



CHAPTER FIVE

5. PRIVATIZATION OF WATER SYSTEM IN THE CONTEXT OF HIV AND AIDS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

HIV /AIDS and water appear to be very little related to each other. However, a closer inspection of the features that characterize its spread and its implications for individuals, communities, and societies reveals several significant linkages with water, as well as important consequences for water resource management.

The links between HIV / AIDS and water reflect some of the often unanticipated effects of the pandemic on society, with long-term implications for effective water resource management and the provision of wholesome water supplies to communities. This chapter focuses on the impact of the non-accessibility of water due to its privatization.

Africa especially in the Sub-Saharan region, has become a fertile ground for the fast spread of and fast death from HIV and AIDS. AIDS grips our communities and robs us of our parents, teachers and other professionals, our eager youth and infant children, our church members and leaders. The epidemic spreads silently and often without people knowing of it. It spreads through a tiny virus known as HIV (human immuno-deficiency virus).

The most common way of its spread is through sexual contact among youth and adults. Infants may also get the disease during birth from their mothers who have HIV. The only other way to pass



the virus is when fresh infected blood is mixed with the fresh blood of another person such as through transfusions, or during a surgical intervention, e.g. in circumcision at initiation schools if sterility or aseptic technique is not followed.

This Pandemic (HIV and AIDS) has become the most devastating disease humankind has ever faced. Since the epidemic begun, millions of people have been infected and affected with the virus, and it is now the leading cause of death in some countries, particularly the developing ones. Worldwide, HIV and AIDS is the fourth killer disease.

HIV and AIDS have been correctly described as the greatest threat to human well-being and public health in modern times. According to UNAIDS, the spread is currently twice what it was five years ago. Presently, 42 million are living with the disease and 22 million have already died of it while 3 million children are living with HIV and AIDS. 14 million children are orphaned.

The church is so far chanting simplistically the “abstinence, be faithful and condomise (ABC) messages, while ignoring the structures of oppression and inequalities that provide a fertile ground for vulnerable to HIV and AIDS, especially women and children, particularly the girl child. HIV and AIDS is a global challenge but at the moment it is heavily an African problem calling for Prevention, Treatment and Care.

Though the anti-retrovirals (ARVs) medication is available, the poverty pandemic, which impact on the infected people’s



malnutrition, undermines the effectiveness of these drugs. It is important that further steps be taken to improve the general living conditions of the poor particularly people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA).

5.2 FOOD AND PRIVATIZATION OF WATER SYSTEM IN THE CONTEXT OF HIV AND AIDS

Research has shown that more than 800 million people go to bed hungry on a daily basis. 300 million of those people are children. It is extremely important that all people have access to basic nutrition and have enough food to keep them healthy. A balanced diet is not only a key part to helping people thrive as individuals, but to help them develop their countries especially poor people. Hunger makes people vulnerable to diseases, causes conflict over scarce resources, and prevents citizens from living up to their full potential. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 33% of the population is under nourished compared to 17% in developing countries.

People are entitled to adequate food that is sufficient, safe, nutritious and culturally acceptable. It is essential for every one of us and we do eat for various reasons. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "Food is the first remedy to AIDS, and with a good feeding, people affected by AIDS disease will live longer. Food is always seen to be the only remedy to AIDS pandemic.

Foods remind us of our childhood, our country and our culture. Most of the time, we commemorate events around a good meal, together with our dearly beloved. A good meal brings about a



feeling of welfare. Food brings the necessary energy and nutrients our body needs to be well kept, move, build up and renew the cells, necessary for growth, upkeep and mending of our tissues. It also enables us to resist and fight against infections. A sound and balanced nutrition implies a good type of food in an appropriate quantity so as to stay in good health and feel well.

Thus, HIV and AIDS patients must make sure they have a good, healthy and sufficient feeding in order to keep themselves away from infections and stop the diseases from getting worse. Patients should therefore, prioritise food that their body can easily bear, and which are nourishing such as soups, stocks, rice, and pieces of pasta, wheat, cream, potatoes, cottages, cheese, toast, chickens or turkey, yoghurt, hard-boiled eggs, bananas, soya biscuits, corn, fruits etc.

In contrast, malnutrition is a serious threat for HIV and AIDS patients. During the first stage of the disease, i.e. where there is not yet any visible sign, HIV changes the nutritional state of the body. The risks of malnutrition considerably increase as the infection gains grounds. It is therefore necessary to meet the feeding and nutritional needs of the families affected by HIV and AIDS in order to keep them in dignity and Security.

