

**Conflicts between the Church Associations of the UPCSA,
with special reference to the Presbytery of Tshwane: A
Narrative Approach.**

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation/ thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree of *MAGISTER ARTIUM* at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at another University.

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TO GOD BE THE GLORY AND HONOUR!!!!!!!!!!

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my late Spiritual father; mentor the **Rev. Ntobeko Hudson Mabuda** *uNzotho* who inspired me into this holy ministry of Christ.

The Rev. H. N. Mabuda was born on the 28 February 1957 in Mount Aylliff. He served the Lundie Memorial Congregation in Willowvale/ Gatyana Transkei Presbytery faithfully from 1987 to 1997. He died peacefully on 20 September 2003 at the age of 46, while serving the Sterling Congregation in East Griqualand Presbytery from 1998.

He was very devoted and much loved in the entire Willowvale area. He served in full-time ministry of the RPCSA (later to become the UPCSA) in the deep rural areas of Transkei, until his untimely death through heart failure. May his soul rest in peace! *Aphumle njengomqeshwa ide ikholiswe imihla yakhe naye abandakanywe kunye nabangcwele bakaThixo.*

ABSTRACT

This research study is based on investigating the conflicts between the Church Associations (also called *iimanyano*) of the UPCSA. These associations are essentially a group of people who gather together to achieve certain aims and objectives in serving God within the Church.

The *iimanyano* are normally identified by means of a specific uniform, even though the UPCSA (as with the reformed Church tradition) does not generally wear a uniform. The uniform of the *iimanyano* therefore does not have any specific origin. However, Chapter One of this study traces the purpose of the *iimanyano* in that it was formed to evangelise and reach out to black people within a cultural ethos.

The research embarks on narrative, qualitative interviews and follows a participatory approach in discovering the problems that led to the *iimanyano* deviating from their original focus. In Chapter Two, the amalgamation of The Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of South Africa in 1999 is discussed. (The emerging of these two Churches formed the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa.)

The process of joining the *iimanyano* of the two former (PCSA and RPCSA) Churches resulted in dissatisfaction and caused several grievances. These tensions of the *iimanyano* are a threat to the union of the UPCSA. The study investigates through narrative research why the problems still persist.

In Chapter Three, the narratives of the co-researchers in the context of the Presbytery of Tshwane are presented. These helped to identify certain experiences that the remaining *iimanyano* in the UPCSA denomination still encounter. It is further indicated that some underlining issues may have been rushed or underestimated by the Special Commission on Union.

An interesting observation is that the tension is mostly referred to by the black members of the former two churches. Furthermore, some members are suspicious of any outside influence perpetuating the problem. In Chapter Four the struggles within the body of Christ whereby the uniform issue among the women is discussed.

In Chapter Five, a narrative reflection on the research findings and recommendations to the associations of the UPCSA are given.

ABBREVIATIONS

BPCSA	Bantu Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa
CA	Church Associations
EC	Executive Commission
GA	General Assembly
GENEX	General Assembly Executive Committee of the UPWF
IYZA	Intlangano Yentombi Zomanyano AseRhabe
JB'S	Junior Branch (designated from Janet Burnside wife of Tiyo Soga)
MCG	Men's Christian Guild
NIV	New International Version
PCSA	Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa
PMA	Presbyterian Men's Fellowship
PWA	Presbyterian Women's Association
RPCSA	Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa
SCU	Special Commission on Union
UNISA	University of South Africa
UPCSA	Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa
UPWF	Uniting Presbyterian Women's Fellowship
UPMF	Uniting Presbyterian Men's Fellowship
YMCG	Young Men Christian Guild
WA	Women's Association
WCA	Women's Christian Association

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- limanyano / uManyano Being one in Associations
- PEKINGCA Association group of: Port Elizabeth, King William Stown and Cape Town during PCSA
- Sedibeng Spring of water
- Umanyano Being united
- Ukunxitywa Being dressed the clothes
- Robing Being dressed on uniform
- Amadodana/ amadoda Christian man in association
- Ingenziwa Not being done
- Omama/ abomama Women

A LIST OF KEY TERMS

Aggrieved

Assembly

Associations

Church

Co-researchers

Deconstruction

Narrative

Postfoundationalism

Presbytery

Recognised

Social- Constructionism

Union

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CHAPTER ONE

RESEARCH ORIENTATION

1.1 Introduction

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." This proposal pleased the whole group. They Chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Paramenas and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith (Acts 6:1 – 7NIV Bible).

The above passage from the Bible, narrates that conflicts within the church are not new, even from the early church times, conflicts have been there in the body of Christ. The Biblical narrative is given that while the numbers of disciples were increasing, the Grecian Jews complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. As the church grew, as the scripture tells, the number of disciples increased, and thus the conflicts also surfaced amongst the faithful. The argument over the daily distribution of food was the economic factor of the time which is also similar to the UPCSA denomination. One of the economic contentious matters in the UPCSA has been the inequality of stipend among the ministers.

Sometimes conflict seems to loom so large that it blocks from view the areas of a relationship that remain functional, resilient, and intact (Monk & Winslade 2000: 171). This Biblical story is quite significant in that despite of the conflict happening among the believers they chose not to neglect the ministry of the Word of God. The

disciples were called immediately to remedy the disagreement of the two groups before the matter could escalate to another level. In this instance the church leadership was involved in solving the problem. But, what happens in the Church when the conflicts are perpetual and Church leadership is challenged by her members? This narrative study approach will investigate the issues of perpetual Church conflicts within the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. This research reveals the hurts and the reality of what is happening in the ground of the local black congregations of the UPCSA in South Africa due to the unresolved Conflicts of the *iimanyano* Associations.

In the papers for General Assembly of 2003: 408 whilst conference took a decision on the new uniform for MCG (Men's Christian Guild) members, it was reported that some members were not happy with the decision as there was a noticeable march-out by a number of people. While in the proceedings and decisions of the General Assembly of 2010 Rev. L. Obose reported that (General Assembly 2010: 298), "We are also concerned with the way the Associations are said to be a cause of all that is bad and that they create disunity and yet there is no urgency in dealing with this very important matter". What was reported in the General Assembly was the uncommon practice in the culture of the Associations as they are known in the black context as strong supporters of the Church projects.

1.2 The Church Associations

In the so-called mainline churches there are historical traditional churches structures within the denominations, which are predominantly, espouse by black members though they are constitutionally open to the entire multicultural membership of the church. These structures are called Church Associations because; they are associated to the church as their members are under the authority and discipline of the Church body. The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa has Church Associations that have been playing a vital role in the growth and development of the Church. In all of the black congregations there are Association members, which form various church organisations, such as the Women's Association, Girl's Association, Men's Association and Youth Association.

Church Associations have a very long and proud history in the life and work ministry of the black church (Vellem 2007: 44). This is so because the formation of such organisations has profoundly facilitated ways in addressing spiritual, sociological and psychological needs of Church membership. It is not clearly determined from a theological view point how the Church Associations began though stories have been told that when black people got converted to Christianity they gathered together informally in the community, evangelised and share their experiences about God. It was through the narratives or stories that persons shared from their own lives and they influenced others through their experiences.

1.2.1 Identification of Church Associations

“Narrative therapy views identity as a public and social achievement supported by communities of people, shaped by historical and cultural forces as well as by ethics, beliefs, and values” (Journal of Systemic Therapies, Vol. 25. No.4 2006:66). The identification of Church Associations is also shaped by the culture, belief and values of black people in the Church as part of their spiritual development. In most black churches a uniform has inevitably accompanied Associations. Members, according to the Association in which they belong, will wear a particular uniform. The uniform identifies a particularly denominational colour as the Presbyterians are known by black and white, the Methodist by red and white, Catholics by purple and Anglicans by white.

The Church Association group will decide on the colours and design of the uniform. The Rev. A Manxaile explains that Associations, therefore, create a sense of identity, a notion of claim and ownership, and a spirit of belonging to those who voluntarily identify themselves with a particular Association within a given denomination (General Assembly 2002: 191). Associations do not exist for the sake of being part of the Church, but to build the reign of God. In most congregations Associations are the pillars of strength of the Church, they are involved in the entire life and work ministry of the local church.

1.2.2 Contribution of Church Associations

Associations play a vital role in the development and growth of black Church leaders, as most of the black ministers grew in the lines of leadership through the Association structures. The Associations in the black congregations are a vehicle of evangelism and a channel for better leaders through the entire UPCSA. The following prominent UPCSA leaders have been hewn from the Church Associations: Rev. Professor M. Masango who is the lecturer of Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria. The Rev. Dr V. Vellem the former General Secretary of the UPCSA and currently a Senior lecturer at the University of Pretoria in Systematic Theology and Ethics.

The teachings of the Church polity, spirituality, discipline, stewardship, preaching and evangelism have been part of the Church Associations. All the Black ministers in the UPCSA who are leading a successful ministry in their local congregations, in secondment ministries, in political arenas and in government positions have been inextricable part of Associations. This is why it is of critical importance to research the stories from all the members of the Church Associations and perhaps find out what had gone wrong. Such black ministers are Rev. Col. Z. Makhilima who is the director of the South African Air Force Chaplains and Rev. Dr S. Xapile who is the head of JL Zwane ministries and part-time lecturer at the University of Stellenbosch. The narrative approach focuses on the stories shared by people in their own lives and is based on the view that problems are manufactured in social, cultural and political contexts. The Church buildings and ministerial support is traditional a core function of the Church Associations. The Women Associations are basically the strong support in taking care of the minister and his/her family.

1.3 The problem statement

The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa experiences tensions among the believers like any other Church denomination in South Africa. But, the conflicts that come under the umbrella of the Church Associations seem to be exceptional in the UPCSA. The challenge of this research convinces me that there are serious

problems needing to be addressed in the UPCSA. The division in the Church Associations appears to be along the former denominational lines of the two Churches (PCSA & RPCSA) that merged to form the UPCSA in 1999. Presently, there is an assumption that different uniforms are the major problem though others see ethnicity as a problem.

However, some Church members are suspicious of the intervention of the third force in the persistence of the matter (Debate on UPCSA Minister's Conference, Eston 28-31 May 2007). This research is to investigate whether the third force is a possible contributing factor in the conflicts. The third force question is addressed in chapter three in narrative conversations with co-researchers. The third force is alluded to be part of the white membership of the former PCSA that came into the union with their former PCSA black counterparts. The white members are involved in denominational politics and in power discourses such as leadership, succession, Church assets and financial management. What is the third force's possible impact on the continuous conflict of the Church Associations amongst the black members?

Another question is what is the deeper issue underlying the Church uniforms issue? Church leadership or Church members have to explore different pastoral approaches towards ending the conflicts. The past and existing stories need to be deconstructed on the basis of which a new future can be envisioned. This study acknowledges that the Church is trying to bridge the gap of division amongst the Associations through the Church structures. There is however still a great need for the Church's theology to address the challenging issues.

It is not theologically or biblically understandable that the issue of small differences in uniform of the two former denominations can be the main subject of conflict that has existed for almost ten years. After all uniform is not part of the substance of faith. The question is: what is the cause of the matter and who is fuelling the issues causing this problem? I studied both the MA and PhD dissertation of Xapile, 1994 on Unity negotiations between the Bantu Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa, 1959 - 1971. I read the articles of Duncan, 2005 on State of the Union: The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa,

1999 – 2004 and 350 Years Reformed in South Africa: The contribution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. I read the article of Vellem, 2007 on the nonconformist. I discovered that there is no research gap regarding this proposal. Therefore, my research endeavours to fill the research gaps in the way of focusing on the Church Associations conflict within the Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa.

1.4 Research positioning

This research work is done in the context of Practical Theology based on the pastoral narrative therapy approach. Using the narrative metaphor leads us to think about people's lives as stories and to work with them to experience their life stories in ways that are meaningful and fulfilling (Freedman, J & Combs, G. 1996: 1).

The focus of this study will be based on the listening of narratives from the Church Association members of the UPCSA in the Presbytery of Tshwane and try to come to a better understanding of their positions regarding the conflicts that exist within the Associations of the Church. The researcher will interview also the Church members who do not belong to the Church Associations as they are affected by the conflict in various ways. In this research the writer is going to be subjective as he values the entire complexity of the stories of the people that are involved in the Church Associations. Within this approach, objectivity is not acknowledged as the ideal but rather the concept of subjectivity integrity (Westhuizen 2008:58). The writer does not want to involve his personal influence rather the people's opinion.

From this perspective, subjectivity or position of being a moral agent in one's own life is not taken for granted. This means a researcher must have the integrity to be honest about his/her own story and feelings towards the research he/she is doing. The Church members are part of this research study and they contribute their life stories in the Church. The integrity and quality of this research will rely on the bases of the stories researched from the co-researchers and the process in which the stories are told.

The experience and knowledge that is carried in the stories of the people is vitally important. For this matter this approach will fit well when conducting this research amongst the Church Association members, because it opens up through sharing of their stories that are causing them pain and hope that this will bring a change in the Church. The narrative researcher works within the paradigm of the social constructionist approach, qualitative research, and involving the postfoundationalist approach of seven movements in chapter two of the research.

1.5 Challenges to the UPCSA Church

The UPCSA Church is a diverse Church and transnational, which consist of three countries, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This Church is composed of believers who come from different race, cultures, traditions, languages, socio-economics, socio-politics and geographical allocations. It has been mentioned in the introduction of the proposal that challenges existed in the early Church times. However, the conflicts mentioned in the early Church contributed in the growth of the Church as it is indicated that the believers chose seven men who were full of wisdom and Spirit to look over the conflict and then the Word of God spread and numbers of believers increased in Jerusalem. Cultural offenses in the church can be painful to experience.

The church in Jerusalem was made up of Jewish believers, but not all had grown up in the same culture. Some came from a very orthodox background and spoke Aramaic or Hebrew. The others spoke Greek and came from a background influenced by Greek thought and customs. The dominant Aramaic speakers failed to notice the needs of the Greek widows. That same kind of insensitivity is not uncommon today. In the UPCSA it has been a common trend the economic unbalances between the lives of black and white ministers which has a negative connotation from the apartheid in South Africa.

However, conflict provides the opportunity for individuals and groups to define their boundaries, discipline their members, and exercise the social consciousness of belonging (Dudley and Hilgert, 1987:105). The UPCSA is a Church that is

challenged by conflicts among the believers which causes a lot of destruction in some local congregations and loss of faith amongst some members. Some congregations are divided, members have withdrawn in paying assessment and some of the members have left the UPCSA for other denominations.

Conflict may, of course, also be destructive of individuals and relationships, and lead to the decline of the church; this has contributed to its reputation (Dudley & Hilgert 1987: 105). The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, whose faith, constitution and laws are hereinafter set forth, is a branch of the one holy catholic church, and maintains liberty of conscience and of worship, within the rule of Scripture, of all members of the one holy catholic Church (Vellem 2007:1).

The UPCSA is a Church that has a vision, which is one:

- In obedience to its Sovereign Lord
- In celebrating its living heritage as a reformed Church in Southern Africa
- In celebrating its cultural diversity
- In addressing injustices and poverty within the Church and Society
- In providing a model of racial reconciliation

The cultural diversity that supposes to be celebrated appeared to be the challenge that has led to conflict within the UPCSA. The researcher will discuss the cultural diversity in chapter four of this mini-dissertation on the Church struggles in the Body of Christ. In the early 21st century the Church Associations of the UPCSA began to experience some divisions aligned to the historical backgrounds of the two churches (Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa PCSA and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa RPCSA) that came into union on Sunday 26th September 1999 to form the UPCSA (Vellem 2007: iii). The problem appeared that the RPCSA Associations was totally black while PCSA was multi-racial yet dominated by whites financial. The cultural practice of the two denominations was totally different in almost all Presbyterian practices. The RPCSA denominational strength was on Associations in spirituality, ministerial support, financial and evangelism. On the hand the PCSA was controlled and financed by the whites. So, this amalgamation of different Church cultures became a difficult in the UPCSA.

According to Muller (Muller, 1999) on companions on the journey, pastoral intervention is always concerned with change. The gospel is concerned with change. No matter how strong our identification is with the core stories of our own group, we must always hold on to the possibility of change and resulting in being freed from damaging interpretations. The UPCSA is also challenged by a difficult of change and embracing the new Church culture that should be adopted by the two denominations.

1.6 The impact of the conflict

When the Church is not seeing things by one eye, the vision become blurred, the member's faith is disturbed, frustrated emotional and the focus to God's grace deteriorates. The internal conflicts of the Church Associations are a threat of division to the UPCSA. According to the report of Rev L. Obose (General Assembly 2010: 298), "we are concerned with the way the Associations are said to be a cause of all that is bad and that they create disunity and yet there is no urgency in dealing with this very important matter. We also request the Assembly to speedily respond to these matters as we believe the Union Agenda is at risk." By Union Agenda is at risk; he meant the amalgamation of PCSA and RPCSA to form the UPCSA, which will be described in chapter two of the dissertation.

This study is a journey with Church members affected by the conflicts of the Church Associations, a journey into their experiences and emotional disturbances. Their experiences are described through their stories. Some of these stories are concerned about family relationships, friendships, Church leadership, honesty, loyalty, trust, professionalism, academic theology and ministry that are affected by the issues mentioned above in the report of the General Assembly of 2010. The researcher as part of the UPCSA member has stories to share as he experienced the impact of the conflict of Church Associations in the local congregation of Mamelodi Township. It is not possible to do research within the narrative approach and not get involved (Westhuizen 2008:57). Most of the predicament situation and rejection stories are basically rooted from the impact of the Associations.

Regarding to the inflicted pain that can be caused by the Church to her members Muller once shared his story (Muller 2003:297), "I had the privilege of a two month sabbatical at the Princeton Seminary, New Jersey. Back in South Africa in between the two visits, I was devastated by a synod meeting, at which I was confronted with a fundamentalist hard-line approach. I had namely been part of a committee that occupied itself with a new approach towards Gay Christians. Our open minded and inclusive recommendations, which I had to introduce to the synod meeting, were met with sever opposition, and I experienced personal rejection in various ways." Muller expressed how deeply emotional he was affected by his Church at that time. Muller's experience reminded the writer on some of the pains he experienced in the congregation of Mamelodi through the Association's negative influence in the local congregation. The Associations were always resistant in accepting changes in the Church.

1.7 The researched theme

The theme of the study is: *Conflicts between the Church Associations of the UPCSA, with special reference to the Presbytery of Tshwane: A Narrative Approach*. My interest on this research theme developed towards the end of 2010, I was contemplating registering at the University of Pretoria a master's degree in theology. But, at this time I envisaged to research something in the department of practical theology though I did not have a particular theme to research. I went to Prof. Y. Dreyer to share my story of interest. I told her that I need to study something theological, but related to psychology. Our conversation continued about research programmes in practical theology. Later on she referred me to Prof. Julian Muller, I shared with Muller that I am interested to write something on the current conflicts in my Church, UPCSA and he allowed me to pursue my studies.

After meeting with Muller I went to Prof. Graham Duncan to share my theme research and he supported the idea. The researcher is motivated by the theme through his experiences, when he observed several General Assemblies, Minister's retreat and Executive commissions that battled in resolving the Church Associations tensions. This study afforded me an opportunity to research this theme on the boundaries of the Presbytery of Tshwane and listen to the stories of

the Church members. The interviews will also be conducted to the UPCSA theological students studying at the University of Pretoria being attached to the care and discipline of Tshwane Presbytery. The issue of Church Association tension is the talk of everyone in the UPCSA black or white from lower to the highest level of the Church. That is why this theme is of significance to the researcher.

1.8 Research motivation

The motivation for this research came from my ministerial experience as a young ordained minister of the UPCSA on the 02 March 2008 in Mamelodi East Congregation. This is drawn from my first experience with the conflicts in the local congregation. After I finished my academic studies the Church sent me for one-year probation in a white congregation in Centurion in 2007. The Church culture and worship service were completely different on what I was used to. There was no Church Association; there were only a women's bible study group, which consisted of old ladies and a men's breakfast, which only met once in three months. The worship services were too short as it was only one hour from 09:00 to 10:00.

I was missing the vibe of singing and dancing and at times I used to rush after the service to a black congregation in Pretoria Central Presbyterian Church as their services started at 10:00 – 12:00. In spite of that I enjoyed the ministry, as my supervisor the Rev. Glynis Goyns was so supportive to my probation-training period. She did her best to transform the congregation as she organised multicultural evening service once in a month.

I knew that I could be there only for that year as the congregation could not afford a stipend for a colleague ministry and the transformation in cross-multicultural ministry was very slow in the UPCSA. In the following year 2008 the presbytery of Tshwane appointed me to Mamelodi East congregation. I was very delighted and passionate about going to Mamelodi and I knew what I was missing in Centurion would be found there. Surprisingly, it is there that I experienced the challenges of Church Associations and my background knowledge about Church Associations completely changed. This experience of Church Association in Mamelodi East

congregation will be discussed in chapter two of this dissertation. The story about my experience motivated me to develop an interest to write this dissertation.

1.9 Significance of the study

This study will attempt to address the issues of the perpetual conflicts on the perspective of a contextual analysis of the Church *Manyanos* (Associations) of the UPCSA. In doing so, it is to seek out as to what the Bible teaches concerning the unity and the peace of the Church and reflect on what currently the *Manyanos* are experiencing. Is there any conscience of faith or conviction regarding the continuous problems, or how do the Associations view the Bible? How does the congregation view the ministry of word and sacrament in the light of Church Associations?

One of the significances of this research is to endeavour to create a model of transforming the relationship between the Church Associations through pastoral narrative conversations which will be discuss in chapter three of the research. The researcher is more interested in the *Manyanos* in telling, re-telling, restructuring and re-authoring of their stories. In narrative pastoral work (Muller 1999) the story is not only seen as a means of releasing information, but more as a way to come to yourself. Muller continues saying, this is why people are led to tell and re-tell their stories in such a way that re-interpretation and re-construction can eventually happen (Muller 1999). This pastoral narrative conversation helps to look for better alternatives for the Associations to work together as the body of Christ in spite of the diversity. I hope that this research will be of some significance and benefit to the Presbyterian members and the executive committees that are working tirelessly in bringing peace and reconciliation to the Church Associations.

1. The word Manyano is from the Xhosa language, derived from 'Ubumbano ngomanyano', which means being together or togetherness, this word refers to Church Associations (being together in Christ).

1.10 The narrative-social constructionism

The narrative social constructionism is based on social realities, which are found in people's cultures, traditions, communities, languages, beliefs, customs, and their knowledge. These realities provide the beliefs, practices, words, and experiences from which we make up our lives, or, as we would say in postmodernist jargon, "constitute our selves" (Freedman & Combs 1996: 16). In this research I align myself with the narrative social constructionist as it embraces the post-modern way of thinking. The post-modernists are concerned with meaning rather than anything else.

It is of vital important to understand the meaning behind the story or in the case of Church Associations the meaning behind the wearing of Church uniform or being a Presbyterian Christian. Zander van der Westhuizen describes social constructionism in this way, (Westhuizen 2008: 29) "Social constructionism adds a dimension to our epistemology that is not added from other sources. The way or method in which knowledge is created happens in a constructionist way. This happens socially, between communities and cultures. This understanding reminds us of a pure procedural epistemology."

1.11 Research methodology

In the research methodology of this dissertation I will be using the pastoral narrative approach. In this narrative approach I will use people's stories from the two different Church Associations that are at loggerheads within the Church. It was through Erickson (Freedman & Combs 1996:10) that we first became interested in the therapeutic use of stories. Erickson saw people as resourceful.

In this method of research, I will be subjective and strive for an open space for people to participate fully in telling their stories. The researcher will be involved in researching from both divided groups of Church Associations without any prejudice. In this research method the information is taken from the people's shared experience regarding the conflicts of the Church. The process of gathering

the data is based on co-researchers, the researcher, the General Assembly and the Executive Commissions.

The other method that will be utilised regarding the research process is that of qualitative interviews and participatory research. The researcher will attempt to integrate the researched conversational stories with the UPCSAs literature and the Tshwane Presbytery as the case study. This method should contribute towards the comprehensive development of new stories that perhaps could shape the theology of Church Associations.

