, members are given material help, for example food for the unemployed, or help with funeral expenses. One of the chief aims of the *Ruwadzano/Manyano/ Women's Association* in the AICs is to reach out to those who need help and to provide relief, in addition to guiding the girl child who and to marry.

Nearly all congregations falling under the UPCSAs in Zimbabwe are concentrated in urban areas, and are therefore urban in nature. This is where the AICs, with wide-ranging activities of this nature, have a lot to offer the UPCSAs in terms of discovering and developing new avenues of being a church in an urban setting. The writer is not in any way trying to underscore the initiatives by certain congregations and groups in the UPCSAs who integrate some of these AIC activities into their ministries. However, the writer retains the sense that compared with the AICs the POZ is still lagging behind. In most cases, such activities fall outside the scope of many congregations in the UPCSAs.

### 5.2.5 AICs and Leadership

There are different models of leadership in the AICs. Scholars tend to differ in terms of the classification of different types of leadership in the AICs, for instance, the chief-type and prophet-type leaders in the AICs as well as the “messianic”. The chief-type model of leadership closely resembles traditional social structure, whereas leaders like Johanne Masowe *weChishanu* and Johanne Marange can be categorized under messianic leadership, as they represent Christ’s position as the mediator at the gates of heaven. They thus become *Black Messianic* figures (Daneel 1987:139). The chief-type model of leadership is not applicable, however, to the urban context, because, traditional authority is not strong. The bishops exercise judicial leadership, while the prophets exercise charismatic leadership, and that the prophets are excluded from the leadership structures.

The nature of models of leadership in the AICs is multi-faceted, and it depends on a number of things like the social status of the members of the church, socio-political infrastructure in the areas where the church functions, or traditional perception of the church, to mention but a few. The different patterns of leadership are flexible and adaptable to various situations when the need arises. The important thing is the way in which those who have been entrusted with positions of leadership utilize their gifts. Those whose gifts are pastoral, preaching or administrative proceed from the office of captain to that of bishop. UPCSA has to learn how it appoints people into leadership than the current scenario where you must know someone to be in a leadership position. POZ is blessed with so much gifted members in various respects but talents are vanishing with being utilized.

The AICs have tapped into that vital force called the laity in meeting the needs of growing numbers of African Christians instead of over-burdening one person with the responsibilities, that is, the minister/evangelist. The shortage of ministers/pastors in the Presbytery of Zimbabwe means that the needs of ordinary congregants will be acutely affected in the future. Is it not time then that POZ considers using its laity in an attempt to minister effectively to the members? All that is needed is to organize them and to involve more of them in the work of the Church. If lay persons were to do things their ministers did not want them to do, their full participation in the life of the Church is crucial. The AICs have strategies for inclusive utilization of the skills and time of their members. As a result, they are able to survive a great many challenges because they are dependent on the community as a whole rather than on a few individuals. Once more, this does not imply that lay persons in UPCSAs are inactive. However, if a cue could be taken from the AICs, it could be used better to advance God's mission and avoid exodus of members to AICs.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The pattern established by missions in Zimbabwe over two hundred years has created two massive problems. First, control still lies with mission churches and organizations, especially in terms of patterns of theological education and funding. Secondly, local churches have internalized the dependency pattern to such an extent that they are blind to their potential for taking their own initiatives. POZ/UPCSAs, like the AICs, must start learning to drink from "their own wells". However, as long as the POZ is still trapped in

the paternalistic structures of the mission societies which gave it birth, this dream seems very distant.

The writer could be misinterpreted as implying that UPCSA must now surrender her Presbyterianism and become a completely AIC. As much as UPCSA is rooted in Calvinism, and there is nothing wrong with that, but by learning from the AICs in certain areas this Presbytery can grow to its full potential. Finally, this writer is not blind to the fact that the AICs have experienced their fair share of faults and shortcomings. Irrespective of such inadequacies the AICs have really lived up to the challenges of the time and UPCSA can tap so much from these churches.