Although a corrective feeding cannot heal AIDS disease or prevent HIV infection, it can enhance the health state of the patients and delay the progress of opportunistic diseases linked to HIV and AIDS. It can therefore improve the quality of life of those who are affected by the disease. It is therefore, important to understand



that there is a linkage between water, sanitation, hygiene and HIV and AIDS.

A sound and balanced feeding will help the body to be well kept and prevent it from losing weight. It is necessary for making up the lost in energy and nutrients, generated by the infection. A good feeding supports the effects of medicines and helps to create an atmosphere of welfare and determination in healing the sick. HIV and AIDS patients are therefore encouraged to live and eat healthily.

Eventually, a good feeding helps to protect and strengthen the immunitary system (protection of the body against diseases) and to be kept in good health. It is important to bring a support to AIDS patients and nutritional care as just at the first stages of the infection in order to prevent the development of the disease or nutritional deficiencies of the prospective patients.

The question is: where do these people get nutritious food in the midst of this abject poverty and unemployment conditions under which they live? Maluleke come out with a strategy when he suggests that: "The church should encourage members of the community who are unemployed to start self-help projects. By so doing they will create employment for themselves as well as for others" (1999:9).

Following are self-help projects that Maluleke suggests:

1. Brick making
2. Building
3. Carpentry
12. Cooking
13. Baking
14. Car repair



4. Radio repairs
5. TV repairs
6. Dress making
7. Candle making
8. Plumbing
9. Painting and spraying
10. Welding
11. Juice making
15. Making gas grill
16. Selling vegetables & fruit
17. Electrician
18. Refrigerator repair
19. Garden making
20. Selling hand craft articles
21. Tuck shops (1999:23)

Most of the above-proposed projects can only exist if people have access to water. Governments should therefore be reminded of their obligation to respect, protect and fulfill people's needs for appropriate access to sufficient water of an acceptable quality.



5.6 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

As a continent, Africa has the highest rate of diseases among its people. Africa also has the highest rate of infant mortality in the world. Every minute, a woman somewhere dies because of complications in pregnancy or childbirth. Most rural communities have no access to health care, making preventable diseases deadly.

According to UNAIDS an estimated 40.3 million people are living with HIV of whom 25.8 million are from Sub-Saharan Africa. In the most affected regions, hard-earned improvements in health over the last 50 years have been overwhelmed by death and disability from AIDS. In addition to the AIDS pandemic, diseases once common but now almost unknown in most of the industrialized world, like malaria, tuberculosis, tapeworm and dysentery often claim far more victims, particularly among the young. These can mainly be attributed to a large section of the population to access medical centers.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), UNAIDS and UNICEF an estimated 8 Million Africans are dying annually from preventable, treatable and manageable diseases and health conditions. 586 911 Africans are dying from Tuberculosis annually (this is 35% of the world total). In 2006, annual AIDS death figures for Africa were 2.1 million; and estimated 24.7 million Africans were living with HIV; and an estimated 2.8 Million adults and children became infected with HIV while AIDS orphans were estimated at over 12 million.



Annual African deaths from Malaria are estimated at 1,136,000 (89,3% of the world total); maternal mortality claims the lives of an estimated 300,000 African women annually (over half of the global total); and child mortality is high with an estimated 4.8. Million children under the age of 5 years dying annually. The Human Development Report 2006 also argues that poverty; power and inequality are the heart of the global water crisis.

Water is life. Without water, we cannot prevent diseases or grow the food we need for sustenance. It is the backbone of all anti-poverty strategies. The church can therefore, not remain silent when the majority of people, particularly the poor, are denied of this basic resource.

Chapter six will therefore focus on the church's response in situations such as these.



CHAPTER SIX

6. THE CHURCH'S PASTORAL RESPONSE TO POVERTY AND PRIVATIZATION OF WATER SYSTEM

6.1 INTRODUCTION

“The church exists in modern society as the work and instrument of God’s justice.” (Moltmann 1989:6). These defining words of Jurgen Moltmann summarize the purpose, mission and the ministerial role of the church in our times. The church, which stands in the historical tradition of being a counter community, promoting the values of justice and love, the importance of sharing has to reinvent itself in order to confront contemporary challenges experienced by those who are caught by social structures that eliminates them from society.