1.11.1 Narrative research

Narrative research is based on the telling and re-telling of stories whose meaning unfolds over a period of time. Our lives consist of stories that develop through time, events, space and the sequence of the stories themselves. The Bible as narrative is a series of stories embedded within the larger narrative of a universal purpose carried out through a continuous series of particular choices (Bradshaw 2002:41). The Church members have also contributed narrative stories since the UPCSAs was formed in 1999. These have had an effect on the conflicts.

Narrative research process can only be understood and evaluated in the light of the narrative discourses (Muller & Schoeman 2004:8). Therefore the understanding and interpretation of stories have to be part of the research process and not merely the analysis of data. In relation to the narrative research process the researcher plans in his research to involve all the research participants and co-researchers in a participative way where the researcher is not imposing any ideas on them. This will then lead to them adding value to this dissertation.

The Church members either from the Associations or those not belonging to Associations have a story to tell that gives meaning to the situation. That is why the narrative approach is used in this dissertation. Within the framework of research there are different models of research, but the researcher will only describe the following two models: qualitative and participatory research.

1.11.2 Qualitative research

The qualitative research involves the researcher to listen very carefully to the co-researcher in order to hear the meaning of the narratives, sentence-by-sentence and word-by-word. To get beyond ordinary listening and hear meanings you have to focus the discussion to obtain more depth and detail on a narrower range of topics than you would in ordinary conversations (Rubin and Rubin 1995:8). Qualitative research is concerned about the world of others to find out about their stories, beliefs, as well as their social, political and economic experiences. The researcher in this study will use this kind of research model.

Qualitative research ensures the interdependency of the researcher and the co-researchers (Mkhize 2007:13). One of the important matters about using qualitative research in this dissertation is to absorb the insider perspective from the research process. In the problem statement of this research proposal it is indicated how significant it is to get the real meaning underlying the wearing of uniforms.

In this part of the qualitative research process it is important to describe and understand the rationale behind being an Association member. The researcher will interview the Association members about their understanding and knowledge of, and insights into, Church Associations.

1.11.3 Participatory research

Participatory research is one of the powerful models of research, as it is not imposing a researcher on the co-researchers. This model of research sets the researcher and the co-researcher in a balanced equilibrium as they both work together equally preserving integrity and dignity. It is critical that co-researchers do not feel intimidated or patronised by the researcher. The researcher is fully aware that some of the co-researchers are lay preachers, ordained elders, ordinary members and ministers. In that regard it is in the interest of the researcher to embrace all of the co-researchers equally.

My focus is to bring a positive change in people's lives through a collective participatory interaction in a manner that will eliminate the current conflicts and disagreement that are detrimental to the UPCSA Church. In the process of narrative participation research people are equipped to re-construct alternative stories and review each story in relation to the other stories. The aim of this type of research is social change, and there also is an intended interaction between the researcher and the researched (Muller & Schoeman 2004:7). In this method of research individuals and groups of the Church Associations will have a time for social interaction in order to find a solution to the existing problems? Everyone is important and add a value in this research process.

1.12 Literature review

In view of this research, the literature review has been made in order to investigate whether there are no other research studies done regarding this topic. The researcher found out through the reading of the church archives in the UPCSA central office in Johannesburg, browsing the catalogues of the University of

Pretoria, UNISA and surfing on line (www.google.com). Throughout that investigation there were no studies found on the research theme within the UPCSA. In this regard, it is the aim of the researcher to attempt to make this study to be of good value, quality and achieve the purpose of the theme. In the view that there is no research been done, the researcher will use the documents that are archived in the UPCSA central office, which consists of: (i) "*The Manual of Faith and Order of The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa*" (Vellem 2007. iii). This is the Church polity of the UPCSA that have been approved by the General Assembly in 2004. (ii) "*Papers, Proceedings and Decisions of the Executive Commissions*" (Vellem 2007 Chap 13.8).

The executive commissions report to the General Assembly, ordinarily through the commission's minutes, on the business it has handled and decisions it has taken. (iii) "*Proceedings and Decisions of the General Assemblies*" (Vellem 2007: Chap 12. 1). The General Assembly is the supreme council of the UPCSA. It has great opportunities to develop the life and work of the whole Church and so promote the

proclamation of the Gospel. It also has far reaching responsibilities to oversee discipline and the administration of financial matters. Its judicial functions and administrative review functions are fulfilled through special bodies set up for these purposes.

1.13 Ethical code

This research study is about current issues that exist in the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. It is very important for the researcher to take into consideration some ethical standards governing the research as this study involves people that are alive and those who have gone before us. The information given by co-researchers need to be protected and the co-researchers are to be aware of their right regarding the research. To commence this study the researcher has informed the general secretary of the UPCSA, the Rev Dr. Jerry Pillay and the consent has been granted to pursue the studies. In the region of the Presbytery of Tshwane where the interviews will take place, the moderator of the Presbytery and the clerk are well informed about the research and the entire presbytery members will be informed on the 11 February 2012. The letter of consent from the University of Pretoria has been given by the supervisor Prof Julian Muller to embark on the therapeutic narrative conversations. The researcher has drafted a consent form to all the church members that will be interviewed pertaining this study. In this study the researcher wishes to maintain a high standard of confidentiality and adhere to the academic procedures of dissertation writing.

1.14 Main divisions of the research

Chapter Two: This chapter will be based on *Practical Theological Research Process of Seven Movements*. In this chapter the researcher will reveal his background of research and reflect on religious and spiritual aspect of God. The background description of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa will be tabled.

Chapter Three: This chapter will focus on *Therapeutic Conversations*; at this chapter the focus will be based on qualitative interviews and participatory research. The Aggrieved and recognised Church Associations of the UPCSA will be interviewed accordingly. It is at this chapter that the suspicion of the Third Force and Church power discourses will be addressed.

Chapter Four: This Chapter will outline the *UPCSA Struggles in the Body of Christ*. It is at this chapter that the contention between the Aggrieved and Recognised associations will be addressed.

Chapter Five: This chapter will conclude by reflection on my research and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH PROCESS OF SEVEN MOVEMENTS

"...You as a white Presbyterian have much more to confess for white Presbyterians than I do as a black Presbyterian!" (Rev Dr P. Tondi. TRC East London 17/ 11/1999)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the background of the researcher and a reflection on his Christian spiritual formation. It also narrates the root description of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa using the seven movements of postfoundationalist approach. This approach comes from the South African theologian, Professor Wentzel van Huyssteen who now lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary, New Jersey at the United State of America (HTS 60 (1&2) 2003: 299).

Van Huyssteen's postfoundationalist argument involves the concept of construction of rationality or identity based on "own experience" which is also capable of reaching beyond (HTS 60 (1 & 2) 2003: 299). The seven movement's concept of postfoundationalist approach has been rephrased by Professor Julian Muller for narrative research process. The researcher is going to use the seven movements in this chapter to make a situational analysis of the Church Associations conflicts. The seven movements describe the context of the research, the role of interpreted experiences, the values that inform our reflection about God, reflections beyond the confines of the local community, listened experiences, groups or cultures and interdisciplinary conversations.

2.2 A specific context is described

The context/action field/ habitus that I am doing the research on

This research dissertation is based on the Church denomination, The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. The UPCSA was constituted in the Centenary Hall in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, on Sunday 26th September 1999, at 10h00 (General Assembly 1999:54). The ministers and elders, as commissioners of the General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa (PCSA) and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (RPCSA) met together for public worship, which was attended by a large congregation composed of members of both Churches. Both of these Churches had previously approved a Basis of Union. This Basis of Union included the following paragraph on “The Polity of the Church” (Vellem 2007: iii):

The Presbyterian form of Church government is held to be founded upon, and agreeable to, the Word of God. The form of Government of the Uniting Church shall be determined in all matters by a book to be named “ The Manual of Law and Procedure of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa”. In the interim this will be the Manual of Law and Procedure, as amended, of the former PCSA. It will be given a new cover and the title and all references in it to the PCSA will be replaced by references to the Uniting Church. After union the General Assembly of the Uniting Church will set up a Manual Committee to draw up the new Manual of Law and Procedure of the Uniting Church.

The Uniting Church appointed a Manual Committee in 1999 to prepare the chapters of this Manual in draft form. What appears hereafter as the First Edition is the new Manual under the title “The Manual of Faith and Order of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa”, a new name approved by the General Assembly in 2004 (Vellem 2007: iii).

The two Churches opted to use the name Uniting with the hope that other sister churches (Evangelical Presbyterian Church of South Africa, Uniting Congregational Church of Southern Africa and Presbyterian Church of Africa) in Southern Africa will join in the near future and become the United Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa.

2.2.1 The narrative root background of the PCSA

The Scottish branch of southern African Presbyterianism has its origins in the early years of the nineteenth century (Duncan 2005: 2). From its inception in South Africa, it came as a divided body. There were four Presbyterian traditions (Vellem 2007: 45): Free Church, the United Presbyterian, the Swiss Mission and the Settler traditions. The settler tradition later became known as the PCSA. In 1812 a Scottish regiment of the British Army stationed at the Cape of Good Hope formed themselves into a Calvinist society and through that St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Cape Town was constituted (Duncan 2005).

From 1892- 1897 there were unity talks among these four South African traditions to establish one Presbyterian Church. To spearhead these unity talks a Federal Council (FC) was formed (Vellem 2007 45). The FC after numerous meetings met in 1897 on the 17th of September and constituted itself as the First General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in South Africa (Vellem 2007:45, cf Duncan 2005: 2, see Van der Spuy 1971: 32). The PCSA was white descendants of settlers and new immigrants from the British Isles dominated espousing the ideal of church embracing different races. Most of the presbyteries that comprised the newly established Church consisted of settlers from Britain who arrived in South Africa in 1820.

2.2.2 The narrative root background of the RPCSA

The roots of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa (RPCSA, which was formed as the Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa in 1923 and adopted its new name in 1979) are to be found in Scottish Presbyterianism (Duncan 2003: 47). This was an autonomous black church “albeit with a strong presence and guidance of the Church of Scotland”, that is through a number of Scottish missionaries (Duncan 2005: 3, see Khabela 2000:9). This took place in a socio-political context that hardly offered space for black expression (Vellem 2007: 44). Intrinsic to the origins of the RPCSA and quite uniquely so, is this phenomenon of *iimanyano* / Associations, which predates the very establishment of this denomination (Vellem 2007: 47). According to Vellem (2007) it would equally be difficult if not impossible to fathom the identity of the RPC without the movement of *iimanyano*.

The strength of the RPC congregations was based on the *iimanyano*. In working relations between the PCSA and RPCSA, the agreement stated that the PCSA would be responsible for work in urban areas, which meant BPCSA members would become members of the PCSA while they were migrant labourers and that the BPCSA would restrict its work to rural areas (Duncan 2005: 3, see Xapile 1994: 21 – 23). However, when white members of the PCSA moved from cities to take over positions in the rural areas, the rule would not apply. Even then, congregations continued to be racially designated until 1970 (Bax TRC paper, 1999).

2.2.3 The Basis of Union between the PCSA and RPCSA

In the preamble of the basis of union of the two churches it says, (General Assembly 1997: 148) “The Churches proposing to unite do so in the belief that it is God’s will for them: that this union of Churches holding the Christian Faith and practising the Presbyterian Order in Southern Africa will be a strengthening of their witness to the Word of God and also a material contribution to the cause of wider Church union in Africa and in the world.”

The basis of union (1997:149) affirms that each congregation of each Church shall enjoy in the Uniting Church the status which it held in its own Church prior to union and its development and status thereafter shall be constitutionally determined in terms of the Manual of Law and Procedure. The special Commission on Union shall remain in being as a judicial commission to determine any matter in dispute to the terms of union for a period of at least three years after the Uniting General Assembly. Afterwards at which time or at any later date it may be discharged by the General Assembly.

2.2.4 The Basis of Union relating to the Church Associations

The rights, powers, functions and duties of any body, group or organisations in each of the negotiating Churches shall become the rights, powers, functions and duties of the corresponding bodies in the Uniting Church (General Assembly 1997:155). These shall be exercised in accordance with the provisions of the Manual of Law and Procedure of the Uniting Church. Rules previously applicable to bodies which have been replaced by other bodies or have been absorbed into other bodies or whose functions, or part of whose functions, have been transferred to other bodies shall continue in force until repealed or amended. These rules will be applicable whenever the functions previously performed by the old bodies are being performed or are to be performed by the new bodies or subdivisions of the new bodies.

Where organisations recognised on a Church-wide basis by each of the negotiating Churches have similar membership and objects, steps shall be taken for their amalgamation as follows (1997: 155): Within three months of the Uniting General Assembly the Special Commission on Union shall provide for the setting up of Joint Committees representative of the central authorities of such organisations. These Joint Committees shall prepare detailed proposals for their amalgamation, including a common constitution and arrangements for amalgamation funds.

Such Joint Committees shall as soon as possible present such proposals for the approval of their organisations in terms of their separate constitutions. As soon as such proposals have received the approval of the organisations concerned, the Joint Committee shall present them to the Special Commission on Union, which in turn shall present them to the General Assembly for approval. The organisations concerned shall then be amalgamated by resolution of the General Assembly in terms of the proposals approved by the General Assembly.

2.2.5 The seven reasons for uniting that were adopted by the 1995 Assemblies of PCSA and RPCSA (GA 1997: 137):

1. *Because a united Church is valid witness to the power of reconciliation in a divided society.*

In a divided society, where the people for so long have been separated by law into racial, language, cultural and political groups, a divided Church denies instead of affirming the unity of all men and women as children of one God and as brothers and sisters of one another. A divided Church denies the reconciling power of the gospel it proclaims.

2. *Because the fullness of Christian truth and worship between the two churches can only be truly expressed in unity.*

In faith, doctrine and practice the two Churches subscribe to the same tradition. Neither of the two Churches claims a different doctrine. The two Churches have the same origin. What separate them are mostly external social and political factors.

3. *Because the Church is truly the Church when it ignores external factors and denominational labels.*

External factors and inherited denominational labels separate us from one another and from the world. Neither God nor the world is interested in our denominational labels. The mission of Christ to which we have been called is to give a united witness and ‘to make disciples of all nations’.

4. *Because the two Churches were formed not as separate Churches but as two branches of one Church.*

The PCSA was formed initially as a ministry of the Church of Scotland to the military garrison in the Cape of Good Hope and grew during the time of the gold rush and also during the time of the 1820 Settlers. The RPCSA, on the other hand, grew out of the Church of Scotland’s mission work among the natives of South Africa. The intention of the Church of Scotland was to establish a self-sufficient Church, run and administered by the natives. The dream of a native Church was accomplished in 1923 when the Bantu Presbyterian Church (BPC) was formed. It was common for most ministers of the Church of Scotland who served in the BPC to retire in the PCSA.

5. *Because the two Churches have come of age.*

The missionary arrangement between the two Churches was that the PCSA would operate in the towns and cities and the BPC would operate in rural areas. As more and more black people flocked to the cities it became impossible to carry out and maintain such an arrangement. The BPC formed congregations in the cities and a conflict ensued, straining relations between the two Churches.

6. Because a negative social-political situation has been overcome

For centuries the socio-political situation in South Africa, with its resultant racial injustices, maintained white supremacy. This created social and religious barriers between blacks and whites and made it impossible for the two Churches to negotiate a union at the level of racial parity. To most leaders in the BPC a union negotiated on unequal footing was tantamount to joining another Church. As a result the BPC General Assembly, sitting at Gillespie Mission in 1972, voted negative and unity negotiations collapsed. The situation has since changed. The present union negotiations are conducted on an equal footing for both Churches.

7. Because obedience to the Gospel demands Unity

The New Testament teaches that the Church is one:

Jesus said: "There shall be one fold and one shepherd" (John 10:16)

Jesus prayed: "That they may be one, as you, father, are in me, and I in you that they may be one in us" (John 17:21). "All that believed were together and had all things in common" (Acts 11:44). There is one body and one spirit even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith one baptism". (Eph. 6:4-5).

My own personal story and knowledge of this context

2.2.6 The Tshwane Presbytery

A Presbytery is formed by a number of congregations clustering together under the authority of the UPCSA as the denomination. The Presbytery has its own executive body which consists of the Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, Commissioners and Committees. The Tshwane Presbytery is among the 19 Presbyteries that form the UPCSA; it is composed of 28 congregations. The boundaries of Tshwane Presbytery cross three provinces of South Africa: North West, Mpumalanga and Gauteng. However, most congregations are located in the Tshwane (Pretoria) Metropolitan area. The Presbytery has 14 historically "White" congregations and 14 black congregations.

Among the 14 black congregations in Tshwane, there are only two congregations that trace their roots from the former RPCSA namely; Khayakhulu (Rustenburg region) and Tumedu Makgahlela (Atteridgeville Township) congregations. Within the boundaries of this Presbytery there is a Presbyterian house of studies called Sedibeng “Spring of Water” which accommodates the UPCSA theological students studying at the University of Pretoria. I joined the Presbytery in 2002 as a second year BTh student at University of Pretoria coming from the University of Fort Hare. It was my first experience to be exposed to a mixed presbytery of black and white members. Though the Presbytery of Amatole has white congregations they are not around Fort Hare University and we never worshipped in a white congregation or attended a Presbytery Council meeting.

I grew up in Transkei Presbytery at Lundie Memorial Congregation in Willowvale/Gatyana at Ntsimbakazi location where there was not a single white congregation in the entire Presbytery. As theology students at Tshwane we used to visit different congregations and attended Presbytery Council meetings with the Rev Dr. GA Duncan. It is then that I observed the differences in Presbytery Council meetings, Church Associations and their functioning comparing to my home background (Transkei Presbytery).

At Tshwane, Presbytery Council meetings were administratively advanced, minutes posted before hand and everything was done in time. Most black commissioners were highly educated. However, they were mute in Presbytery Council meetings, and there was no vibrancy in the Church Associations. In a conversation with uMamtolo (co-researcher) in Chapter three in excerpt 29 of 3.7 she said, “But here in Tshwane even long before the conflict there was no strong sense of the Associations spirituality. So this conflict has made things worse than before”. Rev. Dr. SP. Xapile (1994:27) expressed that in 1959 the Bantu Presbyterian Church representatives once feared that any closer union with the Presbyterian Church would put the black members in inferior positions taking a back seat in presbytery meetings.

The relationship between the context and me

I am now an ordained minister of the UPCSA serving as “stated supply” in Ga-rankua congregation as from the 1st of January 2012 and a Reserve Force Chaplain in the South African Air Force as from the 1st of March 2009 till to date. I am 34 years old married to Bongeka and blessed with a son Bukho. I was ordained into the ministry of Word and Sacrament of the UPCSA on the 2nd of March 2008 in Mamelodi East Congregation within the boundaries of Tshwane Presbytery. I have been actively involved in the life and work of the UPCSA in Tshwane for the past 10 years.

I stayed in the University of Pretoria for six years till I finished my MTh in 2007. Being a theology student in Tshwane I was attached to the following historically “white” congregations: St. Andrews (City), St. Francis (Waterkloof) and Saints Congregation in Centurion. During my theological training I was the only black student who was not attached to a black congregation until I completed my probation in 2007. In my student days as well as during probation I was criticised by my colleagues for being a Euro-centric African.

We were only given a chance to preach in black congregations and the majority of students were second years. In December 2002, the Rev. Dr. GA Duncan organised a trip for the second year students to the Church of Scotland and I was among the four students who went. It was my first time to preach in white congregations in Scotland. When I got back to South Africa in 2003 I joined the St. Wilfred’s Anglican Church near the University of Pretoria for their evening services. My intentions were indirectly, to learn the English liturgy, the white philosophy and to learn to speak English more fluently through participating in the Anglican Church.

St. Wilfred’s Hatfield was a church that welcomed cultural diversity, grooming the youth for ministry under the leadership of Father Mark Spyker. I was made a preacher and a cell group leader. I was also sent by the Anglican Church to Cape Town in June 2005 to an Anglican Students Federation Conference.

It is where I experienced a debate on poverty with the Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, then the Bishop of Grahamstown. That exposure helped me to function optimally and understand the dynamics of the white congregations compared to the black congregations. But every time I got to the white Presbyterian congregations there was always a big gap comparing to the Anglican Church. In the context of Tshwane Presbytery most of the black congregations are vacant and a number of congregations are served by Interim-moderators or “stated supplies”.

This situational context is traced from the history of the formation of the black congregations in the former PCSA as most of the black congregations were supported by their white counterparts. In the UPCSA a minister is appointed by the Presbytery, but paid by the local congregation. If the local congregation cannot afford to pay the minister any longer, it falls on the minister to seek alternatives for making a living. In a public conversation with another senior minister in the Presbytery, he shared with me that when he was appointed by the Church then PCSA as a young minister to a congregation in Durban.

When he complained about his inadequate stipend, the elders told him *Abelungu bazokubhatala!* the white congregations will pay you. In the PCSA stipends for African ministers, and European ministers differed as was the case with African ministers and European missionaries in the BPCSA (Xapile 1994:34). The conflicts within the Church Associations at Tshwane are rampant whether there is a minister in-charge in a congregation or vacant. When I went for the interviews in November 2011 at Ga-rankau congregation for “stated supply” ministry, the interim moderator, the Revd Theo Groeneveld, gave an opportunity to the Session elders to ask some questions. The first question I was asked was do I wear a white jacket or a black jacket? It appeared to me that some of the Church members focused on the Associations conflicts than the vision of the UPCSA mentioned in chapter one.

All the elders at Ga-rankua knew that I was coming from Mamelodi East in the same Presbytery and I was not a stranger to them. The questions related to Church Associations were coming often; I was also asked my stand as the minister.

In all my responses I always say, I will abide to the rules and regulations of the Presbytery of Tshwane, the General Assembly, my convictions and my ordination vows (UPCSA ordination vows APPENDIX F). I decided in Ga-rankua to not be involved to any associations' event and focused on the local ministry as expected by the Tshwane presbytery. I was scared of my previous experiences in Mamelodi East for being trapped in the associations fight. This decision led to the smooth running of the congregation though also limited the minister to unleash fully his potential to the ministry of the local congregation.

The General Secretary of the UPCSA the Rev. Dr. Jerry Pillay wrote a pastoral letter to the congregations (Pillay: 12 December 2011 close 7), *“We have had discussions with the different Groups of Men and Women in attempting to address the issues related to the Church Associations. The conversation with the men is progressing well and we hope to have a further joint meeting early in the New Year. The situation with the women has proved a little slow but a meeting will be taking place in January 2012 with the Aggrieved Group with the hope that it will bring us into another joint meeting soon thereafter. A final report has to be submitted to the 2012 General Assembly as per instruction of the July Executive Commission. Let’s give thanks for what is happening and pray that we will find acceptable solutions to the challenges we face in this area”.*



Figure 2.1: The UPMF Aggrieved group of Mamelodi East in their uniform.



Figure 2.2: The MCG Recognised National Executive induction in East London 2008.

2.3 In-context experiences are listened to and described

2.3.1 Experiences of Association Struggles in Mamelodi East

Mamelodi East Presbyterian Church has been running without a full-time minister for the past 16 years. The reason why the congregation was without a full-time minister was due to financial matters, leadership, spiritual growth and poor vision. On the other hand the development and growth of the congregation seemed to be delayed through congregational dependency on interim moderators who were also doing full-time jobs in the corporate business world. In essence there was no full-time shepherd to look after the flock. The functioning of the congregation was partially dependent on the Elders. When I arrived in 2008 there was a lot of excitement and appreciation for my arrival as a new young minister. Surprisingly, in my first session meeting the problem that was brought was on Associations Choir.

The choir members were not contributing financial to the Church due to the long indifferences with the session leaders. I requested the Church records I noticed that all the members of the uniform associations were also not contributing, except the UPWF senior ladies. When I asked the leaders I was told that this situation has been like that for years. The congregation was mainly made up of middle class

people. I knew this through the membership forms that I requested the members to fill on my arrival. The forms stated the member's details. I tried to organize workshops and inviting ministers who were fluent in Sepedi in order to remedy the situation. I was always suspicious on receiving benevolent fund I made the congregation aware that I do not want my stipend to be subsidized by a white congregation. They could only assist in the Church projects.

