

UNITY AT CROSS-ROADS:
A SOUTHERN AFRICAN MISSIOLOGICAL CASE STUDY

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that UNITY AT CROSS-ROADS: A SOUTHERN AFRICAN MISSIOLOGICAL CASE STUDY is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signed in Erasmusrand, Pretoria on the 26 April 2017

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SUMMARY

This thesis is a missiological case study on organic unity in the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA). The purpose of this study is to revisit the subject of unity within the UPCSA consisting of three countries, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia in the period 1999-2009 and to assess how far the denomination has progressed with unity since the merger between the former Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (RPCSA), predominantly black church and a white dominated Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (PCSA) in September 1999.

The study observes that the union was based on what is now considered to be inadequate preparation and as a result many unresolved problems have emerged to test the witness of the denomination and to hamper the consolidation of the union. Hence despite ten years of organic union unity seems to be at cross-roads. In this connection, this case study will examine some key challenges inherent in already achieved structural unity in the UPCSA. For the purpose of this study the challenges which came under discussion centred around ministerial formation, differentiation in stipends of ministers and conflicts which have dogged the process of amalgamation of church associations in the UPCSA.

It appears that these challenges are a consequence of organic union which was rooted on secular rather than theological foundations which were supposed to guide and inform the merger. The study argues that these challenges demonstrate that a struggle continues for a genuinely unified UPCSA and therefore it would be naive to assume that the denomination is not plagued with its own difficulties in achieving unity. This study will argue that although it is fundamental that the church of Christ must be united, the unresolved challenges which have been highlighted in this study are a litmus test for the UPCSA to wait and assess whether it has already achieved tangible unity.

Furthermore, these challenges indicate that structural union was ongoing process, the historic moment which took place in 1999 with the union of the two denominations was merely the beginning of wrestling with some of these realities. The concluding chapter will bring the subject of unity within the UPCSA to closure by drawing reflections and evaluating the model of union which guided and informed the merger as an important

lead to understanding the intricacies relating to the challenges already highlighted and the implications thereof.

KEY TERMS

Unity, Mission, Encounterology, Church of Scotland, Church Unity Commission, Special Commission on Union, Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, Bantu Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, Ministerial formation, Africanisation, Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa, stipends, Church Associations, Men Christian Guild, Presbyterian Women's Fellowship, Uniting Presbyterian Women At Work, Women's Association and Women's Christian Association.

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

ABBREVIATIONS

AMC: African Mission Committee

BPCSA: Bantu Presbyterian Church in South Africa

CS: Church of Scotland

CUC: Church Unity Commission

ECSU: Executive Committee of Special Commission on Union

EPCSA: Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

FC: Free Church

FEDSEM: Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa

GMS: Glasgow Missionary Society

LMS: London Missionary Society

MCG: Men Christian Guild

RPCSA: Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

SACC: South African Council of Churches

SPCM: Scottish Presbyterian Church Mission

PCA: Presbyterian Church in Africa

PCSA: Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

PMA: Presbyterian Men's Fellowship

UCCSA: United Congregational Church of Southern Africa

UFC: United Free Church

UP: University of Pretoria

UPBLF: Uniting Presbyterian Black Leadership Forum

UPCSA: Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

UPMF: Uniting Presbyterian Men's Fellowship

UPWF: Uniting Presbyterian Women's Fellowship

UPWW: Uniting Presbyterian Women at Work

WA: Women's Association

WCA: Women's Christian Association

WARC: World Alliance of Reformed Churches

WCRC: World Communion of Reformed Churches

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CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the problem

This thesis is a missiological case study on organic unity in the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) in the period 1999-2009. Since the latter part of the nineteenth century various unsuccessful attempts were made to effect the union between the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, (RPCSA from here on) a predominantly black church (formerly the Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa, 1923-1979 [BPCSA], and the white dominated Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, (PCSA from hereon).

The political situation certainly was a major contributing factor in the failure of unity negotiations, given the three centuries of colonialism and 50 years of apartheid, in which human identities were shaped and hardened into racialised, oppositional and exclusionary patterns of life which in turn deliberately created socio-economic and political wedges between black and white people in South Africa. According to August (2012:144) this history of estrangement and alienation consequently contributed towards a Presbyterian family of churches being divided along racial and ethnic lines. Formal negotiations between PCSA and RPCSA came to a halt for a considerable number of years owing largely to the racially polarized situation in South Africa. However the General Assemblies of the two denominations reiterated that even though they failed to reach general consensus, doors for further talks on unity were not closed and committed the Churches to working towards better relationships through increased contact and cooperation.

The changing political landscape with the demise of apartheid and the dawn of a new democracy presented an opportune moment to seal a process of unity negotiations that has been long and tedious between these two denominations.

The history that had maintained separation now facilitated reconciliation. As a result on the 26 September 1999 the RPCSA and PCSA merged to form the current Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA from hereon) consisting of three countries South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia. The subsequent union as Duncan (2006:23) has rightly observed was based on what are now considered to be inadequate preparations, as a result of the union taking place within a comparatively short time and without very important policies in place during the embryonic stages of the merger. For instance, there was no new manual of law, practice and procedure, no policy on ministerial training and no agreement on the location of the General Assembly office. Furthermore, it seemed the very political changing landscape in South Africa was instrumental in the two denominations (i.e. PCSA and RPCSA) rooting church unity upon secular foundations rather than theological understandings. For example, according to Buqa (2012:24) the basic foundations which were supposed to guide and inform the unification process adopted by the 1995 Assemblies of PCSA and RPCSA are:

- a United Church is valid witness to the power of reconciliation in a divided society;
- the fullness of Christian truth and worship between the two churches can only be truly expressed in unity;
- the church is truly the church when it ignores external factors and denominational labels;
- the two churches were formed not as separate churches but as two branches of one church;
- a negative social and political situation has been overcome;
- obedience to the gospel demands unity.

If one studies these reasons carefully it becomes clear that secular imperatives dominated the theological foundations which were supposed to guide and inform the organic union. A secular model of union was also motivated by the fact that the former RPCSA was embarrassed that secular institutions were taking a lead in matters of reconciliation and to building a united nation while the church seemed to be being reactive rather than proactive (Duncan 2005a:41). Therefore it was equally important that the former two denominations also reflect unity at ecclesial level since according to De Gruchy in (Saayman (1984:126) there is a “direct connection between the unity of the church and the social situation in South Africa”.

Many unresolved challenges have emerged to test this model of union as well as the witness of the UPCSA in her search for authentic unity.

Hence despite ten years of organic union unity seems to be at cross-roads. The study will examine some key challenges inherent in already achieved structural unity in the UPCSA. In this connection, the challenges which have been identified for the purpose of this study are ministerial formation, differentiation in stipends of ministers and problems that have dogged church associations. I will argue that these challenges demonstrate that a struggle continues for a genuinely unified UPCSA and therefore it would be naive to assume that the denomination is not plagued with its own difficulties in achieving unity. Although it is fundamental that the church of Christ must be united, the unresolved challenges which have been highlighted in this study are a litmus test for the UPCSA to wait and assess whether it has already achieved tangible unity.

The study will further argue that structural unity in the UPCSA has by and large not been able to assist in overcoming the old divides between the former denominations (i.e. RPCSA and PCSA) as well as the history marked by elimination, assimilation, domination, abandonment, toleration and alienation. Thus within the diverse constituency such as the UPCSA often the subject of unity invokes a myriad of responses ranging from positive to negative; as a result a struggle continues to

embrace diversity as an attempt to becoming an integrated, wholesome community (Duncan 2004:467) is espousing. Whilst not many are willing to concede to these differences especially within certain white quarters of the UPCSA, let alone discuss them, these challenges will continue to have definite implications for tangible unity in the UPCSA.

It is fallacious to assume that the UPCSA is constituted only by its leadership. Therefore it is important that tangible unity be established not only at structural levels, but at grassroots levels as well. In this regard Xapile (in Duncan 2005a:40) reminds us that church unity 'cannot be discussed in isolation from the experience of those involved'. In this regard I therefore concur with Saayman (1984:115) that there is a need for a clear and more consistent interaction between unity at the local and at the structural level. This study seeks to revisit the subject of unity within the UPCSA. As much as organic unity was noble and legitimate it has become necessary to explore to what extent the already achieved unity which gave birth to UPCSA has yielded any fruits.

To assist in this research for sound answers to the problems raised above, I need to formulate research questions that will help interrogate the various aspects of the problem and thus help engender answers pertinent to the nature of the problem identified. Therefore the next paragraph hopes to formulate such a question.

1.2 The research question

In an attempt to address the above-mentioned problem I will broach the following research questions and discuss them briefly:

1.2.1 Historical survey of the two churches prior the merger

What were the dynamics at play which led to the formation of these two churches? My hypothesis is that to ascertain the challenges faced by UPCSAs in its quest for unity is equally important to understand the historical background of both the RPCSA and the PCSA before structural unity. It is against such background one can locate some of the challenges inherent in structural unity in the UPCSAs. More important, what are these challenges? Can they be named unflinchingly with integrity? To what extent is the church leadership prepared to own up to these challenges? Subsequently, will they be noble enough to make a commitment, or at least make a statement of intent, towards resolving some of these challenges facing UPCSAs, with a view to achieve tangible unity.

1.2.2 Unity talks in context

What kind of efforts were made by both denominations to achieve structural unity and the struggles which ensued thereof? Who were the role players spearheading the merger? Did they share the same vision, or were they just motivated by self-interest? What impact did the historical developments in the country and elsewhere have on processes which gave birth to the UPCSAs? What kind of union model/s was adopted to guide the unification process that gave birth to UPCSAs? Did this union model have any shortcomings? These questions are useful to help us understand the complex dynamics at play leading up to structural unity of UPCSAs.

1.2.3 On the current state of UPCSAs

What is the current state of UPCSAs? Are there any interventions to address the challenges which have been identified in this study to salvage the already achieved unity? My hypothesis is that the challenges which have plagued the UPCSAs

presently have far reaching implications for church unity and it betrays the mission and vision statement of the denomination which claims that the Church is *ONE*. This study seeks to provide a clear picture of what the UPCSA looks like in terms of various features. In this regard where necessary I may require applying social analysis tools that I consider effective to ascertain issues underlying the state in which UPCSA finds itself.

1.2.4 Unity in retrospection

The basic assumption is that “unity” presupposes, among other things, people who share one faith, have one calling, are baptised with one baptism, eat of one bread and drink from one cup, work for one cause, share one hope, suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness and together fight against all which may hinder unity. Given the diverse nature of the UPCSA are these values of unity shared across the denomination? By no means, I am not suggesting that the rank and file in the UPCSA are basically the same in terms of values and worldview or on the same level in terms of social and economic power or privilege. It is essential to say farewell to such “innocence,” since it ignores power factors but also allows systems of inequality and patterns of alienation within theology to remain unchallenged. However, I still believe that there are common values of unity which are shared across the denomination. Can such values perhaps be useful in cultivating a culture that could galvanise members across the denomination to work towards a common purpose? My hypothesis is that such ethos can only gain credibility if they are not reduced to mere “*slogans*” but lived out by the rank and file in the UPCSA.

1.3 Aims and objectives of the study

- The purpose of this study is to assess how far the current Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) operating in three countries, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia, has progressed with unity since the merger between the former Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (RPCSA), a predominantly black church and a white dominated Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (PCSA) in September 1999. Therefore this study seeks to revisit the subject of unity within the UPCSA.
- To trace the historical factors which led to the formation of Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. Such history is important for at least two reasons; it helps us to understand some of the challenges and dynamics faced by the UPCSA in its quest for unity as well as explaining the various features which define and inform the UPCSA currently.
- To examine how the unity negotiations by both the Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (PCSA) and Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa (BPCSA), renamed (Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa in 1979) unfolded, leading up to the establishment of the United Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) in 1999.
- To further establish the kind of models of union which guided the process of unification which led to the formation of the UPCSA in 1999.
- To identify unresolved challenges which have emerged to test the witness of the UPCSA in her search for authentic unity during the period in question. In this connection, the challenges which have been identified for the purpose of this study are namely, ministerial formation, differentiation in stipends of ministers and the process of the amalgamation of church associations in a new denomination.
- To give a summary and balanced analysis of the findings of this study and draw conclusions as well as proposing recommendations regarding unity in the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA).

1.4 The relevance of the study

The concept of “*unity*” has come under spotlight in missiological circles and various mission conferences have dealt with the theme of unity extensively (i.e. Lausanne, 1974, Nairobi, 1975). However one needs to point out that these ecumenical conferences focussed on “*church and unity*” in general while less attention was given on “*unity*” with special references to different denominations. The subject of unity has generated a great deal of interest within the UPCSA and different formations of the denomination.

For instance, the theme of the Men’s Christian Guild (MCG) in 2007 was *Union at Crossroads: Time to unlock the barriers*. What makes this study unique is that it pays attention to a particular denomination of the Presbyterian family of churches, namely the UPCSA and how church unity has unfolded since 1999. This study is a humble and simple attempt to galvanise an earnest debate about the subject of unity in the UPCSA. Furthermore, the study attempts *to engage all stakeholders to take a stock and fresher look at unity in the UPCSA at different levels other than structural*.

This study is important for various reasons. First, it could serve as an important source of information for the UPCSA. Through a study of this nature, the UPCSA may be able to re-examine and assess how far unity has progressed for the past ten years. Finally, a study of this magnitude may help the UPCSA to ascertain the challenges facing it in its quest for unity. This study could also serve as a document for historians, missiologists and scholars in other related fields.

1.5 The timing of the study

The study on unity in the UPCSA has proved to be interesting given the rich history of this church. Secondly the current period in the life of UPCSA is a tumultuous period because conversations concerning “*church unity*” have vacillated from

'promising' to *'discouraging'*. For example, in certain black and white quarters of the UPCSA the merger is seen as a success story while in some circles it is regarded as a failure. Thirdly while I try to present my thesis in terms of the past, the reality is that many events and debates (official and unofficial) are on-going and are inconclusive.

This then makes this study difficult, on the one hand, and also frustrating on the other. It is difficult in a sense that the rank and file including the leadership in the UPCSA have divergent views on the subject of unity. The frustration is further compounded by the failure or inability to go back to claims I had made on some specific events, persons etc., and to put them in a correct time frame and time references. I therefore submit that even as the study lands in the hands of subsequent readers and critics, some issues would as a matter of fact be outdated.

1.6 Personal stance

The personal position and stance of a researcher is an important aspect of any research methodology. Neutrality is impossible in any human endeavour (Kritzinger 1988:19). Thus for Kritzinger (2011:7) is important to explain who you are and where you come from, and what your interests or biases are, since these issues have a fundamental impact on how you interpret a certain phenomenon.

In the light of this statement, it is important to indicate my personal stance from the very outset with reference to the subject matter of the present study. I embark on this study as a non-member of UPCSA therefore I speak as an outsider. However I think a study of this nature demands that one be a participant observer as far as

possible to avoid what Kritzinger (1988:2) terms behaving like the proverbial *'fly on the wall'* which listens and observes without being seen. More importantly Mouton (2001:148) states that 'participant observation provides an in-depth description of a group of people or community. Such descriptions are embedded in the life worlds of actors being studied and produce insider perspectives of the actors and their practices'.

In this regard I attended some special occasions and activities such as church associations' events to gain in-depth understanding of various features of UPCSA. I regard this study as an interpersonal encounter with UPCSA in the journey for struggle towards authentic *"unity"*. Kritzinger (2012:1) reminds us that research in theology and human sciences is about the meeting between people, often focused in a one-on-one encounter. This is the case in this study, UPCSA is constituted by its membership (that includes leadership) and I should respect these people as subjects in their own right therefore this study is not about a subject and an object, but two subjects entering into a conversation.

Some of the information contained in this study has been gathered over time in informal conversations, meetings and personal experience. I am also undertaking this study motivated by serious concern about the direction *"unity"* is taking in the UPCSA. In my encounter with some members of the UPCSA and leaders alike, the subject of *"unity"* has always come under spotlight and I often bear the scars of often heated debates on this matter. Moreover, this study is an academic undertaking in which I take the issue of *"unity"* in the UPCSA seriously and attempt to identify the challenges inherent in the unification process.

1.7 Research methods and sources

According to Masuku (2010:5) a combination of a set of literature and interviews can enhance one's study as part of the research methods and sources. Similarly this study relied on both primary and secondary sources as well as interviews to supplement and enrich the findings of this study. This study employed these two approaches which converge at a point of conversation where they are used interactively. Thus there is no specific section in which interviews are treated separately but will dialogue interchangeably with a set of literature. The interviews feature prominently in chapters four and five and they have added more personal information which has not been completely covered in some of the literature study I undertook.

1.7.1 Literature study

This study is both a historical account and a missiological analysis. It attempts to trace the history of UPCSA and the dynamics and challenges which unfolded in its quest for “unity”. The study is based on documentary evidence that includes minutes, reports, other documents of meetings and periodicals, such as, *inter alia*, *The Journal of Theology for Southern Africa (JTSA)*.

Most of this study is based on the unpublished and published documents. I relied on the latter with special reference to the subject of “church and unity”. The book entitled: “*Unity and mission: a study of the concept of unity in ecumenical discussions since 1961 and its influence on the world mission of the church*” by Professor WA Saayman, was useful since it deals with the subject of “mission and unity” extensively and different ecumenical conferences which deliberated on this theme. His journal article in *Missionalia* (1988) was also helpful in locating this debate within the Reformed family of churches of which UPCSA is one. Rev Dr Douglas Bax, booklet titled. *The Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa: An Introduction* was helpful on the history of PCSA.

The primary sources at the Central Office of the UPCSA in Parktown, Johannesburg were useful when sketching the historical survey of the UPCSA. Articles by Rev Professor G Duncan on the history of Presbyterianism (Duncan 2006, 2013b, 2013c,) dealt extensively with the history, for the section on the structural unity negotiations by both the PCSA and Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa (BPCSA), renamed (RPCSA in 1979) leading up to the establishment of the United Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) in 1999 and the struggles which ensued I relied on (MA, dissertation) of Rev Dr Spiwo Xapile, the other important source which was useful in this section was the book entitled: *“Unity or Division? The unity struggle of the black churches within the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa”* by Rev Dr Jappie Lapoorta of Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM) even though he is writing from the perspective of this church some of the issues he is raising on unity has relevance to UPCSA.

I read the book entitled: *“The native school that caused the trouble: A history of the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa”* (by Profs Philippe Denis and Graham Duncan) which also gives the glimpses of the historical developments in the UPCSA even though the focus is on theological training.

When it comes to the section on challenges (i.e. chapter 4 and 5) within the UPCSA in its quest for unity, among other sources I used a journal article by Maruping & Tshaka (2010) even though the two authors critique the unification process in the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) the challenges they are raising have a bearing for the UPCSA. Banda (2010:6) consider social sciences method as valuable tool to bring to surface the core issues underlying a particular phenomenon. In this connection, this study will also apply social analysis tools that I consider effective to understand the complexities inherent in the challenges identified in this study. The study also relied on the journal article of the late

Professor Steve de Gruchy 2006. Some of the critical issues the author is raising regarding the involvement of Joseph Wing in the movement of church unity in South Africa and his shortcomings can serve as an important lesson for UPCSA. The book of Rev Dr Jappie Lapporta of AFM was again helpful since in his work, he isolated some of the teething problems which threaten “unity” in the AFM, the work of Rev W Buqa (2012) on conflicts which have dogged church associations as one of the challenges to organic unity in the UPCSA was helpful, for challenges on ministerial stipends I studied the article by Rev AT Tucker (2012). I also studied dissertations, church records, such as, *inter alia*, minutes of the conference and reports since they contain information regarding challenges which have been identified in this study.

1.7.2 Interviews

Interviewing is a valuable tool for obtaining information. This study relied on oral testimonies in a form of interviews to supplement, complement and interrogate literature sources. This process is in line with Holloway and Jefferson (in Masuku 2010:9) who when defining process of qualitative research advised on the identification of “acquaintances” who are willing to be informants to see if they can shed more light on some important information. I approached a number of key people for the purpose of conducting interviews including experienced pastors, lay leaders, and ordinary members associated with the UPCSA.

One form of interviewing is structured, whereby a set of pre-established questions is asked of all the subjects in research (Preston 2007:8). The interviewer controls the interview and there are no opportunities for response. The unstructured interview

can be open-ended or in-depth. The aim here is to gain understanding rather than to gather information. For the purpose of this study, I will use the unstructured, open ended interview in a form of *aide memoire* which is a list of issues, topics and questions that are covered during the interview process.

The *aide memoire* was adapted to the leaders, and senior pastors on the one hand and ordinary members on the other. Buffel (2005:50) notes that the *aide memoire* accords the participants the freedom to view their own concerns and to share in directing flow of conversation. The interview process is underlined by respect of the participants' perspectives. In this study the issues and topics raised in the *aide memoire* have been constructed from those identified in the reviewed literature. The listing of issues and topics is not in any particular order of importance. They will be interviewed one at a time, using pre-determined questions but providing the opportunity for discussion.

1.7.3 Ethical considerations

In this study, as in all studies, there are certain ethical considerations that need to be adhered to. In line with Babbie in (Buffel 2005:47) the study pledges to be carried forward with the spirit of sensitivity related to ethical issues as required in research. The information by participants needs to be protected and they need to be aware of their rights regarding the research. Before conducting the research, a letter of consent from University of Pretoria signed by the supervisor was written to the General Secretary of the UPCSA, the Rev L Mpetsheni requesting permission that I conduct interviews among ministers, lay leaders and members of the UPCSA and the consent was granted to pursue the study.

A letter of consent was given to each informant explaining the nature and process of the research. In this connection Cresswell (in Mpinga 2014:27) postulates that:

Beginning the study involves initial contact with the site and with individuals. It is important to disclose the purpose of the study to participants. This form should indicate that that participating in the study is voluntarily and that place the participants at undue risk.

The study tries as far as possible to adhere to the norm of voluntary participation. This is the norm endorsed by Babbie (1989:473). He reminds us this is a norm that is far easier to accept in theory than in practice. This study therefore proceeds with that recognition that it is difficult to adhere to this norm. In selection of the participants letters will be sent to prospective participants to establish their willingness to participate.

According to Buffel (2005:48) the other important norm of social research is the protection of informants and that is providing confidentiality and anonymity. Before each interview I will request permission to use participant's information in a confidential manner. If they did not wish anything to be recorded, I will comply. To honour this confidentiality, the interview transcripts have not been included, owing to the sensitivity of the topic, and I will use pseudonyms to protect the names of interviews. This is meant to protect the legitimate rights of the informants.

I undertook to provide feedback regarding the outcome of the research to interviewees if asked to do so. As Mpinga (2014:27) suggest during the interview I respected the will of the respondents about all sensitive matters.