Talking about the responsibility of the churches, Ulrich Dutchrow says: “Prophetic critique, resistance, living alternatives and intervention towards legal reforms, these were the biblical forms of practicing faith in Yahweh, the compassionate God”. ([http:11findarticles.com/p/articles/mcm2065/154/ai97118068](http://11findarticles.com/p/articles/mcm2065/154/ai97118068))

Regarding privatization of water system, the researcher shares the same view which is also supported by other scholars such as Tanner, that the church is under obligation to promote a non-market framework and practice, unconditional giving in the face of competitive terms of relationship. (2005:129).



The theological roots of economy have to rework the truncated hopes, uncertified losses. Callous exclusions and challenge the “winner takes all” competitive market attitude. (2005:129). This statement shares precisely what developing countries are experiencing on a daily basis.

How is this possible? Enrique Dussel advocates that it is possible only through covenantal relationship, which is a pact for the good of the community. Not through moral order (morality of domination or privatization) but by ethical praxis, not through accumulation, but through freely giving by making ourselves responsible for the “other”, we may be able to establish a covenantal community. (1988:40-46).

This community relationship should have characteristics of sharing and stewardship, not economically commodified transaction. Salvation is not just an issue concerning an individual’s soul but also involves transforming the socio-political and economic structure of which the individual is part. How therefore, can we privatize water and not care for the poor? In this way privatization of water system becomes a mini god followed by those who do not care for human beings.

Privatization that replaces God with self should be critiqued. In the context of the dehumanizing forces of privatization and globalization we need to address this evil, for example, Hans Küng stresses the necessity of a global ethic that has binding values, irrevocable standards and personal attitudes. (1998:4). The author



agrees with Küng hence this research which seek to suggest a way but, by presenting a caring method to poor people.

6.2 DEFINING THE CHURCH

Before engaging in the whole question of the church's pastoral response to the poor, it is very important for the reader to be introduced to what the church is, its purpose and what its role in society should be.

The Christian concept of the word "church" is derived from the Greek word "*ekklesia*" found in the New Testament. The term refers to "a company of people called out." These are called out for a new relationship with God and with one another. They are called out to perform a mission of God by caring for others. It refers to a group or body of persons who share their faith based in Christianity. This group is described in the book of Jeremiah as the people of the new covenant because they carry forward the relationship and responsibilities of Israel under new conditions revealed and offered in Christ" (Jer. 3:31; Matt. 26:26-28).

This united people is again referred to in the first letter to the Corinthians as "the fellowship" because of their unique communion with God and with one another on the basis of Christ's life, death and resurrection, through the work of the Holy Spirit in their individual and personal lives (1 Cor. 1:9; John 1:3-7). This fellowship is called the body of Christ as each of the persons in it is related to the others as the members of the body are related, and the whole system of persons is controlled by one head, Jesus Christ. Therefore, the body must always care for other parts of the



body; by addressing injustices experienced by those who are oppressed.

The church is an instrument of God's justice. Hence it is incompatible with the unjust structures of the world and stands under the obligation to strive and struggle for the restoration of the fallen creation. It should have in its heart the role of combating for justice and promoting right relationships, relationships of equality, mutual sharing and caring with "love for the neighbour" as the driving force, embodying the image of God. (Watson 2002:116-120). The church is there for the pursuit of God's justice as a response to the gospel that embraces the whole world and that God's abundant life for people.

It is against this background that the author seeks to address problems of injustice. In the light of the growing privatization of water system the church is called upon to be prophetic, critiquing the kind of dehumanizing privatization that is being pushed by the national water policy under the influence of international funding agencies (World Bank, Asian Development Bank and International Monetary fund) and to challenge governments to develop policies that protect water resources; especially for poor people who are the majority in the world.

Being a model, the church should practice the ecologically sustainable use of water resources and promote community-based initiatives with equal and just sharing. It should encourage communities as well as governments to take up sustainable



watershed management and invest in eco-friendly technologies.

(<http://studentorgs.Utexas.edupidaustin/water privatization.pdf>. p14)

The Church should for example highlight to its members the benefits of rainwater harvesting. As an instrument of God's justice, it should urge governments to take legal framework seriously to protect the poor against this onslaught, by regulating various water bodies and monitoring the price, quality and distribution of water resource.

The church being the epitome of a just sharing community, without romanticizing "community", should live it out in all possible ways. It requires a firm belief in a "God" who has gifted us with all these resources and given us a vocation as stewards to preserve, nurture and share in a community. There is no provision for claiming an exclusive right to God's gift to humanity, and the church has the mandate to resist such a development. It is the duty of the church in the light of Luke (Jesus' Nazareth Manifesto) to ensure that justice is done to the poor, marginalized, the victimized and the excluded, especially in the context of privatization of water system (Luke 4:14–21).