I could not understand why the congregation was underperforming even less than rural congregations. I was frustrated and at times I contextualized my sermons to the post apartheid (1994) of South Africa. I preached socio-economic independence, black political freedom and black liberation theology. The problem became clear when I invited the Revds. Mamalotjie Magagane, Mahotje Pataki the Pedi speaking ministers and Mathemba Tati. They came on different occasions. Rev Magagane came with his wife wearing UPWF uniform and Pataki's wife was known though she was not there.

The congregation was shocked that Magagane's wife was wearing a black hat. They thought the influence of black hat is among the Xhosa speaking members. They witnessed the black hat during my ordination when my family came wearing the UPWF uniform. Strangely, all the minister's wives who attended my ordination on the 02 March 2008 wore black hats and were all Xhosa speaking and some from outside the Tshwane Presbytery. It became apparent to the session meeting that there was some disgruntlement in the congregation about the Xhosa dominance in the UPCSA ministry.

A petition came to the session that the Men's Association wanted to wear the PMA (Men's Associations of former PCSA) and they demanded the blessings of the minister. The women also brought a petition to the session that they want the minister for the robbing of JB's (Junior Branch of girls of former PCSA). They stated that they belong to the aggrieved association. On the 21 February 2010 session minutes state the following, "It was reported that the robbing of "Barwetsana" Girls Association did take place as planned for the 21 February 2010. It is on record that Rev Buqa did not participate in the function and robbing was conducted by UPWF and the President of Barwetsana."

At this time the UPCSA denomination had already declared that there are five Associations in the Church which are: MCG (Men), UPWF (women) IYZAS (girls), Church Choir (ACCMA) and Youth Fellowship (GA 2010: 249). All the uniformed associations in Mamelodi East did not want anything to do with the UPCSA structures. There was no support to the ministry of the local congregation neither spiritual nor materiel. I made a decision with the session not to be involved in anything which has to do with the uniform associations in the congregation.

I chose so in order to avoid the *iimanyano* conflicts and concentrate on the membership and ministry of the local Church as required by the UPCSA (see Manual of Faith and Order Chap 6, clause 6.12 & 6.16). In the UPCSA a person becomes an enrolled member by baptisms and public profession of faith. The membership to an association is voluntary. The Church membership precedes the association membership and that gives liberty to the minister, to serve all the full-members of the Church. However, the support I received was only from the Youth, the Emmanuel which was a non-uniform women's association and the Rock which was a combination of men and women who were not in associations.

Whenever the minister renders church duties like Lent services, home cell group, or anything which involve the minister, the Association members were not supportive. The minister was placed in a predicament situation between the presbytery expectations and the congregational idealism. The presbytery wanted the minister to fulfil his duties while the associations withdraw their support for the minister. The uniform association members were in the majority and very influential over the congregation. It is at this time that the minister thought of the words of wisdom that were shared by Rev. Dr. M. Raphesu in 2007 during probation that we should continue to study even non-theology degrees. In the theology training of the UPCSA ministers at University of Pretoria.

The UPCSA lecturers always reminded their students about three downfalls that can cause a minister to leave or to be forced to leave the congregation which were:

- Alcohol abuse
- Love for Church money
- Falling in love with Church ladies

I was always alert to the three downfalls and my background was of a conservative evangelical nature, it was part of indoctrination (see Buqa 2007:3). However, in my passion for congregational ministry it was unthinkable that associations could become a major problem for a minister to be recall to leave the congregation without being tainted by the three downfalls. I revived myself by reading a book we were given by Rev. Dr. Eddie Germiquet during my probation, written by Father Henri Nouwen a wounded healer.

The influence of my theological positioning in relationship with the context

I have done the practical course “Work-studies in Narrative Therapy” with the University of Pretoria. I am currently doing narrative therapy sessions with the Coram Deo Center in Gasfontein and Clear View Clinic in Pretoria North while working on the research. I have come to an understanding of the practical narrative approach and, in particular the significance of storytelling. A story consists of events, time and sequence and every story is important.

My theological positioning has an influence and is a challenge because of my relationship with the context. Being the researcher, I am not outside the stories that are shared by the co-researchers as I am also involved within the context. However, in this research I envisage to free the Association members from the stories that imprison them and limit their views from within the UPCSA. The stories of conflicts in the *iimanyanos* are saturated stories in the Church that need to be deconstructed to *thicker* descriptions.

Some of the stories we have about our lives will have positive effects and some will have negative effects on our lives in the past, present and future (Morgan 2000:9). The negative stories of the past and present should be dealt with in order to give a rise to a better future. In this context my theological positioning has been influenced by the Presbytery while at times the local congregation would have different views. In my theological understanding it has been so important for me to be a mediator between the Presbytery and the local Church. In this matter of conflicts it is so apparent that the division existing within the *iimanyanos* is a hindrance to the effective witness of Jesus Christ.

Selection of co-researchers

In chapter one I explained that the selection of the co-researchers is going to be in the context of Tshwane Presbytery as the basis of the research. The author carefully selected seven co-researchers belonging from both the aggrieved and recognised UPCSA Association structures. The selection is based on different categories of people of both *iimanyano*. The co-researchers that are listened to are from the Men's and Women's Associations of both divided groups, as they are the prominent organisations in the conflicts. The other co-researchers are a white minister and a black presbytery commissioner that does not belong to any of the uniform Associations. The reasons why I have to listen their narratives is because they are affected by the conflicts either directly or indirectly. I need to investigate about the possibility of the "third force" as it is alluded to in chapter one.

The selection of the co-researchers consists of a group, individuals, and ministers and their spouses from both conflicting Associations. Due to the dynamics of the Associations in the Tshwane Presbytery the selection consists of seven co-researchers. The co-researchers are reflecting the culture, language, ethnicity, gender, race, leadership position, theological students and the former denominational lines (PCSA / RPCSA) that make up the UPCSA. Initially, it was so difficult to select co-researchers, as some members I needed did not want to participate in the research interviews.

This narrative research is sensitive as the author is researching on something that currently exists in the Church and he is involved by being a member of the UPCSA. In selecting the co-researchers I made sure that I phoned the key leaders of the divided groups and the different congregational members in Tshwane that are in the executives of these Associations. For the quality and preservation of the integrity of the interviews I selected members that are from different congregations of Tshwane. Fortunately, the researcher has been in Tshwane Presbytery for a long time and is familiar with all of the co-researchers.

I have been in several sensitive debates in Presbytery meetings since 2009 where the different opinions of the aggrieved and recognised members became so strong. I remember when I phoned one of the members asking to participate in the research; the person responded that he/she is not interested at all because he/she is hurt by the Church. Muller and Schoeman (2004:9) highlights that as the researcher you do not strive to be objective at all, but rather strive for subjective integrity using a method of participatory interaction. It is still at the choice of the co-researcher whether to trust the process and accept the research interviews.

The methods used in order to listen to the experiences (narratives) of people

The selection of seven co-researchers was done from different congregations of with both the aggrieved and recognised parties. I selected leaders and congregants according to cultural differences and Church Associations background. The co-researchers are from different age groups and portfolios. The co-researchers are: (1) Five Students from Sedibeng House of Studies, (2) The minister and his wife from the recognised Association, (3) The minister from the aggrieved Association (4) A male elder from the recognised Association, (5) A female from the aggrieved Association (6) A female elder from the non-uniform Association and (7) A white minister from the Tshwane presbytery.

The interviews were conducted one on one with the appointment made at a time convenient to the co-researchers. In the interviews I used my laptop to take the notes on Microsoft Word. The interviews were much longer as they took two hours with some co-researchers. I drove to all the places where my co-researchers were with the exception of the white minister whom I sent an e-mail. I listened to their stories and asked them to reflect on their own narratives and also gave my own reflection on their narratives.

I made second appointments for the reflection of their narratives; I wanted to make sure that they were truly co-researchers and I have written their true reflection. I would send the document of the first interviews prior to my second appointment so that the co-researchers would have ample time to read their narratives. I must confess it was a tiring exercise. Sometimes I had to remind the co-researchers about my coming and they would postpone the appointment for another week or two weeks.

However, it was a worthy project as my knowledge developed on narrative therapy and I felt I was contributing something to the UPCSA. I was interested in listening to the narratives. At times the co-researches were emotional; they also revealed a sense of anger and hurt in their narratives. Their stories and experiences were clouded by the Church fights and a sense of despair. In some instances after the interviews I would ask permission to offer a word of prayer and comfort.

Accepted ethical guidelines and my research

I phoned the co-researchers in advance and explained the purpose of the interviews so all of them were prepared. With some of the co-researchers, where necessary I phoned their ministers for permission before I could communicate with them. In my explanation to the co-researchers about the interviews I always introduced the letter of authority from the University of Pretoria, the letter written to the Presbytery on the 11th of February and the designed ethical consent form containing the ethical code of the research written by the author. I was absolutely aware of the sensitivity of the topic in the perimeters of the Presbytery of Tshwane. The sensitivity of the research appears in chapter three on the narrative

conversations with association members and chapter four under “conflicts of interest” as subheading. The evidence documentation of the ethical guidelines:

- University of Pretoria permission letter (Appendix B)
- Presbytery letter (Appendix C)
- Ethical consent form (Appendix D)

I recall when I interviewed one of the ministers and his wife, the minister’s wife told me after the interviews that she was not going to accept the interviews if I could not have produced the evidence that I was a bona fide researcher. She was suspicious thinking that I might have been sent by the Church to inspect them.

The co-researchers were asked whether they would use pseudonyms or participate anonymously in the research. It is only the students who allowed that I should use their real names. Some co-researchers asked me to give them an ample time to contemplate whether they would use their real names, pseudonyms or anonymously. The conclusion on the use of the real identity or pseudonyms will be decided by the co-researchers in Chapter three after the completion of their research interviews.

Methods used to be effective and remain true to my theological position

In conducting this research I made it clear to all the UPCSAs members of Tshwane that the intention of my research was academic. I made it apparent because I noticed from my co-researchers that some of them were always asking if I was not being used by the Church to be counted against them. I conducted the research on chapter two and three concurrently. It is then I got to get a glimpse and understand the standpoint of the co-researchers towards the research. I had to ensure that my theological position is always on academic adherence. I did that by continually checking on my chapter one that I was still aligning with the intentions of the research. I informed my co-researchers from both divided groups on everything that was concerning the study.

I protected my theological positioning against any biasness to the groups. On the evening of the 23rd of April 2012, I phoned the leader of the aggrieved men for permission to attend their Tshwane UPMF men's conference. I had already spoken about my academic research purposes with the leader in March 2012. He granted me permission to attend and that I should interview him on the 8th of May 2012 at 10am. The UPMF conference was held in Mamelodi East congregation from the 28 - 29 April 2012 and this conference was not legitimised by the Presbytery. However, I attended it in order to listen to the stories of the aggrieved party and to gain an understanding of their experiences in context. My endeavour was to be present with them to listen and reflect on their narratives. I did not want a rumour or hearsay to taint my research.

The narrative reflection of the UPMF aggrieved conference is in chapter four of the dissertation. The MCG conference took place on the 19 – 20 of May 2012 in Tumedu Makgahlela congregation in Atteridgeville Township. The MCG is the recognised Christian Men's association of the UPCSA. It was officially announced on the 12 of May 2012 in the Presbytery Council Meeting at Soshanguve Presbyterian Church. I also communicated with the leader of the MCG in advance about my research and purpose for reflection of the conference. Apparently, all the leaders were official informed by my research studies on the 11 February presbytery meeting which was in St. Andrews Church.

I got the motivation from my co-researchers to attend these conferences. Some explained that they would not attend the aggrieved or recognised meetings *vice versa*. I wanted to remain effective and true to my theological position by entering into meaningful, empirical research. In some instances I was turned down by other people when I asked for their narratives.

2.4 Interpretations of experiences are made, described and developed in collaboration with “ co-researchers”

The balance of my own interpretations with that of the co-researchers

I balanced my interpretations by being involved with the different co-researchers of the aggrieved and the recognised groupings. I asked them to edit the documents before I could compile them in the dissertation and I visited them in their places. I also compared the interpretations of the same groups and found where there were some commonalities and differences in response. I asked the meaning from the data given by the co-researchers. I asked them some “landscape” questions e.g. Why are you not working together? Where does it hurt? What is the major problem? I also balanced my interpretations with that of my co-researchers with the decisions and procedure’s records of the General Assembly, Tshwane Presbytery Council meetings and the Executive Commissions of the UPCSA. I verified the decisions that were taken by the UPCSA on the assembly papers and compared on what the co-researchers were saying.

Methods to facilitate my co-researchers’ interpretations of their experiences

I drafted the questionnaire that leads the co-researchers to repeat the meaning of their experiences. I made sure that there is no unattended question or interpretation either from the researcher or the co-researchers. Some of the co-researchers that had e-mail, I e-mailed them the questionnaire in advance in order to make the research process smoother. Freedman and Combs (1996: 120) argues that:

“Deconstruction questions help people unpack their stories or see them from different perspectives, so that how they have been constructed becomes apparent. Many deconstruction questions encourage people to situate their narratives in larger systems and through time. In bringing forth the history, context, and effects of people’s narratives, we are broadening their scope, depicting entire landscapes that support problems. Within these broader landscapes, more (and more varied) “sparkling events” can be brought forth.”

The co-researchers were not limited by the questionnaire in their interpretations; I gave them an opportunity to reflect on what they would want to say regarding the Church Associations conflict. Generally, as we listen to problematic narratives we hear about beliefs, practices, feelings and attitudes (Freedman and Combs 1996) and these are what a particular deconstruction question addresses.

2.5 A description of experiences as it is continually informed by traditions of interpretation

The decisions on the basis of which traditions of interpretations need to be studied

The researched data on the traditions of interpretations was based on the critical evaluated information that was relevant to the study context. In this regard my co-researchers had different traditions in Church background and there were various traditional interpretations. My co-researcher's cultures, traditions, norms and ecclesial practices have been informed either by the tradition from the former PCSA or RPCSA although part of the UPCSAs.

Muller says (1999), "the history that we tell in our own circles is not only a chronicle of historical facts but also attempts to explain and elucidate the present". The co-researchers have the history of the past with interpreted experiences, and this forms the traditions with different interpretations and different meanings. It is complicated to bring together into one Church people of different Church organisations that have been doing things differently for over 100 years.

The influence of the scientific community in my decisions about literature to study

In this dissertation the research is based on the empirical research, my co-researchers, the UPCSA Community, the Church minutes, and the relevance of the literature review. As the researcher continued with the study, he also attended some UPCSA gatherings to listen to the stories of the members and ministers.

2.6 A reflection on the religious and spiritual aspects, especially on God's presence, as it is understood and experienced in a specific situation

Carlson, Erickson and Seewald-Marquardt describe spirituality in relation to therapy as follows (2002:218):

“We believe spirituality is an ethic or a way of being and such a way of being that is a lived day by day endeavour. It is a way of being which requires continual practice and daily mindfulness rather than some place or state to which one arrives or some trait or ability one gains. Spirituality is a profoundly relational and moral way of being as the primary purpose centres on our intimate relationship with the Divine (which we take the liberty to call God) and how that relationship invites us into communal relations of respect, mutuality, accountability, compassion, and love with all humanity and with all creation”.

In most of the spiritual presentations in the UPCSA events there is much about the unity in the body of Christ and the love of the saints. In 2007 the minister's spouses conference based their theme in 1 Corinthians 12 looking at unity and the gifts of the Spirit. On the 28 – 31 May 2007, the minister's conference met at Eston in KZN and the emphasis was on Ephesians 4: 1- 16: unity. In this conference I was a probationer. It is where I experienced the pain of the associations. In one of the evenings the General Secretary opened a debate among the ministers on the resolution of the Associations conflict.

As far as my memory serves me well... “The Rev. S. Gwala spoke about the intervention of the third force in the Associations debate and he was also upset by his black colleagues who argued a lot when the white ministers spoke about the employment of Youth Pastors in their congregations. Rev. Gwala mentioned that there are no Youth pastors in black congregations. Why many black ministers were so vocal while they were mute on association’s matter counter to the aggrieved ministers”. In the minister’s conference senior ministers were grouping themselves on their former denominational backgrounds PCSA and RPCSA. In the August 2007 AGM of the UPWF, their theme was on 1 Corinthians 12: 26 (GA 2007: 261). The MCG, in that same year in September at eThekweni Presbytery: “Union at the Crossroads: Time to unlock the Barriers” (GA 2007: 261). On 25th of March 2007 at Tshwane Presbytery MCG at St. James Church in Nelspruit, the theme of the conference was “In one with Christ, a new beginning”

The Moderator of the General Assembly (2007: 260) the Rt. Rev W. Pool preached in Orlando Presbyterian Church in Soweto, he mentioned in his sermon that, “I mentioned then that the great dream that I have is to be part of a Church that experiences deep spiritual renewal, because I am utterly convinced that, that is what our Church (UPCSA) needs to experience- a great visitation of the Holy Spirit so that He would deeply and fundamentally renew the Church”. However, it seems most of the members in the UPCSA are doing the opposite of Christ words. The Moderator addressed the effects of spirituality to the challenging issues of union of the Church in 2007 and the Church Associations conflict.

I attended an ordination service of the Revd Phamodi Motebele on Saturday the 31st of March 2012 at Lekoa Presbytery in Klerksdorp, the Revd Tando Mpambani preached the charges at All Saints Congregation and in his sermon he reflected on the same challenging issues of the UPCSA between the Church Associations. The Church is striving by all means to bring healing and reconciliation but there are still problems.

Among the great threats and challenges you will face lies the Church itself because Christ faced it first. You have been called and now inducted into the ministry of word and sacrament to the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern

Africa. A Church filled with its own challenges but dominantly is the challenge of the associations. You are called into the visible Church. A Church that classifies itself in terms of the black Church and the white Church. A Church with most Congregations proclaiming that they want specific colour when calling a minister. The so-called white Churches want a white minister. The so-called black Churches want not only a black minister but He has to come from a particular tradition. Some will say 'He may be a good preacher but which tradition does he represent'. He may be able to pray that the lame are able to walk, the deaf may hear and the blind may see but he does not represent my 'white-jacket tradition' or 'black-jacket'. We don't care if he is the best minister ever but if he does not represent my 'black-hat tradition or my 'white-hat' tradition I do not want him to be my minister.

I have concluded that these people have not only their sights on their black Churches and White Churches but they see themselves being led by their white gods and their black gods. They prepare themselves for their black heaven and a white heaven and they lose their sight from focusing on the Heaven promised by Christ – one that has no colour to discriminate against. A Heaven of the invisible Church that is only visible to God were the sheep are sheep and the wolves are wolves (The sermon script permission was confirmed with Rev. T. Mpambani).

Language considered being “clues” that co-researchers talk about experiences of God’s presence.

It is very important as the researcher to use the language of the co-researchers in order to journey with them in their understanding. Language is vital for communication with the people, people understand a person much better through interacting in their language. My co-researchers are not expressing their experiences about God’s presence in their lives in the same manner. There is a real world “out there” and we can know it through language (Freedman and Combs 1996: 28). Freedman and Combs (1996:28) continue to say we can use language unambiguously to represent external reality, and our internal representations are accurate reflections of external reality.

While they are all Presbyterians, they express themselves in terms of their faith in different languages: some are conservative, liberal, charismatic, Pentecostal and evangelical. The idea that we first encountered through Erickson and that continues to inform our practice, is that our experiential realities are constituted through language (Freedman et 1996:12). Erickson was very aware of the constitutive power of language. Some co-researchers in their hurt would still comfort themselves by using a language that assures the presence of God in their midst. Muller (1999) states that one must use language in order to get to re-interpretation, and eventually to reframing.

Facilitating “God-talk” in my interviews without imposing my own religious language on the co-researchers

One of the fundamental elements in Narrative Therapy is that the client is an expert at all times. The therapists should use the language of the client and help the client in the direction of the session. The language about “God-talk” should come from the client and the therapist should not manipulate the client on the religious language used.

At Coram Deo where the author is doing the narrative practice with other MA students, we were taught by Dr. Andre Botha that at times clients come to the therapist expecting to get an “approval” answer from God. He advised us that we should never use God to the client as the excuse for the diagnosis. In this research all of my co-researchers are Christians and the topic is Church based. I turned to reflect on God following their stories in their belief system not imposing my theological epistemology.

My feelings in this regard being influenced by my positive or negative experiences of God’s presence

Being a researcher in this regard it is highly tempting for one to influence the situation by her/his positive or negative experience of God’s presence. If I experience God in a positive way in all what I am doing I can be vulnerable to the clients to influence them to experience God they way I do. However, the narrative

therapy guides the therapists in such instances. The therapist should be guided in the narrative therapy room by listening, observing the client's emotions, belief and the interpretation of their experiences of God.

As much as I am the researcher I must also be honest about my feelings and my experiences of God in this regard. Carlson and Erickson argued that when they bring their spiritual beliefs into the therapy room, they like to ask the clients what their spiritual beliefs are. They continue to say that by allowing them to bring their spiritual beliefs they feel they are relating on a more human level with their clients (Carlson and Erickson 2002:234).

2.7 A description of experience thickened through interdisciplinary investigation

Deciding about the themes to investigate further on an interdisciplinary level

This research is in a church based context of conflict; there have been a lot of themes that I have developed in investigating the problem matter. I mentioned earlier on about the developed questionnaire, which will appear on chapter three of the research. I made a decision to take for the themes to investigate based on their relevance to the research topic. I used the language of the Church; I noted the people's interest in associations, the cultural differences and the spiritual aspects.

Using relevant material from other disciplines correctly

Given the fact that I am a practical theologian now, I consulted other writings on practical theology and other researched material in the field of practical theology. I must be honest that for the past four years I was in the field of Christian History. However, before I could embark on practical theology in the field of narrative therapy I was introduced to Trauma Counselling in UNISA where I got a certificate on counselling traumatised clients.

When I embarked on narrative therapy I compiled in my mind the information I received while I was an under-graduate student in practical theology. I combined

this with trauma counselling in order to “swim” more easily in the discipline of practical theology. Looking at the topic I chose for my research and the relevant material either from the library catalogue or the other theology literature, it was very difficult to get the relevant academic literature since my research context is on *iimanyanos*. Most of the theologians in my Church who wrote masters or doctoral studies or articles are not practical theologians.

I used the material from other disciplines that is relevant to my Church and my research theme. The academic researched material that was closer to my research theme was in Christian History written by the Rev. Dr. SP. Xapile, the Rev. Dr. Prof. GA. Duncan, Rev. Dr. M.M. Njeza , Rev. D. Van Der Spuy and Rev Dr. D Bax. The other relevant material was from the Rev. Dr. V. Vellem, who writes on Christian Ethics and Public Theology.

I tried to contextualise this material to make sure that it has a practical theology ethos in order to avoid using one source or piece of information. I also communicated with other respected senior ministers and elders in the Church in order to get the relevant data. Such ministers are Rev. Dr. J. Pillay, Rev N. Nyauza Rev. L. Obose, Prof. M. Masango and Elder R.Vantyi from Port Elizabeth. It was a challenging exercise.

Most members in the UPCSA are analysing their ministers according to their former denominational background either from PCSA or RPCSA. At times they restrict you in revealing the information if you are not from their former denominational line.

2.8 The development of alternative interpretations that point beyond the local community

Methods used to allow all the interpretations (empirical stories; theological and interdisciplinary literature; my understandings; the interpretations of co-researchers) to develop into alternative understandings

“Narrative therapists are interested in working with people to bring forth and *thicken* stories that do not support or sustain problems. As people begin to inhabit and live out the alternative stories, the results are beyond solving problems. Within the new stories, people live out new self images, new possibilities for the relationships and new futures (Morgan 200: 15, see Combs and Freedman 1996:16). Morgan (*Alice?*) explained that people have stories to bring forth and *thicken* those stories to alternative stories.

It is not easy at all to develop into alternative understanding the fragmented stories based on divided groups within the same faith. Paradoxically, it is hard to understand that people confessing the same faith with no doctrinal differences are divided through the traditional interpretation of the history of colonisation. There are many stories from the UPCS members; some are saying the other group came into union without money to use our money (see in Chapter four: 4.5.3).