1.7.4 Case Study Approach

This study has largely adopted a qualitative case study approach. According to Yin (in Mpinga 2014:11) the qualitative case study approach in its nature contributes to our knowledge of individuals, groups, organisational, social and political related phenomena. The case study method is “concerned with exploring, describing and explaining a phenomenon Glathorn & Joyner in (Mpinga 2014:12). They (ibid:12) further maintain that “case study research is undertaken to provide a detailed description of a particular situation, organization, individual, or event. Cresswell (in Mpinga 2014:11) regard a case study research as a methodology and defines a case study research as: qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real life, contemporary bounded system, (a case) or multiple-bounded systems (cases) overtime, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (sic) (e.g. observations, interviews, documents and reports) and reports a case description and case themes.

This definition is the most appropriate one given the nature of this study which is first and foremost a case study about a particular church (i.e., UPCSA) which is governed by certain structures and systems. Furthermore, various forms of sources were consulted in this study as an attempt to understand different features of this denomination as we have noted above with qualitative case study approach.

Despite the positive elements of the qualitative case study method, there are authors who have serious reservations about this approach. For instance, Yin (in Mpinga 2014:14) argue that one of the short comings about this approach, is that it lacks rigour, too many times, the case study investigator has been sloppy, and has not followed systematic procedures or has allowed equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the direction of findings and conclusion. Nevertheless like (Mpinga 2014:14) I still advocate this approach in this study since it is precisely the in-depth in knowledge that we gain from the case study research that makes this approach valuable.

1.8 Definition of terms

Definition of important key terms and concepts relevant to the topic will be done. Where necessary the etymology of these terms/concepts will be considered. A preliminary list of important terms and concepts include the following:

Mission, Unity, Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, and other related terms will be taken into account in relevant sections for discussion.

(a) Mission

For the purpose of this study and in line with Saayman (2013:134) I wish to describe mission broadly as the integral part and dimension of Christian life in the world, what is popularly known in missiological circles as *missio Dei*. Drawing on Bosch's "dimensional" approach to mission, Saayman (2013:134) points out that in Luke 4:14-21 Jesus of Nazareth understood his calling to be multi-dimensional: evangelising, healing, working for social justice and announcing the year of Jubilee. I wish to turn to Bosch's "dimensional" approach to mission in *Transforming mission* (1991:368-510) since I find it helpful to locate this study within the scope of missiology.

According to Kritzinger (2011:1) in the 1970s David Bosch started saying that mission is a wide, encompassing field of activity, with many dimensions. Given the "pluriverse" nature of missiology as Bosch (1991:7-8) had observed, in *Witness to*

the World (1980), he used the image of a prism, which refracts white light into the seven colours of the rainbow, to illustrate the integral unity of God's one mission as well as the genuine differences between its dimensions. To avoid counter-productive priority contestations, he suggested that we should refrain from treating parts or components of mission (like evangelism and social action) in isolation from each other; they rather be kept in balance. That is how he then proceeded to build the elements of his "postmodern ecumenical paradigm" of mission, which he called Mission as contextualization, Mission as enculturation, etc. A broad spectrum of activities, all of them validly part of inclusive or holistic Christian mission (Kritzinger 2011:1).

In the light of Bosch's dimensional approach to mission, and in the context of this study I will argue that we should also speak of Mission as unity, since unity is an integral dimension of the church's mission on earth. In other words, unity takes place in the context of the mission of the church. The credibility of the organic dimension of unity in the UPCSA is at stake given the challenges which have emerged to test her witness and calls for visible, demonstrable unity.

(b) Unity

The basic assumption is that "*unity*" presupposes, among other things, people who share one faith, have one calling, are baptised with one baptism, eat of one bread and drink from one cup, work for one cause, share one hope, suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness and together fight against all which may hinder unity. In this study I am referring to unity between the Reformed Church in Southern Africa (RPCSA), predominantly black church and a white dominated Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (PCSA) to form the current Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) in September 1999. This thesis is a missiological study on organic unity in the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa UPCSA in the period 1999-2009. The study will assess how far the

current Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) consisting of three countries, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia, has progressed with unity since the merger between the former Reformed Church in Southern Africa (RPCSA), predominantly black church and a white dominated Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (PCSA) in September 1999.

(c) Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

The Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (PCSA) was founded in 1897 it first constituted among soldiers and settlers mainly of Scottish origin who arrived in the Cape in the 1800's and thus became a preponderantly a white Settler Church, although it subsequently planted congregations amongst indigenous people.

(d) Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa was a product of mission originating from the Free Church of Scotland intended for indigenous people, hence it became a predominantly a black church. In 1923, the RPCSA was constituted as an autonomous church being initially called the Bantu Presbyterian Church in South Africa (BPCSA).

(e) Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

The current Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) was formed and constituted in 1999 as the outcome of the union between RPCSA and PCSA. The UPCSA is a transnational church covers three countries namely, South Africa,

Zimbabwe and Zambia. Its membership is quite diverse embracing different races, cultures, languages, and economic groupings.

1.9 An outline of the study

In order to carry out the objectives of this study I have fashioned my discussion on the basis of three domains. The first domain deals with the historical survey of the UPCSA and the struggles which ensued and unfolded on a road to final structural unity and is covered in chapters two to three. The second domain deals with issues I have identified as challenges and a threat to “unity” and is covered in chapter four to six. Chapter seven is the conclusion and is retrospective as well as prospective.

An overview of each chapter is as follows:

- Chapter 2: In order to ascertain challenges faced by UPCSA in its quest for unity is equally important to understand the historical background of the RPCSA and PCSA respectively before the merger. For instance, who were the role players and the factors which drove them to embark in such an initiative?
- Chapter 3: builds on the background given in the previous chapter by discussing the efforts towards structural unity and the struggles which ensued thereof. What was the vision behind this unification if any and what factors were behind such merger, who were the role players spearheading the merger? Did they share the same vision, or were they just motivated by self-interest?
- Chapter 4: will focus on ministerial formation as one of the challenges that have emerged to test the witness of the UPCSA in its quest for authentic unity. This chapter will give a brief historical account of theological education in both the former PCSA and RPCSA and proceed to identify some of the challenges

ministerial formation is facing since the two churches merged to form a united church namely, the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) and suggest a constructive proposal for the way forward. The key challenges which have been identified in this chapter are namely, ecumenism, the relationship between church and university and challenges relating to language and spirituality will feature under the Africanisation of the curriculum.

- Chapter 5: will examine the economic unity with special reference to inequality of stipends among ministers as one of the contentious issues and challenges facing the UPCSA. Evidence would suggest in the very earliest phase of unity negotiations already the economic disparities of both the former Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (PCSA) and Bantu Presbyterian Church in South Africa (BPCSA) later renamed Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, (RPCSA) were evident when it came to stipends of both African and White ministers (Xapile 1994:40). For this reason the merger has not been a complete success with regard to glaring inequalities in stipends between those ministering in the more affluent congregations (of which majority are white ministers) and those labouring in previously disadvantage (of which majority are black ministers). However to date the integration of a single salary system and equalisation of ministerial stipends is still unresolved.
- Chapter 6: will discuss the conflicts that have dogged the process of amalgamation of church associations in the UPCSA as a stumbling block which has a potential to threaten unity. The challenges of the Church Associations have dogged the UPCSA since its inception. Given the different value systems, histories and traditions which were in operation among various associations in the former RPCSA and PCSA, it was not going to be easy to integrate various church associations in the new denomination. The challenges which have riddled the church associations have been identified as, uniforms, poor communication, issues of representation, manual of faith and order and the so called third force.
- Chapter 7: concludes with a brief note, the road ahead pertaining to “*unity*” in the UPCSA and prospects thereof.

CHAPTER 2

A historical background of The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will trace the historical factors which led to the formation of Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. Such history is important since it helps us to understand some of the challenges and dynamics faced by the UPCSA in its quest for unity as I indicated in chapter one. Secondly such history is imperative in providing a clear picture of what UPCSA looks like in terms of various features. According to Duncan (2006:1) the original roots of the UPCSA in southern Africa are to be found in the Apostolic Church, the Swiss reformation and Scottish Presbyterianism.

The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) owes its existence to a merger which took place in 1999 in Port Elizabeth, between the Reformed Presbyterian in Southern Africa (RPCSA, a black church) and the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa (PCSA, traditionally a predominantly white church). Duncan argues (2012:65) that the union between this two streams of Presbyterianism of Scottish descent, represented a degree of reconciliation and was a watershed in the history of the church in Southern Africa and moreover in the history of Presbyterianism. The unification of these two churches which, were separated for more than a century, coincided with political developments which ushered the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994. Were these developments later instrumental in the two denominations (i.e. Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa and Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa) rooting church unity upon secular foundations rather than theological understandings?

2.2. The formation of the Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa stream

In a piece dedicated to the late Professor Steve de Gruchy entitled, *The Historical Roots Of Southern African Congregationalism*, Denis maintains that by and large the history of South African Congregationalism is under-researched despite the rich collection of sources to be found in the archives of this church or in a collection of essays published on the occasion of the church's bicentenary (Denis 2012:304). This is equally true of the PCSA. I will refer to a booklet by Douglas Bax, *The Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa: An Introduction*, an article by Professor Graham Duncan entitled, *Ministerial formation in the South African Presbyterian tradition*, an article by Rev A Tucker, *Financially resourcing the ministry in the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa* and Rev SP Xapile's Master's Thesis, *Unity Negotiations between The Bantu Presbyterian Church and The Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa* (Bax 1997, Tucker 2012, Duncan 2012 and Xapile 1994).

Unlike the UPCSA which owes its roots to Apostolic Church, the Swiss Reformation and Scottish Presbyterianism its precursor the PCSA stream tends to lean towards the apostolic church strand (Bax 1997:1). On one hand one cannot underscore that PCSA was a product of the Settler tradition in South Africa which developed among military communities (Vellem 2013:148). Secondly the traces can also found in the Protestant Reformation as it was unfolding in Geneva from 1536 onwards, with John Calvin as its main proponent. Hence, the PCSA used to constitute one of a world-wide family churches made up of 50 million Christians in the Calvinist tradition (Bax 1997:1).

2.3 Presbyterian Doctrine

Bax (1997:2) has observed that the theological emphases of the (PCSA) are rooted in classical Calvinism. I will briefly highlight some of the theological tenets which the (PCSA) espoused:

- the Word of God derives from scripture alone and we have to believe and obey for the sake of salvation and it reigns supreme in matters of faith, theology and ethics;
- the grace of God is central in all salvation and it should take precedence particularly in the doctrine of predestination;
- in God's eyes righteousness is not attained on the basis of human effort, but only through God's unreserved grace, which only requires one's faith;
- God enters into a covenant of grace with so called elect people and in return they put their faith in Jesus Christ; baptism in the name of the Father; Son and Holy Spirit;
- the covenant commands people of God to worship, to be morally uprightly, to seek for justice, to care for one another and for the poor, and more importantly to witness to the world;
- the principle of the priesthood of all believers should apply since believers through Christ as the high priest have access to God. All believers should subject themselves to Jesus Christ alone as a high priest and mediator;
- in accordance with the priesthood of all believers elders together with the minister have a joint responsibility to look after the affairs of the church;
- Baptism and Holy Communion, are two important gospel sacraments which should be regarded as real mediated through Holy Spirit to confer what they signify and promise, that is in the case of Baptism, union with Christ;
- the Church is ever in need of reform even though it has gone through this phase;
- the church's ecumenical task is to strive towards the unity of all Christians united by one body of Christ;

- Jesus Christ rules all spheres of life, secular and political and his dominion extends to spiritual and ecclesiastical domains therefore individuals are expected to serve and glorify him in all spheres of life, private, public, church and secular (*The Manual of Law and Procedure of the PCSA* 1992:88)

2.4 The formative years and the spread of Presbyterianism in Southern Africa

The history of Presbyterianism in southern Africa took place within the ambivalent wider context of British imperialism (Duncan 2006:1). This ambivalence stemmed, *inter alia*, out of Britain's wars against France that led Britain to occupying the Cape from 1795 to 1803 and as well as from 1806. According to Duncan (2006:1) this resulted to the relocation of substantial numbers of the local population as they were forcibly removed from their land to meet settler needs. Some of the occupying regiments were Scottish. While Duncan (2012:64) traces the origins of (PCSA) to 1806 with the arrival of soldiers, colonists and settlers in the Western Cape, on the contrary Tucker (2011:1) claims that the first Presbyterians were soldiers and settlers who arrived in the Cape in 1820. Prior to that in 1800 James Read who was attached to London Missionary Society (LMS), inspired some of the occupying troops to form a "Calvinistic Society" (CS) since they did not enjoy a luxury of a chaplain. According to Bax (1997:5) they met weekly for different spiritual activities and invited missionaries took turns to offer them spiritual services.

In 1812 Dr George Thom, a Church of Scotland minister, arrived at the Cape on his way to India as an LMS missionary (Bax 1997:5). Duncan (2006:1) notes that while waiting for a ship, he held services for the soldiers and met with the Calvinist Society. This led him to remain at the Cape to work as a minister as well as a missionary. The first Presbyterian congregation was established under him on the 6 May 1813. It met in the South African Missionary Society chapel in Long Street, Cape Town

(Duncan 2006:2). Bax (1997:5) asserts that the congregation adopted Presbyterian order and polity and subscribed to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. So the first Presbyterian congregation developed from Scottish military regiments stationed at the Cape with the earliest religious missions taking the form of chaplaincy to the regiments, before extension to civilian settlers and the indigenous population. With the withdrawal of Scottish regiment in 1814 from the Cape it meant Thom was left with a few congregants. Thus according to Duncan (2006:1) he accepted a call in 1818 to a Dutch Reformed Church (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk) Church in Caledon.

In 1820 Dr John Philip who was the Superintendent Director of London Missionary Society (LMS) became the successor to Thom. The rump congregation invited him to preach and in 1820 extended a call (Duncan 2006:1). As a result in addition to his work as Director, the congregation expected him to exercise pastoral duties. In a very short space of time the numbers swelled; hence the congregation had to move its premises to LMS property (Bax 1997:5). The new church premises were named Union Chapel to signify the Presbyterians and Congregationalist as the first founders. However, Duncan (2006:1) contends that as a staunch Congregationalist, Philip preferred the congregational model of governance to kirk session. Thus, he argues that (ibid) after 7 years the first Presbyterian church became the first Congregationalist church in the Cape, a move that caused dissatisfaction among certain quarters of Scottish Presbyterians.

Hence according to Duncan (2006:1) in 1824 a committee of Presbyterians held a public meeting, aimed at mobilizing funds to build a Scottish Presbyterian Church which they aspired to be modelled according to the “Established Church of Scotland”. In 1827 Dr John Adamson, a Scot and a man of great intellect and ardent missionary zeal became the first official minister of the congregation. The first services were held in the Lutheran Church in Strand Street. It was only in 1829 the Scottish church

building was completed. The colonial Government paid one third of the cost. Christians of various denominations, notably the NG churches in Stellenbosch and Graaff-Reinet, and the *landdroste* of the country districts contributed a good portion of the rest (Duncan 2006:1). Bax (1997:6) argues it was the first English speaking church to exist in Cape Town in 1859; it became known as St Andrew's Presbyterian church and was dubbed the "the Mother Church" of Presbyterianism in Southern Africa.

Bax (1997:6) claims that from 1838 until 1840 slaves were free and in the process Cape Town became a very mixed population. According to statistics provided by Duncan (2006:2) the very mixed population of Cape Town then numbered a little over 20 000, excluding soldiers. Slaves made up nearly 7 000 and other people of colour nearly 3 000. Most of the slaves before were either Muslim or non-Christian converts. As a result, in 1838 Adamson and the Session started a Mission for the 'coloured'¹slaves (Duncan 2006:2). Bax (1997:7) notes that between 1838-1841 over 1000 adults joined the Scottish Church's Mission and 134 received baptism and gained full membership. The Mission met for separate services in the church, as those who attended worshipped and needed elementary Bible instruction in Dutch. In 1876 the Scottish Church extended its mission work to Africans in Cape Town with a paid African evangelist. With the formation of Cape Presbytery in 1893 the African Mission moved to Ndabeni (Bax 1997:8).

Duncan (2006:2) maintains that St Andrew's was the first church in the Cape to accept freed slaves as members — and to marry them. Besides biblical instruction and the rite of marriage it provided services such as, poor relief and medical care, and this saved many from the measles and smallpox epidemics of 1840–41.

¹ I am aware that the term coloured often invokes mixed reactions. On the other hand there are people who take offence at being called coloureds, as well as those who prefer the word as a way of claiming their own identity. The use of coloured in this study is in no way used to affirm the terminology and realities of the past colonial-apartheid South Africa.

Meanwhile, according to Duncan (2006:2) Adamson ventured in to education and helped establish the South African College (later to become the University of Cape Town) and at various times served it as a professor. Due to work pressure and the College threatening to close, in 1841 he resigned from St Andrew's to channel his energies to the new college. He lectured in several subjects and for a time was its only lecturer. Most of his salary he gave to the mission (Duncan 2006:2).

As the College was growing in 1820 the NGK requested George Thom to recruit ministers and teachers for the College (Duncan 2006:2). One recruited minister was George Morgan and he became Adamson's successor at St Andrew's. Sadly as Duncan (2006:2) notes he found himself on collision with Rev Stegman a Lutheran minister, who took charge of mission among freed 'coloured' slaves at the end of 1838. Ensuing tensions between the two, led to Stegman severing ties with St Andrew's in 1842, taking most of the mission and the Lutheran teachers with him.

Duncan (2006:2) points out that this setback did not deter Adamson from continuing to work with Stegman. As a result, in 1843 they mobilized resources and bought a 1000 seater old theatre on Riebeeck Square and renamed it St Stephen's Church. Duncan (2006:2) argues that this was the beginning of mission activity in and around Cape Town. St Stephen's joined the NGK in 1857 and is the only 'Coloured' church in the white NGK. The other missions, it is thought, also joined the NGK and became part of the NG *Sendingkerk* when it was formed in 1881.

Due to the ill health of Morgan in 1871 and with the economic depression looming numbers in both congregations dwindled and as a result in 1878 the church closed the mission. According to Duncan (2006:2) the remaining members were invited to join the English-speaking congregation, but those whom English language was a

barrier left for other mission congregations. The Mission School at the Cape, continued until 1896, and then merged with a public school.

Duncan (2006:2) asserts that this state of affairs was catastrophic for Presbyterianism since it lost a large constituency of 'Coloured' people. Failure to later have a multi-racial Presbyterian Church of South Africa representative of the whole country as Duncan (2006:2) has rightly observed, can partly be attributed to the loss of the mission. However, the primary reason for the existence of the PCSA was initially to meet the needs of the settler community which arrived in Cape in 1820 (Tucker 2012:1). The other event was the decision of most of the Scottish missions in the Eastern Cape to stay outside the PCSA when it was established in 1897 in order to enable local people to develop freely without being dominated by white people.

In 1872 another Scot, James Russell, M.A., B.D., was called to be minister of St Andrew's. The work expanded, especially as the discovery of diamonds and gold in the north led to increased immigration. Sunday Schools and then churches, and a mission for Africans, were started in various parts of Cape Town. Presbyterianism also spread northwards and eastwards.

2.4.1 The formative years in the Eastern Cape

A confluence of factors was instrumental in the spread of Presbyterianism in the Eastern Cape. For instance, Duncan (2006:2) argues that Presbyterianism flourished in the Eastern Cape due to the wars of dispossession which forced the amaXhosa further to the east and the creation of neutral territory between the Fish and Keiskamma rivers. Overpopulation in Britain, economic depression, labour

redundancy and potential civil disquiet and instability paved the way for the arrival of some 4 000 settlers from Britain settling in the Eastern Cape in 1820. This inevitably led to constant clashes with the amaXhosa for most of the nineteenth century (Duncan 2006:2).

The 1820 settlers comprised a Scottish party, who founded a church at Glen Lynden, north of Bedford, in 1828. According to Duncan (2006:2) this was financed by the British Government and partly by fund-raising efforts of Thomas Pringle, leader of the Scottish settlers. Duncan (2006:2) contends that contrary to popular belief, it was not St Andrew's but this little building that was the first Presbyterian Church completed in South Africa.

Other churches were founded in other parts of the Eastern Cape such as Alice, Adelaide, Fort Beaufort, King Williams Town and East London. Even though these churches were generally called 'Scottish' they accommodated both Presbyterian and Congregational members and some opted to be independent 'Union churches'.

With the arrival of settlers from Britain in Eastern Cape in 1820, Dr George Thom appealed to the Glasgow Missionary Society to undertake mission to "Caffraria". Bax (1997:8) notes that the first two missionaries of the Society to initiate mission work on the eastern frontier were William Thomson and John Bennie. Bennie embarked in an innovative exercise of committing the Xhosa language to print. A small printing press, which was brought by John Ross took this initiative to another level by printing books in Xhosa. After the death of Dr John Love, Secretary of the Glasgow Missionary Society in 1825, Bennie and Ross renamed Tyumie mission station after him. Lovedale became the premier Presbyterian institution in South Africa, with a school, a seminary, a hospital, farm, industrial school and a printing press. One of the famous luminaries of Lovedale institution was Rev Tiyo Soga who became the

first ordained African minister and among other things he is credited with revising the Xhosa Bible.

Presbyterianism spread to other provinces of South Africa notably, KwaZulu-Natal, where the Presbytery of Natal was constituted in Pietermaritzburg in 1850. John Philip can be credited for the initial stages of Presbyterianism in KwaZulu-Natal since through his request the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABM) sent three missionary couples to Natal in 1835 (Duncan 2006:3). A handful of missionaries remained in South Africa after the war that broke out between the Boers and the Zulus. According to Duncan (2006:3) one couple who remained were Daniel and Lucy Lindley. Daniel was initially a minister to the Dutch *trekker* farmers in the Pietermaritzburg area from 1842 to 1847 and he simultaneously began Presbyterian services for an increasing number of the British immigrant population. In 1850 the Presbytery of Natal was constituted in Pietermaritzburg. William Campbell of the Free Church of Scotland built the first Presbyterian Church in Natal and became its first minister. Duncan (2006:3) notes that by 1850 a sizeable number of Presbyterians were worshipping in Durban.

With the diamond rush by 1870 in Kimberley, Northern Cape, congregations were established in 1871. In Gauteng with the discovery of gold in Witwatersrand in 1866 the first Presbyterian church (St George's) was founded in 1888, and in Free State the (Presbytery of Orange River) was established in 1898.