The church therefore, owes its life to an act of God. A call, an offer, a redemption. Adam puts it very well when he says: "The 'church' can therefore be summarized as a community of persons engaged in mission and functioning through a social structure" (1978:64).

Thus, the church is the creature of God's Word (*Creatura Verbi*), and of the Holy Spirit (*Creatura Spiritus*). The church is missionary



by its nature and cannot exist by and for itself. It is called and sent to serve, as an instrument of the word and the spirit, as a witness to the Kingdom of God.

6.3. DIACONICAL WORK AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Diaconical work is often defined as the care of the church or Christians for people in need. This definition may sound to be too narrow, but in the New Testament, the word diakonia is used in a broader sense, i.e. diakonia as material help, diakonia as spiritual help and other services.

6.3.1 DIAKONIA AS MATERIAL HELP

Diakonia can be arranged as material assistance to those in need. The gift of money that the apostle Paul collected for the congregation in Jerusalem on his third missionary journey is the nearest example of diakonia as a material help (2 Cor 9:12-13; Rom 15:31; 2 Cor 8:4 and 2 Cor 9:1). As already indicated in earlier chapters of this dissertation, the assistance from the congregation of Antioch to the congregation in Jerusalem is referred to as diakonia or service (Acts 11:9 and Acts 12:25). Therefore the church in developing countries must always be cautious of its servanthood.

6.3.2 DIAKONIA AS SPIRITUAL HELP

Diakonia is also seen as a spiritual help. In Acts 6:4, diakonia is referred to as a ministry of the Word. In 2 Cor 5:17, Paul refers to diakonia or service as ministry of reconciliation.

There are other services of the apostles and various other services in the congregations that are referred to as diakonia, e.g. we also



meet deacons undertaking various of both the apostle Paul and the first Christian communities who regarded their job and their mission as one big diakonia arising from the new life in Christ.

6.4 JESUS CHRIST AS MODEL OF DIAKONIA SERVANT

The church is an instrument of God in carrying out God's mission. It was Jesus' mission to bring wholeness in people. In Mark 10:45 and John 13 Jesus is the great servant and his successors are called to carry on his service or diakonia.

Opocensky puts it well that: "The Son of Man has come to serve us, and in his footsteps we are sent out to serve. Jesus of Nazareth is an example and a paradigm of what true service means" (2000:223). This is what Mugambe is saying that: "The church and each one of us is challenged to become agents of social transformation, proclaiming hope where there is war, joy where there is conflict, harmony where there is discord, clarity where there is confusion, light where there is darkness" (Temple et al 2007: 35). The church should therefore ensure that in the context of privatization of water system, the poor get the essential service due to them, i.e. water supply, etc.

One big characteristic in Jesus' service is that he never placed himself above men, but was always in solidarity with men. This is what diakonia is all about. Any one carrying out diakonia never places himself / herself above the person he / she reaches out in diakonia; hence the church should serve people in situations such as that of privatization of water system and the poor cannot afford to pay for it.



As member of the body of Christ, the church and the congregation have the call to continue the service of Christ. Diakonia is not therefore a task of service of the individual, but the call or service and task of the congregation. It is for this reason that the author supports the saying that the church without diakonia is an amputated church. She needs to take her prophetic nature of the gospel to heart, and perform the serving function by protecting people against unjust acts such as privatization of water system.

It is God's design to gather all creation under the Lordship of Christ (cf. Eph 1:10), to bring humanity and all creation into communion, and to a reflection of the communion in the Triune God. The Church is God's instrument in fulfilling this goal. It is called to manifest God's mercy to humanity, and to bring humanity to its purpose, to praise and glorify God together with all the heavenly hosts. The mission of the Church is to serve the purpose of God as a gift given to the world in order that all may believe (Jn 17:21). The above thoughts challenge the way globalization is acting by excluding the poor.

As persons who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, Christians are called to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed. They are to address those who have not heard, as well as those who are no longer living according to the Gospel, the Good News of the reign of God. They are called to live its values and to be a foretaste of that reign in the world.

Mission thus belongs to the very being of the Church. This is a central implication of affirming the apostolicity of the Church, which is inseparable from the other three attributes of the Church, viz:



unity, holiness and catholicity. All attributes relate both to the nature of God's own being and to the practical demands of authentic mission. If in the life of the Church, any of them is impaired, the Church's mission is compromised.