Others say that during apartheid only whites benefited in the former PCSA; there are no black members that can claim money either from the former PCSA or RPCSA. These are stories that came out through the empirical research, people’s understandings and the interpretations of the co-researchers. The method that the researcher used is to value all the researched material together, evaluate the interpretations and then the new research story emerged. The process is to develop an alternative understanding in the light of this conflict.

Involving my co-researchers

In this research, it is very important to ensure that I write the true reflection of my co-researchers. I was always in touch with my co-researchers; every time I finished with the interviews I sent the document to make sure the co-researchers were happy with their reflection. I made the second appointments to come to the co-researcher and re-check their narrative reflection.

In narrative therapy the therapist works on the stories of the client not on his/her story. My research theme is a sensitive issue in the Church and most people are affected either directly or indirectly. I have been in contact with my co-researchers through e-mail, face book, and phone calls. I consulted lot of public Church documentation, read Assembly papers, Executive Commission papers and conference reports. I have been in touch with the UPCSA central office to enquire about some church meetings minutes.

In my curiosity to get the data I was also kindly informed by the General Secretary about private minutes that I cannot yet access. My intention was to have a well researched document with authenticity and to preserve the integrity of my co-researchers I had to phone at times some senior members from both the former PCSA and RPCSA who are not part of the co-researchers to verify some historical information. There was information from the public sources I was not sure about which I had to verify.

2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I was anxious to be relevant to the field of practical theology. I was challenged by the various interpretations of people. I could not get any academic literature on Presbyterianism written by a black member from former PCSA; only from white members. I am proud of being a UPCSA member and to be an ordained minister in this church. Through this research I found out that most of senior members are highly informed by their traditional experiences of the past Churches. This brings a lot of problem in the Associations, prejudices and confusion to the young ministers ordained in the new Church who are not tainted either by former PCSA or RPCSA.

CHAPTER THREE

THERAPEUTIC CONVERSATIONS

“...A congregant visited the minister. She shared with him a painful story that happened in her life. When the minister was about to pray, she said: “No *Mfundisi*, I did not come for a prayer I only wanted a person who can listen to my story...”

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on therapeutic conversations which mean listening to, describing and interpreting the specific narratives of the co-researchers. The aim of this chapter is therefore to invite both the “Aggrieved” and the “Recognised” *limanyano* of the UPCSA, as well as those working with them, to share their experiences. The purpose is to move from thin descriptions to thicker descriptions of the narratives and invite the co-researchers to participate in the reflections of their narratives. Freedman and Combs (1996: 16) found that: “We discovered that, as people began to inhabit and live out these alternative stories, the results went beyond solving problems. Within the new stories, people could live out new self-images, new possibilities for relationship, and new futures”.

Our lives are multistoried. Morgan (2000: 8) accentuates the fact that, “*There are many stories occurring at the same time and different stories can be told about the same events. No single story can be free of ambiguity or contradiction and no single story can encapsulate or handle all the contingencies of life*”. The aim of this chapter is to listen to stories and to be drawn into the stories of the co-researchers. Some of the co-researcher stories contain hurt, frustration, hopelessness and blame of the Church system. The aim is also to concentrate on the small, marginalized, unheard stories and not to make generalized, sweeping claims (Muller and Schoeman 2004: 9, see Pattison and Woodward 1994).

It is only through the narrative approach that the voices and stories of the aggrieved and recognised *iimanyano* of Tshwane Presbytery can be heard and listened to.

3.2 Interviewing agenda

I began by telling my co-researchers about the ethics and academic adherence of the research process. I shared with them verbally that my research is known by the General Secretary of the UPCSA. I formulated a questionnaire that will drive the narratives regarding the Conflicts within the Church Associations of the UPCSA. However, during the course of the interviews there were some additions to the questions as the co-researchers at times drive the research with other issues of the Church that are irrelevant to the purposes of the research. I had to listen to those irrelevant conversations though I was also assertive to the context of the research. Narrative therapy teaches that the client is an expert in the counseling process. As the narrative conversations continued, there were also, with some co-researchers, certain developments in asking the questions. At times I had to ask questions of clarity and probe for more information. In chapter two I noted that the researcher is also part of the research process. The researcher is also well acquainted with the ongoing process of the conflicts in associations.

The questionnaire was very long but consists, at points, of short answers. I strived to research the background of the co-researchers, their understanding and interpretation of the current conflicts. The interviews were structured and targeted the context. The questions were not always the same as some Church members are not in Associations. The questionnaire is tabled in (APPENDIX A).

3.3 The language and culture

In the Presbytery of Tshwane the eleven official languages of South Africa are spoken although Northern Sotho predominates; however the language that is commonly used in presbytery communication is English. The writer has been in Tshwane Presbytery for ten years and is familiar with the Southern Sotho language and culture. The interviews were conducted in Xhosa, Southern Sotho and English to make the co-researchers relaxed, comfortable and to facilitate trust in the process.

3.4 The questions for non-uniform members

There was a questionnaire that was drafted for the non-uniform members. There were only two non-uniform members that were interviewed. I interviewed a black female elder and a white minister from the Presbytery of Tshwane. The white minister asked me to e-mail the questions and we were communicating via e-mail for clarity and on certain issues regarding the Church Associations. The questionnaire with the black female elder was one on one.

3.5 THE NARRATIVE OF REV. X. GIDA AND HIS WIFE UMAMTOLO

3.5.1 Introduction

In the following interviews pseudonyms are used. The Rev. X. Gida is the minister of Mbangcolo congregation in Mpozolo Township. I asked the Gida family in February to be involved in the research interviews. They accepted my request. I went to their house on Friday the 13th April 2012 at 18h00 and the interviews went well until 21h50. The Gida family comes from the history of the former PCSA. They are members of the recognised structure. Mrs. Gida has been highly active in the organization of the UPWF. They both experienced many difficulties in

ministering in a divided congregation alongside the Associations. There has been ongoing fight over association in the congregation

When I arrived in their house I was wearing my military uniform as I came directly from a course at SAAF (South African Air Force) College and their children were surprised to see *Mfundisi* in camouflage. They asked if I had a gun and I told them that Chaplains do not carry weapons. I carried my laptop and the booklet to take some notes where necessary. Immediately, Mrs. Gida saw my laptop, she asked me if I was going to record the interviews. I told her: “No, I want to write your story on the micro software”. She said that she was not going to allow recording if I had a recorder. I explained to them the narrative and showed the documents of evidence for my research. They then relaxed and permitted me to continue.

3.5.2 Excerpts from an interview with Rev. Gida and uMamtolo

The following are excerpts from their interviews on Friday the 13th April 2012. The narrative characters W: Wonke, G: Gida and M: Mamtolo.

1. W: The first question I would like to ask both of you is to which association do you belong and tell me why do you belong to such an association?
2. M: I belong to the UPWF and the only reason is that it is the recognised structure and I am the minister’s wife of the UPCSA.
3. W: Could you explain more the issue of being a minister’s wife in this regard?
4. M: I was told during our marriage (<i>kuyalwa advices</i>) that I must join the Women’s Association to support my husband in the ministry.
5. W: What are about you Rev. Gida?
6. G: I belong to the MCG because is the only recognised Association by UPCSA.
7. W: Could you tell me about your understanding on what is happening in the CA’s at the moment and how do you feel about it?

8. M: I think there are two groups: the non-recognised structure and the recognised structure. And the non-recognised structure is trying hard to win the recognised structure to their side.
9. W: What makes you say that?
10. M: A lot of people have moved away from the focus of CA because of the conflict. We are far from God as lots of us are putting our agenda for ungodly purposes.
11. W: Why do you use the plural we?
12. M: It is because I am also part of the Associations so if one does something wrong even myself I am implicated as part of that particular Association group. People are no longer Christ-like in heart. If I do not like a person I will use the conflict of CA because CA's are a bigger group in the black Church.
13. W: And then what is your own opinion Gida?
14. G: The way I see here in Mbangcolo congregation, in fact I assume even in other congregations in Tshwane, the goal is to outnumber the recognised structure; to appear as if they are wrong as the number of the aggrieved is more than the recognised structure. My worry is that not everybody is in the CA and many people have stopped coming to the Church especially those that are not in CA. Some I meet in the street and ask them why they are no longer coming to Church and they say they will come back when this matter is settled. Some have stayed home; those that are spiritually matured are visiting other churches. It has affected the fellowship of ministers, the friendship; the families and the leadership of the local congregations.
15. W: How has it affected the fellowship of ministers?
16. G: We are no longer trusting one another and fellowshiping together as we used to do?
17. W: Ok.
18. W: What do you take on the leadership of the UPCSA regarding this issue?
19. M: The leadership is stark

20. W: Why?
21. M: The same leadership is belonging to either of the groups. In the General Assembly leadership some members belong to the aggrieved others to the recognised. The other problem is that members of the local congregations are attached to their ministers. If the local minister is not happy with something it is easy to influence the members negatively. The UPCSAs ministers are the cause of the division as they are employed by the Church and these ministers belong to the aggrieved. Some ministers and their commissioners are not sending the right information to the local congregations. They distort the message.
22. W: What about you <i>Mfundisi</i> on the Church leadership?
23. G: The leadership recognised the UPCSAs structures and they are engaging with the aggrieved. They are trying to find the solution.
24. W: Could you share your own roots/background in <i>iimanyano</i>?
25. M: No roots/background. I'm from the Assembly of God. I joined the Presbyterian Church by marrying my husband.
26. G: I joined <i>iimanyano</i> in 1990 when I became a minister as it was expected in the PCSA; my background is from the Assembly of God as well.
27. W: How significant is it to you to have <i>iimanyano</i> in the UPCSAs?
28. G: It is important to have CAs as they have a specific ministry and it helps people to use their gifts regardless of the structure to which they belong. Collectively, they have a ministry to offer to the church. The life and work of the local church in the blacks' congregation is more in the Associations.
29. M: It is important if they are going to serve the aims and the objectives of the Associations. It brings a sense of belonging, people want to belong somewhere. But here in Tshwane even long before the conflict there was no strong sense of the Associations spirituality. So this conflict has made things worse than before.
30. W: Were you aware of the union of the two Churches in 1999?
31. G: We were informed through Assembly papers, it was not a surprise. We had confidence in the progress, we trusted the guys of the PCSA like Prof. M. Masango

and Rev. A. Rodger. Then the North East Presbytery was encouraged on Presbytery level to have interaction with the RPCSA nearby churches. We worked with Msendo congregation before the Union; it was Rev. Msindisi Hlikihla then.

32. W: **What tradition did you hold as PCSA? How do you feel about that tradition now? Is there anything that you are missing?**

33. M: No tradition. I was not at Tshwane during the PCSA, due to my work at Gwadu, I became more involved in the UPCSAs.

34. W: **What have you gained in the UPCSAs regarding CA?**

35. M: Leadership skills, exposure, and administration skills,

36. G: Nothing...

37. W: **Are there any developments that make you feel there is hope to resolve the conflicts amongst the Association groups?**

38. M: The issue in the UPWF “aggrieved” is the sign of development as I have heard that the National Executive Structure aspires to stop the conflict and rejoin with the UPWF “recognized”. But, I am not sure so far....

39. G: No, development that is tangible at the presbytery level. At congregational level absolutely no hope here. *Mfundisi* at grass roots it is a disaster and there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel. I think at all local levels in Tshwane presbytery the process does not have much support as white folks do not understand the dynamics of the CA. They refrain from the debates on CA.

40. W: **Describe the meaning of the words “aggrieved” “recognised”? Where do these words come from?**

41. M: It started in 2007 in the AGM that was held at Egoli when the UPWF members from the former PCSA felt that they were ignored in their grievances on uniform by the UPWF conference. I believe the word “aggrieved” was coined in 2007 and became clear in 2008 through correspondences. The recognised name came on 2008 after the GENEX met with the Moderator of the General Assembly, the Rt. Rev. Christopher Mkandawire in Cape Town. It was to clarify the distinction as the word Uniting put more weight on the name of the Church.

42. W: **How do you feel being part of this group “aggrieved” “recognised”?**

43. M: I feel good being with the recognised structure, but it makes you feel uncomfortable at times and doubting yourself. It is not right to see the Church being divided through material issues.
44. W: What do you think is the major problem that causes the conflicts?
45. M: I'm not going to mention the devil as Satan is not visible. It is the positions and fear of overpowered because the RPCSA came in 100% on Associations and PCSA came minus the whites. The PCSA had assets in the majority, RPCSA in the majority in numbers but fewer resources. In my thinking the RPCSA came in majority with a mind of over-control. The PCSA became afraid as everything in all <i>iimanyano</i> RPCSA was strong. There was a fear of taking over and undermining. In the AGM of the Women's Associations it was clear that whatever debates, in the dialogue, whether stupid or positive the RP would support each other.
While the PCSA would do the same, but they were always on the disadvantage because of being in the minority. At the first election of the UPWF there were co-presidents for both RPCSA and PCSA after 2005. Dr. Pataki was nominated and she came from the RPCSA line. One of the advantages in the tradition of the RPCSA is that their ministers supported the UPWF while in the PCSA tradition ministers were not involved in the Women issues. They only come for revival services to be with the women. People began to be nasty in meetings and exchanging words if one said <i>hamba</i> (go) and when the delegates report back ,they will change the wording and said they were <i>voetsek</i> ...though it was not so.
46. G: Distorted messages and misinformation is the major problem.

47. W: What associates your faith or spirituality with Uniform?
48. M: The poor or rich is not seen and everyone is the same otherwise: nothing...
49. G: It's a question of identity nothing to do with Spirituality...
50. W: What is the Third Force?

51. M: It's the people that are invisible, people who are leaving from the Kingdom of God and the devil is using them.
52. G: Ministers, elders and members of the congregation of both former churches who are not happy about the union, but they could not do anything. The Association issue becomes an excuse. On the other hand it is about the pensions in the former PCSA, the whites used to outnumber the black commissioners for a long period. Some were scared to amalgamate the pension as they had fears about blacks being the majority. Whites have their own agenda about this issue. Whites want supremacy, racism still exists and whites feel they have lost the control whether in General Assembly or committees. Some people are being used by the whites for their votes in the Assembly.
53. W: Why you say other people are being used by whites for their votes?
54. G: It is impossible to understand that in several General Assemblies blacks are voted out by white nominees whereas blacks composed the large number in the Assemblies.
55. W: Would you be willing to compromise the stand of CA if your conviction is that there is something against the will of God?
56. M: I will take off the uniform and sit though I still see the conflict as part of ungodliness. If the conflict continues not being resolved I am contemplating to leave the Associations. However, it is difficult to be a minister's wife in a black congregation without the support of the Associations or being out of Associations.
57. G: Me too
58. W: What is your understanding of UPCS membership and CA membership?
59. G: Membership of UPCS supersedes the membership of CA.
60. W: What is the image of God that you have regarding to CA? Or what do you think Jesus would say in this situation?
61. M: He will instruct the Moderator to do away with the Associations.
62. G: He will say we must do away with the uniform. The associations were doing much better before the conflict.

63. M: But, for me I still believe even before the conflict there was nothing much about the Women's Association in this presbytery...
64. G: But, Mamtolo in terms of church project they were unified.
65. W: What are your thoughts on Jesus' prayer when he says, "Father I pray that they may be one as I am one with you" John 17:21?
66. M: The text that comes to me is the one that says in the Bible love your neighbor as you love yourself and we must love one another...
67. G: That prayer is about Unity, that unity is already there. We just need to practice it. Christ prayed that we should be one....Unity is already there. The only thing we need to do is to put away our differences.
68. W: What do you think could end these conflicts in Associations?
69. M and G: Prayer. But here in Tshwane even long before the conflict there was no strong sense of the Church spirituality. So this conflict has made things worse than before.

3.5.3 Reflection on the conversation with the Gida couple

During the conversations with the Gida couple there were a few things that I picked up concerning the Church Associations Conflict. One they both mentioned that they are not born as Presbyterians from their background. They come from the Assemblies of God (Church founded by Nicholas Bhengu) which is one of the highly traditional Black Pentecostal Churches in South Africa, even the most. This implies that prior to the PCSA; the wearing of the uniform was not part of their Church Culture.

Rev. X.Gida joined the (men's association) *amadodana* when he became a minister during the PCSA. It is rare to find a black minister in the so called mainline-Churches becoming a minister without the experience of the *iimanyano*.

However, Rev. Gadi and his wife uMamtolo did not express any difficulties in their tradition or spirituality in changing the uniform as it has been perceived as the main problem by other co-researchers. My main interest with them was to get their narratives on the following:

- Firstly, in their opinion on tradition or pride as former PCSA, the reasons behind this were that some people in the contention are complaining about losing their normal culture of doing things in the UPCSA.
- Secondly, I was interested in the reasons why it was not difficult for them to change the uniform as many of the people that are resistant to changing of the uniform are from the former PCSA. In fact all the members who do not want to change the uniform are from former PCSA congregations.
- Thirdly the “third” force involved in the issue.
- Fourthly, the major issue that causes the problem
- Fifthly, their faith and spirituality

3.5.4 Flowing of the narrative

In conducting the narrative with this couple, I noticed from the beginning that Mrs. Gida (Mamtolo) was more outspoken than the husband. She also showed more knowledge about the about the associations at UPCSA General Assembly level. However, the husband was very vigilant about the Manual of Faith and order of the Church. When I asked them questions related to the general matters of the Church, the wife would pause and the husband answered. When it comes to the Associations the wife was always the first one to answer and she seemed to have knowledge on Church Associations.

3.5.5 Church traditions and Culture

The Gida family stated the problem of the cultural differences of the two former denominations. They are aware of the traditions that informed the members of

these two denominations (PCSA and RPCSA). These traditions need to be interpreted in a new way of Christian life for the sake of peace in the UPCSA. Mrs. Gida mentioned that in the union the RPCSA association members were always outnumbering the PCSA in vast numbers. She added that the RPC ministers also strongly supported their associations while PCSA ministers were not that much visible. In that regard the former PCSA felt marginalised by the RPCSA.

What Mrs. Gida mentioned about the strength of *iimanyano* in the RPCSA agrees with the paper written by the Rev. Dr. V. Vellem (2007:44), “In the peculiar connection between the RPC and its *iimanyano*, it is our contention that while *iimanyano* were never elevated to an ontological level of a church conceptually, it would equally be difficult, if not impossible, to fathom the identity of the RPC without the movement of *iimanyano*”. However, with this couple the issue of culture and tradition is not that much important. They adopted the new Church (UPCSA) in their heart and as part of the continuation of their church tradition. They acknowledged the fact that in the UPCSA, people at times look at the person being elected rather than whether they are from the PCSA or RPCSA tradition.

The UPWF was chaired by co-presidents at its inception and it seems problems started when that arrangement ended. However, while the president was from former RPCSA the General Secretary was from the former PCSA. It was mentioned by Mrs. Gida that at times in the UPWF conferences the members would vote for a person who is wearing either a white or a black hat without looking at the qualities of a person. They will cast their vote on denominational background instead of focusing on the main issue at hand. The colour of the women's hats became an issue and separated them into two denominations while they are in one denomination (UPCSA).

3.5.6 The spirituality and experiences of God

One of the differences I got with this couple when I asked about their connection of spirituality with the uniform was the immediately answer that said “no”. I tried to probe them in that regard just in case they may be missing the question and they repeated: “no”. I did this purposely because the other co-researchers mentioned something related to the uniform even if the person was not agreeing with the issue. In this case both Rev Gida and his wife were not having any serious sentiments with the uniform.

Mrs. Gida indicated that she is contemplating taking off the uniform if the association’s problem is not resolved though she understands the implications of being a minister’s wife in a black congregational context. Spiritually they share the same convictions. Mamtolo thought about the text in Matthew 22:39 “love your neighbour as yourself”. She said that this text challenged her spirituality and every time she thinks about the associations she does not feel happy about the discourses if she wears a black hat mandated by the UPCSA constitution. The spirit of separation is not good for the Church.

The minister is worried about the spirituality of the members who are leaving the church while others are staying in their houses waiting for the conflict to be resolved. It was also interesting to note the words like Devil and Satan being used in this conversation. In their answer on the third force, they mentioned the Devil is using the people. When I asked about the major problem, they said it is not the Devil or Satan but the people because the Devil or Satan is not visible. This meant that there was a kind of spiritual connection with God in their lives and an analysis of what is happening in the Church. They both mentioned that prayer is the solution to this problem which indicates that their trust is only in God for the remedy of this conflict situation.

3.6 NARRATIVE OF MRS. Z. BUYEYE AND HER DAUGHTER MABU

3.6.1 Introduction

The people's names and places in this narrative are pseudonyms. On Thursday the 26th April 2012 at 18h00, I visited Mrs. Buyeye for the research interviews. I had phoned Mrs. Buyeye in the previous week for the appointment. When I got into her house in Hlakothi her daughter Mabu was around. Mrs. Buyeye has been a commissioner to General Assembly and Presbytery for many years. She is now retired. I knew Mrs. Buyeye through Tshwane Presbytery Council meetings since 2002 while I was a second year theology student. She was among the black commissioners and a female who used to critically challenge the Presbytery in some decision making. She always pushed her views on fostering racial integration and acceptance of cultural diversity in the Presbytery. The Presbytery of Tshwane is diverse with lot of challenges like any other presbytery in the UPCSA. While I was a probationer Mrs. Buyeye challenged the Presbytery which, was held on the Saturday the 17th of March 2007, at Bhongweni congregation. She constructively challenged the views of the minister who proposed to the Presbytery to ban the Easter gatherings of the Pedi Speaking Congregations. In that Presbytery meeting all the commissioners were silent except her.

3.6.2 Conversations with the Buyeye family

When I arrived at the Buyeye home I saw her daughter Mabu's car parked outside. Mrs. Buyeye and her daughter are not in uniform Associations. She is in her early 60's and her daughter in her early 30's. They welcomed me with warmth and spoke about their newly born baby Sizeka the child of Mabu. I did not see Sizeka as she was sleeping at the time. I asked Mrs. Buyeye if Mabu could join us in the narrative conversation. She accepted. I asked them to share about their insight on Associations of the UPCSA especially in the Tshwane Presbytery. Mrs. Buyeye

and Mabu are in Emmanuel Fellowship. It is the only non-uniform Association around the Presbytery of Tshwane and is not recognized by the denomination.

Mrs. Buyeye is the chairperson of Emmanuel in the local congregation of Hlakothi.

I asked them why Emmanuel is not recognised and only operating in Tshwane Presbytery?

Buyeye: The Emmanuel Fellowship was introduced as Women's Fellowship in 1992 by Mrs. Lizeka Nkomonye while the Church was still the PCSA. When the UPCSA was birthed the uniform women's association used the word fellowship and we decided to change to Emmanuel as we did not want to cause confusion with *abo Mama Women*.

Wonke: **Why did you not join the UPWF?** Buyeye: It had a lot of complaints and politics even while it was still PCSA, so I decided not to join. During the time of Fellowship, we used to go as far as Highveld and Egoli Presbytery until we changed to Emmanuel. We had to function within our presbytery territory due to UPCSA jurisdiction, distances and differences.

3.6.3 The Church Leadership and the Church Associations

Wonke: **What are your views on Church Associations and how do you feel about what is happening now?**

Buyeye: My first point with associations at Tshwane is the problem in the local congregations. Many *iimanyano* members would rather not contribute to the work of the congregation and pledge their money to the Associations.

W: **Why they do that?**

B: I think it's a culture that if you do belong to the uniform associations it seems there is a sense of identity and belonging.

W: **What is the impact of the Church leadership regarding the *iimnyano* conflict? Could you share your understanding either from General Assembly or Presbytery or session?**

B: The leadership can't do much because there is a division amongst themselves. I'm saying this because other leaders are for black hat while others for white hat.

But, they are doing it professionally. The leaders seem to protect their former denominations, in reality we are not united but theoretically and idealistically we are united.

W: Do you think is significant to have *iimanyano* in our Church?

Buyeye: *andazi Mfundisi* (I do not know Reverend) but I believe if the Associations can be abolished things will run smoothly because people's focus will be at one point which will enhance the union of our Church. I say this looking on the difficult challenges we experience in our congregation and the Presbytery.

Buyeye: On the spiritual side many people honour their former denominations.

