WHOLENESS AND HEALING IN COMMUNITY:
TOWARD UNDERSTANDING EFFECTIVE AFRICAN
CHURCH INTERVENTIONS FOLLOWING COMMUNITY
VIOLENCE

by

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ABSTRACT

Wholeness and Healing In Community is a study that seeks to understand what are the effective interventions, which the African church has made and is able to make in bringing healing to a community gripped by violent conflict. In this study it is assumed that the church is an existent and potentially effective institution with infrastructure that stretches from the smallest community to an international web. In the midst of Africa’s social, political, and economic turmoil there lie both causes and consequences, which are the brokenness of body and mind, emotions and choices. This woundedness, which is both individual and collective, needs to be made whole or the next generations are likely to continue a cycle of violence, hate and mistrust. The biblical concept of shalom is developed and used as the vision toward which interventions must attempt to move. The qualitative methodology and process of this work sought to not only study church interventions but to assist in the transformation of church leader thinking about their role.

This study has three primary strands: 1) the individual background and experiences of the researcher who has spent nearly thirty years in the midst of conflict on the African continent, 2) a literature review that surveys literature from several disciplines and, 3) a field research. The field research consisted in the filming (or securing already made films) of nine situations in which there was a claim made that community healing had either occurred or had been assisted through a specific set of interventions. The film from these nine situations in five countries (eight in Africa) were then edited into nine 15-30 minute film documentaries which were screened in their entirety to four different focus groups of African church leaders for their evaluation and reflection. Their evaluations are reported and evaluated in this study. In order to comprehend the study and its findings, it is strongly recommended that the films be viewed even though they are summarized here in written form.

A list of effective interventions is the outcome of this study. This is perhaps the most comprehensive listing of holistic healing interventions. A potential use for this catalogue is suggested. It is recommended for church leaders as well as Non Governmental Organizations, which seek to work in situations of violence on the African continent.
Dedication

Special thanks must be given to those who have helped make this study a reality. First to my wife Debbie who encouraged me to begin. She was joined by my colleagues at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, all of whom encouraged me to keep on. To my promoter Dons Kritzinger and to friend Paul Heidebrecht go a special thanks for their special role in reading, critiquing and encouraging the completion.

But none of the research would have meaning without many on the continent of Africa who have entered my life and given me perspectives that could only come from people who have become culturally closer to me, and have shown me the hope of triumph in and through Christ.

It is to that hope of redemption made sure in the work of the Redeemer that this research is dedicated.

Karl Dortzbach
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