2.5 The forming of Presbyterian Denominations in South Africa

Duncan (2006:3) states that by the 1880s the colonialist/settler stream in the Western Cape consisting of a number of disparate congregations, mission stations and Presbyteries existed in South Africa. In 1892 the Presbyterian Church of Cape Town extended an invitation to different Presbyteries and congregations according to Bax (1997:10) with the intention of bringing different streams of Presbyterian work together in one united South African Presbyterian Church and embracing all Presbyterians of all races. According to Vellem (2013:149) to expedite the process of unity, a Federal Council (FC) was formed in the same year, with representatives from seven Presbyteries, including those who were products of Scottish missions, and the separate congregation of Port Elizabeth. In this period alone, these traditions met on six different occasions to discuss proposals for union and to draw up a common basis of union which could be acceptable to all of them.

In the last meeting of the Council in 1897 the majority were in favour of the merger. Out of three Presbyteries which were largely white with few African congregations or mission stations and mission stations of the Scottish United Presbyterian Church on the 17 September 1897 the Presbyterian Church of South Africa (PCSA) was constituted in Durban. Van der Spuy in Vellem (2013:149) portrays the picture of the formation of the PCSA in this manner:

The historic 6th Federal Council met on the evening of the 17th September, 1897, and was later to constitute itself as the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa (1971:32). At its first General Assembly, John Smith was elected as the first Moderator of the General Assembly (Bax 1997:11). The second General Assembly at St Andrews Cape Town welcomed the Presbyteries of Adelaide, King

William's Town and the Orange Free State into their ranks. Later in 1898 the Bulawayo congregation became part of (PCSA) under the Transvaal Presbytery.

Vellem (2013:149) reminds us that the newly formed Church, i.e. the PCSA, was not a product of the missionary work in South Africa, but one of a gathering of professed Presbyterians and associates who intended to form their own independent Church. In retrospect the proposed union of all Presbyterians traditions that led to the formation of the FC did not materialize as envisaged. Nevertheless by the end of 1898 according to the figures provided by Duncan (2006:3) the PCSA comprised 7 Presbyteries: Cape Town, Adelaide (which included Port Elizabeth), Kaffraria, King Williams Town, Natal, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Most of the Presbyteries were mainly white, with a few African congregations; Kaffraria consisted of congregations and mission stations of the UPC. Altogether there were 35 'European' full status congregations, 7 extension charges, 7 preaching stations, and 19 'Native' congregations—in all 68 'congregations' and 54 ministers. The UPC in Scotland still held the properties of the mission stations and the 'Native' schools in the ex-UPC Presbytery of Kaffraria in trust and also paid the missionaries (some of whom served white congregations as well).

Bax (1997:10) indicates phenomenal growth of Presbyterianism in other parts of Southern Africa. For instance, in Rhodesia (later Zimbabwe) the first Presbyterian Church was founded in 1896 in Bulawayo and 1903 the second in Salisbury. Out of the two Presbyteries of (Matebeleland and Mashonaland) in 1993 the Presbytery of Zimbabwe was born. Duncan (2006:3) notes that eight Presbyterian schools, including Gloag Ranch, were also established.

In Zambia the first Presbyterian congregation was established in 1926, in Livingstone (Duncan (2006:3)). With the rapid growth of urbanisation in the 1950s, congregations

were founded in Lusaka (St. Columba's) Kitwe and Kabwe. Duncan (2006:3) states that politically and ecumenically, this was a turbulent political period in Zambian pre-independence history. As a result the PCSA made in-roads among the constituency who did not want to be part of the union that brought the United Church of Zambia into being in 1965.

Spreading her wings north of the Limpopo, the PCSA was later renamed the Presbyterian Church of *Southern* Africa in 1958 (Duncan 2006:3). According to figures provided by Duncan (2006:3) by 1993 the PCSA membership, including South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia, stood at 90 000. Five thousand were in Zimbabwe and six thousand in Zambia. Since its inception in 1897 black membership outnumbered white membership by far. There were 180 congregations in full status, divided into 12 Presbyteries and 189 ministers were active in full-time ministry.

In 1958 the (PCSA) was renamed the Presbyterian Church of *Southern* Africa after Presbyteries of (Zimbabwe and the congregation in Livingstone) respectively became members.

2.6 The Polity of the PCSA

One of the fundamental characteristics of Calvinistic Reformation was church governance or 'polity'. Bax (1997:13) maintains that Calvin was anti autocratic and that a hierarchical priesthood as espoused by Catholic tradition was a human invention. He equally dismissed Luther's view that the structure of the Church was less important and must be informed by context. He maintained that structures were bequeathed by Christ to Church. Bax (1997:13) concludes that such a structure,

according to Calvin, must derive from four permanent offices in the New Testament Church (apart from offices such as apostles): pastors, doctors (of theology), elders or governors, and deacons. The elders together with a pastor equally share the responsibility for the congregation; deacons must take charge of the welfare of the poor.

The underlying principle behind Presbyterian polity is that the Minister together with the Elders governs each congregation. Bax (1997:13) points out that the institution of Elders dates back to Old Testament times and was later adopted by Jewish synagogues, from which the apostolic Church inherited it. It is the responsibility of the Elders who are elected in the Church, to maintain and promote democratic principles. Bax (1997:13) asserts that the Presbyterian form of government differs fundamentally from other two forms of church government namely, *episcopal* and *congregational*. Both the episcopal and Presbyterian forms of government are embedded in hierarchy since they retain a certain degree of different levels of authority.

For instance, in the (PCSA) there is a *Session* at a local congregation which oversees the local congregation's affairs, *Presbytery* oversees the regional matters and the highest decision body the *General Assembly* takes care of denominational level issues. The Moderator presides over the General Assembly, in a Session it is the minister and in the case of the Presbytery it is either a minister or an Elder.

2.7 The PCSA and Ecumenism

The PCSA was a member of numerous ecumenical bodies both internationally and locally. For instance, it was affiliated to both World Council of Churches (WCC) when it was formed in 1948 and World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) by 1978 as

well as South African Council Churches (SACC). By 1970 the PCSA was constantly on collision course with the apartheid regime. A case in point is the (PCSA) involvement in the WCC Programme to Combat Racism (PCC) which State President Mr J Vorster by then saw as a thorn in the flesh of the government. As a result he pressurised the member churches of (WCC) in South Africa to withdraw their membership. Unfortunately, to his surprise the PCSA refused to heed to his call (Bax 1997:16).

According to Bax (1997:17) the (PCSA) has made efforts to unite with other Churches of the Reformed family in the past even though such attempts did not always yield positive results. An example is the unity talks the PCSA engaged in with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in South Africa (EPCSA) in 1961 which resulted to both parties drawing a comprehensive draft plan of the union. The negotiations were dealt a blow ten years later, when in 1971 the EPCSA withdrew from negotiations and preferred to remain under black control.

The (PCSA) also had unity conversations with the Congregationalists in 1906, 1923, 1928 and together with the Methodists in, by 1945-47 and 1973-83. However the union with these two denominations also failed to materialise. In Zambia attempts towards unity with other Presbyterians was muted, but at its Assembly of 1959 the PCSA was not keen to make such a move.

2.8 The PCSA and Apartheid

Bax (1997:19) maintains that the track record of the PCSA with special reference to race relations presents a mixed picture. While on the one hand it was marked by different forms of exclusion, such as racial segregation, racial prejudice in the face of

conspicuous injustices, on the other hand there were efforts to denounce segregation and injustice at the level of General Assembly. The racial segregation and discrimination which was entrenched since the first white settlers arrived in the Cape somehow spilled over to the Church and the PCSA was no exception. Hence one can safely say the congregations which formed the PCSA as a multiracial denomination in 1897, had to contend with other greater political forces which were at play that time.

Black leaders who were very competent and outstanding in the (PCSA) were overlooked when it came to positions of Church leadership. Bax (1997:21) gives an example of George Molefe who was an exceptional community leader fit become the Moderator of the General Assembly but was never even nominated due to racial prejudice. Dr James Jalobe was the first black moderator he was only elected at the General Assembly of 1972, to serve from 1973-4. From 1996-97 Dr Maake Masango served his term of office as the sixth black Moderator of the Assembly. After 1994 with a new democratic dispensation, in 1995 for the first time the General Assembly of (PCSA) met in a black township of Atteridgeville, Pretoria.

The (PCSA) was a signatory to various Church statements which opposed apartheid. For instance, in 1949 the General Assembly endorsed a statement by the South African Council of Churches (SACC) calling for equal vote for all races. In 1960 the PCSA participated in the Cottesloe Consultation which issued a statement condemning, among other things, apartheid in worship, migrant labour, job reservation and permanent exclusion of “non-white people” from government. Charles Villa-Vicencio in his book *Trapped in Apartheid* (1988) accuses English speaking churches including the PCSA of not opposing apartheid more rigorously, a charge Bax (1997:1) argues misrepresents the facts, at least in the case of the PCSA. I do not wish to dwell much in the merits and demerits of this debate, only to

say it seems the PCSA had developed a culture of issuing statements instead of following the difficult and costly path of action in opposing apartheid.

Individual Presbyterian ministers and lay members both black and white resolutely opposed apartheid at times paying heavily for their actions (Bax 1997:30). Revs Ian Thomson and Mamabolo Raphesu for instance, were imprisoned several times.

2.9 A Historical Background of the Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa

Duncan (2012:64) notes that Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa (BPCSA) is a product of the Scottish Presbyterian Church Mission (SPCM) which started to operate in the Eastern Cape in 1824. One needs to point that, already around 1821 the precursors of SPCM, namely the Glasgow Missionary Society (GMS) and London Missionary Society (LMS) were already embarking in mission work in the Eastern Cape. For instance, Dr Johannes van der Kemp of the LMS for a short stint worked among the amaRharhabe-Xhosa. In 1821 the GMS sent its first missionaries, William Thomson and John Bennie, to South Africa together with John Brownlee established a mission station at Tyhume near present day Alice (Duncan 2006:3).

According to Duncan (2013c:1) the formation of mission councils which tended to be dominated by white ministers shaped the history of SPCM for ‘the personnel, administration or independence of our mission in South Africa’. By implication this meant that the general policy rests with whites in mission councils, while the role of presbyteries was limited to exercising discipline, mainly over blacks.

Even though the (SPCM) laid the ground for the formation of (BPCSA) Duncan (2013c:1) advances two other factors which at the end of nineteenth century were equally instrumental for the establishment of an independent black church. The first was the formation of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa in 1897, which according to Tucker (2011:1) was first constituted among the soldiers and settlers who arrived in the Cape in 1820 and became essentially a “settler” church although it subsequently planted congregations among the indigenous and disadvantaged communities. Duncan (2013:1) states that with time the black section of PCSA grew phenomenally but was placed under the care of white congregations.

Duncan (2013b:3) contends that the Mzimba Secession was a catalyst for action which eventually resulted in the formation of the Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa. On the 27 Jan 1900 the Presbytery of Kaffraria recommended that the Synod withdraw the status of Rev PJ Mzimba as a minister and a member of the Free Church of Scotland (Duncan 2013:5). As a result according to Duncan (2013:3) in 1898, Rev Jeremiah Pambani Mzimba, a product of the Scottish Mission who was stationed at Lovedale, and a sizeable number of his congregation, severed ties with Scottish mission to form the Presbyterian Church of Africa (PCA) as part of the Ethiopian movement on the ground that relations were sour with missionaries.

The Mzimba secession emerged during the height of political resistance, to conquest, European domination in politics, economics and social life. The church was not spared from these developments, hence Duncan (2013c:1) rightly observed that the ‘spirit of resentment spilled to the ecclesiastical domain’.

On the 27 Jan 1900 the Presbytery of Kaffraria recommended that the Synod withdraw the status of Rev PJ Mzimba as a minister and a member of the Free Church of Scotland (Duncan 2013:5). As a result according to Duncan (2013c:3) in 1898, Rev Jeremiah Pambani Mzimba, a product of the Scottish Mission who was stationed at Lovedale, and a sizeable number of his congregation, severed ties with

Scottish mission to form the Presbyterian Church of Africa (PCA) as part of the Ethiopian movement on the ground that relations were sour with missionaries.

Although one needs to point out that this occurred during a period which was plagued by secessions from mission churches, for similar reasons, often including issues of responsibility, ordination and finance. For instance, Duncan (2013d:1) reminds us that Rev Edward Tsewu led the first secession from the Presbyterian fold in 1896 after the Free Church of Scotland refused to ordain him to the full status of a minister.

It seems in the case of Mzimba secession money and property were sources of conflict between Rev Mzimba and Free Church of Scotland Mission. Maluleke (2001:11) alluded to this assertion by stating that, even though Mzimba had raised considerable funds by himself for a building project when he was invited in Scotland the “Mission Agency” wanted to dictate how he should use those funds and this contentious issue is the straw that broke the proverbial camel’s back. So he declared: But to me it is clear that even the Black man in Africa must stand on his feet in matters of worship like people in other countries and not always expected to be carried by the White man on his back. He has long learnt to walk by leaning on anybody except his God so that the work of the Gospel should flourish the child itself feels it must walk it stumbles and falls takes one step at a time but the end result it walks (Pambani Jeremia Mzimba in Maluleke 2001:11).

Therefore one can conclude that Rev Mzimba broke away from Scottish mission due to squabbles over custodianship and use of funds. Duncan (2013c:2) asserts that even though money and property were bone of contention between Mzimba and Free Church mission, one cannot rule out, political upheavals coupled with a growing black nationalism, reluctance to ordain black ministers, imported denominationalism just to mention a few a cumulative factors which fuelled the Mzimba secession. One can

argue that this bold move by Rev Mzimba heralded a new chapter as an attempt towards seeking autonomy and it was a clear indication that Africans desired independence in church matters and to manage their own affairs, which to them meant to plant a self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating African Church.

These two momentous ecclesiastical events including the socio-political developments in South Africa were turning point in the history of Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) under the auspices of United Free Church with regard to future of mission policy (Duncan 2013c:2 and Vellem 2013:146). Bax (1997:11) states that in 1900 the Free Church (FC) united with the United Presbyterian Church (UPC) to form United Free Church (UFC), however according to Duncan (2006:3) their mission work in South Africa remained separate. The UPC missions in South African had strong ties with the Presbyterian Church of South Africa PCSA while on the other hand the missions of the FC operated independent of the PCSA, as the largely self-governing Synod of Kafraria of the Free Church of Scotland.

Those who belonged to the former FC and UPC now under UFC were at odds regarding mission policy. The UFC favoured a 'united' church policy within which black and white would co-exist happily as equals. The reason that made the United Free Church of Scotland to advocate this view was that the two "parent" Churches in Scotland from which the South African Presbyterian traditions of the Free Church and the United Presbyterian respectively originated, united in 1900 after a half of a century split arising from the "Great Disruption" in 1843 (Vellem 2013:150). On one hand, some in certain quarters of the Scottish mission or former FC supported the 'native' church option which would become self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating (Duncan 2013:3).

In 1920 the UFC sent out two Deputies of the Foreign Mission, namely Rev F Aschroft and Mr A Houston from Scotland to resolve this *impasse*. They met at a conference at Blythswood Institution with stake holders representing different constituencies of the Presbyterian family. In their report back in Scotland they cited end of missionary expansion and failure by the Mission Council in South Africa to play a unifying role as reasons justifying the formation of the BPC. The decision regarding the formation of BPC triggered mixed reactions. According to Vellem (2013:152) some felt that the formation of BPC was based on white bias in some of the native congregations and therefore the danger that the BPC might be captured by a political party with ideology that is hostile to British government. Contrary to this position, some African ministers strongly supported the ideal of an African Church for African people standing on its own feet, and in the end this view prevailed (Duncan 2006:3).

According to Bax (1997:12), they recommended that as an interim measure it would benefit black Presbyterians to have their own church. A separate church was expected to promote the values of self-hood, *inter-alia*, develop black leadership, and an indigenous style of churchmanship, mission and evangelism.

Duncan (2013:2) notes that a commission on union was formed to lay a foundation of a new black church. The convocation of Presbyterian missions met at Lovedale on the 23rd July 1923 and all the black congregations, of the old Free Church and the majority of the black congregations, of the old United Presbyterian Church (who had formed the Presbytery of Kaffraria in the PCSA) were constituted as Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa BPCSA with Rt Rev W Stuart as the first Moderator of the General Assembly. According to statistics given by Bax (1997:12) by 1923, the BPCSA had 22,000 members, in 45 congregations, 48 ordained missionaries and ministers and 385 schools with 24,000 pupils.

The PCSA was the hardest hit by this state of affairs since it lost more than half of its black members to the BPCSA. The word “Bantu” historically means “people”. However according to Bax (1997:12) by 1979 the word carried negative connotations as it was distorted by the apartheid regime to mean something ethnic, as a result is not surprising that in 1979 the BPCSA renamed itself the Reformed Presbyterian Church of South Africa (RPCSA). Throughout its history, even though the BPCSA was an autonomous black church she had to contend with the dominance of missionaries who exercised power through mission councils. Duncan (2006:3) asserts that the FC in Scotland acknowledged the progress made by the young church but believed that the black ministers were not yet ready for full control. Hence Duncan (2013:2) concludes that BPCSA was independent but with no autonomy and as Vellem (2013:153) rightly observed continued to remain under the patronage of the newly united Church of Scotland through the Mission Council.

Even though from 1962 the Mission Council which became the Church of Scotland South Africa Joint Council, had an equal representation of members from the Church of Scotland, matters of finance and property were still ultimately decided in Scotland and communication still took place through the Joint Council. In 1981 the mission council dissolved and the RPCSA took control of its own affairs.

2.10 Legacy

The assessment made about the BPCSA has ranged from positive to negative. RHW Shepherd in Duncan (2013:3) put this point succinctly in his assessment of the BPCSA:

The greatness of a Church does not consist in its perfection of organisation its financial resources. It is the spiritual life it is producing in its members. I think we can say that these things have been produced. But there have been failures, confusion in organisation, and the desire for power, dispute and cases of discipline.

It is in the area of ecumenism the BPCSA/RPCSA left an indelible mark. According to Duncan (2013:3) over the years the BPCSA embraced this in its mission work. This spirit of ecumenism was evident even in educational institutions such as Lovedale, which was inter-denominational even in its staff composition. The BPCSA/RPCSA made a notable contribution in the education sector including the instrumental role it played in the foundation of the South African Native College at Fort Hare in 1916, the first black university in Africa.

The BPCSA/RPCSA has also occupied a central space in the world ecumenical front. For instance, this church was a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC), the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and Council for World Mission (CWM) as its successor Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA). Since the RPCSA was the product of Scottish Mission it maintained close relations with the Church of Scotland (Duncan 2013:3). The two churches have been involved in a number of partnerships in different levels. It has also forged links with other Presbyterian family of churches elsewhere in the world (i.e. Presbyterian Church of USA). Duncan (2013:3) points out that within the African context, the RPCSA was a member of All Africa Council of Churches (AACC) and contacts, for instance, with Church of Central Africa were forged through such continental ecumenical platforms.

Duncan (2013:4) contends that perhaps the greatest ecumenical contribution by RPCSA was its commitment to Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa (FedSem) established in 1963. The BPCSA channelled its resources to FedSem

together with other black member churches namely the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (EPCSA) and Presbyterian Church in Africa (PCA). Within the black Presbyterian fold FedSem has produced some of the finest black theologians, such as Professor Tinyiko Maluleke, Dr Vuyani Vellem, the late Dr Cecil Ngcokovane and Dr G Khabela.

Since the BPCSA was a product of the Scottish missionary enterprise it benefited greatly from educational work and institutions which were founded by the Scottish missionaries, notably Lovedale institution which was established in 1841 in the Eastern Cape, out of which the University of Fort Hare was born in 1916.

Through its association with Lovedale Press the RPCSA contributed immensely to the development of vernacular languages, particularly *isiXhosa* and in the process the promotion of black writers from the era of Tiyo Soga. It also played a significant role in translating the bible into *isiXhosa* to make it accessible to the local people in their own vernacular. Since educational work was fundamental to the work of the Scottish missionaries. The RPCSA had a remarkable track record of struggle against apartheid and injustices that accompanied this draconian system (Duncan 2013:4). In various assemblies the RPCSA took a radical stance on matters which were of national and international concern, including the Group Areas Act, unrest at universities, bannings and the role of ministers as marriage officers as well as its criticism against the Bantu Education Act which seriously hampered its educational work.

2.11 Conclusion

In this chapter I outlined the history of both Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (PCSA) and Bantu Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (BPCSA) later renamed the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (RPCSA). The histories of the PCSA and BPCSA are ramifications of various traditions of Presbyterianism in South Africa. Vellem (2013:148) argues that prior to the formation of BPCSA, there were four traditions of Presbyterianism already operating in our shores, namely, the Free Church, the United Presbyterian, the Swiss Mission and the Settler Presbyterian tradition.

The BPCSA was a product of mission originating from the Free Church of Scotland intended for the indigenous population, while on the other hand the PCSA was a product of the Settler tradition in South Africa. Between 1892 and 1897 Presbyterian family of churches cherished the ideal of a united church. Xapile (in Duncan 2005b:192) contends that this dream did not come to fruition as envisaged owing to fear of white domination and racism. Therefore, this study would argue that it seems the pursuit for a vision of one church embracing all Presbyterians of all races envisaged during the early stages of union talks, was sought already between a Presbyterian family of churches divided along racial lines. Furthermore, the FC which was supposed to spearhead union negotiations and to draw up a common basis for union which could be acceptable to all Presbyterian traditions later constituted itself as the First General Assembly of the PCSA in September 1997 (Vellem 2013:149).

Therefore in retrospect this body deviated from its mandate and as a result it endorsed the formation of the PCSA which became a preponderantly white Settler church in 1897 instead of a multi-racial church. The extent of racial conflict and tension partly became a fertile ground also for the formation of predominantly black BPCSA in 1923. Vellem (2013:159) echoes these sentiments when he argues that

Ethiopianism which was instrumental for the formation of BPCSA was a reaction to racism in the church and society.

According to Duncan (2005b:194) it was the same socio-political situation that revived unity talks between the PCSA and BPCSA (which by 1979 was renamed Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, RPCSA). In the spirit of national euphoria which gripped the first democratic elections in 1994, it came as no surprise when the RPCSA initiated union talks with the PCSA. The inception of Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) in 1999 is the fruit of unity between the RPCSA and PCSA after various unsuccessful attempts dating back to the latter part of the nineteenth century to effect union between the two denominations. Unfortunately, only the RPCSA and the PCSA streams of Presbyterianism constituted the new UPCSA. The UPCSA has not given up the dream of the proposed union of all Presbyterians traditions that led to the formation of the FC. Thus the PCSA and RPCSA opted to use the name UNITING with the hope that the other family of Presbyterian churches will in future form a united church.