The Church, embodying in its own life the mystery of salvation and the transfiguration of humanity, participates in the mission of Christ to reconcile all things to God and to one another through Christ (2 Cor. 5:18-21; Rom 8:18-25). Through its worship (leitourgia); service, which includes the stewards of creation (diakonia); and proclamation (kerygma) the Church participates in and points to the reality of the Kingdom of God. In the power of the Holy Spirit the Church testifies to the divine mission in which the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

In exercising its mission, the Church cannot be true to itself without giving witness (martyria) to God's will for the salvation and transformation of the world. That is why it started at once preaching the Word, bearing witness to the great deeds of God and inviting everyone to repentance (metanoia), baptism (Acts 2:37-38) and the fuller life that is enjoyed by the followers of Jesus (Jn 10:10).

It is the church's responsibility to be God's instrument for peace as St. Francis of Assisi prayed:

***“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;***



***where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.***

***O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much
Seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal
life.
Amen.”***

As Christ's mission encompassed the preaching of the Word of God and the commitment to care for those suffering and in need, so the apostolic Church in its mission from the beginning combined preaching of the Word, the call to repentance, faith, baptism and diakonia. This the Church understands as an essential dimension of its identity. The Church in this way signifies, participates in, and anticipates the new humanity God wants, and also serves to proclaim God's grace in human situations and needs until Christ comes in glory (Mt 25:31).

Because the servanthood of Christ entails suffering it is evident (as expressed in the New Testament writings) that the witness (martyria) of the Church will entail – for both individuals and for the community - the way of the cross, even to the point of martyrdom (Mt 10:16-33; 16:24-28).



The Church is called and empowered to share the suffering of all by advocacy and care for the poor, the needy and the marginalized. This entails critically analyzing and exposing unjust structures, and working for their transformation. The reader will understand the reason why the church should address the issue of privatization of water system. This is what president Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, first President of Tanzania meant when he said: “Unless it participates actively in the rebellion against those structures and organisations which condemn people to poverty and degradation, the church will become irrelevant” (Nyerere: 1968). The Church is called to proclaim the words of hope and comfort of the Gospel, by its works of compassion and mercy (Lk. 4:18-19).

It is against this background that Maluleke make mention of the fact that: “The question of the poor affects all people but more so the Christian Church. There would be something central missing from Christianity if it were to lose sight of the plight of the poor and the justice due to them” (1997:7).

This faithful witness may involve Christians themselves in suffering for the sake of the Gospel. The Church is called to heal and reconcile broken human relationships and to be God’s instrument in the reconciliation of human division and hatred (2 Cor. 5:18-21). It is also called, together with all people of goodwill, to care for the integrity of creation in addressing the abuse and destruction of God’s creation, and to participate in God’s healing of broken relationships between creation and humanity. It is sent into the



world to be stewards of creation, to do justice and to work for reconciliation in a divided world.

In the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church is called to proclaim faithfully the whole teaching of Christ and to share the Good News of the Kingdom – that is, the totality of apostolic faith, life and witness – with everyone throughout the entire world. Thus the Church seeks faithfully to proclaim and live the love of God for all, and to fulfill Christ’s mission for the salvation and transformation of the world, to the glory of God.

God restores and enriches communion with humanity, granting eternal life in God’s Triune Being. Through redeemed humanity the whole world is meant to be drawn to the goal of restoration and salvation. This divine plan reaches its fulfilment in the new heaven and the new earth (cf. Rev 21:1) in God’s holy Kingdom.

6.5 THE CHURCH’S RESPONSE TO PRIVATIZATION OF WATER SYSTEM

The biblical insights regarding the centrality of water to life, and water as a sacred gift, motivate advocacy for water as a basic human right. Just as the Biblical Jubilee tradition declared that land belonged to God and was only entrusted to individual families. Similarly, water should also be a common good for global use. To treat it as a gift of God and a human right implies that clean, fresh water should be available to meet the basic needs of all, rather than as a private commodity.



This goal requires the support and expansion of community-based initiatives such as those mentioned at the end of the previous section. There are many more encouraging examples of the effectiveness of community-based organisation in meeting people's water needs. A refocusing of Official Development Aid (ODA) is also required. Only 12 percent of total aid to the water sector in 2000-2001 went to countries where less than 60 percent of the population had access to safe water.