The writer is of the opinion that few contributions which have been hinted above could benefit POZ and its partners in a quest for possible approaches and opportunities for future partnership. This study attempted to look at UPCSA/POZ's weaknesses as a phenomenon in its own time. The AICs have taken the lead in an endeavour to live up to the self-principle, that is, self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating and self-theologizing thereby growing spiritual and in turn numerically. The writer indicated areas in which POZ could learn from the AICs. Finally, the study explored issues of mutuality and inter-dependence, and a few guidelines are proposed for POZ.

## **CHAPTER 6: Analysis and Conclusion**

### **6.1 Introduction**

There is also a deeply religious and spiritual quest which helps us to understand how persons nurtured in the womb of the UPCSA may at some point go over to an AIC. Rather than get into polemics, it is better to ask: what is it that UPCSA has not done right, which encourages some of their members to “vote with their feet” and join other churches? Those who have been responsible for the propagation of the Christian Gospel in Zimbabwe have not shown sufficient awareness of the need for an encounter between the Christian religion and the cosmology of the peoples outside European cultures and traditions. It is this which has made Christianity either alien or superficial or both.

As the UPCSA preached in Zimbabwe the African believer hoped for satisfaction but to a great extent this was in vain. The historical nature of the UPCSA, theological reflection of the 21<sup>st</sup> century missionary movements in Zimbabwe reveals that the problem started during the propagation of Christianity. The Good News, however is that the UPCSA can be more relevant in the African context through contextualization. A theological reflection on missionary movement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Zimbabwe reveals that the missionaries presented what was the God of rules more than of love to the Africans; individualism and a superiority complex of Western principles, which were considered as faith itself. It was a theology that was homogenous. It was a theology of abstract principles that failed to answer African spiritually. It presented a theology tied to the Western culture as the Church.

In order for the UPCSA to be more relevant there is need for dialogue with African cultures. African culture is the basis by which Zimbabweans come to experience God. It is only when there is consideration of African culture their faith might be catered for. The church is improving on aspects of worship style, liturgy and use of African instruments but there is still more on this aspect to be addressed. The UPCSA has to quench the daily religious thirst of African spiritually. This church has to offer prophetic ministry to its members. The ministry will help the UPCSA to move away from academics to practical issues that make the gospel message a central point of life. The call for moratorium in African churches to make encouraging impact on the Church-scene without any hindrance from the mother churches, which normally come with funds and foreign personnel, will enable the church to be responsible in making important decisions that affect the African Church or and worshipper without fear or bias. Sadly Christianity in Zimbabwe came wrapped in the Western culture and the Church has continued to transmit the gospel in that Western culture today but there is room for the Church to change and be more relevant and contextual to African needs. The UPCSA has the potential to make African Christians children of God without abandoning their God given culture because it is neither a sin nor an affront to their participation in the Kingdom of God.

## **6.2 Advisability of Establishing the Presbyterian Church in Zimbabwe**

A possible degree of autonomy for the Presbyterian Church in Zimbabwe is imminent at this point. This would however be coupled with some implications including a change in



name. This could perhaps enhance the image of the church as an indigenous one, and from the current denomination sister nations' (South Africa and Zambia) point of view, a change in name would probably not make much of a difference at all. There would also be little or no costs involved in any re-registration of property as this would probably be unnecessary. The possible benefits of emphasizing the indigenous character of the Church ought to be weighed against the possible benefits of emphasizing its Pan-African or regional or international character. The church has a local as well as an international character. Lastly, a change in name would probably facilitate relationship with other Churches in Zimbabwe, with international organizations and with the government of Zimbabwe.