Even though both denominations owe their origins to Church of Scotland, they had different backgrounds, traditions and cultures which were shaped by among other things socio-political developments in South Africa as well as missionary policies which dictated how mission work was to develop in these two churches. We will see in the next chapter how some of these dynamics played themselves out leading up to organic union of RPCSA and PCSA which gave birth to UPCSA in 1999.

CHAPTER 3

The process of unification in the Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I shall examine how the unity negotiations by both the Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (PCSA) and Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa (BPCSA), renamed (Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa in 1982) unfolded leading up to the establishment of the United Presbyterian Church in southern Africa (UPCSA) in 1999. This quest for unity emerged in different time periods, accompanied by a number challenges and problems which often derailed unity negotiations and continue to haunt the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) today.

I shall first look at earlier attempts towards the quest for a united Church, then attend to three important stages which shaped the unity talks leading up to structural unity in 1999. What kind of efforts were made by both denominations to achieve structural unity and the struggles which ensued thereof? Who were the role players spearheading the merger? Did they share the same vision, or were they just motivated by self-interests? What impact did the historical developments in the country and elsewhere have on processes which gave birth to UPCSA? These questions are useful to help us understand the complex dynamics at play leading up to structural unity of UPCSA.

3.2 Earlier attempts towards unity

According to Vellem (2013:149) between 1892 and 1897, there were talks among all the Presbyterian traditions to establish one Presbyterian Church in South Africa. In this period alone, these traditions met on six different occasions to map out a common basis for union which could be acceptable and accommodate all of them. To spearhead these union negotiations, a body called the Federal Council (FC here on) which later constituted itself as the First General Assembly of the PCSA was established to facilitate this process (Vellem 2013:149). Suffice at this stage to say the envisaged dream of the union of all the Presbyterian traditions did not materialize. For the simple reason that the FC later constituted itself as the First General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa on the 17 September 1897 and even more complex as Vellem (2013:149) argues the models of this union were sought between a divided, federally cooperating church. As a result some of the synods such as Kafraria, which had a black membership declined to enter into union since racial cooperation was sacrificed at the expense of racially separated churches.

In relation to the BPCSA and PCSA Bax (1997:17) notes that by 1923 the PCSA was courting the BPCSA for a federal union and co-operation was maintained at the level of the General Assembly whereby, the two churches sent six delegates to each other's General Assemblies. Unfortunately racism and white domination hindered the struggle towards unification and rendered such efforts fruitless in the early twentieth century (Xapile in Duncan 2005b:192).

Second, according to Xapile (1994:123) the phobia of absorption was evident in both churches and in the process hampered the dream of a united church. Some of the proposals for co-operation and unity advanced by committees of both the PCSA and the BPCSA between 1956 and 1957 reinforced such fears.

For instance, Xapile (1994:22-23) indicates that the BPCSA proposed that the African section of the PCSA be incorporated with the BPCSA. Such a move implied the African section of the PCSA would be under the wing of the General Assembly of BPCSA. It would have been difficult for the PCSA to welcome such a proposal I would argue, since they regarded Africans as their target of mission outreach, hence there was no readiness on their part to abdicate such responsibility to the BPCSA.

Another bone of contention which threatened the ideal of a united church was comity arrangement of 1934 (Duncan 2005b:192). According to this agreement the PCSA would be responsible for work in urban areas which meant the BPCSA members would become members of the PCSA while they were migrant labourers, and that the BPCSA would restrict its work to rural areas. But when white members of the PCSA moved from the cities to take over whatever positions in the rural areas, the rule would not apply. Only the BPC would have no right to form congregations in the cities. What was significant is that many of the ministers involved were retired missionaries who transferred their allegiance to the PCSA on retirement (Duncan 2006a:7).

The fourth contentious issue was the Book of Order of the PCSA which was proposed by the African Missions Committee (Xapile 1994:23). If the Book of Order was adopted, it would have meant, the BPCSA exists under missionary work of the PCSA. The General Assembly of the BPCSA in 1957 resisted this proposal.

It seems such stumbling blocks did not deter those who were keen to realise the ideal of a united church among certain quarters of both BPCSA and PCSA. The minutes and the reports of various committees of both BPCSA and PCSA suggest that between 1956 and 1957 a great deal of energy was channelled into union negotiations even though such efforts were always in vain. (Proceedings of the General Assembly of the

Presbyterian Church of South Africa 1956, 1957). Discussions about unity gained momentum in 1959. One can dub this period the beginning of a new era in the struggle for unity. According to Xapile (1994:26) the unity talks stretched for twelve years and can be divided into three phases.

3.3 The first phase of unity struggle

Issues of representation became a source of concern during this stage of unity negotiations. The African Mission's Committee (AMC) which around 1957 was overseeing the affairs of the African section of PCSA was very central in unity talks. At the 1958 Bulawayo Assembly of the PCSA, the AMC reported that it had finalised a draft for discussing the terms of the union with BPCSA (Xapile 1994:24). Some members of both churches had some reservations with AMC handling union negotiations. The BPCSA questioned the status of AMC on the grounds that it represented only the African section of PCSA in the negotiations but not the white constituency. Furthermore, the BPCSA felt the AMC did not trust its leadership and their ability to conduct their own business. As a result according to Xapile (1994:24) it was proposed that AMC must be replaced by a special committee to handle union negotiations.

The first official meeting of unity talks between BPCSA and PCSA took place in May 1959, Johannesburg and Rev PG Gordon of the PCSA was the convenor. The BPCSA appointed Revs. D Matheson, TP Finca, WPT Ndibongo, M Molaba and JY Hliso as their negotiating team. The meeting started rather on a low note since much attention was devoted to points of conflict. Xapile (1994:26) notes that once some points of friction were deliberated upon the question of union came under the spotlight. The committee spend a fair amount of time debating the structure of the union and how to merge presbyteries.

Even though there were points of difference Xapile (1994:40) argued that during the first four years of unity negotiations, a lot of groundwork was covered by the joint committee on negotiations representing the BPCSA and PCSA respectively. For instance, the joint committee managed to prepare the way for union and to examine relevant areas of work in the two churches (Duncan 2005:195).

In some quarters of the PCSA there were anti- sentiments towards union; among others, fear of black takeover since blacks will be in the majority in a new united church and fears that a union will be burdensome on the resources of PCSA.

A subcommittee of the negotiation team met in Umtata, Eastern Cape, on the 16th June 1960 to work out pertinent issues which needed to be attended to prior to the merger. I must point out from the beginning the joint subcommittee had its work cut out, since the scope of its work regarding definite agreements prior to the union covered a wide range of issues. For the purpose of this study I will only highlight four areas which the joint subcommittee had to examine to prepare a plan for the union; representation of presbyteries on the united assembly and the possible creation of synods, the book of order and law, practice and procedure, relationships with the Mission Council of the Church of Scotland and church associations.

3.3.1 Representation of the presbyteries on the united assembly and the possible creation of synods

Xapile (1994:30) points out that as a rule within the BPCSA all ministers and one elder from each congregations were members of the Assembly and congregations had to carry their own expenses. In the PCSA an equal number of ministers and elders from

each presbytery were elected to the Assembly and their expenses are paid from the assembly fund. The subcommittee felt in a united church the number of delegates to the Assembly has to be reduced. The subcommittee deemed it necessary to create synods as way to alleviating the work of the General Assembly. By 1961 a subcommittee was appointed to come up with a draft constitution for synods.

On the question of the use of official language for conducting church business in both presbytery and assembly, it was the prerogative of each presbytery to use the dominant language and where necessary the services of an interpreter can be enlisted (Xapile 1994:31). However in the Assembly of a united church English would be preferred as a language of communication. To conduct the proceedings where some delegates use their mother tongue an interpreter could assist.

3.3.2 Book of Order

According to Xapile (1994:31) both churches had a Book of Order, referred as *Manuals*. The subcommittee recommended that a new Book of Order would be essential in a united church. It was even anticipated that the union might even take place before a new Book of Order was finalised since the two books of both churches did not differ significantly. It was recommended that those who were specialists in the area of Church law in both churches must be given the task to identify areas of divergence and points of connection.

3.3.3 Relationships with the mission council of the Church of Scotland

Xapile (1994:31) posits that land and properties of BPCSA remained under the Church of Scotland controlled by its Mission Council (MC) in South Africa. One might ask why the land was not in the hands of BPCSA? Modise (2011:233) reminds us that the Dutch Ordinance of 1893, together with apartheid laws precluded African people from owning or buying land. However the ordinance gave the white church leverage to buy land for black churches in black people's areas, I will return to this point later in chapter four when I discuss the issue of properties in the UPCSA which is closely related to the subject of land.

The BPCSA had hoped the MC would cease to control its properties and land and the joint committee would take full responsibility of such functions. Xapile (1994:32) states that the joint committee was to operate for a short period until the Church of Scotland abdicated functions and transfer properties to the BPCSA. The view of the joint committee was that once the union is concluded, the united church and the Church of Scotland must enter into a new agreement regarding, property, missionary personnel and funds.

3.3.4 Church associations

The BPCSA had several associations, namely the Women's Christian Association, the Girls Association, the Young Men's Christian Guild and the Boy's Brigade (Xapile 1994:35). The African section of the PCSA had three, the Women's Association, the Girls Auxiliary and the Presbyterian Young Men's Association while the white section had the former two in addition to Youth Fellowship and the Boy's Brigade. According to the joint committee it would be easier to merge some of the associations of the two

churches since they had similar names and character. When later I discuss this issue which continues to be a source of conflict in the UPCSA, one will discover that the joint committee was too unrealistic in this regard since the traditions, culture and ethos of some of these associations differ radically.

Discussions around some of these issues were aimed at giving form to structural unity, however a lot of hard work still remained to be done in the future. On a positive note in the 1960 Assemblies of both churches welcomed recommendations of the subcommittee and indicated willingness to unite. They both agreed that the process of unity must be accelerated and achieved in a very short space of time (Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa 1960:48). The joint committee was given a mandate to continue with unity negotiations and a series of meetings were held to further deliberate on sensitive matters prior to a united church being established.

It seems to me the first stage of unity negotiations there was general consensus at least among members of the joint committee on policy regarding among other things, rules of order, ministries within the church and creation of synods. The litmus test whether the joint committee had really dealt sufficiently with some of these challenges would to a certain extent dictate the pace of unity negotiations.

3.4 The second phase of unity struggle

Xapile (1994:40) points out that the second stage of unity negotiations mainly focussed on unresolved issues which were not adequately exhausted in the first phase of unity talks. These issues often invoked hard feelings and posed serious practical challenges. Second, I sense there was a fear that discussions around some of these thorny issues

might compromise union negotiations. However, some of these sensitive issues could not be by-passed forever, uncomfortable and awkward as they turned out to be. There are two related matters which deserve a special mention in this regard, namely stipends and pension funds.

3.4.1 Stipends

The first issue had to do with the perceived financial weakness of the BPCSA. Xapile (1994:40) asserts that the BPCSA was a poor church financially. The BPCSA mainly survived by generous giving of the poorest of the poor who have been most loyal to the Church. Duncan (2005b:208). Even though the BPCSA was struggling financially, this financial status did not deter her from striving for an independent “native” church free from white control. Duncan (2005:208) rightly points out as a church whose members belonged to a racially polarised South Africa then, the BPCSA could not match the resources of PCSA. Among certain quarters of the PCSA, there were those who thought the BPCSA was seeking unity because she was in dire financial constraints, its administration is in shambles and its ministers stood to benefit from the proceeds of their pension fund. Duncan (2005:207) dismisses such claims, since the BPCSA made an undertaking that it had no interest to tap into the financial resources of the PCSA.

The economic disparities of the two churches were evident when it came to stipends of both African and White ministers and the resources of various pension funds. Xapile (1994:40) estimated that stipends of African ministers in 1962, were R50-00 per month, without any benefits except the manse, while their white counterparts in the PCSA earned R100-00 per month and enjoyed benefits such as car and petrol allowance. Very few African ministers in the BPCSA had the luxury of such benefits. African Ministers of the BPCSA in the rural areas were earning R10-00 per month, in some cases they owned farm land to help them generate extra income or had *glebes* (church

lands dedicated to the support of the minister) to support them. Xapile (1994:41) indicates that a sub-committee report of 1962 acknowledged anomalies in stipends between black and white ministers due to “the difference in standard of living” of both white and African members. This state of affairs would require the BPCSA to raise a huge capital fund to ensure that stipends of black ministers are on a par with their white colleagues.

Unfortunately the BPCSA as a poor church could not afford to raise such capital even though at some stage she would inherit the assets of Church of Scotland following a consultation in 1979. Xapile (1994:42) admits sadly that in the second stage of unity negotiations there was no real solution to the problem of stipends. I need to point out that to this day under a united church (UPCSA) this problem continues to be a sore point, due to glaring economic inequalities aided among other things by legacies of colonialism and apartheid I will return to this issue in chapter five.

3.4.2 Pension funds

Xapile (1994:42) notes that both the PCSA and BPCSA had pension funds. In the BPCSA pension fund covered African ministers and their spouses but excluded evangelists who were covered in the PCSA. According to the figures provided by Xapile (1994:42), ministers contributed R10-00 per annum and each congregation R2-00. Those who joined the fund under fifty years of age were expected to contribute R40-00. European missionaries were exempted from pension fund since the Church of Scotland contributed towards their pension.

In the PCSA pension contributions were higher compared to the BPCSA. White ministers contributed R48-00 per annum, white evangelists R36-00, African ministers

R24-00 and African Evangelists R12-00 (Xapile 1994:42). Given the unequal pension contributions of both churches actuaries were appointed to explore the possibility of one pension fund for a future united church. The actuaries reported that amalgamation of two pension funds would require a huge capital investment to put ministers of the BPCSA on par with their white counterparts in the PCSA. Xapile (1994:43) points out the actuaries further recommended that remuneration of pension funds of ministers would be determined by how much an individual contributes. The PCSA was not keen and prepared for amalgamation of pension funds. Unfortunately, they viewed this as an opportunistic move on the side of BPCSA to seek for union (Duncan 2005:207).

Xapile (1994:49) commended the negotiating committee for handling some of these difficult matters with competence in this second stage of negotiations even though I will argue they continued to be unresolved. One of the achievements of this committee was to produce the draft Basis of Union of these two churches by 1962 with guidelines for further development. Members of the negotiating committee were privy to different expectations pertaining to the united church. It seems that the pace of unity talks was slow during this stage because the rank and file in both of these churches were not well informed about the issues at stake. In this connection Maruping and Tshaka (2010:3) reminds us that for unity to be tangible, it is imperative that unity be established not only at structural levels but at grassroots levels as well.

3.5 The last phase of unity struggle

Xapile (1994:50) suggests that between 1964 and 1971 efforts were made to finalise negotiations. The joint committee on negotiations had already made great progress at the level of technical discussions leading up to the draft Basis of Union by 1962. Unfortunately, no agreement was reached by both churches regarding this draft basis of union. As a result I agree with de Gruchy (2006:91) although referring to failed unity

talks between PCSA and UCSSA (United Congregational Church of Southern Africa) that “the high hopes for church unity which characterised union negotiations” had degenerated into cynicism in many quarters of both BPCSA and PCSA in the beginning of the last stage of unity talks.

Some members of the PCSA balked and rejected the scheme of the union. Xapile (1994:51) notes that a leader in the PCSA briefing the negotiating committee warned that some members expressed misgivings and negative sentiments towards a united church. Language and historical background were cited amongst others as reasons some members were vocal against unity. I am not sure about the merits of such concerns as I think such sentiments stem from a fear about the racial demographics of the new Church in which white membership of the PCSA would no longer be in the majority and the perceived financially weak status of BPCSA.

In the midst of ambivalence, suspicion and negative attitudes towards unity, the PCSA Assembly of 1970 circulated the draft basis of Union to Presbyteries, sessions and congregations for comment and amendment (Xapile 1994:51). The negotiating committee was tasked to compile a report for the 1970 Assembly and only after that presbyteries, sessions and congregations could vote in favour or against the union. At the 1970 Cape Town General Assembly of PCSA majority of delegates voted overwhelmingly for the union and finally the PCSA agreed to unite with the BPCSA.

Nel (2012:122) reminds us that the drive towards unification cannot be isolated from socio-political developments in South Africa and elsewhere (emphasis mine). The General Assembly of the PCSA in 1970 took place, after the World Council of Churches (WCC), through the *Programme to Combat Racism* had taken drastic measures to end apartheid, by funding the ANC, PAC, SWAPO and organisations in Africa with similar aims and objectives. A week before the Assembly, the Vorster regime put pressure on

the member churches of the WCC in South Africa to terminate their membership of WCC. The PCSA as a member of WCC in their scathing reply reminded Prime Minister Vorster that they do not owe him allegiance but only Jesus Christ. The Assembly rejected Vorster's directive and saw this as a move to cut ties with WCC. One wonders whether such a decision was not a calculated move on the side of the PCSA, to demonstrate to the BPCSA that they were denouncing apartheid and ready for unity.

The following comments by a leader of the PCSA (in Xapile 1994:52) attest to such an impression: "I feel that, at last the church is showing concretely that it does not support discrimination on racial, religious, cultural or social grounds we are called to repentance, to achieve and love between all men". I guess such claims would be tested once the dream of a united church is achieved. Finally, Xapile (1992:53) claims that between the years 1965 and 1971 there was a certain degree of lack of enthusiasm in the ranks of the BPCSA for church unity. However, there were some leaders such as Rev GT Vika (the General Secretary of BPCSA in 1969) who really worked tirelessly towards unification of both churches. He later became the convenor of the negotiating team and in 1970 he presented his report on the Basis of Union to the Assembly and the majority of delegates voted in favour of the union. The next hurdle was to send the final Basis of Union to the presbyteries for approval. In 1971 at Lovedale, Rev GT Vika indicated that four out of seven presbyteries were pro-union.

The negotiating committee moved that the Basis of Union be adopted. Delegates were at odds whether the Basis for of Union should be approved. Some felt the matter should be suspended for a year. According to Xapile (1994:54) the motion of the negotiating team had to be decided by the ballot and the results were fifty two in favour of the union and thirty five against. It turned out those who voted against the union were not really against it in principle, they felt is a sensitive matter which needed people to be given time to apply themselves.

Between 1971 and 1972 the negotiating team under Rev GT Vika accompanied by Presbytery clerks travelled extensively visiting congregations of BPCSA to seek their opinion on the question of the union. As the team engaged the congregations on this matter it turned out that many congregations expressed naivety pertaining to union negotiations, those who heard about unity talks were surprised that the negotiations had reached such an advanced stage. Such sentiments point to one thing; the rank and file was not abreast of the developments around unity but only certain people in the high echelons of the BPCSA leadership. They forgot that the pace at which the process of unity would be completed needed to be determined by contact and communication of the congregants.

Failure to communicate with congregations was going to have dire consequences when Presbyteries voted for or against proposed union. Xapile (1994:54) maintains that the resident minister largely determined the direction the votes would go. I would argue together with the failure of Presbyteries to consult their respective congregations on unity.

Three Presbyteries out of seven voted in favour of union and four against. Those who voted against indicated that amongst other things, the political climate in South Africa at that time would do harm to the union and white people would assume positions of leadership in the new united church while blacks continued to be relegated to inferior status. Furthermore, some felt the issue of control of properties in a new church was not clear; they feared a total takeover of properties by the white group (Xapile 1994:55) quoting the Report of the Commission on the Presbyterian Union Negotiations, Bantu Presbyterian Assembly, 1972).

At the Assembly of 1972 in Transkei some members of the negotiating team such as Rev BM Molaba felt the process of unification has been dragging on far too long and he

moved that the question of unity be decided by the ballot. In the end most delegates voted overwhelmingly against structural union. However the Assembly reiterated that even though they failed to reach general consensus, doors for further talks on unity are not closed between the two churches. The Assembly encouraged local cooperation and contact between the two churches at congregational level.

3.6 Road to structural unity

Formal negotiations between PCSA and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (RPCSA) came to a halt for a considerable number of years. In this section onwards I will prefer the term RPCSA since by 1979 BPCSA was no longer a commonly used term. Duncan (2005b:194) argues that the dawn of democracy in 1994 heralded a new chapter for the process of unification between the PCSA and RPCSA. The spirit of 1994 “euphoria” was instrumental in RPCSA resuming unity negotiations with PCSA. Duncan (2005b:194) asserts that the RPCSA was embarrassed that secular society was taking a lead in reconciliation and nation building while the Church was taking a back seat. At the RPCSA Assembly of 1994 the tide had swung back in favour of the union. Duncan (2005:194) draws a very interesting paradox that the “history” that kept the two churches apart was the glue which was to bring them together.

One of the lessons learnt during the initial stages of unity negotiations was mistrust which was rife between certain members of both churches. Hence it was agreed at the initial meeting that negotiations regarding church structures must go hand in hand with building trust. This time around Special Commission on Union (SCU) prepared a timetable leading up to the union. According to Duncan (2005b:195) this was only amended once, to lay the ground for the union. The union between the RPCSA and PCSA finally took place on the 26th September 1999 in Port Elizabeth to form the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA). However one needs to point

out there were many hurdles to overcome before this important milestone. The central committee on negotiations had a daunting task of critically analysing historical issues which had the potential to compromise the process of union. I will only mention the three most important, just to illustrate this point namely, structures, the location of the General Assembly Office and ministries.

3.6.1 Structures

Duncan (2005b:197) maintains that there was an early tendency to assume that the structures of a united church will be modelled on those ones of PCSA. Hence it was not surprising some in the quarters of RPCSA expressed fear of domination by the PCSA once the union is achieved. A case in point according to Duncan (2005b:197) is the issue of evangelists where it was proposed that “they may be able to fit into one of the new categories in the PCSA’s Church Growth Plan”. It was clear on certain issues the PCSA was just forging on without consulting and respecting the position of the RPCSA.

3.6.2 The location of the General Assembly Office

Duncan (2005b:200) notes that the location of the General Assembly office of the new united church became a source of concern and generated heated debates. The RPCSA felt it has already made many concessions in the process leading up to the union and it would only be fair for the new office to be situated somewhere other than the location of both of the existing offices. In correspondence addressed to SCU a concerned group took a swipe at the RPCSA for sacrificing the General Assembly office and personnel in a new united church (Duncan 2005b:209)

Duncan (2005b:200) states that according to the Basis of Union: “The office of the General Assembly of the Uniting Church shall be situated in a new venue, to be determined by the SCU, until such time as the Assembly may move elsewhere”. In 2005 a committee which was tasked to deliberate on this issue failed to bring this matter to resolution. The ambiguous position of the Basis of Union, together with a lack of decisiveness on the part of the committee charged with the responsibility to look into this issue, had serious consequences for RPCSA. Duncan (2005b:200) indicates that the staff of former PCSA were all absorbed in the new office of UPCSAs while their black counterparts from RPCSA were overlooked on the grounds that they were unsuitable for posts which were advertised or unwilling to move from Umtata, the General Assembly office of the RPCSA.