Mabu: I will beg to differ with my mom. Emmanuel is performing well and if Emmanuel was not there we could not do what we are doing in the congregation. I love the competitive spirit we have as the Emmanuel; we make changes for the better. If all other Associations could compete with each other by doing projects in the congregations that will make a positive change. I believe that there is good and bad in the Associations.

Buyeye: In that regard Mabu I agree with you because in all of the black congregations at Tshwane Emmanuel is doing wonderful work.

3.6.4 State of the Union and Church Associations

W: What are your opinions about the state of the union now?

Buyeye: There is nothing wrong with the Union biblically; the problem is the ministers and their spouses. They are at the forefront in perpetuating this conflict. I'm wondering if there was a problem in the beginning of the union. Why did it suddenly appear in the *iimanyano*. Didn't they agree in the beginning? And then suddenly they disagree with the Church. I think people want top positions, and now they feel left out.

Mabu: Some people like the sense of "ownership" and this has caused a lot of problems in the UPCS. Some people who have a long history in the Church can

be problematic at times. Some resist the change to new teachings and structures as they still hold onto past issues.

W: Is there anything that you have gained or learnt in the UPCSA regarding Associations?

Buyeye: Improvement is noticeable in the Emmanuel Fellowship; all the congregations with Emmanuel at Tshwane Presbytery are peaceful. We motivate each other and we look at the needs of the local congregation.

Mabu: I learnt something from the youth associations. In the former PCSA our youth was up to 18 years and in RPCSA up to 35 years. I love the change that has been brought through the RPCSA tradition that you can stay to youth now up to 35 years. In the former PCSA after 18 years you either joined the JB's (Junior Branch) or the PWA or PMA or you remain as an ordinary member.

W: What is the major problem that causes the conflicts?

Buyeye: It is power and Uniform, but uniform tops them all. The aggrieved are resisting the change, because of the uniform. The gossiping amongst the black and the white hats also contribute to the problem. People turn to ignore the fact that we come to church to worship and glorify God. Some come with certain agendas and their differences.

3.6.5 Reflection on their narrative

I think it is important to take a note of the conversation with Mrs. Buyeye and Mabu. They are reflecting on some of the issues that are affecting the life and development of the congregation due to the unresolved problem of the association's conflict. In narrative therapy a person is not a problem: a problem is a problem. The Buyeye family is not connecting the problem of the associations with the congregants; they note the problem is in the leadership and the ministers. To them the problem of associations has been influenced "down" to the congregations by the leadership system of the UPCSA. What was interesting is to find out that the issue of the conflict in association is not new in the UPCSA.

When I observed the age of Mrs. Buyeye being in the late 60's. People of her age in most black congregations are in uniformed associations. However, it was interesting that in the context of Tshwane Presbytery prior to the union; the women's association had some challenges that led other women to not have an interest in joining the UPWF. This resulted in the birth of the fellowship of a non-uniformed association in 1992 which later changed to be called Emmanuel Fellowship in the UPCSA era. This challenge in the women's association was also raised by Mrs Gida. The other point is that the associations in Tshwane seem to have lost the main focus of their inception. I picked up a controversy in the argument between Mrs. Buyeye and Mabu on the question of abolishment of the associations. When Mrs. Buyeye supported the ban of associations her daughter Mabu disagreed on the basis that the Emmanuel Fellowship, though it is not a uniform association, has done great work in the Presbytery. Later on they agreed that if the other fighting associations can compete in the way Emmanuel Fellowship does in the Church projects, the conflicts will be over. The reason why the fight continues is because they are not externalizing the problem.

3.7 NARRATIVES OF THEOLOGY STUDENTS

The first appointment

It is mentioned in chapter one of this dissertation that the interviews would be conducted with the UPCSA theological students studying at the University of Pretoria who are under the care and discipline of Tshwane Presbytery. The first interview was conducted on a Sunday evening, the 25th March 2012. The students as co-researchers were introduced by the researcher to the ethics and academic standards of the research and they were all happy to use their real names. The researcher recognized, in the first interviews with the theological students at Sedibeng House of Studies, their eagerness to deconstruct their stories. The interviews went on for three hours that evening from 20:00 until 23:00 and I drove back from Menlo Park to my place in Mamelodi West very tired. Students

expressed their concerns and the fear of their future placement in congregations due to the unresolved problem of the Church Associations in the UPCSA.

The names of the students

The following are the students who participated in the research interviews:

1. Mr. Celani Mbhele from uThukela Presbytery, Endumisweni Congregation
2. Ms. Bongive Ngebulana from Western Cape Presbytery, PW. Ndibongo Congregation.
3. Mr. Bulelani Thupha from Transkei Presbytery, Kirkston Congregation
4. Mr. Sandisele Xhinti from Transkei Presbytery, Kirkston Congregation
5. Mr. Lesego Lawrence Mokeng from Free State Presbytery, Kimberley



Figure 3.1: UPCSA students in MCG with a Methodist student seated in front. The female student was absent when the photo was taken.

All the five students belong to the MCG (Men's Christian Guild) recognised as a UPCSA Association and the first four students are coming from the congregations that have a history of the former RPCSA. The 5th student is from the former PCSA. The female student is above the age of 35, the rest are below 32 and the youngest is 25. The female student was absent during the taking of the photograph. The interviews were conducted in a group session. The consensus views were written and where one student expressed something different from others that student's opinion was noted in inverted commas. The students were all happy about the process of interviews and everyone was given a chance to express him or herself respectively. They were each given the narrative document prior to the second appointment for their reflection and approval of the document.

The second appointment

The second appointment took place on Sunday the 15th of April 2012 at 1800; the students had their narrative reflection copies in hand with corrections and comments. They asked the researcher to give them ample time as they wanted to reflect further on their narratives and they would inform the author when they are done. I gave the consent to the students and waited for them to finish.

The third appointment

The third appointment was on Thursday the 3rd of May 2012, the students were done with their reflection, and there was only one student who wanted to recheck the narrative reflection. They were quite confident about their input. At this time the students asked me if they could e-mail their narrative reflections or meet me at the Presbytery Council meeting which took place on the 12 May 2012 at Soshanguve Presbyterian Church. I met the students at the presbytery council meeting at Soshanguve and they e-mailed their narratives on Friday, the 11 of May 2012.

What is happening presently, in the CA's and how do you feel?

We are not happy with the present situation because the *iimanyano* in a black context brings unity and now they appeared to be the source of disunity. The Associations play a big role in our home Presbyteries but being in Tshwane Presbytery the element of unity does not exist. We are not growing spiritually. Lesego... "It is so sad that we are losing members in our Church because of this fight". We do not worship with the aggrieved Associations. We feel no sense of belonging here as we are not free in this Presbytery and we can't state "bodily" our membership. There are Associations at Tshwane but they do not seem to understand the *iimanyano* background and the significance of the associations in the local congregation.

The aggrieved seem not comfortable in what they are actually doing even if they could have been in the recognised structure. We believe that they show the lack of understanding of the tradition of *iimanyano*. Sandisele.... "When the Presbytery attached me to Mamelodi Gardens Congregation I was asked by a congregant which former church I come from as a theological student. I experienced that Associations are used as a platform of fighting for something that they do not know. They use the *iimanyano* to destroy the unity." Some Church members may be angry with the decisions taken prior to the UPCSA. They do not know the purpose of Associations. There is no way forward in what they have established.

What is your understanding on the Church's position (UPCSA) regarding to CA (UPCSA leadership)?

The leadership is biased. They should not allow the aggrieved to take their place within the UPCSA. The leadership contributes to this perpetual fight because some of them are part of the aggrieved. Some Church leaders seem to support this aggrieved. Sandisele... "The leadership is using the biblical concept of the

communion of saints to be fair to the aggrieved. They said they are our brothers and sisters even if they are outside of the recognised structure”. The Church spends money on meetings in different places trying to bring unity. The Basis of Union should be applied; the local congregants are used by the ministers and elders in authority. The ministers are having power to influence the congregants whether they may be wrong or right. Thupha...remembered that in February 2009 in a Presbytery meeting at St. Francis Presbyterian Church, the Clerk of the Presbytery, then the Revd Chris Moore, asked the presbytery to call the aggrieved to a meeting and charge them one by one. An aggrieved member stood up in the Presbytery and declared that will happen over his dead body. However the presbytery refused to take the views of the clerk.

Could you share your own root background on iimanyano?

Iimanyano are the spiritual counselors in the black culture especially in a context of death. Prayers in cases of death or traumatic incidents in the black culture are conducted by *iimanyano*. This is what we were taught when we entered the Church Associations. It is a fellowship with development of personal faith. We were taught to preach and do street evangelism. There were few black members who were not in Associations and active. The *iimanyano* provided a platform for anybody to participate and learn in the Church. Lesego... “I was 14 years old when I was robbed (*ukunxitywa umanyano/ dressed the uniform*) in the PMA, it was a sort of climbing a ladder from moving on from Sunday school to confirmation then to Associations. When I was about 16 in the year 2003 I changed to the MCG and that did not bother me”.

How significant is it to you to have iimanyano in the UPCSA?

What is the impact of church associations?

It is impossible to abolish *iimanyano* as they are the strength in the black church. The influence of the former churches is causing the problem. Let us start a new

thing to bring change, breaking down everything we have for the sake of peace. We should design new things starting with the uniform.

What kind of message did you receive when you heard about the union of the PCSA and the RPCSA in 1999? Were you aware of the two Churches?

According to Bongwiwe, “I was fully aware of the PCSA though I come from RPC because they were our neighbours in Nyanga East, Cape Town. I knew former PCSA as the Church governed by whites having black congregations and ministers supported by whites. I knew something about the black *manyano* of PCSA called *PEKINGCA* (Port Elizabeth, King William’s town and Cape Town). The message was saying we are uniting with the PCSA again as we were one before. There was an indication that there will be less stress in finances though we were not going to depend on the whites. Sandisele commented...we were taught that PCSA is in the townships, now we are uniting with them because people were migrant labourers to cities from rural areas to join the PCSA but were not dedicated enough. They said, “*Siyazigcinisa nje imali siyayithoba sizophangela kwinkonzo ezisedolophini*” meaning, “We are in cities to work not to be full church members, we are sending our money back home to our rural Churches”.

They were giving Sunday collection only and not participating fully in the entire life and work of the local Church. They were contributing to the rural congregations as they want to be buried there. Celani....reflected that in Thukela presbytery they said, “We are returning to the Scotch Church from our original Scottish Church that came with whites from Scotland”. Lesego...commented, “I was not aware of the union, I was surprised by the union and I didn’t even know anything about the RPCSA. By that time we had our own problems in our local congregation. There was a fight between the minister and the local congregation. We ended up not getting information about the changes in the denomination”.

What tradition did you hold as PCSA/ RPCSA? How do you feel about that tradition now? Is there anything that you are missing?

The tradition is still the same. It is just the name that has changed, we do not miss anything. Lesego.... "In the PCSA the conferences on presbytery level were together with all Associations. We had different meetings in the conference centre. Basically, there is not that much change.

What have you gained on the UPCSA regarding CA?

To get out of your culture you learn something. To be out of your comfort zone you learn something. With youth fellowship there is a difference compared to UPWF and MCG problems. In Youth fellowship there is no fight on former denominational lines. The difference is that the Tshwane Youth has less formality than the majority of other presbyteries. However, they are still Youth in the UPCSA recognised structures. We can say that we also gained fights....

Are there any developments that make you feel there is hope to resolve the conflicts that exist amongst the Association groups?

Presently, we are hopeless. If the leadership were honest there may be a change. Lesego... "I observed as a theology student attached to Mamelodi that some guys are just aggrieved because their parents are aggrieved". The older generation has to pass in order the new change can come.

2. PEKINGCA was the strongest Association wing of the PCSA that was allocated among the black PCSA congregations from the East coast of East London up to Cape Town. It is this structure in black congregations of the PCSA that had a uniform in youth associations which was black and grey. The rest of other PCSA black congregations were not in uniform.

How do you feel being part of this group “aggrieved” “Recognised?”

We are more than happy being part of the recognised and we feel that we are doing the right thing and adhering to the UPCSA governance. We are at peace and in favour of the union.

What associates your faith or spirituality with the Uniform of the CA’s?

It identifies the Church you come from. Everything we do in our culture has a meaning behind it. As boys in the Eastern Cape we dress differently to men. Even in the Church boys and men dress differently. Celani...The uniform is a form of confirming the symbol of Christ. The Rev T. Masikane who dressed me in MCG, described the meaning and the symbolism of the uniform scripturally: the five buttons of the waist coat represent the scars of Christ in crucifixion, white jacket the light of Christ. The uniform has an element of order like the Roman Catholic Church’s Holy Orders. Lesego... “I do not have any connotation with my faith or spirituality with uniform, to me uniform is identity as an Association member. That is why it was not an issue for me to shift from PMA to the MCG after the new Church was formed”. Celani... “Even myself it was not an issue to move from YMCG to MCG”.

What is the major problem that causes the conflicts?

Power struggles. People came into Union with high expectations. Some expected to get high positions and be General Assembly moderators. The uniform is not the main problem: it is just a tool that is being used. Lesego.... The leadership that told us to change to the uniform of MCG left the MCG when we did not elect them into positions. In the later stage they joined the UPMF and the UPWF aggrieved.

Third force: We believe that some white members are involved as they know that the black membership strength is in the Associations. They know that if we are divided in Associations, they can use us in Assemblies for their votes. We believe that they are using the aggrieved. The evidence is that the majority of the black congregations that are aggrieved are from the former PCSA and the entire intertwined black congregations with white congregations have this problem of the aggrieved. Other black ministers are supported by the white congregations in their stipends and congregational development. There are also other people behind this conflict, pushing all this. The people who could not be in power any more are using this issue now.

What is the image of God do you have regarding to CA? Or what do you think Jesus would say in this situation?

This situation would not make Jesus happy. When we are in praise and worship He will be happy. But, in discussions he will be hurt. In Associations members express their faith easily and freely. If Jesus would come into the Associations service, He would ask to wear the uniform. Jesus would be very disappointed that we entertained the materials things. He would remind us of the core business of being an Association member. He would not even entertain the part of the uniform whether who is correct or wrong. He would want us to do his work. He would remind us the significance of being a Christian.

What are your thoughts on Jesus' prayer when he says, "Father I pray that they may be one as I am one with you" John 17:21.

In the Universal church we will remain one with them, but on denominational lines for the sake of peace and growth of the Church, they should leave the bigger Church and form their own. We both preach the same text and know it well but are unwilling to obey it. It is so sad for the fact is that we do not appear as the prayer says, because at the moment we are not one.

What do you think could end these conflicts in Associations?

Once people understand the purpose of the organisation this would end. We believe also that we should start with a new uniform from scratch and see what would be the next problem with the aggrieved.

3.7.1 Reflection on student's stories

Students acknowledged that in voting and or decision making it does not necessarily satisfy everyone. However, for the sake of peace and the advancement and the progress of the Church one accepts her authority. Students believed that some members are not aware that they are aggrieved as they have not been properly informed by their leaders. The researcher was also present in the presbytery council meeting in 2009 at St. Francis when the Clerk asked the presbytery to call the aggrieved members to charge them one by one. The student felt that some young members in the presbytery are being influenced by the senior members for their interest to be aggrieved. However, the students are at peace with being in the recognised structure. They are in favour of the union of the church though worried about the continuation of the associations division. The Students complained that they are not attached to any congregation at Tshwane in 2012 due to the unresolved problems between the UPCSA ministry committee and the Tshwane presbytery.

3.7.2 Culture of Tshwane presbytery

The students expressed the cultural differences they observed in the nomination of elders in Tshwane. In their home presbyteries elders are nominated from the association members of the congregation. In Tshwane some black elders do not have knowledge of Associations as they are not members. This becomes a disadvantage to the management of the affairs of the association by the session. In

most cases they are not competent in matters related to Church Associations. Then the church associations become a Church within the Church. The students mentioned that they are not feeling welcomed or comfortable in the Tshwane presbytery by the associations as they are not in support of the aggrieved movements.

The students are concerned about their future placements in congregations that are having a fight in the associations. They all do not want to be in this predicament in their early years of ministry. In their views no one can aspire to become a minister at Tshwane in the present situation. Another problem is the comparison the students make between their home presbyteries and the Tshwane Presbytery. It appeared that the culture of the Presbytery and the black congregations differs a lot with their home background.

3.8 NARRATIVE OF THE AGGRIEVED ASSOCIATION

3.8.1 Narrative conversation with Rev. M. Nyama

The Rev. M. Nyama is the leader of the UPMF men's association in the Presbytery of Tshwane. I had made contact with him on the 23 April 2012 to arrange for the interviews, we agreed upon for the 8th May 2012 at 10am. However, the session did not materialised then he asked me to e-mail him the questionnaire. He phoned me again asking for one on one interviews as he felt that some of the questions he could not answer without my present. Eventually, we met on Thursday the 31 May 2012 at 13:45 in his work environment for the interviews. The interviews went until 16:00.

3.8.2 Excerpts from an interview with Rev. M. Nyama

The following are excerpts from their interviews on Thursday the 31th May 2012. The narrative characters are W: Wonke and N: Nyama.

1. W: Which church association do you belong and why?
2. N: I am in the UPMF the reason is that I did not find home in the MCG.
3. W: What do you mean that you did not find home in the MCG?
4. N: Example, there was no good agreement in uniform, we from former PCSA men, felt that we were forced to the uniform by the majority of the men from former RPCSA. In other words during the discussion we were overpowered by the majority and they did not listen to the spirit. I was in the part of the discussion in Port Elizabeth for amalgamation of YMCG and PMA. At that time I was the president of the two groups of men from the Presbytery of the North by then (now Limpopo presbytery) we opted for Black Jacket of former PCSA and the waist coat of the RPCSA as the Presbytery of the North. My vice president was Rev.

Mpeke from former RPCSA. We all wanted the RPC waist coat not the white jacket.

5. W: **Was this decision from the Presbytery of the North or to the entire PCSA men?**

6. N: No. it was the presbytery of the North prior to the meeting in Port Elizabeth. The major problem happened in Port Elizabeth the majority was RPC in the conference. When we reached there as the Presbytery of the North, the conference asked the two groups to be divided in order to discuss the issue of uniform. Our representatives from the PCSA were Rev. Dr. M. Masango and Rev. Mkhungo. So, we had to be divided in Port Elizabeth according to our denominational line. Then I had to leave the North presbytery to join the former PCSA in discussions. The problem as former PCSA we were few than the RPCSA so they voted us out. Then we were just told that we are going to wear the white jacket in the MCG.

7. N: In the presbytery of the North we were working together very well, and the issue of the jacket was not a problem. In our agreement, we did not consider the colour. Perhaps, I can mention this that some of the ministers in Limpopo were not in associations by then.

8. W: What do you want to see happening now in associations?
9. N: When I arrived in Pretoria I would love the MCG working together with UPMF irrespective of differences in uniform. But, I was told that the Tshwane Presbytery refused the black jacket which is the cause of the division when I arrived here. However, I do not have the minutes of that Presbytery conference. Actually, I'm looking forward to seeing the MCG and UPMF working together irrespective of the uniform, even you <i>mfundisi</i> , you are a president of MCG and I am a president of UPMF we should work together. Though I know that the affiliation will separate us, but local we should work together.
10. W: Do I understand you well if I may say you are not feeling right that the men are divided in this presbytery?
11. N: Yes! Mfundisi
12. W: What do you think about the Church's position (General Assembly or Presbytery) regarding to Church Association? I mean the leadership of the Church?
13. N: Our Church leadership is confused.
14. W: Why you say is confused?
15. N: Because it does not want to listen other groupings. I was glad when they say let us keep on negotiating as I thought dialogue will make a progress. They are not willing to listen to the spirit of the people. Let the Assembly leave the branches, Presbyteries and the sessions to work together to the local churches. For example <i>mfundisi</i> , I am from former PCSA and I am serving the former RPCSA congregation (Thumedi Makgahlela). I must not take sides, they must accept me as I am and I also have to accept them as they are. I want to serve them all and we must worship together. I do not want to say you are and I am. I do not want a division or undermining or taking any side.
16. W: I see you say on the leadership position, the Church is confused as they do not want to listen to the other groups do you mean the Church leadership is biased to the recognised structures?
17. N: Biased is not a correct way, they are not willing to listening to the spirit as I believe working in the Church you are dealing with the spirits. I do not see any

division in the spirit there only thing that is needed let us sit together and talk about these things; no man has power to say it is finished up until we are one.

18. W: **I understand in the black congregations some ladies join the Church because of being married to a husband who is the Presbyterian not having roots as Presbyterian. Could you share your own root background on *iimanyano*?**

19. N: As the man in the Church I need to belong to the group of men not as *Moruti*. To the group that says this is the work related to man, because in our black church there is no group of men doing that except relating to the *iimanyano*.

I joined in 1983 amadodana, I was robbed at FEDSEM as a student by Rev. GA Duncan in PMA of former PCSA.

20. W: **Do you mean Prof. GA Duncan?**

21. N: Yes, at that time in FEDSEM we were treating each other as Presbyterians not as PCSA or RPCSA as we were altogether as black students. Graham Duncan was a missionary of the former RPCSA and a president of the men's associations at FEDSEM that is why I was robbed by him. We were not divided in that time

22. W: **Were you born in a Presbyterian family?**

23. N: My grandparents were former RPCSA but due to some church politics happened at that time my grandfather resigned from RPCSA and the whole family moved to the PCSA.

24. W: **It means there is still intertwine of the RPCSA and PCSA to most of the black members?**

25. N: Yes a lot even the families are getting divided now because of that attachment, you still find to some couples the wife was RPC and married to the PCSA man and she wants to be in RPC congregation because she feels comfortable.

26. W: **How significant it is to you to have *iimanyano* in the UPCS?**

27. N: Yes, it helps us instead of being in the street we are in the Church. The discipline of the *iimanyano* helps us to stay away from the wrong.

28. W: You mentioned the discipline inculcated to the *iimanyano* while the *iimanyano* being viewed as the cause of the problem in the UPCSA, what do you mean about discipline?

29. N: The discipline is still there, the disturbance is caused by the white people as they discuss something they do not know. They must leave the issue to the blacks only. They just impose things and that is the one that causing the division.

30. W: When you heard about the union of PCSA and RPCSA in 1999? Were you excited about it? Actually it was discussed even before 1999. What happened? Khayakhulu MCG

31. N: I was excited about it as we are no longer being seen as divided. I never thought of *iimanyano* will become a problem.

32. W: What tradition did you hold as PCSA? How do you feel about that tradition now? Is there anything that you are missing in the UPCSA that was part of your life as PCSA?

33. N: There is nothing I miss.

34. W: Are you comfortable with all the tradition that is in the UPCSA now?

35. N: No, I would say to the Church they must Stop dictating things for others. They should allow us to sit together they are causing a problem like apartheid by using the PCSA or RPCSA. The vision is one; I'm saying this because some congregations want to call a minister by former denominational lines.

36. W: What have you gain on the UPCSA regarding CA or something new?

37. N: Nothing, we are operating under ground, there is nothing.

38. W: Are there any developments that make you feel there is hope to resolve the conflicts that exist amongst the Association groups?

39. N: The hope that I wish is that uniform must not be the main problem. Uniform must not divide us. Other churches have lots of *iimanyano* like the Methodist Church and they operate well with lots of associations with different colours. The colour of the uniform is the cause of the problem.

40. W: Coming back to the question of the colour of the uniform as you mentioned earlier on about your decision in the presbytery of the North by then that you wanted a black colour jacket. Do you have any connotation with the appearance of the black colour than a white colour? What is the trigger there on changing colours?

41. N: Let me explain to you, I see you are still young in ministry but for the sake of your research. The colours of the uniform have significance and they are debatable, if you are taking a white colour means something else, if you are taking black it also saying something else. **(1)** Right for me (in my interpretation), the black jacket is there to tell me that I'm not yet holy; I'm striving to be holy while I am still in the darkness. Black is associating me with my sinful nature. Now, You as putting white are you saying you have been purified completely. **(2)**The black jacket does not mean on occasionally, because if I'm on white jacket I would say at the moment I cannot do this and this. Because I'm still wearing *izambatho*/ uniform, you hear a person saying let me go home and take of my uniform. I do not want that, we worship God any time. **(3)**However, with my black jacket I can go anywhere and evangelise weather is in a case of darkness or no go zone I can still go with my jacket. Wearing a black jacket does not limit you in doing things.