Like its master, the church is uniquely placed to provide effective relief in times of distress. Right from the beginning of his ministry, Jesus identified himself with the marginalized. The Gospel of Luke comes out very clear in identifying Jesus' diaconal ministry. In chapter 4 of this Gospel, Jesus puts his mission very clearly when He says:

“The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me; He has sent me to announce good news to the poor, to proclaim release for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour”. (Luke 4: 17-18)

It is very clear that Jesus identifies two roles of his ministry at this point. The preaching of the Word (The Good New, Gospel) and caring to the marginalized.

It is the church's responsibility to care based on the needs of people. To look at the world's reality from the perspective of people, especially the oppressed and the excluded. Through his church Jesus continues to extend his ministry and care for people (Haugk 1984:35). In the New Testament the poor are referred to



as the needy, indigent, the poor who are meek and calm. James says Faith and Deeds go together. He puts it very interestingly that “faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (James 3:26).

In the midst of injustice, cultural dislocation and other ills plaguing the world, the church is the light and the leaven in human society. Her mission is one of being witness and serving the entire human community. She does not only save souls for heaven, but also humanize the social life of human kind and arouse in them a sense of personal responsibility in promoting a social, political, economic and spiritual order that is in line with the divine will for the world. Khoza Mgojo better explains this that: “The church should be prophetic and pastoral simultaneously” (Pityana et al). This implies therefore, that the church must continue to play its prophetic role of exposing the ills of society and also going a step further to rehabilitate the survivors of human selfishness and greed.

This is better explained by Nyomi the General Secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) in his address to the Christian Lifestyle Conference of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, when he urged participants to resist consumerism through ethical investing, the use of fairly traded products and by advocating for economy and ecological justice.

In his address Nyomi discusses the role of the church in society saying: we cannot yield to the rather mediocre view in which the powers that manage God's household today convince us that



individual needs and greed are more important than the needs of the community and that privatization and the motif of unbridled profit are paramount even if they oppress large numbers of people.

Without a critical analysis, we could be engaged in idolatry in which particular economic systems become gods – the only solution. This is one reason WARC is engaged with some of its sister organizations in the building of a covenanting for justice movement (March 2007.)

If God is sovereign over all of life, Nyomi asked, how can Reformed Christians today stand by as millions of people around the globe are suffering and dying because of the way the world's economic systems operates?

Many people do not have enough money to buy food, privatized drinking water, decent health care or education while Structural Adjustment Programmes imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank further exacerbate their plight” (March 2007).

Reformed faith has taught us that we cannot stay silent in the face of these realities. The church is called to follow Jesus and to serve in this world where he is present before we enter it and where he suffers with the least of our brothers and sisters.

The Bible tells us that God cares for those who suffer and calls on believers to challenge systems that fail to exhibit concern for those



on the margins of society through no fault of their own. Reformed theology refuses to blame the poor for their poverty.

How can we remain silent when the way the household is managed leads to death for some people in the household? Today we can see it in all those suffering around the world, particularly in Africa. The mission of the church is to care for them, to speak on behalf of the voiceless and, walking in the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth, to serve without being subservient. From time immemorial until today the Son of Man suffers with all those who are discriminated against, oppressed and exploited. The church is called upon to be the messenger, ambassador and co-worker of Jesus Christ in the continuing process of transformation and humanisation.

When church members are experiencing troubles in their lives, it is the responsibility of the church community to respond. We are called upon to be actively engaged in resisting anything that denies fullness of life. As a church we are called to serve each other and to be faithful stewards of the entire creation.

The Accra Confession, a statement on neoliberal economic globalization by WARC's 24th General Council states that it is contrary to Christian faith to remain silent in the face of the current economic system that kills millions. It is therefore, contrary to Christian faith if the church remains silent while millions are denied access to safe drinking water.



As already indicated and inescapably, the Church has the Biblical mandate to respond to human needs in all manifestations. To ignore this responsibility is to deny the Lordship of Christ over the Church. Robert Wuthnow is vocal that: “The fellowship of believers is expected to be service, not only to one another within its own group, but to the needs of others, whether this be the immediate neighbourhood or the wider community of human kind. This is vital to any discussion of the church’s role now and in the future” (1993:33).

It is therefore, the researcher’s view that the church cannot sit back and watch when the government is privatising natural resources such as water, making it unaffordable to the poor. Barlow puts it clearly that: “When water is privatized prices are set on the open market. As a result, millions of poor people have been cut off” (1999:16). The research is intended at mobilizing the church leadership and other stakeholders to be the voice of the poor so that commodification of the world’s water supply is stopped since without this resource there is no life.