3.6.3 Ministry

In terms of ministry, clear distinctions were made between tent making/self-supporting ministry, ministerial divorce and payment of stipends (Duncan 2005b:199). With time this became a contentious issue. For instance, Duncan (2005b:199) alleges that the PCSA after scrutinising the proposal of the SCU pertaining to these issues, without engaging this forum they went on and prepared their own proposals which they expected the RPCSA to embrace. The SCU had made some fundamental changes to the process of selecting and training ministers in the PCSA and this led to an *impasse* which nearly compromised the unity of the new church at its inaugural General Assembly. This was unfortunate since one would have expected sensitivity given the complex history of both denominations, accompanied by both legacies of apartheid and colonialism.

3.7 Conclusion

The initial stages of the unity negotiations leading up to organic unity demonstrate that it was not easy to weld together two streams of Presbyterianism in South Africa into one functioning denomination. This state of affairs was not helped by racial polarisation which was still very much a feature of society and the church.

Therefore I agree with Duncan (2005b:194) that the political climate certainly was one of the contributing factors in the failure to unity negotiations especially during the initial stages of unity talks. In similar vein, Xapile (1994:iv) echoes the same sentiments as Duncan that what prevented a full union of Presbyterians at this time was the fear of domination and racism I will add together with the fear of absorption by PCSA. At the General Assembly of 1973 the PCSA acknowledged such fears: “We understand the doubts of those who fear that the White members will assume an automatic right to all the real power in a united Church and refuse to share it fairly with Black members. We confess that there is ground for these fears because our Church and we who are White in it have not been free of these faults in the past”. (PCSA General Assembly Proceedings 1973:80).

Furthermore I will argue that the failure by BPCSA to keep their rank and file abreast of the unity negotiations derailed the unity process. Xapile (1994:58) rightly points out that church unity “cannot be discussed in isolation from the experience of those involved”. Despite some of these challenges the team which was involved in the unity negotiations between 1959 and 1971 did a great deal of work which resulted in a Basis or Scheme of Union. This important document was to shape the process leading up to organic unity.

The birth of UPCSA out of former PCSA and RPCSA in 1999 is a sign that organic unity in the midst of the social, political and economic struggles is attainable. However the new united church would have to confront the evils of the past with sincerity; it is not just enough to pray for Christian unity, preaching racial harmony, confessing its unhappy

divisions and its prejudices without giving them up. It remains to be seen whether the challenges which made unity impossible in the past were sufficiently dealt with or they continue to haunt the UPCSA. I think this where the unity of new united church will be tested.

CHAPTER 4

Ministerial Formation in the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will assess how far the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) has progressed in an attempt to integrate the theological training of both the former black Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (RPCSA) and the white dominated Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (PCSA). The merger between the PCSA and RPCSA to form the UPCSA in 1999 also had serious implications on theological training in a uniting church. The unification of the two denominations meant it was necessary to re-align theological education. This has not been an easy process as a result ministerial formation in the UPCSA continues to be plagued by many challenges that have emerged to test the witness of the new denomination in her search for authentic unity.

This chapter will give a brief historical account of theological education in both the former PCSA and RPCSA before organic union. It is against such background one can locate some of the challenges inherent in ministerial formation in the UPCSA. More important, what are these challenges? Can they be named unflinchingly with integrity? To what extent is the church leadership prepared to own up to these challenges? According to Kritzinger (2010:212) *ministerial formation* denotes a 'holistic' formation of church members' ministry which should be built on three pillars of intellectual (theological) insight, practical (ministry) skills and personal (spiritual) growth. This definition fits well with the ministerial formation vision of the (UPCSA) Assembly of 2000, which in part reads thus:

The Assembly agrees that the aim of ministerial formation should be to integrate the academic, evangelistic, practical and spiritual aspects of training, to take account of the Reformed tradition and to be open to transformation. (UPCSA 2000:271).

Ministerial formation (or theological education) was always the pride and cornerstone of both the former Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (PCSA) and Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (RPCSA). Therefore, it is not surprising that by the middle decades of the twentieth century the two churches had partnered with the Methodist, Congregational and Anglican churches to form two strong schemes of theological training. In this chapter I will give a brief historical account of theological education in both the former PCSA and RPCSA and proceed to identify some of the challenges ministerial formation is facing since the two churches merged to form a united church namely, the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) and suggest a constructive proposal for the way forward.

The key challenges which have been identified in this chapter are namely, ecumenism, the relationship between church and university and challenges relating to language and spirituality will feature under the Africanisation of the curriculum. The list of some of the pressing challenges which have been highlighted in this chapter is by no means exhaustive of other matters of concern related to ministerial formation in the UPCSA.

4.2 Historical outline of Presbyterianism theological education

According to Denis and Duncan (2011:10) the early history of theological education in the Presbyterian tradition can be traced to the birth of Lovedale Missionary Institution in 1841, established by Scottish missionaries. Even though the theological programme was first introduced by 1870, already in 1834 missionaries in their assessment of first

ten years of Lovedale Institution among other things cited theological training as a priority. Hence in 1845 the first principal of Lovedale, William Govan, at the meeting of Institutional Board expressed a need to train students for ministry (Denis and Duncan 2011:11).

Duncan (2012:65) notes that since the inception of Lovedale Missionary Institution openness to ecumenism was one of the hallmarks of Presbyterian theological education in South Africa. As a result of a strong ecumenical commitment when the possibility of ecumenical theological education and ministerial training arose after the Second World War, the Presbyterians joined forces with the Anglicans, Methodists and Congregationalists to form two strong schemes of theological training.

According to Kumalo and Richardson (2010:265) by 1947 a new ecumenical state funded Faculty of Divinity was established at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape and the founding denominations were, Presbyterians, Methodists, Anglicans and Congregationalists. Duncan (2012:65) states that this first scheme was to last until 1999 and was initially only exclusively for white students even though towards the end of apartheid admission was opened to black students. In 1963 the same churches partnered in another ecumenical theological training venture and established the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa (Fedsem) at Alice in the Eastern Cape (later relocated to Pietermaritzburg). Denis and Duncan (2011:2) assert that that majority of students who trained at (Fedsem) were mainly but not exclusively black and the staff was racially mixed.

As Kumalo and Richardson (2010:236) rightly point out Fedsem demonstrated institutional expression to the values of ecumenism and it became a beacon of hope in a country which was racially polarised and dominated by segregation. Former president of South African Council of Churches, Professor Tinyiko Maluleleke (in Denis and

Duncan 2011:2) puts it succinctly: the seminary constituted an independent, alternative and counter-hegemonic educational model in a country where black had little access to institutions of higher learning, it was a small island of a multiracial, multi denomination and alternative community in a sea of a larger society where Black was Black and White was White.

Sadly owing to *inter-alia*, the winds of change in higher education sector in the early 1990's these two schemes of theological training suffered a major blow when they ceased operation, Fedsem in 1993 and Rhodes Faculty of Divinity in 1999. This chapter will not dwell on the reasons behind the demise of ministerial training schemes at both Rhodes University Faculty of Divinity and Fedsem, only to suffice one finds it is unfortunate especially in the case of Fedsem that it survived the wrath of Apartheid but was unable to survive post-apartheid era. As a result of the closure of Fedsem and Faculty of Divinity at Rhodes University both the PCSA and RPCSA had to take interim measures to continue training candidates for ministry. From 1994 all candidates for ministry in the RPCSA were trained at University of Fort Hare while former PCSA forged links with various theological training institutions for ministerial training of students.

According to Duncan (2012:66) the merger between PCSA and the RPCSA to form the UPCSA in 1999 also had serious implications on theological training in a uniting church. In this regard the 2001 General Assembly of the UPCSA which met in Johannesburg, endorsed the decision to integrate the ministerial training of both former PCSA and RPCSA (UPCSA, GA 2001:257-260). The University of Pretoria (UP) became one of the theological training centres of choice for the UPCSA since 2002. The UPCSA trained students for the ministry at four residential and two long distance learning institutions, namely Stellenbosch University, University of Pretoria, United Theological College in Zimbabwe, Justo Mwale Theological College in Zambia, University of South Africa and Theological Education by Extension (South Africa).

I will now turn attention to emerging challenges facing ministerial formation in the UPCSA since the decision to partner with UP in 2002.

4.3 Emerging challenges facing ministerial training and formation in the UPCSA

What are some of the challenges ministerial training and formation in the UPCSA is facing since, opting for UP to become one of the major church training centres from 2002, in an attempt to integrate the ministerial training of the former two denominations (i.e. black Reformed Presbyterian church in Southern Africa and the white dominated Presbyterian church in Southern Africa? Special attention will be paid to the following challenges - ecumenism, the relationship between church and university and challenges relating to language and spirituality will feature under the Africanisation of the curriculum.

4.3.1 Ecumenism and ministerial formation in the UPCSA

Richardson and Leleki (2010:235) contend that ecumenism is at the very heart of the Methodist Church. One can equally argue that both the former PCSA and RPCSA had ecumenism in their DNA especially in the area of theological education. This point is further confirmed by Duncan (2012:65) when he states that from 1870 Presbyterian theological education in South Africa at Lovedale Missionary Institution was always driven by the spirit of ecumenism. This fervour for ecumenical theological education was also demonstrated when the Presbyterians partnered with other ecumenical churches in establishing two exciting new ecumenical training schemes the Rhodes University Faculty of Divinity and Federal Theological Seminary (Fedsem). According to Richardson and Leleki (2010:236) these two institutions symbolised the spirit of ecumenism in Southern Africa.

However, by the end of twentieth century both ministerial training schemes at Fedsem and Rhodes had collapsed. The closure of the two schemes in the 1990's almost coincided with the dawn of democracy which Kumalo and Richardson (2010:265) describe as a "tragic irony" for the simple reason that both schemes managed to overcome the tyranny of apartheid yet they succumbed to its demise. Secondly the closure of these two schemes did great harm to relationships amongst participating churches and to theological education and ministerial training in particular.

Richardson (2007:143) claims efforts towards healing and forgiveness amongst all stakeholders involved in these two theological education ventures especially in the case of (Fedsem) have proven fruitless. Sadly, with the closure of the two denominational training schemes in the 1990's the constituent churches fled into their own denominational training schemes and unfortunately no concerted efforts were made to salvage the ecumenical gains from the wreckage (Richardson and Leleki 2010:237). As a result the training of ministers by the previously participating churches was characterised by unsettled and nomadic experience as they explored possibilities of finding the most viable location in each separate case.

According to Richardson (2007:144), in 1994 the Presbyterians returned to their historic roots at Lovedale in the Eastern Cape and for a short stint partnered with University of Fort Hare. Unfortunately as Duncan (2012:66) rightly observes only black students of all Presbyterian denominations and the Congregationalists were part of this interim arrangement meanwhile white students of the same church opted for various institutions other than Fort Hare University. I find it interesting and ironic that by 1994 as the country was celebrating the demise of apartheid the Presbyterian theological education was still an embodiment of segregation. However on one hand it should not come as a surprise as Richardson (2007:141) reminds us that while theological education of schemes of the churches, who were affiliated to Rhodes university denounced apartheid were ironically enclaves of segregation. Even though by the late 1980's this picture was

beginning to change slowly, with a few black students being sent to Rhodes, as the quota system for black students was expanded, it is clear the pattern was not easy to dismantle.

The unification of the PCSA and RPCSA in 1999 meant it was necessary to re-align theological education. Duncan (2012:66) asserts that after much investigation and discussion various options were considered as the new ministerial centre of training for the uniting church. In 2002 it was agreed that University of Pretoria (UP) would become one of the main theological training home of the UPCSA. According to Rev C Thomas one of the participants, who was part of the UPCSA Assembly of 2001, where this proposal was overwhelmingly approved, this decision was an important milestone since, it meant for the first time UPCSA is one of the major Faculty of Theology partners at UP together with other churches of the reformed family.

Furthermore, Duncan (2012:66) states that the decision was first attempt geared towards integrating the training of black and white ministers. Unfortunately, this vision has not materialised since white candidates for ministry in the (UPCSA) prefer to train elsewhere other than at UP and are allowed to do so. The continual failure by white candidates of ministry in the UPCSA to train together with their black counterparts is a sign that the integration of ministerial training for black and white candidates for ministry in the UPCSA is still a challenge to this day. This can be attributed, among other things, to centres for ministerial formation before the unification which created vested cultural and racial interests that have proven difficult to undo.

I therefore concur with De Gruchy (1997), quoted in Richardson (2007:141), that “the segregation of theological training reflected the reality of segregation in the churches”. I think it was an excellent move by the UPCSA to afford black and white ordinands an opportunity to train together at UP for at least two reasons. First, such a move was

geared at fostering and strengthening church unity in a uniting church (UPCSA in this regard) among students. However, as Duncan (2012:66) has indicated previously, white candidates of ministry in the UPCSA usually vote with their feet against training at UP and this is sanctioned and perhaps even encouraged by their presbyteries and the General Assembly Ministry Committee which has the final say in where candidates train (*Manual of Faith and Order of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa* 2007:17.22, UPCSA GA 2006:255).

As a result little contact take place between both white and black theological students in the UPCSA at UP, and in the process they miss the opportunity to grapple together with the meaning of Scripture or church history for the future of a united church. Secondly, such a move would have gone a long way as a stepping stone to transcend racial divides in the ministerial formation of the former PCSA and RPCSA which to a large extent was shaped by a century long history of estrangement and alienation taken to illogical extremes by apartheid. Owing to this deep-seated estrangement there is a need to cultivate a climate whereby both white and black students in the UPCSA can share stories of anger, fear, pain and hope. As one former UP student Rev J Mongalo attached to the UPCSA rightly pointed out “the important initial stages of our theological training until completion we literally don’t bond with our white counterparts thus doing injustice to the unity of our church”.

Even though Duncan (2012:66) maintains that the decision by the UPCSA to partner with UP as a major theological centre signalled a return to an earlier place of PCSA theological education (from 1917-1933), one wonders whether this partnership is ecumenical to the same degree as the structured unity of the Rhodes and Fedsem schemes of which the former RPCSA was a participant. Moreover, the UPCSA has had a long history of theological collaboration with English churches namely the Anglican, Methodist and Congregational churches and the two former theological schemes at Rhodes and Fedsem attest to this. It will be interesting how the UPCSA will fare in

theological education since partnering with the Faculty of Theology at UP which previously used to be dominated by Dutch Reformed Church. Furthermore, will this new partnership venture with UP help the UPCSAs to produce a new generation of ecumenically oriented, socially and critically aware ministers as Denis and Duncan (2011:284) claim was the case with Fedsem?

Richardson (207:132) notes that one of the incentives of seminaries operating in partnership with universities is that, staff appointments can be shared between churches and the university. According to Rev B Mayor who used to serve in the ministry committee which is responsible for the theological training that is the case in the agreement (UPCSA) has with UP (Faculty of Theology). The UPCSAs are no stranger to this kind of benefit especially as a church which has a long history of ecumenical theological involvement. For instance, at Fedsem the former RPCSA, by sharing human resources with other participating churches in ministerial training alleviated the financial burden on salaries of academic and support staff on the part of RPCSA. Gray (in Richardson 2007:132) reminds us that at universities currently around the globe, there is a scramble and jostling for scarce resources and often faculties of humanities and theology (emphasis mine) are at the receiving end. I argue that the Faculty of Theology at UP, just like other universities offering theological degrees and subjects elsewhere in the country, is not immune to such onslaughts on humanities, therefore it will be interesting how the UPCSAs as one of the major partners at UP negotiate such turbulences for the sake of its ministerial training survival.

One of the daunting tasks on the side of UPCSAs is to ensure that both white and black students train in one institution. As it stands at the moment, it is not healthy for a uniting church that its black candidates for ministry are training at UP, meanwhile their white counterparts train in other institutions as Duncan(2012:66) has already stated. Integration of theological education for both prospective white and black ministers would be one way towards advancement of church unity within the UPCSAs, but also as an

attempt to redress the past history of Presbyterian theological education which was once marked by segregation as Richardson (2007:141) attests.

Furthermore, if this *status quo* continues to remain it will have serious cost implications and overstretch the human resources of the UPCSA. Rev R Tsotsi who used to part of ministry committee of the UPCSA pointed out that given the limited resources and the vastness of theological training, the UPCSA human resources will be better utilized at one institution (in this case UP) and one can argue that the previous two schemes of theological training at both Fedsem and Rhodes provided a network of shared resources both human and physical that was rich and varied.

4.3.2 UPCSA and the University as agents of ministerial formation

According to Duncan (2012:66) the academic component is central to Presbyterian formation, hence a long history of association with universities such as Rhodes, Fort Hare and recently with university of Pretoria. However, the academic dimension of ministerial formation is equally important as the evangelistic, practical and spiritual aspects of training in the UPCSA (Duncan 2012:66). Klaasen (2012:48) reminds us that all four aspects of formation are closely related and of equal value. *Who* is responsible for ministerial formation in the UPCSA? In the case of the UPCSA the interrelatedness of the church and the partner university is important for holistic ministerial formation (which as I have mentioned above encompasses the academic, evangelistic and spiritual) aspects of formation.

A holistic approach to ministerial formation in the official resolutions (UPCSA 2000:271) cannot be delivered by either university or the church alone. At different stages the different organs of the church (such as, the Ministry Committee of the UPCSA,

Presbyteries) together with the university share the responsibility for training candidates of ministry. The question is what are the implications of this position? In other words, how does the UPCSA exercise this responsibility and what is the role that a state-funded university plays in this formation process?

Even though other organs of the church are responsible for the vocational and personal formation of candidates for ministry, the overall responsibility falls under the institutional oversight of the Ministry Committee of the UPCSA (UPCSA, 2006:254). To this end, the formation of the ministers of the Word becomes the responsibility of the entire church in addition to what they learn at university. According to Duncan (2012:66) in the UPCSA it seems only ministry students studying at UP are exposed to Fellowship of Vocation (FOV) before completion of their academic studies. Even more worrying according to the report of the ministry committee is an ongoing concern that some Presbyteries do not have FOV at all (UPCSA, GA 2006:257). The student formational activities were organised around, the Tiyo Soga Community, whose primary focus was devotional. Duncan (2012:68) notes that much of the life of this community revolved around, the annual valedictory service for departing students. It is interesting to note Presbyterian formation has almost been lost compared with its rich history of residential training which has been inherited from the previous paradigm of theological training.

From 2007, with the arrival of a new Ministry Secretary, the formation programme led by Presbyterian lecturers and ministers has steadily been withdrawn and transferred to the Presbytery of Tshwane which has struggled to fulfil this role. However, evidence for this is difficult to trace since this matter has been dealt with solely by the Ministry Committee whose minutes are not available and which matter has never been reported to the General Assembly. Storey (in Richardson 2007:150) argues that the residential training helps to form ministers with integrated intelligence and imagination.

Second, such training promotes a spirit of *community*. Two former UPCSAs students, Revs S Koena and T Mhinga whom I had a privilege to interact with, indicated to me that staying in a student hostel and participating in devotional activities with other ministry students helped to create an environment of comradeship and living together, as a worshipping, learning and caring community. Kritzinger (2010:220) borrowed the African adage 'It takes a village to raise a child' to illustrate how it has relevance to ministerial formation in the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). I maintain that this African proverb is most befitting to ministerial formation in the UPCSAs.

The ministerial training of UPCSAs attempts to live up to this African adage by involving various organs of the church to play an active role in the formation of ministry students, this implies the involvement of not only of the wider church, but also a local congregations (women's groups, youth groups and so on) of the church. Since the UPCSAs does not subscribe to a unified but varied modes of formation, practical ministerial training currently is exclusively for ministry students who study at UP, it is not clear whether practical orientation for prospective ordination candidates for ministry in the UPCSAs who are not enrolled at UP, often takes place at a local institution with attachment to a local church community. In this case spiritual formation takes place in the local church.

The challenge of this kind of local training scheme is that minimal exposure to residential training takes place and it becomes extremely difficult to keep good contact and build community amongst ministry students. Hence Duncan (2012:68) concludes that ministry students in the UPCSAs who do not study at UP are often not well equipped in practical ministerial training. Although one senior source involved in ministerial formation in the UPCSAs confirmed to me in our e-mail correspondence that the residential training component is factored in these local training schemes, however like Klaasen (2012:51) I am still convinced the effectiveness of the integration of academic and spiritual formation is minimal.

I think this phenomenon poses a huge challenge to ministerial formation and theological education in the UPCSA. One of the challenges it seems to me will be how to keep this phenomenon in creative tension with the residential model of training. Second, in a church like the UPCSA where there is a challenge of a shortage of ministers and with the escalating high cost at a full-time residential university, it is likely that prospective ordination candidates of ministry in the UPCSA will be attracted to this theological model of training.

It seems to me even though candidates for ministry in the UPCSA studying at UP are expected to do ministerial formation as a requirement, this component of ministry does not enjoy attention it deserves. It is currently limited to Presbyterian Polity. Two examples will suffice in this regard, Duncan (2012:68) states that there are no formal assessments of the ministerial formation programme presently in the UPCSA even though evaluation is performed by Department of Education Innovation at UP and moreover ministerial formation is not part of the formal curriculum.

To meet the vocational aspects of ministerial formation students are placed to local congregations during term time for practical exposure, however according to Duncan (2012:68), there is no uniformity regarding expectations of such an exercise and this is left to the discretion of individual ministers, despite there being Presbytery guidelines on the matter. Vocational aspects of ministerial formation require a sensitive mentorship process by well-selected and prepared UPCSA ministers. A manual to guide UPCSA ministers in such a mentoring process is an urgent priority, to avoid ministers using their own discretion in carrying such an important task.

Practical ministry experience in the UPCSA should constitute part of the curriculum. I would argue since the underlying logic of formation for ministry takes place best in the back-and-forth journey between classroom and between theology lectures and pastoral

encounters as suggested by Kritzinger (2010:223). This kind of an exercise will enable students to encounter challenges and questions in their practical experiences that will impact on their theological reading and discussions, and they will begin to see the value of the interplay between theory (what they encounter in lectures or books) and practice. The idea is that students should be active participants in the ongoing life of a UPCSA congregation from week to week during the year.

I think one of the reasons vocational training in the UPCSA is given less attention can be attributed to the theological assumption in the Reformed tradition that formation cannot, be formalised and taught. Burger and Nell (2012:18) maintain that even currently there is a certain degree of uneasiness among certain quarters of Reformed family of churches regarding the word *formation*. The general assumption is that formation will take place later once students are ordained and in congregations.