### **6.2.1 Devolution**

What would be the implications of this degree of autonomy? Devolution would allow the Presbyterian Church in Zimbabwe to assume greater responsibility in various areas. This church would decide which course to take and which committees would be needed which would be relevant to its context. For instance, the following areas could be devolved:

- 1 Training for the ministry: Ministers would be trained for a particular context unlike the current situation whereby the Denomination is training for the wide church with a variety of context.
- 2 Church growth: Discipling the nation Zimbabwe and not the region of Southern Africa. Employing the use of available resources without looking for external aid.
- 3 Finance (including Pension Fund): Foreign aid has since crippled the church in Zimbabwe at large. People view church as the donor. They come to church to receive material things and not to support the ministry of the church.

- 4 Ecumenical Relations: POZ needs to start working and viewing outside world partners or core workers in the vineyard of God and not as superior in any respect. The focus on money and personnel has had a detrimental effect on the growth of the church in Zimbabwe. The third world is viewed as the recipient and the sending church's needs are never defined and as such this has been a problem in building such a relationship. Duncan (2007:66) sees that sending churches' needs are blatant – personnel and fiscal. Who should really determine the needs of the sending church? The Zimbabwean church needs to learn to grow and stand on its feet.

The financial and manpower implications of such devolution would need to be carefully examined. Could the present manpower cope with the work that would need to be done; the persons involved would need to be freed from all General Assembly responsibilities.

The following, among others would be the cost of devolution:

- i. Training for ministry; would be necessary to have students being received for training from both Presbyteries each year.
- ii. The contribution to the Pension Fund, this writer recommends should be doubled in order to strengthen the Fund.
- iii. The extent of devolution would determine the proportion of financial support needed.

### **6.2.2 Disjoining**

The Presbyterian Church in Zimbabwe could disjoin from the UPCSA but maintain some specific link. There would be some implications though and the clear ones could be; disjoining would mean the immediate application of devolution indicated above and it would probably be necessary to set up some form of joint council similar to that which existing between the Church in Denver and the current Presbytery of Zimbabwe.

### **6.3 Reasons for Autonomy**

There needs to be better and speedier unity between the blacks and the whites in the Church in Zimbabwe. Autonomy I presume will promote greater self-reliance and therefore reconciliation, A Zimbabwean Church might be more effective in its witness and mission in the life work of the church as a national unit without waiting for the mother body to regularize the operations such sort in Zimbabwe.

There is need to encourage total identification of all ministers with the Zimbabwean situation. To train all its ministers within the context of Zimbabwe rather than the current “scenario” where the church trains for the denomination and mostly outside the context with which one will operate. There is great desire within the government of Zimbabwe for the churches to identify with state programmes. Indigenous churches are being promoted by the government through its “Land Reform Programmes” by being given land to farm and build mission stations, easy access to food and any other scarce commodities in the country. This alone gives confidence to the people in Zimbabwe and

hence moves to such church leaving the “main-line churches” including Presbyterian Church. Autonomy would to some extent reduce this influx by giving the generality of membership confidence and security.

The above positive ideas to enable the church in Zimbabwe to grow both spiritually and numerically also come with side effects including, the move of autonomy for the Presbytery of Zimbabwe could affect negatively the need to maintain visible unity of the church and that the pre-requisite of competence for self-government to be developed further in order to create confidence in the structure; that is the need for experience to precede any autonomy. There is above all a danger of creating a precedent for further division in the Church in Southern Africa. This would further impede the value in Christians supporting and complementing each other beyond national boundaries. The situation in Zimbabwe seems to pose a challenge with both positive and negative aspects.

The writer is of the opinion that little mission has so far been undertaken to the indigenous people of Zimbabwe with the result that the present membership is perhaps not sufficiently rooted in Zimbabwe (e.g. a high percentage of the black membership is Malawian). There is, therefore, a fundamental challenge to penetrate the indigenous Zimbabwean community.

There might be the challenge of funding the church in Zimbabwe. With the continuing emigration of white people especially during this time of industrialization and black empowerment programmes by the Zanu PF, where most of the industries are off loading

49% of the proceeds to the indigenous Zimbabweans. The fact that Presbyterian Church in Zimbabwe is almost totally urban in character provides both a challenge and an opportunity for the church and surely it needs to learn from the AIC.