42. W: **But, when you wear a uniform you must have a white waist coat at the same time? What do you mean about white colour restricting?**

43. N: Yes! I mean the whole uniform; a black jacket without a waist coat is not a uniform. I just do not know the constitution may be of the MCG or understanding the significance of their white jacket.

44. W: **I think there will be different answers on the issue of jacket, you are right when you say I was still young. For me it sounds like if the RPC move their original white jacket which was opened at the back and take the new jacket of MCG which is closed at the back and silver buttons and the PCSA use their white waist coat which is in the MCG. Then we took the shape of the badge of former PCSA to the round shape which represents the shape of the former PCSA PMA badge. I thought this was just going to be the easy exchange as both groups will take some symbols in the new uniform.**

45. N: Both badges PMA and YMCG were having the St. Andrews cross, we felt so strong to keep the tradition of our church. It showed that we belong to one family. But now we are fighting because of the cloth

3.8.3 Controversy over the Men's Association badges and uniform



Figure 3.2: YMCG badge of former RPCSA men's association *Amadodana*



Figure 3.3: PMA badge of former PCSA men's association *Amadoda*



Figure 3.4: MCG badge for UPCS men's Association *Amadoda*



Figure 3.5: UPMF non-recognised structure (aggrieved)

The former PCSA men's associations used the term **Amadoda** in referring to their men's associations while the former RPCSA used the term **Amadodana**. In the entire denominations of these two Churches these terms were used for men and they are derived from "Xhosa" language meaning men. However, *Amadoda* in

isiXhosa literally means men and *Amadodana* means Young energetic men. In so-called mainline Churches particularly the Methodist Church the men's associations are well known as *Amadodana*. In the Eastern Cape Xhosa speaking people the term *Amadoda* is not well known in the Church context as it is normally associated with *Amadoda otywala* (Men drinking alcohol) while *Amadodana* referred to Church men. The new organisation for Men's Association in the UPCSA is MCG which has elements of both former denominations.

In the union of PCSA and RPCSA in forming the MCG of the UPCSA, the men decided to compromise in taking both elements of Cultures and Church traditions from the two former denominations. However, the main argument with men from former PCSA who resist joining the MCG felt that the white jacket colour is more dominant in the MCG. It also makes them look like they are wearing the colour of former RPCSA men's association. On the other hand the men from former RPCSA felt that they have compromised a lot of things in the union than the former PCSA men. The men from former PCSA that resist joining MCG formed the UPMF as an alternative association against the MCG official structure of the UPCSA.

Elements taken from the former PCSA men's associations in MCG are:

- Shape of the MCG badge is round like former PMA
- The MCG badge has a star taken from former PMA
- The St. Andrews cross of MCG is taken from former PMA
- The waist coat of MCG is totally from former PMA
- The name *Amadoda* in MCG is taken from former PMA
- The silver buttons of the MCG white jacket are taken from former PMA

Elements taken from the former RPCSA men's associations in MCG are:

- The MCG name sounds similar to YMCG of former RPCSA

- The colour of the new jacket of MCG is white like former RPCSA

Uniform colour differences in Men's Associations (see Chapter two at figures 2.1 and 2.2).

46. W: I understand that MCG is composed of people from both former PCSA and RPCSA, how does that make you feel like?
47. N: I'm telling you the truth is not by their choice, they join MCG by force which is the one that kills the Church. They are not in their heart. Most of the ministers are saying in the pulpit, if you are not in this recognised group you are not part of this Church, UPCSA.
48. W: Do you feel that they are not in MCG by choice?
49. N: They like <i>iimanyano</i> , but because they did not know where to go, they find themselves under influence of the strong ministers who advocate for the MCG and they just joined. If that particular minister can leave the congregation, they will return to the UPMF.
50. W: If you noticed most of the leading ministers in the MCG are from former PCSA, are you still feeling strong that those people are not there by their choice?
51. N: I do not want to lie, I do not think is their choice they just say; let us go for the sake of peace in the Church.
52. W: Don't you think is fine when you do something for the sake of peace in the Church?
53. N: No, you must show your true colours
54. W: Ok!
55. W: Being in the aggrieved how do you feel?
56. N: It is the threat word or insult; I mean I'm not part of that. It's hurting is an insult.
57. W: Though the church is using that word, do you feel you are not associating with that?

<p>58. N: No, I do not even want to hear that word; I do not know that animal. You must take off that word. They do not refer to me, I will never call the Christian group aggrieved, and you must write it down that I do not associate with that word.</p>
<p>59. W: Don't you have the originality of this word?</p>
<p>60. N: I do not want it, I do not know at all.</p>
<p>61. W: What do you think is the major problem that causing the conflicts?</p>
<p>62. N: Is because of our Church is not listening to the will of God, it is using the majority. In the majority there are some elements that are not led by the spirit. It is only the clever people that are being listened and the poor are ignored. Those who are clever are given the front seats. The innocent are not given time.</p>
<p>63. W: How does this make you feel when the blacks are fighting each other in the present of the whites' minority in our Church?</p>
<p>64. N: <i>Moruti</i> It is the Satanism because the spirit of the Lord is not there. People are using their own agendas. I do not have a problem with the whites I never succumbed to the white supremacy in the PCSA.</p>
<p>65. W: Ok, You will hear some people saying one of the problems is the legacy of the past. Others say they linked with the whites or sellers like when South Africa got freedom. How do you feel about that?</p>
<p>66. N: The legacy is natural; some may feel it was better in Egypt feeling things were well. We carry our legacy but, we need to go forward, I agree with those people. We should not find it difficult to cross the river.</p>
<p>67. W: What legacy do you hold on as the black person from former PCSA?</p>
<p>68. N: I never put any white person in front of me. The legacy I have is that the Church must be one. I strive for the unity in the Church.</p>
<p>69. W: You say you believe that the Church must be one and at the present moment the Church says there are only five recognised association structures of the UPSCA e.g. MCG, UPWF, IYZAS, Choirs and Youth Fellowship. And then you do not belong to either of these groups and the Church says these people are bringing disunity in the Church. Like people in your group are viewed by the Church as polarising the Church. And you say you are striving for the unity in the Church. How does this make you feel?</p>

70. N: The church wants to oppress other people spirit. We are being oppressed. We are not destructive in the Church, we are there to work. They must let us to operate. If they could give us a chance, it is not our group that is bringing division in the Church; it is the leadership that is problematic. They say we are not part of the Church, we must go away. That is the spirit of Satanism.

71. W: **I hear that you mentioned two strong points like (1) The Church does not want to listen and (2) the strong affirmation on black jacket. What would you like the Church to listen if it were to listen?**

72. N: They must let a dialogue to continue over the issues. It must not be the choice of man. They must not push us away and call aggrieved. They must listen the spirit of the Lord. God has more power to make us one not people.

73. W: **What associates your faith or spirituality with the Uniform?**

74. N: No, for me uniform is an identity.

75. W: **As you say is an identity do you feel strong the identity on black jacket?**

76. N: Yes, I mentioned the meaning behind the colour

77. W: **When the UPCSA say the uniform must be a white jacket don't you find that also giving an identity?**

78. N: It was not well discussed. We struggled because of the majority of RPCSA.

79. W: **What is the Third Force?**

80. N: The white people must stand there and not interfere. I'm saying let them leave the black congregations on issue of associations. However, I'm not saying they are the major cause in the associations.

81. W: **There are people saying the reason why this fight continues, whites are using some of the black members from former PCSA to keep the blacks fighting each other so that they can regain power? Like people say how come the moderators of the General Assembly continue to be white while the blacks are in majority? What is your intake on that?**

82. N: I do not agree. I'm not part of the people being manipulated by the whites. Even if they may be some people who are yes bus. I think we are being used by people who are not having God spirit. How can you recruit without having

Christ...some people use holy communion for black hats only or white only? They do not want to serve the other groups.

83. W: **What is the image of God do you have regarding to CA? Or what do you think Jesus would say in this situation?**

84. N: Christ had enough time with people; the moment they gave the name aggrieved they undermine the people. Christ never chase away. In his prayer father I have done everything.

85. W: **What do you think could end these conflicts in Associations?**

86. N: Let the leadership listens to the spirit of God and the minority.

3.8.4 Rev. Nyama's notes on the interviews

In conversation with the Rev. Nyama, I list some important notes that are direct from the conversation.

- I belong to the UPMF because I did not find home in the MCG.
- The problem we as former PCSA were few than the RPCSA so they always voted us out. The RPCSA was always a majority.
- I am looking forward to seeing MCG and UPMF working together at Tshwane Presbytery.
- The Church does not want to listen to the spirit of the minority group
- The colour of the uniform is the cause of the problem.
- I'm telling you the truth it is not by their choice, they join MCG by force which is the one that kills the Church.
- I never put any white person in front of me.
- I do not want the word aggrieved; I'm not part of that.
- I strive for the unity of the Church.

3.8.5 My notes from conversations with Rev. Nyama

When I met Rev. Nyama I was not sure how to ask the questions of clarity outside the questionnaire. I sent him the questionnaire in advanced and he asked me to come for one on one interviews. I was aware that he is a leader of the non-recognised structure within the UPCSA. In all of my co-researchers that I had interviewed before him were in the recognised structure though some were from former PCSA. I had an expectation that anything may happen in the interviews. However, I was very much impressed to get an opportunity to interview him. I was very much interested to find out exactly from the aggrieved structure the main reasons from withdrawing to the UPCSA structures.

Initially, I had a struggle to get members from the aggrieved structure and I had a fear that I may end up not getting a competent co-researcher. I was afraid that my research may not have the sufficient information from the aggrieved structure. I was very glad that I got a leader of the UPMF not just an ordinary member. Before I could embark on the narrative with Rev. Nyama I was so sensitive in conducting the narrative as I doubted at times whether I should probe him. In many cases I made long questions by starting a conversation or using a question as the normal thing that people are saying. I was afraid not to hurt him or sound challenging. I did not want to impose my knowledge or appear to be cross questioning him instead of the interviews. At this time of research I had more information from the UPCSA documentation and experiences from the co-researchers. I was aware about some contentions in Church arguments. I was always keeping in mind the narrative therapy element that a client is an expert and drives the therapy. That is why I used the term non-recognised structure with Rev. Nyama as he did not want the term aggrieved which is used by the Church. I was always conscious of the rules of the ethics of the research. Before one on one interview with the co-researcher my concerns were:

- He knew that I was in the recognised structure of the Church
- I was the junior minister to him
- I was very much young to him
- I did not want my interviews to end before time
- I occupied his office space
- I did not want to sound hurting him or challenging by questionnaire
- Surprisingly, I was just nominated as the new president of MCG of Tshwane in the 19-20 May 2012 conference. I had to interview a UPMF president of Tshwane at the same time the leader of the counter group to the UPCSA structure.
- I was bit worried about the direction that the interviews can take.

However, as the interviews went along I felt so relieved and I was impressed with the responses that he gave as I continued with the conversation. He was relaxed and comfortable with the questions except the question pointed on the aggrieved. He expressed it vivid that the word aggrieved is not happy with it and it's not a suitable word used by the Church when they referred to the non-recognised association structure. He does not want even to hear that word. I stopped immediately using the term.

3.8.6 Reflection on the narrative

In this reflection I will be looking at the major themes that rose during the conversations.

3.8.6.1 The dominance of the former RPCSA in associations

Having conducted the interviews with my co-researcher, it does appear time and again the issue of the dominance of the former RPCSA members as the negative impact in the UPCSA associations. This came up when he responded that he

belongs to the UPMF because he did not find home in the MCG. The history of these two churches is unavoidable that the former RPCSA was black Church only and the PCSA was both blacks and whites.

It became clear that in the union the RPCSA would always have a vast number of the black membership than the PCSA. As Dr. Vellem (2007:44) stated that it was impossible to separate the RPCSA with the movement of *iimanyano* in their strength. There were hardly white members in associations in the PCSA, though the MCG is composed of both members from former denominational lines it is still mainly former RPCSA members in majority. However, the MCG is led by the majority of former PCSA members. Basically, Christ calls his people in his Church regardless of majority.

The current and former presidents in the MCG are both from former PCSA

- 2003 – 2004 The Rev. L.L. Qina Secretary Rev. SP Sam
- 2008 – 2011 The Rev. TH Hans
- 2011 - 2014 The Rev. L. Obose Treasurer CB. Mokeng

All the above top members in MCG structure are from former PCSA tradition.

3.8.6.2 The Association uniform

The one thing that I noticed here was the different interpretations on the wearing of the uniform in the former denominations. It becomes apparent that the uniform is one of the major problems as much as people are taking it as a tool being used for division. I listened the story of the Rev. Nyama about the interpretation of the colour of his black jacket, as part of showing the sinful nature and the darkness. It makes another different opinion with the interpretation of the student minister who described the white jacket as the symbol of the light of Christ. These interpretations give a strong meaning behind the wearing of the uniform to some of the members which can result to the contention in the name of God.

In General Assembly (2004:179) the conference of MCG deliberated on constitutional matters, and appointed a committee to listen to the hurts that are uniform related which emanated from Pietermaritzburg conference. The Rev. L. Mpetsheni expressed in the MCG conference on the 19 – 20 May 2012 at Tumedi Makgahlela at Atteridgeville that the Church does not have a uniform. However, black members identify the denomination with the kind of the uniform that the association is wearing.

3.8.6.3 Church unity and spirit of God

One of the difficult moments I experienced as the narrative researcher is when I interviewed the co-researcher on the issue of the unity of the Church. I asked the co-researcher what is his opinion about the people who are in the forefront leadership of the MCG and they are also from former PCSA. He responded that they are not there by their choice is because they love *iimanyano*. I turned to ask if it is wrong in doing something positive in the UPCSA for the sake of the peace of the Church. What surprised me was the response that you must show your true colours. On the other hand the co-researcher emphasise his eagerness in fostering unity in the Church. There are two words that came up a lot in the narrative which were “majority” and “listening of the spirit”. When I asked the co-researcher what you would like to be listened if the Church was to listen. The co-researcher said they must let a dialogue to continue over the issues. It must not be the choice of man. They must not push us away and call aggrieved. They must listen the spirit of the Lord. God has more power to make us one not people. I could not probe more as the situation became a bit tense and as the researcher I had to avoid stretching the co-researcher.

3.9 Interviews with Elder Jongikhaya Mpongoshe

Mr. J. Mpongoshe is well known as Jongi, he is an Elder and MCG member at Pretoria Central Presbyterian Congregation. He came in Pretoria because of work.

He was born in Port Elizabeth and his father is the retired UPCSA minister from the Presbytery of Amatole in the region of Queenstown.

3.9.1 The following is the facilitated questionnaire:

Which Church Association do you belong and why?

I belong to the MCG. I joined it because of its objectives...like advancing the kingdom of God to Christian man and to man yet not believers. As men we can meet to have discussions like social and spiritual growth. We can chat intimately about the Word of God as men of the UPCSA.

What is happening presently, on the CA's and how do you feel?

My understanding is that there are groups that are recognized and groups that are not recognized by the Church. The recognized were formed during the union of the two Churches; I believe that compromises were done on both sides and discussions until common understanding was reached. If my memory serves me well I think negotiations began in Lovedale in 1998. Those discussions were before the union. The matter became a problem on uniform. I can remember in the National Youth meeting in 2005 at eThekweni presbytery there was a problem where 14 Presbyteries in the Youth came up with a proposal that black and white must be a uniform. But, there was one presbytery which was Central Cape; they raised a matter that they had a structure though it was not recognized by the PCSA. The Central cape came with Black and grey; they were defeated on discussions and votes. On Men's Associations some people from former PCSA felt that the colour of the white jacket is swallowing them as they used a black colour.

However, I'm not sure because the waist coat of RPCSA was white with black buttons, black lining and white jacket was open with black buttons. I could not understand that could be the main point. I think the bone of contention is that

people are being misinformed and use in terms of all the compromises that were done prior to union. **Feeling:** I do not feel good about this. There is lot of things that were overlooked during the discussion around the union. This uniform issue is not important; it's a uniform of Associations not of the Church.

What is your understanding on the Church's position (UPCSA) regarding to CA (UPCSA leadership)?

There is high need to reaching out to the aggrieved by the UPCSA leadership. They should find a common ground.

Could you share your own root background on iimanyano?

My first *iimanyano* was the Youth, because youth did things differently than the other *manyano*, it embraces both female and males. Through camps, gatherings and outreach youth had an influence to me. The vibe on the youth inspired me, later on there were younger people who joined the YMCG then in the former RPCSA, but I did not join. I joined the MCG in 2008 during the UPCSA when I read their objectives.

How significant it is to you to have iimanyano in the UPCSA?

I can say Yes or No: When you look into the situation of fights in the *iimanyano* and their struggle to find common ground and yet they are in the Church. But, as a person that I have interacted with the people on the *manyano* where they discussed about really issues and pray for one another as men, women, girls, and youth. For that particularly reasons I would say no. In the black culture *iimanyano* is a vehicle that is used to preach, evangelise and recruit people to the Church. I had never seen a black congregation either in the PCSA or RPCSA *ingenziwa iimanyano* (not having *iimanyano*). It is important that it must exist.

What kind of message did you receive when you heard about the union of PCSA and RPCSA in 1999? Were you aware of the two Churches?

I was aware of the two Churches, I can remember vividly Rev. Qgotso (former PCSA) at St. Patricks and he actually buried my grandmother as the Rev. D.M. Soga was not around. I knew about the negotiations of the union, I became interested as people were talking about in the Church. My late minister at PE the Rev. D. M. Soga would come and report in the congregation about the process in the union. He explained about the history of the Churches that supposed to be in Urban and Rural areas with their origins. I knew about negotiations even before 1996.

What tradition did you hold as PCSA/ RPCSA? How do you feel about that tradition now? Is there anything that you are missing?

The *iimanyano* used to be very strong in the RPCSA, it was about preaching, evangelism, and outreach but now there are more meetings, procedures and hot issues on fights. Not to say discussions are not important, but I miss that *madodana* (Men's Association) spirit.

What have you gain on the UPCSA regarding CA?

It has opened my eyes on coming from different denominations though we are all Presbyterians. In PCSA they talk of Board meetings and RPCSA Deacon's court. But, they say change is so difficult some people can't adjust easy.

Are there any developments that make you feel there is hope to resolve the conflicts that exist amongst the Association groups?

I never lose hope as a person, there only thing needed people must be frank and find out what is the problem of contention. If there are no things on the table there

won't be resolution. We must swallow our prides not to boast our ego whereas I do not think fights is a question of the uniform. There must be something behind that.

Describe the meaning of the words “aggrieved” “recognised”? Where do these words come from?

This word came from the disagreeing people with the Church, as they felt that there was injustice done on their side. I do not know when the word was given and who came up with it.

How do you feel being part of this group “aggrieved” “Recognised”?

It is not about being right or wrong, as it does not make me feel proud about the Church in the case of this situation. How so ever I feel good for supporting the vision of the Church.

What is the major problem that causes the conflicts?

I do not think many people knew what the Union was all about, they did not know what meant to be achieved, and they did not know the objectives. The information was just given.

What associates your faith or spirituality with Uniform of CA?

I separate uniform with the spirituality, though I understand that there are some people who referrers to others as Church people when they see them with uniform. To me uniform is supposes to be the symbol of unity.

What is the Third Force?

Some people say other things that are causing the fights in the *manyano*, is the people from outside the Associations that are pushing their interest. But, I do not have an assurance, it becomes a serious accusation. The Associations were in the black congregations though I know in former PCSA there were some whites involved in the women's associations.

Would you be willing to compromise the stand of CA if your conviction says there is something against the will of God?

The will of God is central to everything; whatever we do, we must do for the glory of God. Stepping out would not be a valid reasons I would rather try to convince the people for the will of God being inside. I think it is also the Church ideology that there aggrieved should raise their grievance inside the recognised UPCSAs structures.

What is the image of God do you have regarding to CA? Or what do you think Jesus would say in this situation?

The conflicts we have around uniform are not reflecting Jesus teachings; I think he would say *Masiyiyeke le mfeketho siyenzayo* (Let us stop this nonsense).

What are your thoughts on Jesus' prayer when he says, "Father I pray that they may be one as I am one with you" John 17:21.

Jesus would say we must stop *le mfeketho siyenzayo* (This nonsense). The oneness in Christ is important and centralized. This reading would be a reflection on what we must do, especially when we call ourselves as Children of God.

What do you think could end these conflicts in Associations?

I think even in the Church when we are stark in the Manual of Faith and Order we go back to what does the Bible say, it goes to Jesus' prayer. I want to add that at times some challenges are bringing people closer to God; I do not want us to look at this conflict as something leading us completely outside Christ.

3.9.2 Jongi's reflection on his narrative

Having heard interviews with Elder Jongi, he has made mentioned that he has never been in an aggrieved group meeting and he is not interested to attend one. He quoted the verse in Matthew 16: 13 Jesus said, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Elder Jongi said, "He believes that some people if they could be asked that question by Jesus, they would say, I am the fighter in the house of the Lord.

3.9.3 Reflection on Jongi's narrative

I think a lot has opened up my eyes through the conversation with Mr. Jongi; he has been in the Church before me and grew up in the township and was well informed about the process of the UPCSA negotiations. In the interviews he was so relaxed and taking up his time to respond. He expressed himself that he was so happy to receive an opportunity to share his sentiments of the current conflicts regarding to Associations of the Church. He feels that it would be very interesting if this kind of questionnaire can be circulated to all other Association members as part of discussion during the Association's National Conferences. He was interested to hear what the aggrieved group would say in their response to the same questions.

3.10 Interviews with a white UPCSA minister of Tshwane

In this research I consulted the Rev. Glynis Goyns as my co-researcher; she has been a convener of the Church Associations in the Presbytery of Tshwane since 2011. The Rev. Glynis Goyns was also my supervisor during my probation period in 2007 at Saints Presbyterian Church in Centurion. The presbytery appointed her as the neutral person to head the associations in the Presbytery. The interviews went as follows:

What are your views on Church Associations (CA) or how do you feel about Associations?

I am not personally orientated towards associations of any kind as I find they often create a “social club” mentality than can become closed and exclusive. I am also nervous of any internal church grouping that may result in a “church within the Church”; especially if there is no clear shared vision and mutually formulated objectives and values between the local congregation and the particular branch of the association, or between the denomination as a whole and the national executive of a particular association. However, there is a clear history of an ongoing potential for church associations to contribute significantly and meaningfully to the life and work of the church, and I am deeply appreciative of the good work and major contribution made by the various associations over the years. I am also deeply aware of the cultural and historical significance of the associations in our local South African context, as well as the fact that I do not share in this heritage and am, therefore, not equipped to fully appreciate all the different nuances or to share in the deep emotive reasons for belonging to and participating in these associations.

What is the impact of the Church leadership (General Assembly or Presbytery level) regarding the CA situation?

I find this question difficult to answer as it is somewhat ambiguous. To what situation does it refer, what kind of impact is it considering, and how am I required measuring this impact? Am I being asked whether the church leadership at GA and Presbytery level has any impact on the activities of the church associations? Or am I being asked whether the church leaders at GA and Presbytery level have had an impact on the current situation with regard to church associations? And how do I distinguish between the various church associations and the respective impact of the leadership on individual church associations, such as the Choir Association, etc.

I must, therefore, ask for greater clarity concerning this question before I can answer it adequately. I have also personally experienced the relationship of only one Presbytery with the church associations within its bounds and am, therefore, able to answer the question from the particular perspective of this one Presbytery only, which may differ substantially from that of other presbyteries. However, it is clear from our *UPCSA Manual of Faith and Order* that General Assembly and the various presbyteries represent the top councils within the denomination.