Since the UPCSA advocates holistic ministerial formation which includes the dimensions of academic insight, evangelistic, practical and spiritual growth it seems to me the interrelatedness between the church and the partner university is important. The church has the necessary resources to provide practical training, while the university is the most appropriate venue for academic excellence. I concur with Klaasen (2012:59) combining the two institutions can go a long way in contributing towards the most effective ministerial formation. The two institutions should not be viewed as mutually exclusive, but as complementing each other in dispensing holistic formation the UPCSA is striving for. The litmus test for UPCSA is whether it will have capacity to sustain and carry the responsibility for holistic ministerial formation in collaboration with its partner university. What can, and should it expect from a faculty of theology at a state-funded university and on one hand maintain its confessional aspirations?

4.3.3 Africanisation of the curriculum and ministerial formation in the UPCSA

Duncan (2000:29) contends that there is not one definition of African and it needs to be defined by Africans themselves within their own context taking account of: 'the massive diversity in Africa and the multiplicity of ways of being African'. Hence Africanisation has become a contested term, with varying interpretations and implications (Maile 2011:111, Maluleke 2010:371). Nevertheless, theologians in the UPCSA (Masango 2000:5f, Khabela 2000:11, and Duncan 2012:70) have issued a clarion call for ministerial formation curriculum in the UPCSA that should have a distinctly African flavour. In similar vein, the final communique of A Pan African Conference of Third world Theologians advocated that theology in Africa take account of context and culture and that Africa: 'requires a new theological methodology that is different from the dominant theologies of the West' (Appiah-Kubi & Torres 1979:192-193). Naidoo (in Duncan 2016:6) argues that the debate on Africanisation has developed because of the larger discourse on the transformation of higher education; to undo decades of injustice caused by apartheid. In Christian circles such an appeal is necessitated by among other things, the shift in Christianity's centre of gravity to the South of which Africa has become one of the centres (Gerloff 2010:315).

According to Tshaka (nd:1) statistics continue to bear testimony to this reality and therefore the long-loathed idea of bringing the Reformed faith into serious dialogue with Africa and its people is long overdue. However as Zwana (2007:79) rightly observes the shift in Christianity's centre of gravity to the South has meant little since is not matched by a sustained reconstructive discourse promoting authentic epistemologies. Hence Kaoma (in Duncan 2016:8) concludes that one can safely argue that the centre of gravity of Christianity has shifted to the global South, but theology has not. Dibeela (2014:240) argues that this will require an epistemological shift that dispels a myth that African meaning systems, such as traditions, rituals, songs, dress and sacraments are barbaric and unintelligent. The contempt and disdain towards African thought can be

attributed to what Tshaka (nd:7) calls *superiority of western paradigms* in academe which tend to undermine African experiences and stories, despite a realisation that African religious and cultural insights may have a relevance far wider than the African continent and as though God never revealed Godself to Africans prior to their exposure to Jesus Christ (Duncan 2016:8).

Even though Duncan (2012:70) maintains that Presbyterian formation at UP is beginning to take an African approach seriously, we must ask to what extent UPCSAs students continue to engage seriously with their African identity in their theological reflections. In my conversation with Professor G Duncan a member of UPCSAs attached to the Faculty of Theology at UP he alluded that, for a brief period, Rev E Germiquet, UPCSAs Ministry Secretary, and the Ministry Committee was toying with the ideas of Africanisation of theological education promoted by the retired USA theologian Thomas C Oden (2007) but nothing emerged from this.

Two former UPCSAs students Revs D Letlaka and W Mokoana whom I engaged on this important subject, indicated to me that African theology is not taught as one of the mainstream modules at UP, but is rather treated as a sub-discipline in traditional disciplines such as Systematic Theology, yet there was an undertaking from the Faculty that from 2008 curriculum change would take into account of the South/African context and African and Black theology (Duncan 2016:4). They further bemoaned that the fact that prescribed books and lectures largely focus on theological ideas and methods generated in Europe and North America. One would have hoped that since UP Faculty of Theology according to Duncan (2016:npn) is involved in active collaboration with seminaries in Zambia, Cameroon (where it was hoped to establish an annual programme with Kumba University) and the Congo, the Faculty is in a good position to expose students sufficiently to the realities and theological riches of the continent. Makofane (2009:42) warns that one of the dangers of treating African theology as an appendix in theological education is that African students are denied an opportunity to

deal sufficiently with complex African problems and often become estranged from the communities they are to labour in (Tshaka nd:9). Maluleke (1998:124) gives an example once related by the doyen of African theology, John Mbiti to illustrate this point:

A young African man had just completed his post-graduate studies in theology and there was a big feast to welcome him home. As the ceremony was in progress, apparently his sister became possessed by the evil spirits. The community asked the young man to intervene in this regard since his sister's problem was a religious one and he was trained in theology. However, the poor young man pulled out some theological books thinking they will help him to address the illness of his sister but to no avail, it only took an ordinary member of the community to shake the sister and she became healed.

This story above demonstrates that at times university system, which is still steeped in Western concepts and frameworks, is to a great extent responsible for the points of disjuncture between theology as an academic subject and the African communities our students serve.

Dibeela (2014:241) contends that an epistemological shift would mean among other things a special effort to include the works of African Christian thinkers and writers in theological curricula. In this respect Kritzinger (2010:229) warns us to guard against a myth that if one wishes to be a serious theologian one must read only "classics" by which is meant European theologians like Karl Barth, Thomas Aquinas and so on. Nel and Makofane (2014:244) assert that there is extensive body of literature of African classics which Reformed tradition can tap into if is to make lasting contribution in the continent or be relevant for local communities within the (UPCSA) and the broader Reformed community. Dibeela (2014:241) suggests the works of people such as Gabriel Setiloane, Marcus Garvey, John Mbiti, Jesse Mugambi, Musa Dube, and James Amanze as some of the standard prescribed works universities can expose students to.

If the classics of African theology do not yet exist, Kritzinger (2010:229) is encouraging the South African Reformed tradition to start producing them. A further important consideration of this undertaking to be successful is to explore possibilities of a strong intracontinental cooperation of theological schools, seminaries, churches and universities. This is a fertile area for progress especially for the UPCSA which has an advantage of being a trans-national church and the Faculty of Theology at UP being part of a network called NetACT an academic and ecclesiastic that spans the Southern Africa countries and presently includes institutions, from Angola, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Duncan (2016:3) points out that with regard to Africanisation, which is the responsibility of the Dean, it is not always clear what it encompasses within the Faculty of Theology, at UP. Perhaps that explains why networks with other colleagues and institutions in the continent have not come to full fruition.

This strategy is, of course not to suggest that the European classics are useless, but to merely point out that their relevance needs to be tested, and serves as a critical reminder that the various African cultures and churches have indeed produced classics in their own right. Neither am I propagating for a crude Afrocentric (vs Eurocentric transformation) for the UPCSA but ask the question whether the current theological curriculum respects the cultural and theological worlds inhabited by black students equally as those of white students.

4.3.4 Language policy and curriculum

Another dimension of Africanisation of the curriculum has to do with language policy. Maseko (2015:13) is advocating for bilingualism and multi-lingualism in development of the curriculum in our schools and universities. Equally Tshaka (nd:8) holds a similar view that translating theology into indigenous languages is important. One of the

reasons underlying such a proposal is that African Christianity is lived and practised largely in African indigenous languages and more importantly we learn and express ourselves better in our mother tongue. Maseko (2015:13) notes that mother tongue in the context of South Africa, refers to inter-alia, language that is learned at home, from birth, and it is also a language that through which cognitive abilities are framed and perfected.

According to Kritzinger (2010:225) language policy in ministerial formation, is a hotly contested issue at all universities and schools. Up until now the Faculty of Theology at UP of which UPCSA is a partner offers separate Afrikaans and English classes for the majority of theology modules, after the first year classes are taught in one language with simultaneous translation. As a result the curriculum at UP Faculty of theology does not foster bilingual theological competence in English and a student's home language. Many black students including UPCSA students at UP's Faculty of Theology are taught through the medium of English.

This means majority of these students are helped to become theologically competent in English but not in their first language or mother tongue. Furthermore, since Afrikaans students enjoy the benefit of being taught in their own language and in English, they encounter fewer challenges when it comes to interpreting and understanding the English textbooks prescribed to them and even finding translation equivalents for theological terms, whereas the black students are simply treated as 'English students' by having lectures in English, which to most is even second or third language. One of the former students Atele Moshapalo indicated to me, that she finds it an irony that she has been taught in English at UP yet her ministry is among black people to whom she is supposed to preach, counsel and pray in one of the African languages. Hence Kritzinger (2010:226) urges us to raise the contextual question regarding the extent to which there is genuine transfer from English class learning to the preaching, praying etc. African and other languages.

I suggest that the Faculty of Theology at UP together with the UPCSA partnered has to address the issue of language with utmost seriousness. Since the majority of (UPCSA) students studying at the Faculty of Theology at UP speak different African languages, is important that these languages represented amongst students be affirmed and fostered as a theological language in their own right. In other words, the Faculty of Theology of which the UPCSA is a partner should strive to deliver bilingually competent and intercultural sensitive theology graduates. Each student should demonstrate the ability to communicate the acquired theological insights in their mother tongue and in English.

The implication of this proposal is that African languages be accorded the same status as English and Afrikaans as medium of instruction in teaching theology at UP's Faculty of Theology. This way the two languages will be affirmed alongside with and together with other African languages such isiZulu, Sesotho and isiXhosa and not against English and Afrikaans but in creative tension with them. I am not proposing that every lecture should be presented in all eleven languages. One set of strategies to achieve this goal is to invite all students for a session in a particular module where the topic is introduced, then divide them into language-based seminar groups, according to each student's choice (based on their mother tongue language of ministry): Afrikaans, Sesotho, isiZulu etc. and then conclude this language based session by giving all students space and time to share their insights amongst themselves regarding the translation of the English words of the topic into their mother tongue.

By moving back and forth students to tap into rich cultural resources such as songs, proverbs, stories, rituals, customs which have a bearing on the topic under discussion. Such an approach can nurture a vibrant theological pedagogy and contribute meaningfully to ministerial formation in the (UPCSA). Kritzinger (2012:243) cautions us that such process is fraught with power dynamics owing to the colonial policies that thrived on among other things excluding indigenous languages and elevating Dutch and

English (and later English and Afrikaans). Enormous resources in the government and private sector were channelled towards projects such as Afrikaans universities, cultural organisations to enable Afrikaans to develop as a respected intellectual and public language.

The numerous Afrikaans and Afrikaans-English dictionaries attest to the huge funds and intellectual resources which were invested in such an endeavour. I share the sentiments of Kritzinger (2012:243) that the urgent challenge of our time is to mobilise and unlock resources into research to produce multilingual and intercultural books and dictionaries to stimulate intellectual explorations and experimentation within-and between-cultural-linguistic communities (including churches). Such a venture requires a collaboration with colleagues from academic departments, such as African languages or linguistics, who are competent in African languages to assist in drawing up glossaries and translations. Secondly, such intercultural theological resources can be of great value for *vernacular theologising* in ministerial formation of the (UPCSA) and UP's Faculty of Theology would have contributed immensely to the church scene and society at large.

4.3.5 Spirituality

Zwana (2007:74) reminds us that religions (Christianity included, emphasis mine) do not operate in a vacuum, a confluence factors including, social, political, and economic dimensions are important determinants in the operation of any religion. South African society under Apartheid was organised along racial lines and in the process the racial divisions became very much a feature of the church. Tshaka (nd:2) warns us that even though Apartheid is legally abolished, through negotiated settlement, it continues in the mind-set of both white and black people of South Africa. Owing to the history of deep seated alienation and estrangement we should not be surprised that the (UPCSA) is still

struggling to rid itself of the racial spectres of the past. Therefore Duncan (2005b:206) is correct in suggesting that racism is an inherent spiritual problem rooted in life's (sic) and experience. In this respect, I propose that in order to overcome the legacy of exclusion and division of the past the UPCSA needs to cultivate both an anti-racist and inclusively African spirituality.

Kritzinger (2010:231) contends that a 'colour-blind' approach, which seeks to deny the realities of history, is not helpful. Similarly Tshaka (2010:134) asserts that an ahistorical view approach to issues of racism encourages an apolitical approach which, in turn, breeds indifference to this problem. An anti-racist spirituality should acknowledge the shortcomings of our racialised identities in South Africa over the centuries. Secondly, an anti-racist spirituality will be informed by two-strands, i.e. (a) a joyful self-acceptance, coupled with an affirmation of all other people as image-bearers of God, (b) a commitment and sacrifice to dismantle all attitudes, habits and structures that reinforce the oppression of people on the basis of racial or ethnic characteristics, African country of origin and to defend the weak against the wicked (Kritzinger 2010:232).

The UPCSA has a diverse membership (i.e. the poor, middle class, old, young, black and white, foreign nationals etc.); as a result constant tensions and frictions often come to the fore as members try to find their identity in a uniting church. In search for alternative models of co-existence spirituality of inclusion which is undergirded by the values of *ubuntu* (humanness or personhood) can go a long way in affirming and reaching to people who are different. Dibeela (2014:231) holds that the concept of *ubuntu* is the glue that holds life together. It denotes the interconnectedness of all things. We share the source of life that keeps us alive by breathing the same air, sharing the food that nourishes us, walking together and carrying each other burdens and celebrating and affirming what is good in each other. When looking at *ubuntu* as affirming personhood or humanness and respect for all human dignity, we begin to realise the value of embodying a spirituality of inclusion which reaches out to people

who are different and the necessity of consciously thinking them into our lives as part of our worldview.

A united and diverse church as the UPCSA cannot afford to underplay a spirituality of inclusion in its ministerial formation as a way of building bonds of solidarity among its members and finding a new common language that will unite members to see themselves as part of the collective and becoming aware of their connectedness. For instance, instead of saying, “Those black poor communities in the UPCSA struggle with Afrophobia” one can rather say “in some of our communities in the UPCSA, We struggle with the hatred of foreign nationals”. This way a new language of collective ownership in the (UPCSA) is cultivated.

A spirituality of inclusion informed by the values of *ubuntu* is a very important resource the UPCSA can employ in its ministerial formation and as it seeks to work towards promoting unity among its rank and file. Such an undertaking will require a commitment of all (UPCSA) members with spiritual courage and bold humility.

4.4 Conclusion

The closure of Fedsem and the Rhodes University’s Faculty of Divinity had a devastating effect on ecumenical ministerial training and the participating churches (the UPCSA included) fled into their own denominational training schemes. Theological and ministerial formation of the (UPCSA) was marked by a period of unsettled and nomadic experience in a quest to finding the most viable location and reshaping its theological education. This vacillation and nomadic experience culminated in UP Faculty of Theology became a major training institutional partner of UPCSA since 2002. The ministerial formation in the UPCSA is facing a number of challenges since joining forces

with the UP (Faculty of Theology). These challenges were identified as, ecumenism, the relationship between church and university and Africanisation of the curriculum with special focus on language policy and spirituality. This study has attempted to look into these challenges in depth and in some cases suggest a way forward that could address some of these challenges.

Chitando (2010:205) notes that it is difficult to be innovative in disciplines, (such as theology) that take pride in upholding traditions. Calls for creativity and curriculum transformation are often viewed with suspicion and disdain. Churches like the UPCSA which pride themselves in upholding the Reformed tradition are often guilty of such a charge. The failure to liberate Reformed theology leads to coldness and traditionalism that is soul destroying. A reformed tradition which operates in a legalistic framework will rob the UPCSA of an opportunity to open up and hear what God is saying to the church today. I think the Faculty of Theology at UP together with its partner churches (that would include UPCSA) is in a better position to experiment or even to come up with creative new theological pedagogies since the university provides a space where principles of institutional autonomy and academic freedom are essential elements of knowledge production.

Chapter 5

Ministerial stipends in the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

5.1 Introduction

One of the challenges facing the Uniting Presbyterian Church in South Africa (UPCSA) is economic unity. According to Buqa (2012:1) differentiation in stipends among ministers in the UPCSA has become one of the most economically contentious issues. Evidence would suggest in the very earliest phase unity negotiations already the economic disparities of both the former Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, [PCSA] and Bantu Presbyterian Church in South Africa, [BPCSA] later renamed Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, [RPCSA] were evident when it came to stipends of both African and White ministers (Xapile 1994:40). For this reason the union has not been a complete success with regard to glaring inequalities in stipends between those ministering in the more affluent congregations (of which the majority are white ministers) and those labouring in previously disadvantage (of which the majority are black ministers).

This situation has been exacerbated by the financial crisis the new denomination has plunged into according to the initial findings of the retreat which was held in Skuilkloof (Minutes, Initial Findings, 1, Informal Retreat, March 11-12, 2002). According to Tucker (2012:1) since the union in 1999 the UPCSA has encountered enormous challenges regarding equitable remuneration of ministers. In an attempt to resolve this problem Tucker (2012:1) indicates that the General Assembly of 2006 proposed equalisation and centralisation of stipends. However to date the integration of a single salary system and equalisation of ministerial stipends is still unresolved.

This study will briefly discuss the history of stipends in the former RPCSA and PCSA respectively and the current system under the new denomination, the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA). Furthermore the study will highlight some of the implications for failing to offer ministers decent stipends and the consequences thereof. While this study contends that equalisation and centralisation of stipends is imperative it will argue that is equally important that such a discussion is not treated in isolation from other related factors, notably forms of ministries, economic factors and theological imperatives.

5.2 Stipends in context

The common term which will be used in this study is “stipends” which according to the dictionary of Scottish Church History and theology denotes “the living allowance received by a full-time minister in most churches (Herron, 1993:797, 798). Secondly, this is a term currently used in the UPCSA and it was inherited from the two former Presbyterian denominations (i.e. RPCSA and PCSA) who according to Tucker (2012:1) owe their origins to Church of Scotland.

5.2.1 The system of payment of stipends in the former PCSA

The former PCSA has for a long time exercised the *congregational* system of payment of stipends (UPCSA, GA 2005:187). This was a voluntarist and congregational stipendiary structure in which each local congregation financially sustains the minister who serves it (Tuckers 2012:2).

The payment of stipends in the former PCSA was not linked to the payment of assessments. In other words, stipends were congregationalised and assessments were *centralised* as a result in some cases as it was noted in the supplementary report of the committee on centralisation and equalisation of stipends (UPCSA, GA, 2005:187) a congregation could pay a stipend of the minister and not pay assessments to the General Assembly office. At the same time there were inconsistencies regarding the stipend the minister receives, sometimes it is given in full, other times in halves and in most cases it is given as a minimum as stipulated and approved by the Assembly. According to the report of the committee on centralisation and equalisation of stipend (UPCSA, GA, 2005:187) those who were at the receiving end of this malpractice or affected negatively were ministers labouring in township congregations.

Furthermore I will argue that township and rural congregations are plagued by poverty and inequality and are served mainly by black ministers. Therefore black ministers serve the majority of people who are victims of poverty. They do not only minister to them, but as Buffel (2002:38) has rightly observed they are part of vicious cycle of poverty in which majority are trapped hence at times the stipend a minister receives would not be regular as it is required in terms of General Assembly rulings.

The congregational stipendiary structure was fraught with flaws. One of the shortcomings of this system was a communication gap between the General Assembly, Presbyteries and congregations which resulted to a lack of accountability in relation to payment of assessments and stipends. For instance, presbyteries will not have records of congregations which pay or default on their assessments since congregations pay their assessments. As a result presbyteries felt disempowered when it came to monitoring assessments of congregations (UPCSA, GA 2005:187).

5.2.2 The system of payment of stipends in the former RPCSA

It has to be noted that at various times the RPCSA experienced a number of changes in relation to payment of stipends and assessments (Report of the Committee on Centralisation and Equalisation of stipend UPCS, GA 2005:188). First at its inception in 1923 the BPCSA which was later renamed RPCSA in 1982, adopted a voluntarist and congregational stipendiary structure at the 1924 General Assembly (BPCSA, General Assembly minutes 1925:66). Congregations through Deacon's courts became responsible for the payment of stipends to their ministers. Congregations were assessed through a programme called *Malihambe Ivangeli* (let the Word spread) to support the ministry of the denomination located at General Assembly office (Report of the Committee on Centralisation and Equalisation of stipend UPCS, GA 2005:188).

In the late 1970s General Assembly under the guidance of Its then Clerk of the Assembly, the late Rev Samuel B Ngcobo, who was also the General Secretary of the church, adopted a centralised stipend payment system (Report of the Committee on Centralisation and Equalisation of stipend UPCS, GA 2005:188). Although Tucker (2012:1) notes that unfortunately no easily available explicit documents exist which record the adoption of this change or its details, he suggests the pressure caused by the seizure of property and forced removals by the Nationalist Party motivated this decision. This study will argue that another reason behind this decision has to do with the fact that as the number of black ministers increased the Deacon's Court which oversaw the responsibility for the payment of stipends later experienced problems. Unfortunately not all ministers were placed in financially viable congregations, hence the problem of non-equal stipends arose.

This became a source of tension as ministers began to prefer to serve congregations which were financially sustainable as opposed to those which were poor (Report of the

Committee on Centralisation and Equalisation of stipend UPCS, GA 2005:188). It also became difficult for the General Assembly Ministry Committee to place probationers in poor congregations which were unable to honour the payment of stipends to the ministers; on the other hand ministers who were due for retirement refused to leave financially viable congregations for the younger generation of ministers.

Under this new system assessments were based on the statistical growth of congregations and the rate of assessment was set and reviewed by the General Assembly every time it met. Sessions had to complete statistics forms which revealed the numerical growth of a congregation. Based on informed statistics the Finance Committee would then draw a budget and make financial projections for the church (Report of the Committee on Centralisation and Equalisation of stipend UPCS, GA 2005:188). The financial viability of a congregation was assessed on the basis of these statistics. It appears for a period of time this system worked well according to the Supplementary Report of the committee on centralisation and equalisation of stipend (UPCS, GA 2005:188). It brought a certain degree of equalisation of stipends. Congregations and their Deacon's Courts were afforded the opportunity to augment the stipend given to their minister. More important, congregations and Deacon's Courts had the prerogative to determine the supplement of the stipend of a minister.

As was the case with the system of payment of stipends in the PCS, this system was also inherently flawed, since Presbyteries were not actively involved in ensuring that congregations honour the payment of stipends of their ministers and assessments. Presbyteries were not fully involved except as collectors of and distributors of statistical forms. Congregations were directly linked to the General Assembly office in terms of paying their dues and they would only be informed by the Assembly office about defaulting congregations within their bounds (Report of the Committee on Centralisation and Equalisation of stipend UPCS, GA 2005:188). Thus, Presbyteries felt undermined

in their mandate to govern and oversee that congregations honour and implement the General Assembly financial resolutions.