The share of Africa, where the need is extremely high, even decreased slightly during recent years. Many water and sanitation projects are financed through loans rather than grants. For example, in 2000-2001, about 57 percent of the total ODA in the water sector took the form of loans, thus increasing foreign debts. Developed countries should urgently fulfil their obligation to help poor countries to be able to guarantee and protect the human right to water, and adjust their ODA politics accordingly.



The human right to water is recognized as a precondition for other human rights – such as the right to life, appropriate nutrition and sufficient medical care (UN Doc. E/C.12/2002/11). This principle is at odds with the drive toward privatization and distribution of water supplies. The WCC delegation to the UN Twelfth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development underlined that:

... private ownership... makes impossible the protection of a ‘right’ as it makes a ‘commodity’ that is ‘tradable’ for a price and at a profit ‘Privatization’ in the context of ownership of water replaces community and people’s ownership. Such an approach is a serious roadblock to achieving the Millennium Development Goal on water that seeks to reduce by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water by 2015.

The urgent challenge, both in the South and the North, is to develop a positive vision of the public sector models that are responsive and effective in meeting water needs. The purpose should be clearly not to promote blueprints, but rather to create space for local communities to develop their own solutions and maintain their traditional rights and approaches to water use.

The UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR) encourages the call for the right to water as a basic human right. In its General Comment #15 on the implementation of Articles 11 and 12 of the International Convent on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the committee noted that “the human right to water is indispensable for leading a life in human dignity. It is a prerequisite for the realization of other human rights”.



This human right has received global recognition and is firmly established in a number of international human rights instruments. By ratifying these treaties and instruments, the states have voluntarily accepted the obligations to progressively realize the right to water and sanitation.

Again, the WCC delegation stated that: “Water needs the protection of international law that incorporates a right-based approach. A water convenient binding under international law would champion a forward-looking water policy that is based on the human right to water, recognize water as a common good of humanity, safeguard the basis of life for future generations and create equitable distribution. Behind the call for binding law are questions of principle such as: Is access to water a human right or just a need? Is water a common good or a tradable commodity? Who has authority over access to water?”

It is the researcher’s view that an international water convention is needed for the following reasons:

- (i) To establish the right to water for all people in a binding manner.
- (ii) To guarantee the right to water for the coming generations.
- (iii) To protect water as a public good belonging to humanity and the rest of creation.
- (iv) To declare as a core task of governments to guarantee the right to water, and making national-states and their authorities responsible for the respect, protection and fulfilment of the right to water.



- (v) To prevent water from being privatized and degraded to a tradable good.
- (vi) To ensure that the human right to water takes precedence over international trade agreements (e.g. WTO).
- (vii) To place springs, groundwater, rivers and lakes under the comprehensive protection of international law.
- (viii) To guarantee women's water-related rights as human rights.
- (ix) To protect the local and national water rights of Indigenous Peoples under international law.
- (x) To enshrine traditional water culture and local water rights (e.g. of nomads) in national law.
- (xi) To ensure that people have a democratic right in determining and deciding national and local water strategies.
- (xii) To provide all people both internationally and domestically with effective judicial remedies for demanding fulfilment of the right to water.

The above will help churches to address this great monster that is making the rich richer and the poor poorer.

6.6 THE CHURCH AND THE ACCESSIBILITY OF WATER TO ALL

It is God's intention that every living creature should have access to water, the precious free gift of life he provided to his creation. As God's steward, the church should partake in the public and international discussion on water management. The church needs to discuss issues such as:



- **Precautionary principle with regard to water**

Here, the church need to check that whatever measurement regarding the handling of water is considered and discussed so that it does not lead to pollution, reduction in water supply, loss and damage to the water ecosystem.

The churches should be appalled by the economic destruction and environmental impact of most economic activities. In Southern Africa for example, forests are destroyed, natural habitats ruined all in the name of economic development. Deforestation and environmental degradation increase global warming which leads to increases in natural disasters such as cyclones, flooding and droughts.

It is the researcher's view that humanity should protect the environment and preserve the earth, which belongs to the Lord. The researcher's view is that economic progress and development should benefit all creation and not destroy what we have. He also believes in preserving natural filter like the wetlands and climate regulators than trusting it to commercial alternatives.

- **Protection from pollution**

Growing human populations have reduced the amount of water available per person and increased pollution of drinking water. More than 5 million people die each year from diseases caused by unsafe drinking water and a lack of water for sanitation and washing. When rainwater carries



fertilizers and pesticides from farms into lakes and rivers, fish and other creatures die. Pollution by chemicals' use in pesticides (such as DDT and dieldrin) and industrial process has long-term harmful effects, and cause cancers, birth defects and infertility (Adeyemo 2000:616).