#### **6.4 Vernacularization and Localization of the UPCSA in Zimbabwe**

In the previous chapter the writer mentioned the need to translate church doctrines and liturgies in local languages mainly Shona and Ndebele, a thing which is still lagging behind within the denomination worse still in the UPCSA in Zimbabwe. For the Ndebele members, the church uses Zulu translations from South Africa. At this point the writer sees it fit to evaluate the impact of such translations on the localization process.

According to Lamin Sanneh, the expatriate missionary project of translating the Bible and other Christians Literature into mother tongue was very important for Africans (Sanneh 1989:174-181). Sanneh, however, over praises the missionaries at the expense of local people. Important for the localization process were the actual work of translating and the impact of the translations on local people. Wherever such process takes place it should be a reciprocal one between the local people and missionaries. Local people must contribute the language, proverbs, idioms, symbols and imagery in-order to create the sense of scripture and Christian literature which local people feel to be theirs.

Where translations had already taken place, for instance, the Dutch Reformed Church, Methodist Church in Zimbabwe and United Methodist Church, languages were not written down before the translations. Communication was verbal, so formal education on local languages commenced as a by-product of the translations. The growth in mother

tongue literally created confidence and articulate expression among local people. It also presented local people with a framework for cultural narratives. This has become the basis of spontaneous localization and cultural resistance to European imperialism, and hence cultivated the need favourable atmosphere within the local people which most find with the AICs.

Vernacularisation has had a great impact on cultures. It led to cultural revival. The Bible was a tool for immediate appeal in terms of Christian practices which were in agreement with African cultures but the church discouraged or forbade such as faith healing, miracles and burial rites. This area still needs articulation theologically since there may be confusion and misuse of the Bible as a series of proof texts. UPCSA ministers and any other learned theologians must devote themselves in trying to shape the liturgical material which appeal to the local people.

Local people need to read the gospel in their own languages in order to interpret it and use it to evaluate their lives. In this way local members evaluate UPCSA beliefs and practices in the light of the Gospel. As a result of the evaluation two sets of beliefs would become evident, aspects which reflect western culture and those which are biblical. Those which expose western culture include rejection of faith healing, the gospel of inequality which looks down upon Africa and her peoples and the scientific interpretation of every sphere of life. These are a result of the enlightenment era which called for reason and scientific proof in everything. Aspects of UPCSA which were found to be in line with the

Gospel include justification by faith, salvation by grace and sanctification by the Holy Spirit. It is only through vernacularization that such a fruitful evaluation of The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (Zimbabwe) can be made.

## **6.5 Evaluation of Deliberate Localization**

The church is struggling with deliberate localization, hence the need to examine it. The writer is going to evaluate deliberate localization under the following six points namely: training of local members, training of co-workers, churches structures, ownership, dialogue and worship.

### **6.5.1 Training of the Laity**

The church has to undertake intensive training programmes directed towards enabling the whole people of God to function successfully in the life of the church. Various groups like Men's Christian Guilds (MCG) and/or Men's Fellowship (UPMF), Women's Fellowship (UPWF), IYZA, Youth Group and Sunday Class meetings all of which are in existence. The lessons should cover Christian life (ethics), Bible Study, prayer, church leadership, stewardship and youth ministry. What is lacking in the training programme is the platform for dialogue between Christianity and cultures. Some local members feel that the church is not being faithful to them because church leaders do not explain why African cultures and traditional religions are condemned (Mukamba. 4<sup>th</sup> April 2012: Interview). The church just removes from membership those who are accused of

practicing African traditional rituals. This has led many members to be Christians by day and to practice African traditional rituals by night because they fear to be disciplined by church leaders if they do it publicly (Muromo 6<sup>th</sup> June 2012: Interview). This shows how urgent dialogue should be implemented in order to address some confusion, tensions and difficulties some members find themselves in.