The church associations must, therefore, fall within the care and discipline of these councils, fulfilling their functions and responsibilities within the vision, objectives and structures put in place by these councils. I'm not convinced that this is currently taking place. Some of the church associations seem to have developed an independent life of their own, which is not being shaped by the vision and objectives of the denomination as a whole. Nor, at times, do they seem to see themselves as subject to the higher authority of these councils or to comply with the requirements for regularly submitted audited financial statements. In fact,

financially, the associations appear to see themselves as completely independent organisations.

Do you think is significant to have CA in the UPCSA if not/yes why?

There are many congregations within the UPCSA that operate very effectively without any church associations and are fully effective in performing the work of the church. In fact, there are many local congregations who have never had a culture or heritage of church associations and have not been disabled in any way because of this. However, there are other congregations where church associations have always been an important and intrinsic part of the life and work of the church. Their absence in such congregations and, therefore, in the denomination as a whole, would almost certainly have a negative impact; certainly initially until the mode of operation of the congregations had changed sufficiently to allow for effective participation by members in some way other than through the church associations.

What are your opinions about the Union now?

Demographic changes are clearly visible both in the membership and leadership of many of our local congregations, with a mix from both Presbyterian streams, ie RPCSA and PCSA. However, the racial mix is largely restricted to urban and suburban congregations, while township and rural congregations remain almost exclusively black. Very few of the urban and suburban churches have a strong church associations' culture, certainly not uniformed, while the township and rural congregations have church associations strongly entrenched in their heritage and mode of operation, especially those that are uniformed. As a result, the union in these congregations is more vulnerable to divisive elements and issues arising from the uniform dispute, although those congregations with no associations are becoming increasingly annoyed and frustrated with the ongoing dispute and

division, and this, in turn, pose a further threat to the unity of the UPCSA as a whole.

I must confess that the attitude of such congregations is, to my mind, often arrogant and unwilling to search for any real understanding of the dynamics involved in this issue. Looking at the issues that currently spark controversy within the UPCSA, I suspect that we rushed into union too quickly without realistically confronting the entire issues attendant upon such a process. I am fully appreciative that there was considerable spade work done by the church leaders at the time of the union, but it is at grassroots level that the soil must be carefully prepared for new growth of this kind and I'm not convinced that this was properly achieved among the local members themselves. As a result, we are suffering from a deep-seated identity crisis within the denomination that is sparking resentment and further division from those who are not part of this identity crisis and do not understand the inner turmoil or nature of the problem, as well as among those in the thick of the identity crisis.

What have you learnt or gained on the UPCSA regarding Associations?

Over the past 18 months or so, I have been responsible for convening the church associations committee in Tshwane Presbytery. This has been both challenging and rewarding. Those belonging to the various church associations have been singularly gracious in accepting as their Convenor a person with no knowledge, understanding or culture of church associations and gently helping me through the process of grasping how things work and how people think. The role that I have had to play has also been immensely challenging as I was tasked with working towards reconciliation in a context where I have little understanding and no real experience. This meant that I was often vulnerable to manipulation and misunderstanding in my ignorance, often not even recognizing that this was the case.

However, the various Executive Committee members of the different associations serving on the Tshwane Church Associations Committee seemed willing and ready to work together in a cooperative way to find a way forward within Tshwane Presbytery and to help me to understand the different dynamics and complexities. However, both the Tshwane CAC and the respective associations experienced difficulties from time-to-time with respect to decisions taken on a national level.

There is a tremendous vitality and sense of commitment present in church associations that is not necessarily captured outside of these organisations in those congregations where associations are central to the life and work of the church, or in congregations with no culture of associations at all. If this energy, loyalty and enthusiasm could be positively channeled with respect to the overall vision and mission of the church, I believe this could have a profound and dynamic impact on the denomination as a whole. However, with the vitality and energy currently sapped by bitterness, resentment and division, this has a profoundly destructive and damaging impact on the denomination as a whole and the life and work of the respective local churches.

What do you think is the major problem that causes the conflicts?

This is a difficult question to answer as an “outsider” as it were. Ostensibly, the problem has to do with uniforms, but it is also clear that there are issues related to our *Manual of Faith and Order*, original office space, among others, that have fomented resentment. At last year’s church association (2011) imbizo in Gugulethu, for the first time I discerned a political issue pertaining to the apartheid struggle which seemed somehow to be linked to the uniforms. This issue appeared to be the source of considerable pain to selected members of the former PCSA, who appeared to have been accused of “selling out” with respect to the struggle. However, much of what was said was being said in languages that I do not speak or understand, so it was extremely difficult to follow exactly what the

discussion was about. Certainly the problem is far greater than the mere issue of uniforms. It seems that there are elements of

- governance and the decision-making processes within the united church
- power, pride and control
- misunderstanding and manipulation of those who are ignorant of the actual facts
- heritage and identity with reference to uniforms and their symbolism related to the past, especially the struggle against apartheid.

What do you understand or know about the concepts “aggrieved” and “recognised” Structures?

The aggrieved women in particular feel that the processes followed at national level especially concerning the uniform were not correct and that they were, therefore, unjustly disadvantaged in the debate and decision-making process. They have therefore withdrawn from the “recognized” structure until such time as this matter has been addressed to their satisfaction. I’m not sure that the Men’s Fellowship can be understood in the same way, but I do not have sufficient inside information about this.

It would seem to me that this is more a case of simply withdrawing from the recognized structure as it were and giving birth to an alternative movement. The recognized structures are officially accepted and recognised by the UPCSA General Assembly as legitimate church associations, while the “aggrieved” have temporarily removed themselves and are operating outside of the “recognised” structures.

***Is there any hope that makes you feel the current conflicts can be resolved?
And what could end these conflicts?***

The conflicts can be resolved only if all concerned are prepared to set aside their pride and reach out in love and humility to each other. It's a question of taking off the old and putting on the new and may require ceremonial burying of the dead and giving birth to something completely new through and in the love of Jesus. It also requires a united vision and mission that will capture the imaginations and enthusiasm of all to work together with energy towards a common goal.

What is the Third Force or have you heard about the word Third Force when it comes to Church Associations conflict "general"?

I have never specifically heard this term used in this context. However, thinking carefully about the term and its implications, I guess there might be a Third Force that is contributing towards the conflict; I'm not sure that I would go so far as to say that it has caused the conflict, but it certainly might contribute towards it and prevent an amicable solution from being reached. What would constitute such a Third Force? It could be those fomenting trouble from

- conservative "white" congregations who do not wish to be swallowed up by a "black" church and see disruption of the union as a possible "way out"
- former RPCSA members who feel that they have lost their autonomy and heritage in the process of the union and who seek to reverse the process
- those who are afraid of being swallowed up by a singularly strong "Xhosa" bias subsequent to the union.

It could also naively be suggested that the "devil is playing havoc with the church" to prevent it from going its work!

What are your thoughts on Jesus' prayer when it comes to Associations, "Father I pray that they may be one as I am one with you" John 17:21. What is your image of God in this regard (Imago Deo)?

I do not believe that being one requires any loss of diversity, as God himself created the earth with phenomenal diversity. We should, in fact, celebrate in our diversity. We should be able to reach beyond our differences to touch one another, take hands with one another, and work together in unity. We should be able to accept and respect each other, despite our differences, as all created in God's image, all loved by him, all equally sinful and all equally in need of restoration. It requires open hearts to see and hear and understand beyond the boundaries of our own emotions, vision, and perceptions. It requires setting aside prejudices and preconceived ideas. If God can accept us as sinful as we are, surely we can accept each other? If each one of us is one with Jesus who is one with God; and are, therefore, one with each other, there is no room for division within the church without there also being division between ourselves and the triune God.

3.10.1 Reflection on the interview

In listening the narrative of the co-researcher who does not belong to any of the association and specifically being a white person in the UPCSA, I think it gave another sentiment in some of the struggles in *iimanyano*. I was interested in the fact that the co-researcher undertook the responsibility of being a convener of the associations in the context of Tshwane while not a member of the associations. The co-researcher expressed some of the important things that UPCSA members have been talking about in assumptions as well as some of my co-researchers alluded to.

I took a note on the following points on the Third Force:

- conservative “white” congregations who do not wish to be swallowed up by a “black” church and see disruption of the union as a possible “way out”
- former RPCSA members who feel that they have lost their autonomy and heritage in the process of the union and who seek to reverse the process
- those who are afraid of being swallowed up by a singularly strong “Xhosa” bias subsequent to the union.

The above three points have been coming time and again from the co-researchers except that some co-researchers were not direct in putting the issue. It seems there is a sense of fear from the various members of the denomination that their tradition or culture may be swallowed by the new structures of the UPCSA. The issue of apartheid and the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa has also brought a debate among the black members of the RPCSA and PCSA. The Rev. Dr. D. Bax (PCSA submission to TRC 1997) once mentioned that in the former PCSA some of the black members at times were not sure how to voice their concerns as they were ignored by the white supremacy.

The PCSA maintained the facade of being united while black concerns were often ignored by Assembly and Presbyteries resulting ultimately in the formation of an entirely black organisation within the PCSA (18th August 1997 PCSA submission to TRC par 2). “The General Assembly in 1981 charged three committees to investigate whether ministers could all be paid from a central fund. The following year the investigation was stopped. Strangely, most black Commissioners helped to vote down its continuation” (18th August 1997, submission of PCSA to TRC).

3.11 In closing

When I was doing this research on chapter three, I experienced a lot of difficulties during the research process. I had to make a scrutiny on finding relevant UPCSA members in the Tshwane presbytery for the research interviews. I was always nervous when I was communicating with some of the UPCSA members in asking the permission for interviews. Some members were not sure about the purpose of this research since the issue of associations conflict is at stake in the Church. Even when I was dealing with the interviews, I was worried if some co-researchers may decide to withdraw after have taken the information. One of the major problems I encountered with the co-researcher was the time management. Some co-researchers I had to remind them time and again about their reflection on the narrative. In some of the narratives of the co-researchers there were common responses which gave a connotation of some realities on people's aspirations.

I also experienced a lot of time driving in and out as most of the co-researchers did not want the e-mail communication. However, one on one interview also gave me more confidence in narrative therapy practice. The therapeutic conversations with the co-researchers from former PCSA, RPCSA, Recognised and Aggrieved structure also opened up my mind on what people think about UPCSA on grass root level. This chapter was not an easy one as people's emotions also came up. However, then I was also struck by some of the things that I thought were small issues and people took them very serious e.g. the colour of the uniform. Unfortunately, as it has been proposed in chapter two that I will also interview the UPWF aggrieved women, the leaders of the aggrieved UPWF were not in a position for interviews and did not grant permission to interview their members. This chapter leads to chapter four whereby the controversies over association's uniforms and General Assembly decisions are being rejected by her members.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE UPCSA STRUGGLES WITHIN THE BODY OF CHRIST

“...Unity is the bond of love, which ties all those who belong to this single body of Christ, where there is no love, there is no unity.” (Buqa 2007: 83).

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the narrative conversations between the co-researchers and the researcher were shared. Some of the stories that the co-researchers alluded to are confirmed in the Assembly papers. However, other stories are simply a representation of the experiences of individuals or groups in local congregations. This Chapter investigates the struggle of the UPCSA within the Body of Christ and verifies the narratives of the co-researchers within the broader perspective of the UPCSA literature. In reflecting on the traditions mentioned by the co-researchers and the interpretations thereof, it is important to consult the UPCSA General Assembly papers relevant to this study.

In the conclusion of Chapter Two, it was stipulated that most of the senior ministers in the UPCSA appear to be the cause of the conflicts in the Associations. The reason is that their interpretation of experiences is based on the tradition of their former denominations (PCSA or RPCSA). Almost all co-researchers reflected on the issue of senior ministers and commissioners sending distorted information to the local congregations or misinforming the congregants. Mrs. Gida reflected in an analogy (Chapter 3 excerpt 45): *People began to change the words if one said hamba (go) and they will change and said voetsek ...though it was not so.*

The Church documentation is fundamental in verifying the contextual narratives such as the above example.

According to Zander van der Westhuizen (2008:207):

In many theses, literature studies precede the research process. In our positioning literature follows the stories listened to and described. The reason for this is that within our approach the moment of praxis is the starting point. The narrative of the research process leads us to the literature or text. In practical theological terms, the context leads us to the text and back to the context

By using the same approach, this chapter aims to give a brief overview of the ministerial and leadership issues that affect the Church through the negative contribution of the *iimanyano* in the practical context. The literature will be the voice to expand or support the challenging issues that came through the narratives.

4.2 Contention between the Aggrieved and the Recognised UPWF in Tshwane

The conflict and pervasive tension within Church Associations in the Tshwane presbytery began at Jonas Lediga congregation in Atteridgeville. This is the biggest and strongest congregation among the black congregations in the Tshwane Presbytery. The first called special Meeting of the Presbytery of Tshwane attempting to resolve the problem at a congregational level was held at the Jonas Lediga church premises on 13 September 2009. The minister of Jonas Lediga at that time was also the moderator of the Presbytery of Tshwane. (The author was also present at the meeting.)

The clerk reminded the Council that this was a Special Meeting of Presbytery called by the Moderator as per 10.58(b) of the UPCSA, Manual of Faith and Order. The only business was that of the Agenda circulated in the notice of the meeting

(accessed on 18 March 2012 from www.presbyteryshwane.org.za), as given below:

- Aggrieved member's meetings
- Unfreezing of UPWF (local branch) bank accounts.
- Robbing of members in the Associations

The Clerk reported that the Aggrieved Members Interim Structure had sent notification that they would be holding a Spiritual Conference in Hammanskraal at the same time as the Presbytery UPWF Conference.

The Clerk further reminded the Council of the Church Associations letter sent by the Moderator of General Assembly, the General Secretary and the Convener of the Associations. This communication clearly states that there are four officially recognized Associations within the UPCSA.

After much discussion, a general consensus was reached that the disunity and disharmony within the Associations had become unacceptable and was affecting many local Churches. Many expressed their disappointment at the situation which was now clearly affecting the unity and peace within the Presbytery itself.

The Rev. D. Nanyane proposed (seconded by Prof. G. Duncan) a possible way forward by stating: "Presbytery requests that the aggrieved members rejoin the Associations, so that their grievances and concerns could be addressed from within the officially recognized Associations of denomination".

4.3 The struggle over associations uniform between the UPWF

The tension in the life and work ministry of the local church of Jonas Lediga emanated from the Women's Association. The argument appears to be mostly concerned with the issue of whether the women should wear a black or white hat as part of their uniform. The congregation is historically from the former PCSA where women wore white hats while the former RPCSA women wore black hats. In the UPCSA, the structure of the Women's Association recognised by the General Assembly requires women to wear a black hat. In the Jonas Lediga congregation, some of the women have changed to the new uniform to wear a black hat while other women have resisted the change.



Figure 4. 1: Mrs. T. Mamabolo (white hat) Rev. P. Mogale centre and Dr. M. Pataki (black hat). Women’s Association uniform prior to the UPCSA UPWF uniform.

The picture in Figure 4.1 above was taken from the UPWF report from the Presbytery of Limpopo. This was written prior to the decision of the UPWF structure recognised by the UPCSA to introduce a new uniform. The Women Associations of the two former denominations (PCSA and RPCSA) had slight differences in their *iimanyano* uniforms.

The uniform for the women from the former PCSA:

The former PCSA women wore a white hat, a white blouse with a round neck and black collar, a PWA (Presbyterian Women’s Association) badge on the neck and a white belt around the waist of the blouse having two buttons in front. There were five buttons in the blouse. A black skirt, black shoes and black stockings completed the uniform.

The uniform for the women from the former RPCSA:

The women from the former RPCSA wore a black hat, white blouse with five buttons and a WCA (Women's Christian Association) badge on the neck, a white girdle along the waist, black skirt, black shoes, and black stockings. The picture in Figure 4.1 shows the small differences between the uniforms of the two former churches.

4.4 The GENEX (General Assemble Executive Structure of UPWF)

The two ladies in uniform represented the GENEX (General Assemble Executive Structure of UPWF) that was nominated in August 2005. Dr. M. Pataki became the first independent president of the GENEX from former RPCSA and Mrs. T. Mamabolo became the general secretary from the former PCSA. Before that the GENEX structure was chaired by Co-presidents from two former denominations taking turns in chairing the meetings. The contention in the UPWF Association began with arguments concerning whether women were to wear a white or black hat. Mrs Sandra Pillay reported (GA 2000:93) that although the Church is now the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, the PWA and WCA of the two former Churches are not yet united and have continued to function separately.

This has caused major problems in most presbyteries, with certain branches not understanding the separation. There are many issues that the PWA have to grapple with which did not make unification possible before the meeting of the 2000 Assembly. In October 1999 the PWA and WCA leaders met in Alice, Eastern Cape to discuss issues relevant to unification.

In that meeting they agreed to choose a Women's Committee consisting of five representatives from the two women's organisations be put in place. This Committee met for the first time in February 2000 which turned out to be a fruitful time for decision-making and relationship building (GA 2000). However, it proved

that transition and change is always a problem. In the General Assembly Papers of (2004, 178) the Rev. WV Mkhungo expressed that the committee would like to place on record its appreciation on the work done by the Special Commission on Union (SCU) in helping with the amalgamation of the Associations of the former denominations (PCSA – RPCSA).

Whilst most of the Associations have joined together there are still some issues (e.g. uniforms) that would need to be dealt with more carefully and sincerely (GA 2004:178). The Jonas Lediga congregation experienced the same problem in the denomination. The UPWF reported (EC 2009:18) that there are members of their fellowship who disaffiliated themselves throughout the Denomination and are now calling the Aggressive group or members of the UPWF. It has been mentioned in the Executive Commission (2009: 18) by Mrs Z. Loni that in all presbyteries the black congregations who came from the former PCSA have raised their grievances about uniform process.

4.5 The common elements in UPWF badge from both former Churches



Figure 4.2: PWA badge women from former PCSA



Figure 4.3: WCA badge women from former RPCSA



**Figure 4.4: UPWF badge for women in UPCSA
Aggrieved women also use the same badge**

4.6 The UPWF recognised uniform by the UPCSA General Assembly

According to the UPWF Women's Association Constitution clause 21.2 (APPENDIX E); the uniform of the UPWF shall be as follows:

- a. Black Skirt with a closed pleat at the back
- b. Black Shoes and black stockings
- c. White Blouse with five buttons, round collar and belt with two buttons
- d. Black under collar
- e. Black hat with six panels and a brim
- f. UPWF Badge



Figure 4.2: The UPWF recognised Uniform of women during the UPCSA



Figure 4.3: Aggrieved UPWF in uniform identified by the white hat with Rev. W. Buqa

4.7 THE CONFLICT OF INTEREST

4.7.1 UPMF Tshwane conference during 28- 29 April 2012

The UPMF aggrieved conference was held during 28 – 29 April 2012 at the Presbyterian Congregation of Mamelodi East. The author asked permission from the President of the UPMF to attend the conference. The president further agreed to allow the author to conduct interviews with him on behalf of the aggrieved men. An invitation to the conference had been extended to the MCG association and the theme was: “Please go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me”.

The President of the conference gave an inspiring message to the conference attendees. The author was warmly welcomed to the conference and was the only person wearing the Youth fellowship uniform. The rest of the 23 men with two ministers were wearing the UPMF uniform. The author was further given two stickers of the UPMF conference to wear.

The conference went well and the president mentioned that the invitation had been extended to the MCG members as well as to Presbytery. Unfortunately, none of the MCG members nor representatives of the Presbytery Executive attended the conference. The president also indicated to the conference that the gathering was regarded as illegal by the Presbytery although the Presbytery was fully aware of the meeting.

4.7.2 The conference guest speaker

The conference had invited a speaker from the Egoli Presbytery to explain the current position between the MCG and the UPMF. The Egoli Presbytery is one of the controversial presbyteries in the UPCSA concerning the difficulties of *iimanyano*. It is the only Presbytery in South Africa that has one minister serving from the former RPCSA (as from this research 2012). In most cases there are no black ministers in South Africa who envisage taking a call in Egoli presbytery, especially from the former RPCSA.

The Moderator of General Assembly the Rt. Rev. Dr. George Marchinkowski comes from the Presbytery of Egoli (September 2010 – 2012). At one stage in 2009 the Tshwane Presbytery urged all of its congregations to not become involved with the Egoli presbytery.

In 2011 the moderator of Tshwane Presbytery expressed in an informal talk that the moderator of the GA should be challenged regarding the instability of the Egoli presbytery as it affecting neighbouring presbyteries. The guest speaker expressed

vividly in the conference that the MCG is intending to destroy the existence of the UPMF on the legal aspect of the General Assembly. The guest speaker expressed that the MCG is appearing everywhere like the Pakistan shops in the Townships of South Africa. The General Assembly maintains that the MCG is the only recognised structure and the UPMF is duplicating the work of the MCG.

The Associations representatives from aggrieved and recognised members met in Edenvale in March 2012 to discuss the ways of working together (The minutes were confirmed to be private.) In the author's view, the conference seemed to not know that the national executive members of the MCG are both from former PCSA and RPCSA.

This observation was further confirmed with the UPMF minister seated next to the author during the conference when the guest speaker mentioned the name of Rev. L. Obose who is the President of the MCG and convenor of the Church Associations. The Rev. L. Obose comes from the former PCSA and the conference did not know him. In Tshwane Presbytery all of the UPMF members are from former PCSA congregations. However, they are not orientated or well-informed on what is happening in the UPCSA general regarding to Church Associations.

4.7.3 The interviews with the guest speaker

The guest speaker gave a long presentation describing the inception of the MCG as an organisation to unite the former PCSA, Presbyterian Men Associations (PMA) and RPCSA, Young Men Christian Guild (YMCG) men's forums. He mentioned that in 2007 the black congregations at Egoli Presbytery mobilised the UPMF without the acknowledgement of the Presbytery against the MCG. The recruitment went along the nearby Presbyteries such as Highveld, Lekoa and finally into Tshwane after a long period of time. The speaker alluded that the Presbyterian system affirms that we are all equal except that the moderator is the

first among equals and there is no boss. After the presentation, it was time for the questions. Here follows the questions asked during the interview.

Author: Could you explain the current reasons why the UPMF still exists in the light that MCG is the only recognised structure by the denomination.

The speaker: It is because the UPMF is growing and the MCG is threatened by that.

Author: Could you explain to me beside the issues of growth, the resistance for not joining the MCG, because in Tshwane you will find many people saying it's a uniform others saying no it is not about that, it is something else. At times other people say is because of members that are hungry for power and authority?

Speaker: To be clear to you *Mfundisi* it used to be the uniform as we did not like the white jacket as it is reflecting the RPCSA colour, but now the reasons why we are UPMF is because the MCG is mostly RPCSA. They are taking over our churches, they came into the union without money and now they are taking our money. They are overpowering us, and started in the UPCSA by the issue of pension amalgamation. The UPCSA is also our Church.

Due to the limited time, the interview with the guest speaker could not be continued. However, another conference member asked some additional questions as described below.

UPMF member: What are the reasons why the UPMF decided not to follow the legal route?

Speaker: We are being defeated in the General Assembly through the Church policy, rules and regulations. Now we have decided to fight, we are not scared of them. We are not going to tolerate being overpowered. We are going to offend them in the next General Assembly (July 2012 in Stellenbosch).

UPMF member: Is the UPMF constitution accepted by the UPCSA?

Speaker: Our constitution is not accepted yet as we are not recognised, we are not going to follow the legal route but we are growing in numbers.

UPMF member: You mentioned the numbers. What about the quality?

Speaker: At the present moment we are targeting the numbers not the projects. The projects will follow.

4.7.4 The concerns of the conference

All of the UPMF members of Tshwane were highly concerned about the illegal route to be followed in their contention against the ruling of the MCG. The president reminded the members that the theme of the conference was to check on the brothers on the other side and see whether they are still well. He mentioned that the MCG are their brothers, and they must love them as children of God. In the report presentation of the president (UPMF Tshwane Presbytery report 2011, 1 and 2):

It has been observed that most of our men in this Presbytery are willing to join the UPMF, but they are intimidated by their sessions. We had our first Presbytery Conference on 2011-10-1 &2 at St. Paul, Marite, Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga. The conference indicated that we can have a good number of men's fellowship if the spirit of fear and cowardice can be eradicated.