This in turn created a distance between Presbyteries and the General Assembly office in terms of quick information sharing pertaining to financial movements of congregations belonging to Presbyteries, which weigh heavily towards the failure of this system. It is against this background decentralisation was then implemented (Report of the Committee on Centralisation and Equalisation of stipend UPCSA, Proceedings and Decisions of the Executive Commission, 2005:188).

Decentralisation simply meant that centralisation of stipends was now responsibility of Presbyteries and no longer congregations. It was Presbyteries which had the prerogative to decide on stipends and increments. General Assembly would assess Presbyteries based on the number of members as indicated by the statistic form signed by the sessions which form the presbytery (Supplementary Report of the committee on Centralisation and Equalisation of Stipend UPCSA, GA 2005:188). This system enabled presbyteries to govern their congregations and clearly monitor their progress without being bypassed. According to Rev. A Rodger, the former General Secretary of PCSA and UPCSA respectively, who was cited in the Supplementary Report of the committee on centralisation and equalisation of stipend (UPCSA, GA 2005:188) the period towards the Union reflects significant improvement with regard to payment of assessments and equalisation of stipends since this system was adopted. This confirms the important role Presbyteries should be playing especially if the system does not overlook their role. The unfortunate part of this system is that it was implemented shortly before the union in 1999.

5.2.3 The current system of payment of stipends in the UPCSA

Already in 1998 the PCSA-RPCSA Committee on Union was anticipating that is not going to be an easy process to integrate two entirely different systems of paying stipends (PCSA-RPCSA Union, GA 1998:1). Hence it was recommended that both systems (i.e. RPCSA ministers be paid through the Central office and PCSA congregations pay their ministers directly) continue concurrently until a common system is developed. In 1999 the finance and property task force committee of PCSA-RPCSA proposed that stipends of ministers must not be paid through central office, but the committee was unable to decide whether payments should be made by presbyteries or by congregations (Report of the Finance and Property PCSA-RPCSA, 1999:1).

Unfortunately the report did not spell out why stipends must be paid through central office. One can see that the scale was tipped in favour of the former PCSA in this matter since the payment of stipends was administered by the local congregation not the Central office. As a result it was not surprising when in 1999 UPCSA adopted the former PCSA method of paying ministerial stipends (Tucker 2012:2).

This is a voluntarist and congregational stipendiary structure where each congregation takes full responsibility for the payment of the stipend of its minister. Those congregations that are not able to sustain a minister financially were encouraged to apply to a central fund for a grant to meet the minimum stipend of their ministers (UPCSA, GA 2005:92). It appears this new system of payment of stipends did not appeal to some presbyteries. For instance according to the Report of the committee on centralisation and equalisation of stipend the Presbytery of Umtata which was dominated by the former congregations of RPCSA resolved to centralise the stipend of ministers (UPCSA, GA 2005:189). The Presbytery also embarked on a fundraising initiative through *Malihambe* in order to be able to pay stipends to their ministers.

Although the report does not state reasons why this Presbytery opted for centralisation instead of congregational stipendiary structure, one can assume that it be may be the new system was not viable for some of the congregations in this presbytery of the RPCSA tradition.

The system has de-linked stipends from assessment. Stipend is issued by the local authority while assessments becomes the national concern (i.e. Central Office,) (UPCSA, GA 2005:189). The General Assembly which according to the law of the church is the supreme council of the UPCSA, set a basic stipend which every minister is expected to be paid regardless of the congregation as recommended by the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee (Buqa 2012:16). Congregations which cannot meet the minimum stipend of their ministers as set by the General Assembly are assisted through a central fund which is administered by the Central office (UPCSA, Special Commission on Union, 1999:6). Congregations are at liberty to give additional supplementary income if they so desire.

Unfortunately the glaring economic inequalities in South Africa are a litmus test also for financing the ministry of UPCSA. According to Pillay in (Buffel 2002:36) in South Africa indications are that 50% of the population could be considered poor and that the gap between the rich and the poor was among the largest in the world. These unacceptable proportions of poverty and inequality affect the living standards, economic growth and levels of social stability. According to Buffel (2002:37) these socio-economic imbalances can be attributed to the legacy of the apartheid system which through discriminatory policies ensured the white minority are entitled to economic privileges at the expense of the black majority. Mangayi (2012:4) notes that the Church membership in Africa which is diverse is not immune from these economic realities since is mainly constituted by members who are poor and unemployed; thus numerical growth does not always translate to financial viability.

Similarly the UPCSA consists of a very diverse membership embracing different races, cultures, language and economic groupings (UPCSA, GA 2014:81). Such diversity also reveals economic imbalances and disparities that are evident in the life and work of the UPCSA as the former General Secretary, Rev. Jerry Pillay highlighted in his report to the General Assembly in 2014 (UPCSA, GA 2014:81). The levels of differentiation in the remuneration packages of ministers in the UPCSA is a case in point. For instance, according to Tucker (2012:2) ministers (mainly black) who are labouring in the disadvantaged areas such as townships and rural areas receive less income than those ministering in the more affluent congregations. Therefore one can be justified to categorize a Body of Christ's workers between the "have more" and "have less".

It is against this background at the General Assembly of 2010 the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee of the General Assembly tabled a proposal for equalisation and centralisation of stipends. According to Tucker (2012:) this proposal entailed the following:

- Every congregation of UPCSA in South Africa, which has a minister called or appointed, will pay to the presbytery (or Synod) the full cash stipend of their minister(s) (less grant in aid of stipend where relevant) by the 15th day of every month.
- Presbyteries in South Africa shall remit to the UPCSA Assembly Office their entire stipend bill together with contributions for pension, long leave and medical aid subscription (where relevant) for every minister called or appointed by the 20th day of every month.
- The Assembly Office shall deduct tax and other statutory deductions and pay this to the South African Revenue Service. Every minister in South Africa shall receive on the 25th day of every month from the Assembly office a stipend equal to the Presbytery's minimum stipend less relevant deductions if the congregation has remitted the due amount (UPCSA, GA 2010:199f).

This system was going to take a form of a pilot project for two years and during which it will come under a review by the committee and suggest changes to the Assembly or Executive Commission.

After a lengthy discussion, the General Assembly agreed to the following resolution: The Assembly refers the proposal back to the Maintenance of Ministry committee for further research and report on the implementation of the Centralization of stipend system and instructs it to give a detailed report to the 2011 Executive Commission (UPCSA, GA 2010:376).

At this stage, suffice to say upon receiving the report of the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee, the Executive Commission decided not to implement the centralisation system (UPCSA , GA 2011:34). Tucker (20122) notes that the Executive Commission never provided any reasons why it rejected the proposal. However elder J Ngake attached to Presbytery of Highveld confirmed to me that this contentious issue always came under spot light at every biennial General Assembly he attended and as Tucker (2012:2) has rightly observed the matter of the centralisation of and equalisation of stipends will not go away in the foreseeable future.

5.3 Some consequences of failing to pay ministers appropriate stipends

There are a number of consequences, if the church (in this case UPCSA) fails to offer its key employees (ministers) decent stipends. This study has identified five consequences that might have far reaching implications for the UPCSA if ministers continue to earn low stipends, these are, ministers opting for secular employment, stress, poor job performance, family problems and poor pension benefits.

5.3.1 Ministers opting for secular employment

According to Khabela (2000:13) the UPCSA recognises diverse forms of ministry, namely full time ministry, this category refers to those ministers who are working full time in a congregation, specialised ministry, these are ministers who work in the Central office still earning a stipend and serve the church on full time basis, seconded ministers, to this category belongs ministers who been released officially by the church to serve secular institutions, including government institutions such as army and police where ministers serve as chaplains or any other structure approved by the church and part time ministers, this ministry refers to those ministers who are employed in various secular jobs but wishes to remain in the ministry of the church and serve part time.

As a result of the low stipends several full time ministers in the UPCSA over the years have requested to be released by the church to join various secular institutions including the government on secondment. In my email correspondence with a senior source working in the central office of the UPCSA, the arrangement is that such ministers should always apply for credentials to their respective presbyteries on annual basis so that their status as ministers in good standing is retained. According to statistics provided by the Central Office to date 46 ministers in the UPCSA are seconded by the church. The same senior source confirmed to me that the figures are likely to increase in coming years if the problem of differentiation in stipends is not addressed by the church (email correspondence with a senior source in the central office dated the 13/04/2016).

Buffel (2005:1) referring to the situation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) with regard to low stipends of ministers noted that the majority of the clergy who remain in full time ministry have tried to soldier on regardless of the odds stacked against them and the question remains 'for how long will they continue? Rev E

Selabe a young minister in the Presbytery of Egoli indicated to me that UPCSAs are no exception. He confided to me that he is struggling financially since the meagre stipend he receives every month is not enough to meet his financial obligations; as a result temptations to take a secular employment always cross his mind.

I conducted interviews with seven ministers attached to presbyteries of (Polokwane, Limpopo Province, Lekoa and Egoli, Gauteng Province) respectively and they unanimously cited low salary levels in the UPCSAs as the major reason they opted for secular employment. If anomalies in stipends continue, UPCSAs stand to lose some of their best candidates in full time ministry. The UPCSAs need to guard against this trend. The previous general secretary in his report already warned that some congregations without a full time minister are often neglected and rarely enjoy services of a pastor (UPCSA, GA 2014:72).

5.3.2 Low stipends and stress

According to Buffel (2002:68) one of the major causes of stress among ministers is related to poor stipends. In similar vein, Bratcher (1984:38) points out that there are studies that have shown that finances including (low stipends) become the most serious source of stress for a minister. Buffel (2002:64) further notes that stress can be attributed to a variety of sources. This study will argue that low stipends in the UPCSAs are one of these sources. This is also confirmed in the 2005 report by the Executive Commission tasked to look into the centralisation and equalisation of stipends in the UPCSAs which cited low stipends as one of the causes of stress among ministers (UPCSA, GA 2005:189).

Since this study is not on stress I wish not to enter in to a debate around definitions of stress; suffice at this stage to say for the purpose of this research stress refers to those work-related pressures and problems that ministers experience in their ministry. Terry Burch (in Malcomson 1975:27) states that ministers' salaries are comparatively low hence the salary is often a source of tension for the minister (Hinchey 1975:12). Revs J Motime and D Sobantu attached to Presbyteries of Lekoa and Polokwane respectively, in an interview we had both singled out stipendiary discrepancies as one of the major causes of stress amongst ministers in the UPCSAs. The two participants also mentioned that as a result of low stipends they often experience stress since they are unable to provide for the needs of their children, such as school fees and pocket money.

5.3.3 Negative impact on job performance

The other equally serious result of low stipends is negative impact on performance of ministers. According to Coate (1989:12) as a result of stress ministers and the church are functioning below their true potential. Similarly Davey (1995:84) shares the same sentiments, though slightly differently, by stating that stress leads to dysfunctional behaviour and is counterproductive to effective ministry. When stress is experienced over a long period consequently it affects the quality of the work of any employee. As a result as Buffel (2002:93) has rightly observed performance is affected, like all institutions (including the church) productivity is lost. Buffel (2002:92) further states in the case of ministers the effect of poor performance can be detected from amongst other things, unprepared sermons, turning up late for meetings and general lack of professionalism in executing one's pastoral duties.

At the General Assembly of UPCSAs in 2005 lack of performance by some ministers was attributed to among other things poor stipends (UPCSAs, GA 2005:189). Rev D Murray attached to Highveld Presbytery lists low stipends as one of the contributing factors to

low morale and lack of productivity among some of his colleagues. He even suggested that like other sectors of employment is necessary for the UPCSA to quantify and give monetary value to the hours and resources lost as a result of poor performance by some of its ministers.

In his report at the 11th General Assembly the outgoing General secretary Rev Dr J Pillay warned that some congregations within the UPCSA are declining in membership (UPCSA, GA 2014:72). This state of affairs will continue to worsen if congregants receive poor services from ministers who are demoralized and demotivated as a result of low stipends and the membership growth of the UPCSA will take a knock.

5.3.4 Family problems

Stress experienced by ministers due to poor stipends inevitably permeates the whole of their lives, in particular their families. In this connection Morris and Blunton (in Buffel 2002:70) contend that clergy families, like other family types are subject to stress arising out of the work context that creates heavy demands in which family systems and resources may not be adequate. According to Buffel (2002:95) due to the low stipends ministers receive, tensions and friction often arise especially when minister is unable to provide for the needs of a family. This has often put a lot of strain on many marriages of ministers while, in some cases this has had disastrous consequences as evidenced by growing numbers of clergy marriages that end in divorce (Bratcher 1984:84).

Rev M Lufhuno who used to belong to Tshwane Presbytery now retired expressed this very interesting dichotomy with regard to the impact stipends have to family life of ministers: "When one earns a decent stipend, pleasure at home tends to be rekindled but equally when the stipend is low peace and harmony are eroded things seem to fall

apart at home”. From this statement one can deduce that stipends have a tendency to affect the relationship between ministers and their families.

5.3.5 Poor pension benefits

According to Buffel (2002:89) low stipends have implications for pension benefits of ministers once they have retired. It is a known principle of pension benefits that the lower the salary, the lower one's pension contribution and a better salary ensures a better contribution towards pension benefits, which will be enjoyed after retirement. In the case of the UPCSA since the union in 1999, some congregations were reported to be inconsistent with payments of their minister's pension fund according to the Report of the President of the Uniting Presbyterian Black leadership Forum (UPBLF), (UPCSA, GA 2003:413). If this trend continues it will have far reaching implications to the new system of Pension provision which was introduced in 2013 as an attempt to address a variety of discrepancies at various levels (UPCSA, GA 2014:80) and pension benefits of ministers attached to such congregations when they retire.

At the 2014 General Assembly of the UPCSA it was reported that the biggest threat to the pension fund is action taken against it by the members failing to pay their contributions at all in time (UPCSA, GA 2014:172). Even more worrying was the threats by the Financial Service Board to withdraw the registration of the fund due to this default. This would sadly be very detrimental to the members both those who are compliant and those who are not (UPCSA, GA 2014:172).

Rev G Rammutla and Rev P Mopeli both attached to Presbytery of Limpopo expressed concern about their retirement benefits. Rev G Rammutla pointed out that since his stipend is too little he contributes a little percentage of his salary to the UPCSA pension

fund and as a result he is worried that in turn his retirement benefits will equally be meagre once he retires. Thus, he concludes that: “one works very hard for the church for a very long time, only to crown that with destitution”. Rev P Mopeli in summing up this situation said: “As it is, I am very worried about how my family will survive after retirement. I know I will be earning even far less than, I am earning now, as the low stipend makes our contribution to the pension fund very low, If was earning a good stipend I will buy a retirement annuity policy to augment my UPCSAs retirement contribution”.

These are but a few implications of the meagre stipends that ministers receive and the UPCSAs can only ignore some of these realities at her own peril. If the UPCSAs fails to offer some of its key employees (ministers) decent stipends as I have argued it stands to lose some of its best candidates in full-time ministry as has been the case over the years. Those who will remain in full-time ministry continue to do so while they are demoralised and with low self-esteem if their stipends do not improve.

5.4 The centrality of economics in centralisation and equalisation of stipends discussion

As it was pointed elsewhere in this study the UPCSAs is also located in disadvantaged areas such as townships and rural areas as a result it becomes a challenge to resource ministry. Mangayi (2016: no page number/npn) has observed that with the exception of a few, most members of these churches are poor and members suffer from mass unemployment. Buffel (2002:38) remarks that ministers in such situations serve the majority of people who are victims of poverty. Consequently these harsh socio-economic conditions of the church members also have repercussions on ministers’ stipends. Therefore the economic dimension is very relevant with regard to discussion around centralisation and equalisation of stipends.

Given the fact that UPCSA is also constituted by members from historically disadvantaged groups it is imperative to look at how the denomination can streamline its operation to help congregations in disadvantaged areas to be economically viable. While the church is a religious organisation, Buffel (2002:147) argues that there are aspects of the operations of the church that should be business like in nature. For instance, even though churches in the townships and rural areas have limited resources, Mangayi (2016:npn) argues that they are endowed with important assets such as the physical and institutional which I think often are under-utilised and not maximised to their full potential. Most of these premises are rarely utilized during the week yet they can provide for the needs of the communities such as skills development, trauma counselling centre for the public good. This can go a long way in helping UPCSA congregations in poor communities to position and re-discover assets which can be used to form community structures in local communities, which can be used as a basis for community and economic development as well as a source of fundraising.

With the financial meltdown (i.e. diminishing income) experiencing by members of mainline churches in developing countries and the fragile economic base of the African laity as both Tucker (2012:9) and Mugambi (2004:257) have observed one can predict that it is going to be difficult to rely solely on the income of congregants to finance stipends of ministers. Therefore is important that the UPCSA revives and consolidates fundraising initiatives such as *Malihambe Evangelii* as an attempt to increase ministers' stipends. The strength of such an initiative is that is driven by people and fosters synergy and cooperation for the good of the church.

Furthermore Mangayi states (2016:npn) states that a fundraising method such as this promotes self-reliance and discourages a temptation by poor congregations to rely on external funding, as is the case with some poor congregations of the UPCSA which rely on central funds or subsidies from affluent congregations for their survival.

The pattern established by missions in South Africa over the two hundred years has created among other things a dependency syndrome and what Buffel (2005:1) calls the glorification of poverty by some poor congregations. Hence in some cases the members of the peripheral churches hardly realise their potential and important assets of their churches which constitutes a valuable strength to develop their own economic engines. For instance, Ms R Ledwaba indicated to me that their congregation which is located in the rural area has a well fenced property with borehole water in the yard, yet none of them have initiated a viable agricultural project, which has the potential to become a socio-economic and agricultural asset and a long term sustainable development programme. According to initial findings of the retreat which was held in Skuilkloof the UPCSA is endowed with tracts of land which can be used for agriculture (Minutes, Initial Findings, 1, Informal Retreat, March 11-12, 2002).

Ms R Ledwaba lamented the fact that most UPCSA poor congregations are still trapped in the paternalistic structures of the resource giving congregations. What hurts her is that the resource giving congregations if ever are involved in community development initiatives of disadvantaged churches at all, tend to promote charity and relief. According to her the problem with this approach is that it focuses on symptoms while the root causes of economic inequalities that breed, poverty, unemployment and injustice remain unaddressed. Hence Mangayi (2016:npn) concludes that as a result they enjoy little meaningful relationship with their resource giving churches.

In the light of this, it seems to me a changed pattern of relationship between resourced giving-receiving congregations is vital (Makofane 2009:87). Alteration of power relationships between the resource giving and receiving congregations will help both to share equally in their mission work. The structures and attitudes which perpetuate dependency had to change for the sake of growth of both the resource giving and receiving congregations. It appears the model of partnership between the resource-

receiving congregations was according to Duncan (2007:55) inherited from a traditional understanding of mission as a current flowing in a single direction: from North to South, from rich to poor, from the powerful to the powerless, from white to black. This understanding of mission has limitations, as it reduces mission to something that some people do to others, rather than a common sharing in God's mission to the world. As a result this approach does not open up a space for reciprocity. Partnership requires mutual respect for each other Makofane (2009:93).

Duncan (2007:66) observes that receiving churches (receiving congregations) needs are blatant money and other material needs. But one hardly hears of the needs of resourced giving congregations. Both the resourced-receiving congregations must open up to one another as friends in mutual trust and accountability. Part of the problem, as Bosch & Saayman (1987:172) have rightly observed is that the commodities given and received in the mutual relationship between resource-receiving congregations consist almost exclusively of money. The resource giving congregations are definitely replete with this commodity and share with others out of abundance. The receiving congregations, on the other hand, do not have the luxury of such commodities, but that does not by any means suggest that they have nothing to offer to the resource giving churches. The resource giving congregations should also be willing to receive the resources offered by poor congregations, even if this is not in monetary terms. Thus Pillay (2014:81) in the case of UPCSA reminds us that gifts and abilities must not be limited to economic readings but must include gifts of the people themselves with their experiences and life encounters.

5.5 Centralisation and equalisation of stipend and forms of ministries within UPCSA

In his report to the 11th General Assembly in 2014 the outgoing General Secretary Rev Professor Pillay implored the UPCSA to seriously explore the recognition and

acceptance of different forms of ministries (UPCSA, GA 2014:72). Given the diverse nature of the UPCSA whose membership is drawn from different races, cultures, languages and economic groupings as (Buqa 2012:7) has rightly observed such a plea by the General Secretary was timely and appropriate. The plea was also motivated by a concern that congregations which are unable to financially sustain a minister are neglected and disadvantaged within a structure (UPCSA, GA 2014:72). In light of this, the study argues that discussion around centralisation and equalisation of stipend should also be informed by different forms of ministries the UPCSA should adopt.

As has been pointed out in this study the UPCSA recognises different forms of ministries even though there are clear differences in the categories of ministry. According to Rev Z Malibongwe unfortunately these distinctions have often created divisions and hierarchy of ministries with full time ministry accorded superior status. Tsele (2012:2) warns us that the danger with this view is that it creates a false impression that there is a form of ministry that is intrinsically more worthy, more divinely favoured and more superior than other forms. Khabela (2000:13) reminds us that in the Presbyterian tradition full-time or part-time ministers are supposed to enjoy equality of ministerial status.

Full-time ministry remains indispensable to the life of a congregation and a church, so should other forms of ministry in the UPCSA. A church like UPCSA which according to Tucker (2012:1) has increasingly encountered tremendous challenges in financing its ministry should look into different models of ministry that are viable alternatives that can complement full-time ministry which already in some cases is over burdening the financial resources of poor congregations which are located in historically disadvantage areas. Hence Tsele (2012:6) contends that a specific form of ministry a church may take is amongst other things should be guided by the prevailing conditions the church faces as it seeks to serve God's mission.

According to Masango (2000:1) John Calvin from whom the UPCSA owe its reformed theology distinguished four offices within which ministry occurs namely, presbyteries, deacons, pastors and doctors (teachers) each exercising certain functions in ministry. For instance, pastors were expected to govern and care for local congregations and deacons were to administer the affairs of the poor and to care for them. However as Masango (2001:2) has noted churches (including the UPCSA) tend to place prime importance on the minister's multiple, competing functions such as, preaching, evangelism, caring, administration, teaching just to mention a few and as a result great emphasis is on individual ministry. Thus Tsele (2012:7) concluded that this task-oriented approach has denied the church the opportunity to benefit from the gifts of its many servants. One can imagine the kind of benefits the UPCSA was going to accrue if she was to tap into different models of ministry and maximize the potential of the laity. Maluleke (2015:579) in an article dedicated to Bishop Emeritus Desmond Mpilo Tutu make reference to Tutu's father who had to conduct a funeral of his son in the absence of the local pastor to remind us that the church of Tutu's childhood was always present and it convened as when needed, with or without a priest in attendance.