In the initial stages of the training programmes the church relied on borrowed literature that is irrelevant to some sections of life. Most of these borrowed literatures from the outside calls for contextualization and adaptation. This shows that there is need to train local members of UPCSA in terms of literature production. Christian education committee needs to seriously look into this if the church needs to grow and increase its workshops for the laity.

### **6.5.2 Church Structures**

At the moment the church has three levels which compose its structure in Zimbabwe not including the General Assembly (where the Zimbabwean church meets with the Zambian and South African churches). The three levels are Session, Region and Presbytery, which is congregational, provincial and national respectively. The slight difference with the other nations is the addition of “regional level”. The regions are for decentralization of administration. The Presbyterian Moderators find it difficult to fulfil their duties because the Presbytery is too big. In addition, he/she would be in charge of a congregation which is even too big for one or two ministers. In some cases issues which need immediate



attention are prolonged leading to tensions or standstill of work in congregations. To minimize the problems separate Regional Chairpersons are appointed and are given administrative and pastoral duties over their regions. The idea is subsequently to grow these regions into future Presbyteries and eventually a synod would be constituted following the stipulated procedures laid down in the Manual of Faith and Order 2007 (Chapters 10 and 11).

The 'Calling' system as opposed to 'Appointment' where congregations with financial capability would call the minister of their choice, for a specific period or for life (Manual of Faith and Order 2007 Chapter 16:3-52). This is seriously linked to the problem of finances in the church. If members feel that they are not being served in any way they do not see the logic in being encouraged to give to God. This is serious and should be addressed carefully if the church has to be localized. One minister had been at a particular congregation for two or more decades, building his/her own empire. Now, with the reduction of the number of ministers in the Presbytery those who cannot afford to call a minister suffer such an opportunity, and it is from these congregations where most numbers are transferring to the AICs.

### **6.5.3 Theological Training**

What is expected from such a context is a theological training which enables local clergy to lead the church and show direction in theological issues and ethics. Theological

reflections must help members to have deeper faith in God, understanding what God has done in history, fellowship with each other and have hope.

Rev. Banana wrote on dialogue between Christianity and African traditional religions in his book, “*Come and share, An Introduction to Christian Theology*” (1991:3ff). In this book he called upon theological students, church leaders and theologians to articulate and apply Christian convictions in religious and socio-political context in Zimbabwe. He dealt with the problems of tribalism, regionalism, racism and sexism in socio-political issues. In religious matters he dealt with the Messiah and ancestors, ecclesiology and communicating with the divine. This offers areas of concern and for dialogue between Christianity and African traditional religions. He, however, does not offer the way in which dialogue is to be done, but this writer is of the opinion that theologians must learn to be tolerant and in return teach members of the community to live in harmony with other religions especially African Traditional Religion which appeals to many local people. Ministers of Religion can be of good repute by the way they approach or view other religions and not to be seen as competitors and judgmental to other practices.

Quality training which is offered to UPCSA ministers enables them to be of great value throughout the globe and alone raises more questions than answers why leaving the church into greener pastures, leaving the old people who have funded their studies. Think of any old grand-mother in a poor rural area who struggles to pay offerings let alone her tithe to God through selling termites or vegetables in the market places, and her minister

abandons her for other affluent communities abroad. We therefore propose that above all the good bookish training ministers get, institutions of learning must introduce and intensify ‘Theology of Development’ for all the candidates for the ministry. This will minimize the exodus of the clerical fraternal into Diaspora and or secular employment such chaplains in army, policy, correctional services and municipalities.

#### **6.5.4 Ownership**

The aim of the above mentioned areas is to make local members own the church physically, theologically and financially. It must not remain a baby of the western missionaries. When the laity are trained and know the direction of church development and growth they own the church. Likewise the clergy would theologize the life of the church. This would lead to structures which are conducive to take into account local experience. This in turn leads local members to feel that they are the church. Ownership of the church goes along with financing the church’s programmes. The stewardship and development programmes are directed towards self-governance and self-support in the church and in this area of self-government the church has made strides.