In the gospel according to St. John 6: 65 Jesus said, "That is why I said that people can't come to me unless the Father gives them to me". It is our duty to support one another and be patient to those who are still undecided. Pray for them that the Father may give them to us. Jesus said, "What pleases the Father is when you bear more fruits" (John 15:8). May the good Lord bless, strengthen and multiply the UPMF in all the Presbyteries to the Glory of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

4.8 Tshwane MCG conference during 19- 20 May 2012

The conference of the Men Christian Guild was held in Thumedi Makgahlela congregation in Atteridgeville Township during 19 – 20 May 2012. This was an official conference of the Presbytery of Tshwane. The president of the MCG opened the conference by reading 1 Peter 5: 1 – 8. The theme of the conference was “Behold I am making everything new” Revelations 21: 5.”

The Presbytery theme was under the denominational MCG theme of “Unity: A sure hope in our present trials”. The president shared with the conference attendees his thoughts on leadership and serving with humility. He expressed the need for the MCG to be informed by the direction of the UPCSA and be firmly grounded in the Church.

The Tshwane MCG was functioning on the interim-structure. It has been resurrected since the effect of the conflicts on the associations of Tshwane Presbytery became known. Among the fourteen black congregations there are only four congregations that have an MCG. The other black congregations have ministers that are members of the MCG. The constitution of the organisation allows an individual to affiliate his membership to any congregation that has an MCG within the bounds of the presbytery (Appendix E).

4.8.1 The Presbytery and Culture

During the proceedings of the conference, the report of the MCG was given by the hosting presbytery. It was noted in the meeting that the hosting congregation had fifteen members after the departure of the Xhosa speakers from the congregation to establish a new congregation in Pretoria Central Town.

The presbytery appointed a Sotho speaking interim-moderator in June 2010. In the presbytery minutes of 12 May 2012, page 18 of 7.18, the interim-moderator reported that “when he was appointed there were about 12 elderly members with

no youth and children. However, the membership as from May 2012 stands at 70". The reporter expressed that the congregants accepted the new minister and those who left the church came back. However, the interim-moderator is not an MCG member but a UPMF member. It was noted by the conference that the influence of a Pedi speaking minister brought more members as most people in Atteridgeville speak Northern Sotho. However, it was not a threat to a congregation that the interim-moderator was aggrieved.

4.8.2 The conference guest speaker

The conference invited MCG members from other presbyteries e.g. Lekoa, Highveld, and Egoli presbyteries. The speaker to the conference was a member of the Denominational Executive Committee (DEC) of the MCG. The speaker shared that there was an organised meeting of the national executive of the MCG, UPMF, the General Secretary and the moderator of the General Assembly.

This meeting had been held in March at Edenvale to discuss the unity of the Church in associations. The meeting expressed that the Church should engage with the Aggrieved structure only on the matters of unity and not on dual existence of the associations. The Church must foster unity to avoid the image that the associations are destroying unity.

The Presbyterian Church does not have a uniform. However, in black congregations it is common for people to identify the Church with the kind of uniform that a particular association is wearing. For example, a person could ask another to which church they belong. The person may say "I am a Methodist". The next question would be, "Is it that church where the associations are wearing red and white?" The speaker emphasised that we do not worship uniform.

The speaker noted the following points regarding the associations:

- Leadership development and evangelism is the core business of the UPCSA

- The core business of the Church is the salvation of souls
- Associations must grow to become an extension of the ministry of the Church not to become a Church within the Church
- We do not want associations causing headache to the ministry.

4.8.3 The concerns of the conference

The MCG should be an organisation that addresses the spiritual needs of men. This can be a beacon of hope in the Church. We must manage our objectives. Our first objective of the MCG is to present Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour to men and to engage them in the promotion of the extension of God's Kingdom (Clause 2.1 APPENDIX E).

The MCG discussed the issue of attaching students to the presbyteries surrounding Tshwane. The MCG mandated the executive to have a workshop to facilitate the issues of evangelism, stewardship and social-ills. The MCG made a vow that they will never violate the orders of the UPSCA.

The conference struggled with the question: Who is sponsoring the schism in the Church? The MCG narrated that the YMCG and PMA of the former denominations met in 2001 to establish MCG. It is puzzling that a group from the former PCSA is aggrieved over the MCG while the previous and current president of the MCG is from former PCSA.

4.9 THE UPWF AGGRIEVED OF TSHWANE

4.9.1 Interviews with Mrs Gingqa

The characters and places in the following interviews are pseudonyms.

Among the UPWF aggrieved members, the author selected Mrs Gingqa who is the member of Msendo Presbyterian Congregation. The author firstly phoned her

minister the Rev. Z. Sodo and explained the details of the research in narrative therapy and asked permission to interview one of her congregants. The minister gave permission for the research to be conducted. On Saturday 14 April 2012, the author visited Mrs Gingga at her house. She warmly welcomed the author into her house saying in Sotho *Oh! Ke Moruti* (It is the Reverend). Mrs Gingga was chosen because she is one of the members who was present in all the interactive meetings between the aggrieved and recognised UPWF of Tshwane presbytery that were held during the cold winter evenings of 1999 at Msendo Presbyterian Congregation. The author explained to her the purpose of the visit and the academic research adherence and asked her for an appointment for the interviews. She was delighted with the idea of researching the topic of Church associations.

She explained that most people are focussing on the fights concerning black and white hats (UPWF aggrieved wear white hats while the UPWF recognised wear black hats) whereas this is not the main issue. She asked whether the author had spoken with her leaders in the aggrieved so that she could go ahead with the interviews. Unfortunately, the author had only spoken with the leader of the UPMF aggrieved men and not the women. The author had only explained to her about the Presbytery's permission, The UPCSA, the University of Pretoria and permission from her minister. After that explanation, she made an appointment with for the research interviews any time after 5 May 2012.

However she then stated that she will firstly speak with her leaders in the aggrieved group. The author met Mrs Gingga again by coincidence at the UPMF conference on 28 April 2012 just before 5 May 2012. She explained that her leaders had asked her to withdraw the interviews. On Tuesday 8 May 2012, the author phoned the leader of the aggrieved group to explain the research process. She was not sure whether to accept or not and she asked to wait until she meets her executive.

On Saturday 12 May 2012 at a Presbytery Council meeting, the author met her and explained again. She answered that they would be having an executive

meeting that evening and that she would come back to the author. Despite a further attempt, eventually interviews could not take place with the aggrieved women of Tshwane Presbytery.

4.10 Conclusion

Upon reflecting on the issues and misunderstandings that the association members are struggling with, it was realised that people in general do not accept change easily. However, it will certainly be difficult for someone outside the Church to understand that members can wrestle on uniform styles and colours!

There are far more serious issues that the association members could rather be doing in the Church. Examples include evangelism, alleviation of poverty, stewardship, etc. Unfortunately, in the Presbytery of Tshwane people among the black congregations have neglected their purpose in being part of the Church of Christ. Church members are encircled by a dominant story of church association in-fighting. The mission of Christ, which is to preach the kingdom of God in the world and salvation of lost souls, is no longer a priority among the association members.

It is also difficult to find the reason why the women from former PCSA could not accept to wear a black hat whereas the women from former RPCSA took the black colour of former PCSA. It is also strange that Aggrieved women want a white colour while Aggrieved men want a black colour. Perhaps if the Aggrieved women would have accepted the interviews the author would have got a meaning behind wanting a white colour. In closure the next chapter, chapter five will try to get the answer on the significances of this two colours black and white to associations. Why the UPWF recognised structure chose a black hat instead of a white hat? Why the issue of a white hat became a difficult matter to some of the former PCSA women members whereas the contrast in uniform of the UPWF were much smaller than the Men's Associations.

CHAPTER FIVE

REFLECTION ON MY RESEARCH

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit just as you were called to one hope when you were called” (Ephesians 4: 3-4).

5.1 Introduction

Narrative research focuses on the stories of people’s lives and is based on the idea that problems are manufactured in a socio-cultural, religious and political context. It allows individuals, groups, families, and cultures to share their stories. Stories provide consistency of continuing experiences and a way of communicating with each other. The stories that people share are different from one another. Some stories are beautiful while others are sad. Having done this narrative research in the Church context, I realised that some people have more negative stories to tell from their experiences in the Church than within their families or communities.

Freedman and Combs (1996: 169) said, “It is through the experience of reflecting on our experiences that we make meaning of it”. It is therefore significant to remember that the interpretation we give to our stories is that which helps us find their underlying meaning.

5.2 The purpose

In this chapter I will give a reflection on my research, conclusion and recommendations. It is very crucial to me to reflect on my experiences while conducting this critically sensitive research. The purpose of this final chapter is to present an overview of the research study and my own experience of the research process. This research project explored the conflicts of Church Associations that

appear to cause a division within the UPCSA. The methodology used was both quantitative and qualitative in orientation and involved in-depth interviews with participants.

5.3 Writing experiences

During the writing of this dissertation, I learnt many new things about the UPCSA and the theology of the members. I developed more knowledge about the teachings of the Church and the polity that governs the UPCSA. It has been an eye-opener for me to trace the background of the formation of the Associations within the UPCSA starting from the amalgamation of the PCSA and RPCSA. It was surprising to discover how different the cultures of these two denominations are, considering that they have the same root of Presbyterianism from the Church of Scotland. However, the colonialism of in South Africa's inception has created a huge separation among the black members.

I have made many discoveries concerning the UPCSA, both as a member and a minister. I believe that I would have remained unaware of the issues if it was not for writing this dissertation. I did not previously consider that the associations within the Church can be a cause of division in the body of Christ.

5.4 Evaluation of the Study

The foremost objective of the study was to explore the rationale behind the conflicts of the Church Associations. Many questions were addressed to investigate the issue perpetuating the conflict in the context of the Church. The research further investigated whether the differences in traditions of the two former Churches (PCSA and RPCSA) had a mode of impact on the conflict crises or whether it was a result of a third force. The phenomenon of conflicts was explained from the Church traditional background, Presbyterian polity of leadership, and biblical point of view.

The co-researchers in this study had their own very subjective experience of conflicts in their local congregations, presbytery and denomination. From the narratives of the co-researchers the emphasis was placed more on the role of the Church leadership as the contributing factor to the cause of the conflict. Many common words negatively describing the Church leadership, such as: “power control”, “disappointments in union”, “influences”, “positions”, “minority vs majority”, “blacks vs blacks” and “blacks vs whites in power control” were used. It appeared that due to some personal interest of some UPCSAs leaders, the Church lost credibility as well as their focus on the calling of Christ.

5.5 Personal development

Personally, this research has influenced my spiritual growth and knowledge development through learning about the UPCSAs denomination. However, the approach of developing conversations with the co-researchers was not an easy one. Every time I visited the co-researchers for a first appointment I was always mindful of the conflict situation. I always got an uneasy feeling at the start until I persevered with the conversations. I was also anxious at times as some members I wanted to interview rejected the topic outright. Narrative therapy focuses more on people’s stories than literature material. This was a great learning experience for me.

I indicated in my proposal that I come from a research background of Christian History. Indulging in narrative therapy was a curiosity stemmed from being challenged by congregational members on pastoral issues as well as exposure to trauma counselling research at UNISA. During this research, I learned far more from the narrative research process, in terms of conducting quantitative interviews and participatory research, than with my previous studies.

Academically, I have developed my own views and critiques regarding the UPCSAs leadership more than ever before. The experiences obtained with the Church through this research have helped me to understand how the church can be both holy and sinful.

In spite of the fact that the research focussed on conflict, it was a meaningful experience and a privilege to share in the lives of the co-researchers. This research study would not have been possible without the co-researchers who spent their valuable time with me in expressing their feelings concerning the Associations' conflicts.

5.6 Practical experiences

It was not easy to continue probing the co-researchers in some of the interview discussions. Some of the discussions involved highly sensitive topics and the co-researchers refused to respond to certain questions. They also requested me to refrain from referring to names that are used by the UPCS Church such as "Aggrieved group".

One of the challenging factors was managing the time spent while executing the research methodology. In some cases the co-researchers tended to tell stories that only reflected their interests, while others took an extraordinarily long time in responding to the question asked. This was, however, expected, since in a black culture most adult people are accustomed to long conversations. (Even a simple greeting can take more than five minutes!)

The reflection on their narratives was also slow as most of the time I had to remind the co-researchers about submitting their feedback. Only a small percentage of the interviews could be conducted via e-mail and thus most of the conversations required personal appointments.

What I like about narrative therapy is that the research data is retrieved from the people's stories, rather than an impersonal literature study. As the researcher I felt involved with the Church members and the research process was more practical. However, the interpretation of the narratives from the co-researchers took a great deal of time. I had to remind the co-researchers about the time deadlines and personally collect their reflection stories. I was fortunate, however, that all the co-researchers lived around Pretoria where I could drive easily.

The fact that I am involved in the church as the UPCSA minister was also challenging to my own understanding of the UPCSA in comparison to that of the co-researchers. However, I strived as far as possible to remain subjective during the process of telling and describing the stories of the co-researchers.

5.7 Conclusion

The Special Commission on Union, (delegation of members of PCSA and RPCSA to form the UPCSA) rushed into forming the union and underestimated some of the influential strongholds of the two denominations that could undermine unity. It is undisputed that some of the black cultural practices with regards to expression of faith were not considered.

Assuming the Biblical mandate of Christ's prayer that the Church should be one (John 17:21) and a common Presbyterian history would be sufficient, the Special Commission on Union underestimated potential problems along the journey towards unity. The time allowed for spreading the message of the union to the local congregations was not enough and delegates to the local congregations perhaps did not deliver the message properly.

It is also unfortunate that while the union process was in preparation, some of the congregations in various presbyteries were not stable. As a result, the information came very late. Some of the co-researchers have expressed that the delegates and some of the ministers informed the congregations differently about the union. It has been alluded that to some members it was a matter of changing the name to the UPCSA as the black Church was amalgamating with the white church. Due to the vast number of the rural congregations in the RPCSA some members were not aware that PCSA had black members. There was much uncertainty and fear of the unknown to some of the members regarding the marriage of the PCSA and RPCSA. However, there is still a hope for reconciliation and healing in the UPCSA.

5.8 Recommendations

I would not recommend anyone to undertake a research from a narrative perspective regarding Church Conflicts unless that person is willing to be challenged and understands human spirituality. The challenge with narrative therapy is that the researcher must get involved with the research process. The other challenge is that religious conflicts have been part of human history though faith institutions are expected to be the drive of peace and healing in the society. It is always shocking and disappointing to get stories about conflicts in the context of the Church. However, conflicts can be part of growth as people share different views on spiritual matters. The problem is when the conflicts are perpetual and threatening the unity of the Church. I would like to recommend the following points to the UPCSA:

- The Church should start a dialogue to search a solution to resolve the existing problem by being involved on local congregations.
- Most of the local members are not clear on the vision of the Church and are unaware about the priorities of the denomination especially when it comes to full-time ministry.
- The ministers should have gatherings that dialogue on Associations starting from the presbytery level as most of the co-researchers alluded that the leaders are the one that instigate the Association's conflicts.
- The healing of memories and lectures on the Presbyterian history is much recommended as most of the members are not sure about Presbyterianism and its inception in South Africa.
- Forgiveness and reconciliation among the Church Association members must be the core of discussion whenever the Associations gathered together.
- The Church should practical foster working relationships between whites and black congregations to eliminate the suspicions and resentments existing within the UPCSA.

APPENDIX A

The following is the facilitated questionnaire:

- Which Church Association (CA) do you belong to and why do you belong to that association?
- What is happening presently in the CA's and how do you feel?
- What is your understanding on the Church's (UPCSA) position regarding to CA (UPCSA leadership e.g General Assembly or Presbytery)?
- Could you share your own background/roots in the *iimanyano*?
- How significant is it to you to have *iimanyano* in the UPCSA?
- What were you told about the union of PCSA and RPCSA in 1999? Were you aware of the union of the two Churches?
- What Church tradition did you hold on as PCSA/ RPCSA? How do you feel about that tradition now?
- What have you gained or learned in the UPCSA, especially regarding the CA's?
- Are there any developments that make you feel there is hope to resolve the conflicts?
- Could you describe the meaning of the words "*aggrieved*", "*recognised*"?
- How do you feel being part of this group "*aggrieved*" "*Recognised*"?
- What in your opinion is the major problem that is causing the conflicts?
- What associates your faith or spirituality with the uniform of your CA?
- What is the so-called Third Force?
- Would you compromise the stand of the CA if your conviction is that there is something against the will of God in it?
- What is your understanding of UPCSA membership and CA membership?
- What are your thoughts on Jesus' prayer when he says, "Father I pray that they may be one as I am one with you" John 17:21. (Imago Deo) what is your image of God?
- What do you think could end these conflicts?

Questionnaire for non-uniform Church members

- What are your views on Church Associations (CA) or how do you feel about Associations?
- What is the impact of the Church leadership (General Assembly or Presbytery level or Session) regarding the CA situation?
- Do you think it is significant to have CA's in the UPCSA? If not/yes, why?
- What are your opinions about the Union now?
- What have you learned or gained on the UPCSA regarding Associations?
- What do you think is the major problem that causes the conflicts?
- What do you understand or know about the concepts “*aggrieved*” and “*recognised*” Structures?
- Is there any hope that makes you feel that the current conflicts can be resolved? And what could end these conflicts?
- What is the Third Force or have you heard about the word “Third Force” when it comes to Church Associations conflict in “general”?
- What are your thoughts on Jesus’ prayer when it comes to Associations, “Father I pray that they may be one as I am one with you” John 17:21. What is your image of God in this regard (Imago Deo)?

APPENDIX B



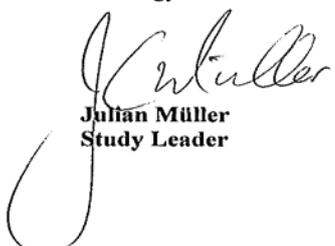
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November 4, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

I hereby confirm that **Rev Wonke Buqua** is a student in the MA course in Practical Theology.


Julian Müller
Study Leader

APPENDIX C



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20.01. 2012

St. Andrews Presbyterian Church

Clerk of the Presbytery of Tshwane

Notification of academic research studies at UP for Rev. Wonke Buqa

This letter serves to inform The Presbytery of Tshwane that Rev. Wonke Buqa has enrolled at the University of Pretoria in Faculty of Theology in the Department of Practical Theology the Masters Thesis in Family Therapy under Prof JC. Muller. The research theme is: **“Conflicts within the Church Associations of UPCSA, with special reference to The Tshwane Presbytery: A Pastoral Narrative Approach”**. This research study consists of co-researchers, church records, literature and the General Secretary has been informed in 2011. I wish to request from the presbytery to continue with the research interviews within her boundaries as part of UPCSA.

Hope this will reach your favourable attention.

Yours in His service

Rev. Wonke Buqa

BTh, MTh (UP)

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION AS CO-RESEARCHER

University of Pretoria	Researcher: Rev. Wonke Buqa
Practical Theology	Contacts: 0836837768
Supervisor: Prof JC Muller	E: ww_buqa@hotmail.com
Study duration: 2011- 2012	MA dissertation

RESEARCH FIELD

Narrative Therapy research: This research consists of stories shared by people regarding to the topic of the researcher. The research is on Masters Programme and part of its evaluation is on empirical research required from the researcher. The narrative research developed in Australia by Michael White. The interviews are conducted by the researcher and the people being interviewed are called co-researchers.

RESEACHED TOPIC

Conflicts between the Church Associations of the UPCSA, with special reference to the Presbytery of Tshwane: A pastoral Narrative Approach

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

- It is to get stories from the co-researchers about their views or insight concerning the conflicts existing in the UPCSA.
- The interviewee must be the Full-Member of the UPCSA and belong to the Presbytery of Tshwane
- This research is for academic purposes and contribution to the UPCSA

PERMISSION AUTHORITY TO DO THE RESEARCH

- There are three letters to be produced to the co-researcher:

- a. A letter from the University of Pretoria by Prof. JC Muller
- b. A letter to the Presbytery of Tshwane by the Researcher
- c. Informed consent letter

THE RIGHTS OF THE CO-RESEARCHER

The research is conducted out of the free will of the co-researcher; there is no influence or force pressure to the co-researcher to participate. It is in the right of the co-researcher either to use his/her real name or pseudonyms or participates anonymously.

- a. All your information and stories will be protected and valued on academic adherence.
- b. The written materiel about your story will be verified to you again for confirmation of the narrative.
- c. In this project your voice, ideas, views, opinion are respected.
- d. After the compilation of the dissertation you can have an access to the copy of the dissertation as this project will be available at the library of the University of Pretoria for academic purposes, and to the archives of the UPCSA, only if the research is found of good quality.

Information of the researcher:

The Rev. Wonke Buqa
19081 Section H
Mamelodi West
0122

I..... give a consent that the research has been explain to me well, and there is no intimidation or promises of financial gain or any nature of personal benefit regarding to this research. I participate out of my will, love of God and my contribution to the research and to the UPCSA.

Co-researcher:..... Date:

Researcher: Date:.....



APPENDIX E

MENS' CHRISTIAN GUILD CONSTITUTION

The following are the points selected from the constitution of MCG which appear on the dissertation:

1. NAME

The name of the association is the "Men's Christian Guild "(MCG) and is referred to hereinafter as the Guild.

2. AIMS

The aims of the guild are inter alia:

2.1 To present Jesus Christ as Lord and saviour to men and to engage them in the promotion and extension of God's Kingdom.

2.2 To extend the Kingdom of God, in our Church, in the churches to which we are related and in the entire world.

2.3 To build up Christian character by encouraging attendance at public worship, the reading of scripture and witness to Christ.

2.4 To inculcate a sense of moral discipline, especially in the members of the Guild.

2.5 To promote programmes of intellectual, social and physical growth.

2.6 To inculcate a spirit of obedience and humility both in our church and the entire Church of God.

2.7 To bind members to resist all unchristian customs and to follow the life which is the fruit of the spirit.

2.8 To encourage a sense of responsibility for all men, especially those who need either practical help or spiritual assistance.

3. MEMBERSHIP

3.1 Membership shall be open to all ministers and male members in full communion of the Uniting Presbyterian church in Southern Africa.

3.2 Each branch together with its outstations shall take the name of a congregation to which it belongs.

3.3 A branch shall first affiliate to the Presbyterian structure within its bounds then to the Denominational Conference.

3.4 It is the Guild's desire to have branches in all congregations, however if anyone wishes to apply for membership but belongs to a congregation that does not have a guild, he may apply for membership to any branch within his presbytery with a view to recruit in order to establish a Guild in his congregation. This will have to be rectified by the Presbyterian structure in which he belongs.

3.5 New members shall be on probation for six months under the supervision of the Branch Executive Committee.

8. UNIFORM

8.1 The uniform for members shall be

- A white jacket without a vent with two silver buttons in front of gabardined material.
- A white waistcoat with five silver buttons.
- A black pair of trouser
- A white shirt
- A plain black tie
- A black pair of shoes and a black pair of socks.
- A MCG badge.

8.2 The uniform for ministers will be exactly like **8.1** with the exception that Ministers will wear a white clerical shirt with a white collar.

10. OCCASION TO WEAR UNIFORM

1. Holy Communion Services
2. Funerals of members of the Guild and other associations
3. MCA Conference worship services
4. New building dedication services
5. Service of the unveiling of tombstones of the various associations
6. Service of a minister's welcome or farewell
7. All Assembly/ Presbytery services

APPENDIX F

ORDINATION VOWS OF THE UPCSА MINISTERS

II own and confess God as my Father,
Jesus Christ as my Saviour and Lord,
and the Holy Spirit as my Helper.

As far as I know my own heart,

I am moved to enter this ministry

by zeal for the glory of God,

love for the Lord Jesus Christ,

the call of the Holy Spirit,

the commission to proclaim the coming of God's kingdom on earth

I promise to honour this covenant and be loyal to this Church, to
accept its authority,

to abide by its laws and discipline,

and to encourage other members to do the same.

I will take my place in its ruling councils

and seek its unity and peace.

With God's help I undertake to be faithful in the study of Scripture
and in prayer, to live a holy life,

to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour

and to be diligent in pastoral care,

so that God may use me to spread the gospel

and build up the Body of Christ.

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