- **Principle of transparency**

The church needs to monitor that all decisions with regard to the handling of water is transparent and to empower consumers to fight hidden profit mechanism such as profit and corruption.

- **Public participation**

There is a need for public participation with regard to the handling of water resource. This will ensure that the interests of all stakeholders, including animals and plants, are reasonably upheld. In chapter two of this dissertation, the author discusses the whole question of the need for public participation in the handling of water resource.

- **Principle of public control**

In the case where water is left in the hands of private sectors, the church need to ensure that independent control systems are in place so as to safeguard reasonable prices for water services. This will ensure that the poor are not cut off and left without water supply,



- **Taking sides with the voiceless**

As indicated in chapter four of this dissertation, the church should ensure that the voices of the voiceless are voiced. This will ensure that the interest of the poor and the marginalized are taken care of.

- **The principle of subsidiary**

The church must also ensure that decisions on the handling of water resource must take place at the lowest possible level so as to serve basic interests of all water users.

Keeping these benchmarks in mind, and at the same time reflecting on the spiritual dimension of questions related to water. Churches can become main contributors to a future world that reflects other values than just those of a trade-and-profit mentality.

Churches could become places of inspiration and change wherever and whenever they provide a model and example to community in general, by the way they handle water in their own life, using water-saving technology and encouraging their members to make personal life-style adjustments to their consumption of water.

Perhaps, more than any other, the church in the New Testament record, the church in Antioch providing a good model of holistic ministry. **It was a compassionate church.** When famine in Judea took place, every believer in Antioch



“The disciples, each according to his/her ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea” (Acts 11:29).

Clearly, the Church that is the incarnate body of Christ on earth has to “be moved with compassion” at the sight of human misery around us like the Church of Antioch. It has a relief responsibility to the hungry, thirsty, naked, homeless, sick and other forms of human needs today, such as that of water.

The failing of world economies, globalization, mismanagement of natural resources, global warming creates massive calamities to millions of people.

The church in her shepherding role should have a part to play in globalization and work to make it just. This can happen if the church:

- Strengthens the sense of community in society.
- Promotes cooperation and participation at all levels, particularly that of the poor, women and children.
- Helps to promote social welfare and human security.
- Calls for equality and justice, and practicing them itself.
- Demand transparent democratic procedures in important economic decision – making processes such as the management of water resources.
- Appeal for everyone to participate in protecting the environment and lastly.
- Help people to experience that life is meaningful.



While realizing that there are limits to the understanding of the church's power to take action, the church is encouraged to seek cooperation with as many different partners as possible. The church should cooperate in ongoing dialogue with politicians, business representatives and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the region on the one hand, and with the groups critical of globalization today on the other.



6.7 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

The church witnesses the massive violation of human dignity and the integrity of creation. She witnesses how the poor are impoverished by water privatization, the suffering, enormous economic and social disparity, abject poverty and the destruction of life resulting from the after effects of the above.

The church and all believers are called upon to be non-conformist and transformative communities. We are called to let ourselves be transformed by the freeing our minds from imperial mindset, thus doing the will of God. We are called to create spaces for, and become agents of transformation even as we are entangled in and complicit with the very system we are called to change.

Churches need to accept and assume the vocation to challenge all the evil forces that are taking away that human dignity from God's people. She is called to be with the suffering people and groaning creation in solidarity with those who are building alternative communities of life. She is called to make an explicit and public commitment of faith in word and deed by caring for life and resisting destructive principalities and powers. Following are ways in which the churches can express their faithfulness to God:

1. By opting for costly discipleship, preparing to become martyrs by following Jesus.
2. By taking a faith stance when the powers of injustice and destruction question the very integrity of the gospel; confessing their faith by saying "No!" to powers and principalities.



3. By participating in the communion (koinonia) of the Triune God for fullness of life.
4. By sharing the suffering and pain of the people and the earth in company with the spirit, who is groaning with the whole creation (Rom 8: 22-23).
5. By covenanting for justice in life together with people particularly the poor and the rest of creation.
6. By being in solidarity with the suffering people such as the poor, the marginalized, the ecosystem earth, and in resistance to powers of injustice and destruction.

The churches are challenged to join in the struggle for justice by resisting unjust and destructive powers and by working to build a healthy society be it local, regional, continental and global.