#### **6.5.5 Dialogue**

This is the area in which the POZ has failed dismally. We have seen above how vernacularization provided a platform for a dialogue between Christianity and local religions and cultures. Dialogue between Christianity and local cultures is very important component of the localization process. The church has failed to initiate dialogue. This was caused by inadequate theological training and lack of basic skills for dialogue. There

are also fears of going astray for instance, leaving the clear way set out by missionaries. This is the worst handicap in terms of dialogue. The failure to bring about dialogue has created continuous tensions and exodus within some members as they struggle to be Christians while Africans at the same time. Lack of dialogue has led to a very popular but wrong assumption that all which is African is evil or bad while all which is Western is Christian and good. Only dialogue based on biblical foundations will prove this assumption wrong as a result help the POZ realizes her potential.

Dialogue between Christianity and other religions in Zimbabwe needs to be entered into without delay. Without dialogue the localization of Christianity in Zimbabwe will never be complete. Tension will continue to exist in the fields of Christianity and traditional burial rites, Christianity and traditional marriages, Christianity and ancestors as well as traditional healing. Tensions in these areas can only be removed or minimized through dialogue. Above all there is great tension within ministers most probably competing for a congregation or leadership positions. These have also created unnecessary suspicions on one another and hence division arises. Intensify retreat and fraternal meetings to cement relationships amongst the clergy will result in growth of the church.

### **6.5.6 Worship**

There were no deliberate efforts undertaken by the Church to localize Presbyterian forms of worship. This is another area in which the church in Zimbabwe has failed completely. Presbyterian worship in Zimbabwe has more foreign concepts and components than

local; the order of services, like Holy Communion, baptism, marriage, and confirmation and burial are mere translations of the Western Church. In most cases a cut and paste from other denominations, most notably the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe which has translated theirs from British forms. In some cases the translations are found wanting because of the use of Latin words which local members cannot understand.

Worship tests the differences between cultures although ideas may be similar. In worship people express the presence of God, dependence on Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, fellowship and how they celebrate life with the whole of creation. Worship should warm up people's hearts, emotions and meet their needs. For some members Presbyterian worship falls short of the expectations and move to the appealing AIC under the local tree. This is shown by the ever growing problem of members who leave UPCSA or visit independent churches for healing and prophecy, who constantly attend Pentecostal denominations and attempt to introduce Pentecostal forms of worship in the church and who go back to African traditional religions in times of crisis. One of the contributing factors to the problem is the shortage of ministers in the Church in Zimbabwe. At the present the nation (POZ) is being serviced by thirteen (13) ordained ministers and twenty-six (26) evangelists as drawn from the 2011 handbook (Miller 2011:5-11). There is no local liturgy written down. There has been little or no encouragement on writing liturgy. A type of worship which is needed for the localization to be complete is the one which will make local members own calls for immediate attention for the church to respond to the African religiosity.

This is how far Presbyterians in Zimbabwe has travelled with God directing and protecting them. The church has travelled for more than a century now. Where she set her feet she will never repeat. The great journey will continue as POZ make strides into the forth millennium. When we look back into the past and see how God directed, protected and corrected our faith in Christ is deepened and our hope is revived. With hope and trust in God we leap into the new millennium.

## **6.6 Recommendations**

### **6.6.1 To Churches**

There is great need for starting afresh, recommitment and reconciliation if the church is to make a way forward. The church needs to remove some blockades through reconciling ministers and the laity.

It is vital for the churches to learn the context, environment in which they operate, especial the culture in which the message is preached before one begins to evangelize. Church leaders must note that each community is unique and as such treat it with reverence and utmost due care list you shun all potential membership.

The church must learn to share the available space with the existing religions you find in the area you evangelize. Avoid thinking for and imposing things on the inhabitants rather pursue them. Intensify Bible studies and allow the scriptures speak to them (communicants), with them and through them at all times.

Ministers of the word and Pastors avoid distancing yourselves from the parishes least they would withdraw and the whole process will collapse. Live with them and be the light to the community. Move manses into the community than the norm of staying with the church premises.

The church must attract rather than shun condemn and judge people. Most of all be readily prepared to adapt change and move with time in reforming herself. It is your duty as her Ministers to prepare congregants to debate at all levels. Give priority to training and equipping human resources. In meetings use the common language which is understood by everyone at all times.

### **6.6.2 To Universities / Colleges**

In the institutes of learning must be the inevitability of constructing an African Theology that takes reflection on the vibrant of cultural circumstance and reflects the experiences of African Independent Churches in order to build the distinctiveness of (African Churches) black congregations is critical.

Universities and colleges make Psychology of Religion a priority to all theological students in order to equip the pastor to be more relevant to the community with which one will minister and hence reduction of redundancy.

### **6.7 Conclusion**

This dissertation has been advocating for a new way of conscientising the Church in Zimbabwe about the need to look into itself, the way how it evangelises and care for its members to avoid exodus into the AICs. This can be done through learning from the AIC's approach to ministry. We have a situation whereby members are seeking help or advice to AIC after our normal church hours. The spiritual poverty has caused people to shun UPCS/WMFC for AICs.

To conclude, the writer thinks that there is need for the church in Zimbabwe to bring change in its approach to mission work and be inclusive in nature, embracing the instruments, ideas and even ways of worship in the services. This will enable members to take responsibility for shaping their lives, and church within their environment. It is important for the church to give the local people confidence and hope in them. This will enable them to listen and express their insights. As a result this will bring about a radical transformation to the whole church historically.



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Rev. Chikomo H. P,	Harare, June 25, 2012
Bishop Gondongwe K,	Harare, September 20, 2010
Bishop Kadenge L,	Harare, October 15, 2010
Rev. Dr. Machukera C.J,	Harare, October 29, 2010
Dr. Mahoso T,	University of Zimbabwe, August 4, 2012
Father Makamure K,	Harare, September 25, 2010
Ms. Mavhuka A,	Mutare, October 11, 2011
Mr. Mukamba A,	Avondale, April 4, 2012
Bishop Mukubvu,	Harare, May 12, 2012
Mrs. Muromo J. G,	Greencroft, June 6, 2012.
Dr. Mupeperekwi I,	University of Zimbabwe, August 4, 2012
Mr. Mutonganavo M,	Gweru, June 18, 2011
Rev. Moyo N,	Bulawayo, October 29, 2010
Rev. Nkumalo K,	Bulawayo, July 2, 2012

Miss Nyanga P,	Harare, September 20, 2011
Rev. Nyoni A,	Harare, August 20, 2012
Rev. Dr. Zwana R,	Harare, October 29, 2010.
Rev. Sanganza S,	Harare, September 11, 2011

## **APPENDIX**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. What is your view of AICs?
2. What is your view of WMFC?
3. What is your view of AICs' preaching?
4. When people discuss about AIC what comes to your mind?
5. Have AIC through its mission got any contributions in the betterment of the welfare of Zimbabwe populace?
6. Do you think AICs are involved in the improvement of communities?
7. What is your view of break-away as sections in the WMFC?
8. In your view, are there reasons as to why break-away are taking place in main-line churches?
9. Are spiritual gifts named in the bible still in operation today?
10. How can the mission of the church bring healing to the society?
11. The subject of casting out of demons and being set free has been a bone of contention for between main-line churches and AICs. What do you understand about this subject?
12. The mode of worship in the WMFC and the AICs is different in so many ways. How do you worship in the churches today?

13. Demon possession has been quiet a debatable subject. Many WMFC do not believe in this, but most Charismatic AICs believe that a person can be possessed with demons.  
What are your views on this?
14. How do you look at the subject of miracles?
15. Dreams and visions are other aspects the church does not understand today. What is your understanding about dreams and visions?
16. Is break-away from the church God's will or not?
17. What do you think is the view of WMFC regarding *ngozi* and *huroyi* (avenging spirits and witchcraft)?