The UPCSA can take a cue from the African Independent Churches (AICs) since they have really tapped into that vital force called the laity in meeting the needs of growing number of African Christians instead of over-burdening the responsibilities to one person in this case the pastor. The former secretary of UPCSA, Rev Professor J Pillay already in his report to the General Assembly of 2014 lamented that congregations which are not in a position to sustain a minister financially are often neglected. In such cases is it not high time then for UPCSA to consider using its laity in an attempt to minister effectively to her members? All that is needed is to organize them and to involve more in the work of the church. Kalanda (1976:339) even goes further to argue that even if lay persons might not do things which ministers would have not wished their full participation in the life of the church is crucial. In this connection, what is important is that all diverse forms of ministry that can be adopted as dictated by the needs and circumstances (Buffel 2012:14). To broaden its base for ministry the denomination will

require to do a thorough context analysis in order to discern what is the nature of Christian ministry and what forms of ministries can best serve the mission of the church (in this case UPCSA).

5.6 Theological basis around discussion on centralisation and equalisation of stipends

I concur with Tucker (2012:3) that pragmatic and contextual considerations must be balanced with a sound theological basis with regard to centralisation and equalisation discussion. This study has identified theology of stewardship, the Eucharist together with the notion of *ubuntu* as both the theological and philosophical framework which will inform this discussion.

5.6.1 Stewardship

Tucker (2012:3) defines stewardship as the theology of managing, on God's behalf, all that was given to humankind to have authority over. In the case of UPCSA this will include the resourcing and method of stipendiary payments within a congregation. Tucker (2012:3) submits that the concept of stewardship is rooted in both the Old and New Testament. The story of creation in the Old Testament (Genesis 1:28) explicitly expresses a desire by God to give men and women authority to manage creation on God's behalf. In Luke 16:1-15 Jesus gives an account of a steward who was entrusted with responsibility to handle the finances on behalf of his master. Thus Tucker (2012:3) associates the biblical doctrine of handling money and the total environment with "stewardship".

Buffel (2005:1) laments the lack of a culture of meaningful stewardship in different levels of many churches. Lack of stewardship is tantamount to lack of accountability and responsibility and once this happens often members of the congregation withdrew financial support to express their dissatisfaction. It was reported at the 2014 General Assembly that this tendency of withholding tithes and financial giving is rife in some congregations of UPCSA especially when lack of financial transparency is evident (UPCSA, GA 2014:73). Why would someone continue to contribute when no accounting and reporting is done?, responded Ms T Molaontoa when I asked her why their congregation withheld contributions due to the Central Office. The convenor of Special Committee on Reformation Rev Rod Botsis in a circular to ministers, Session Clerks and Presbytery Clerks in 2003 also noted that there was lack of stewardship on the part of ministers, elders and Presbyteries about belonging to the UPCSA. He cited lack of honouring assessments by congregations, non-payment of medical contributions by ministers and congregations, non-repayment of loans and non-attendance of meetings as some of the challenges amounting to dishonesty and irresponsibility therefore lack of stewardship (Special Committee on Reformation 2003:1). Tucker (2012:4) warns that this lack of non-payment might have serious spiritual and social repercussions both for ministers and congregations.

It seems to me there is a need to intensify stewardship in the UPCSA. This will require targeting the leadership of Congregations and different levels of structures such as associations and sub-committees so that they can lead by example. Obviously this will go even to higher levels of the leadership of the church. After education and awareness those who continue to neglect their own stewardship obligations should not be considered for leadership positions or if they are already in such positions they should be relieved of their duties. In congregations where there are cell leaders and committees such leadership also to be urged to lead by example.

5.6.2 Eucharist

Like many other churches, UPCSA celebrates the Eucharist as one of the sacraments. However, the question is whether UPCSA has tapped sufficiently into this potentially powerful sacrament to accommodate diversity in its various manifestations. Kritzinger (2000:269) points out that if there is one ritual in the church's repertoire that fundamentally undermines various forms of discrimination (inequalities emphasis mine) - when understood properly and celebrated imaginatively - it is the Eucharist. The Confession of Faith of The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa has a section on the Lord's Supper. Article 9.4 in the *Manual of Faith and Order* read thus:

"The unity and fellowship of the body of Christ is manifested above all at the Holy Table: no believer may be barred from it or separated at it on the grounds of race, nationality, culture or class".

This powerful statement points to equality of all persons at the holy table and can be a useful tool in mobilising and conscientising members of the UPCSA that inequalities in stipends betrays what the Lords Supper stands for. Workshops and bible studies can be organised around this important sacrament.

The Eucharist offers hope in the present context of the levels of differentiation in the remuneration packages of ministers in the UPCSA. In a confessing community such as UPCSA inequalities in stipends should ritually be likened to Christ's sacrifice and see in his very wounds, the woundedness of his sisters and brothers who are subjected to economic injustice. The UPCSA community's identity is in Christ who takes the church as his Bride, makes it his Body, and opens possibilities to discern injustices.

The Eucharist as a central and constitutive practice of the church is, therefore, concretely a ritual of membership, as is the sacrament of baptism, and a matter of bodily mediation of justice and incorporation of hope (Eiesland, in Ackermann 2001:31); all are welcome to partake in the Eucharist and only self-exclusion or in some cases through some form of discipline can members be excluded from the sacrament (*Manual of Faith and Order* 2007:2,18.6). Ackermann (2001:32) argues that as such, i.e. in Christ's Body, the Eucharist is the sacrament of equality. At the communion table we are offered consummate steps in building an ethic of right relationships, across all our differences. For the Eucharist to have meaning in our lives, we need to experience it as a powerful tool that enhances loving relationships with those who are different. In John 6:15 Jesus said, 'The Bread that I shall give is my own flesh; given for the life of the world'. Hence the Eucharist involves a commitment to sharing with the "other".

When the Eucharist is understood, but also meaningfully planned and administered, it is a potent tool to break down prejudice and create a new community of trust and respect. Kritzinger (2000:269) warns against the dangers of underplaying prejudice and distrust, and emphasises a need to bring these two monsters to the surface and deal with them ritually on a regular basis around a table of unity and justice. By doing so, I argue that the UPCSA has the potential to become a liberating and reconciling community in which economic inequalities will gradually be broken down on an interpersonal level in the name of Jesus and replaced by trust and appreciation.

It seems to me that such a Eucharistic spirituality nourishes and promotes equality positively by creating hope, the kind of hope that drives us to keep working and striving for liberation in all its forms.

5.6.3 *Ubuntu*

Courageous voices in the UPCSA (Masango 2000:5ff, Khabela 2000:11 and Duncan 2012:11) have emerged regarding the issues of being African and Reformed. One is further encouraged by the growing number of lay people joining the debate and endorsing a call for theological reflection on this subject in the UPCSA (Presbyterian Black Leadership Development Report to the PCSA General Assembly 1999:281).

One of the cornerstones of African philosophy is the notion of *Ubuntu* (personhood or humanness, respect for human dignity). *Ubuntu*, as Gathogo (2007:113) rightly points out, apart from being exploited in many instances, entails, among other things, the notion of hospitability. This hospitability is ideally extended to all people: friends, foes as well as strangers. It is also extended to all departments of life. Issues such as stipends are about economic welfare of ministers and their families. Therefore when some congregations withhold tithes and financial giving because among other reasons, they are not satisfied with the minister, as the former General Secretary Professor G Pillay reported at the 11th General Assembly of 2015, are they not acting contrary to spirit of *Ubuntu*? (UPCSA, GA 2014:73). Thus, when looking at *Ubuntu* as an aspect of African hospitality, one finds it difficult to come to terms with such unjustifiable actions.

Even though *Ubuntu* is described differently among the various African communities, according to Gathogo (2007:110), it is both a philosophical and religious concept that defines the individual in terms of her/his relationship with others. Former Archbishop of the Anglican Church, Desmond Mpilo Tutu, offers an incisive definition of *Ubuntu*:

A person with *Ubuntu* is open and available to others affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for she or he has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed.

As a spiritual foundation of African societies and as a unifying vision or worldview, *Ubuntu* resonates with the Sotho idiom that says: *Motho ke motho ka batho ba bang*, that is “a person is a person through other persons”. Gathogo (2007:114) asserts that this African maxim articulates a basic respect and compassion for others as its bottom line. It both describes a human being as “being with others” and prescribes what “being with others” entails.

One can hope that, as the debate on being African and Reformed rages on in UPCSA, the notion of *Ubuntu* will feature in the debates more especially in the light of discussion around centralisation and equalisation of stipends. The UPCSA could apply the philosophy of *ubuntu* to foster synergy and cooperation for the betterment of the church.

5.7 Conclusion

The unresolved challenge regarding the centralisation and equalization of stipends among ministers in the UPCSA remains a test on the witness and unity of the new denomination. Therefore I concur with Mugambi (2004:157) that denominational or what Vellel (2013:146) terms deficient structures transplanted by missionaries in Africa are too expensive to sustain with the fragile economic base of the African laity and the classical example is inequalities in stipends among ministers in the UPCSA. Even though the Executive Committee of General Assembly over the years has failed to endorse and implement the centralisation and equalisation of stipends as recommended by the Maintenance of Ministry this issue will never go away.

This study investigated both systems of paying assessments and stipends in the former PCSA and RPCSA and the new systems under the current UPCSA. The study argued

that other imperatives such, as (stewardship, the Eucharist together with the notion of *ubuntu*) should also inform this discussion. What became clear was that centralisation and equalisation of stipends will require the UPCSA to mobilize all its assets and resources among its rank and file to address the inequalities in stipends.

Chapter 6

Formation of Church Associations in the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss some of the challenges that have dogged the process of the amalgamation church associations within the UPCSA. This study (Chapter 1, 1.1) already alluded that structural unity in the UPCSA has by and large not been able to assist in overcoming some of the old divides between the former two denominations (i.e. Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa and Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa). This is evidenced by conflicts which have dogged church associations in a united denomination and appear to be along the former denominational lines (i.e. PCSA and RPCSA). As a result tale of formation of church associations in the UPCSA remains conspicuous with challenges. According to the former General Secretary, Rev. Professor J Pillay, in his report to the General Assembly in 2014 the challenges of the Church Associations have riddled the UPCSA since its inception (UPCSA, GA 2014:77). What are these challenges? Are there any interventions to address them in order to salvage the already achieved unity? Do these challenges have a potential to threaten church unity?

Given the different value systems, histories and traditions which were in operation among various associations in the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (RPCSA) and Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (PCSA), it was not going to be easy to integrate various church associations in the new denomination. What exacerbated and frustrated the process of amalgamation of church associations in the new church among other things, was the fact that, the Executive Committee of Special Commission on Union (ECSCU from here on) which was tasked by the General

Assembly to facilitate and guide the process of uniting various associations failed to carry this mandate (UPCSA,GA 2000:236). The ECSU in 2000 apologised to the Assembly for its failure to take the initiative at the right time to guide the Associations in the process of amalgamation (UPCSA, GA 2000:236). As a result other alternatives were explored through various other structures such as Church Associations Working Group (WG) of the denomination to integrate the different Church associations in the UPCSA but to date have not succeeded. According to Duncan (2005b:202) by June 1999, two months prior to the union, only the men's association had made progress towards union even though, at a later stage issues relating to uniform threatened their unity. Buqa (2012:30) indicates that according to the pastoral letter issued by the former General Secretary, Rev. Professor J Pillay by 2011, the women's association was still struggling to make any progress in the process of coming together. Lack of proper consultation during the period leading up to the union, different ways of relating to the General Assembly by women's associations in the former RPCSA and PCSA as well as issues relating to uniforms were cited among other things as problems hindering the union of the women's organisation (Duncan 2005b:202-203).

The PCSA and RPCSA church associations prided themselves as an important component as well as contributing to the growth and development of the church (UPCSA, GA 2008:248). However, according to the (Report of the Church Associations Working Group to General Assembly, UPCSA, GA 2015:61) church associations in the new denomination have been dogged by conflicts, which have caused hurt, pain and suffering within families, congregations and Presbyteries that much effort and time must be devoted to the entire church to have an opportunity to find healing, restoration and forgiveness. To date among the eight recognised church associations within the UPCSA only one has united namely the choirs. This is a clear indication that the unification between various associations within the UPCSA is fraught with challenges. This study identified some of these challenges as, uniforms, poor communication, issues of representation, manual of faith and order and the so called third force. Furthermore, in dialogue with two associations within the UPCSA namely, the Uniting

Presbyterian Women's Fellowship (UPWF) and its precursors Women's Christian Association (WCA) of the RPCSA, the Women's Association (WA) of the PCSA respectively, the Men's Christian Guild and its forerunners, Presbyterian Men's Association (PMA) of the PCSA and the Young Men's Christian Guild (YMCG) of the RPCSA, the study will demonstrate how the abovementioned challenges were among other things a key obstacle in the process to merge the aforesaid associations. The study will attempt to give an assessment of factors that have hindered the integration of the associations under discussion and propose a way forward in this connection.

6.2 A brief history of the associations under discussion

According to Buqa (2012:2), in many churches there are structures within the various denominations, which predominantly are espoused by black membership though their membership is not restrictive. These structures are called Church Associations and their activities are entrusted under the authority and discipline of the church body. Buqa (2012:2) maintains that the UPCSAs have such Church Associations that have played a significant role in both the growth and development of the church. Various Church Associations, such as Women's Association and Men's Association form part of many black congregations within the UPCSAs.

Vellem (2007:44) asserts that Church Associations have a long and proud history in the life and work and ministry of the black church. Preston (2007:3) states that Church Associations have provided a place of respect, recognition and support for many members of the church. 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. There are differences of opinion as to when Church Associations began; according to one legend once black people were infected by the Christian bug they would often meet informally to share their stories and experiences about God. Church Associations

played an instrumental role in development and growth of black church leaders in the UPCSA (Buqa 2012:4). Among them are Rev Professor M Masango, emeritus Professor in the Department of Practical Theology at University of Pretoria, Rev Prof V Vellem the former General Secretary of UPCSA, currently a staff member at the Faculty of Theology at University of Pretoria, Rev Dr S Xapile attached to Stellenbosch University on part-time basis and Rev Col Z Makalima the Director of the South African Air Force Chaplains.

6.2.1 Uniting Presbyterian Women's Fellowship (UPWF)

Although the PCSA-RPCSA had merged to form the UPCSA in 1999, by 2000 the WA of the former PCSA and the WCA of the former RPCSA were not yet united and continued to function separately (UPCSA, GA 2000:93). This caused major problems in most presbyteries with certain branches not understanding why this had to be the case. An initial meeting was held in October 1999 in Alice in an attempt for the leaders of the two separate associations to meet and discuss issues relevant to unification (UPCSA, GA 2000:93). At this meeting it was agreed that the Uniting Women's Working Committee consisting of five representatives from the two women's organisation be put in place.

The committee met for the first time in February 2000, which turned out to be a fruitful time of decision making and relationship building. This was the beginning of a process towards amalgamation of these two associations (UPCSA, GA 2000:93). The outcome of this process with the help of the Special Commission on Union (SCU) also led the WA/WCA amalgamation team succeeding in producing a draft constitution for the proposed new Women's Association and submitted it to the Annual General Meeting (AGM's) of the WA and WCA, which took place on the 29th June- 4th July 2002 (Zambia) and the 5th July- 7th July, 2002 (Pietermaritzburg) respectively (UPCSA, GA 2002:15).

The Presbyterian Women's Association AGM adopted the draft constitution on condition that some amendments are made to it. They mandated the negotiating team to finalise the draft constitution and submit it to the 2003 Executive Commission. Similarly the WCA AGM adopted the draft constitution as an interim constitution (UPCSA, GA 2002:15).

The WCA also resolved however to give its individual members and Presbytery structures time up to the 5th August to study the draft constitution further and submit their comments to the negotiating team to take into account when finalising the draft of the constitution. As a way of strengthening relations the negotiating team proposed to the WA and WCA AGMs that they plan to hold their Uniting Conference in July 2003, and the two AGM's adopted the proposal.

It has to be noted that the WA-WCA amalgamation had been much more difficult to bring about than those of any other organisations, partly due to the highhanded actions of the then Executive Committee and their extreme reluctance to co-operate with the SCU (UPCSA, GA 2004:378). After they had written a letter of complaint to the 2000 General Assembly the full SCU met with them the following February and members of the Executive attended part of the WCA conference (AGM) in July. That meeting agreed to resume negotiations with the WA, but a meeting with the WA and the SCU Executive was cancelled at the last minute (UPCSA, GA 2004:379).

The 2001 Assembly lost patience with WCA Executive and strengthened the arm of the SCU to take whatever measures were necessary, including discipline. At a meeting of WCA Presbytery representatives a new negotiating team was elected and talks resumed under the guidance of the SCU. The end result was the amalgamation of the WA and WCA to form the Uniting Presbyterian Women's Fellowship (UPWF) in August,

2003 (Report of the Special Commission on Union, UPCSA, Proceedings and Decisions of the 6th General Assembly 2004:379).

According to the report of the UPWF to the General Assembly of the 2005 the UPWF has a large membership made of about 340 branches spread through all 18 presbyteries of the UPCSA, including Zambia and Zimbabwe and is one of the recognised associations of the UPCSA (The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, Papers, Proceedings and Decisions of the Executive Commission 2005:47). The General Executive meets once a quarter and whenever there is a need for a meeting. The co-presidents take turns in chairing the meetings (Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, Papers, Proceedings and Decisions of the Executive Commission 2005:47). The UPWF has a number of projects under its wing. They range from educational, community building and membership capacitating projects. The fellowship give financial support to the UPCSA projects like the retired ministers fund.

6.2.2 The Men's Christian Guild

Based on the Basis of Union document Act 13 the former RPCSA Young Men's Christian Guild (YMCG) and the Presbyterian Men's Association of the former PCSA started the discussions on the formation of one men Guild in the new denomination (Report on the mediation work of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa to the 11th General Assembly of 2014:86). An interim committee was elected to facilitate the unification, unfortunately the process was not smooth as envisioned. However both associations (YMCG and PMA) were committed to the formation of one men's Association (Report on the mediation work of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa to the 11th General Assembly of 2014:86).

The name of the association (MCG) and the badge were agreed upon. However uniform (white jacket or black) became a contentious issue. A task team was appointed to look and report back on this matter at the conference of 2004 in Umtata unfortunately it failed to discharge its mandate as a result the conference was dominated by disagreements and nearly collapsed (Report on the mediation work of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa to the 11th General Assembly of 2014:86). In 2005 conference, the issue was revisited, inputs were made and in 2006 in Western Cape conference it was ratified and the MCG was formed. Sadly some members of the former PCSA did not join the new MCG but opted to form Uniting Presbyterian Men's Fellowship (UPMF) which is a replica of MCG but is not recognised by the General Assembly of the UPCSA. Negotiations are ongoing with the hope that UPMF and MCG will become one for the sake of cohesion and unity (General Secretary Report to the Assembly, Papers, Proceedings and Decisions of the Executive Commission 2007:182).

Some of the aims of MCG according to Buqa (2012:138) are *inter alia*:

- To present Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour of men and to engage them in the promotion and extension of God's kingdom;
- To extend the kingdom of God, in our Church and in the Churches to which we are related and the entire world;
- To build up Christian character by encouraging attendance at public worship the reading of scripture and witness to Christ;
- To include a sense of moral discipline, especially in the members of the Guild;
- To promote programmes of intellectual, social and physical growth.

Membership

- Membership shall be open to all ministers and male members in full communion

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

6.3 Uniforms

According to Duncan (2006:937) dress has always been a way in which people of a particular time and place express their identity. Similarly Buqa (2012:3) maintains that the identification of church associations is also marked by the culture, belief and values of black people in the church as part of their spiritual growth. Uniform has always been a form of identity in many associations of black churches. Members according to the association with which they are affiliated will don a particular uniform (Buqa 2012:3). Members of different denominations are distinguished by their particular uniform. Buqa (2012:3) holds that Church Associations group often decide on the colours and design of the uniform. This was to become a source of conflict among the associations in the UPCSA in particular the UPWF and the MCG.

In the report on Church Associations it was noted that uniform issue is still the main challenge facing the church associations (Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, Papers, Proceedings and Decisions of the Executive Commission, 2009:18). This issue became so serious that some members of the former PCSA disaffiliated themselves from UPWF and founded a parallel structure called Uniting Presbyterian Women at Work (UPWW here on) (Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, Papers, Proceedings and Decisions of the Executive Commission, 2009:18). Buqa (2012:60) claims that many members of the former PCSA are reluctant and hesitant to do away with the uniform of their former denomination. As a result they have not embrace the new uniform of the UPCSA which they feel has striking resemblance with the uniform of WCA of the former RPCSA.

According to the report of the UPWF to the General Assembly of 2008, the annual conference which took place from the 31 July to 3 August 2008 the following uniform was adopted (Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, Papers for the 8th General Assembly 2008:247):

- Black hat
- Belt with two buttons
- Black under collar
- Black skirt
- Black stockings
- Black shoes

According to Buqa (2012:113) the uniform of the women from the former RPCSA WCA was:

- Black hat
- White blouse with five buttons
- A WCA Women's Badge
- A White girdle along the waist
- Black skirt
- Black shoes
- Black stockings

Members of WA of the former PCSA used to wear:

- A white hat
- A white blouse with a round neck and black under collar
- A WA badge
- A white belt around the waist of the blouse with two buttons in front

- A black skirt
- Black shoes
- Black stockings completed the uniform (Buqa 2012:113).

Even though there is a slight difference between the uniforms of the women's associations of the two former churches, Buqa (2012:113) points out that the UPWF report indicated that in all Presbyteries the black congregations who came from the former PCSA have raised their grievances about the uniform colours and design. As a result there are a number of fellowship members from the former PCSA who have disaffiliated themselves throughout the new denomination. It is against this background that the General Assembly of 2004 even though commending the SCU for helping with the amalgamation of the Associations it was noted that issues around uniform need to be dealt with more carefully and sincerely (Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, Papers for the 6th General Assembly 2004:178).

Buqa (2012:61) indicates that in one interview he conducted the informant mentioned that at times in the UPWF conferences the members would vote for a person based on the of their previous denomination (i.e. RPCSA-PCSA) without looking at the qualities of a person. The same informant confided with Buqa (ibid:62) that she is contemplating taking off the uniform if the associations problem is not resolved, though she understands the implications being a minister's wife in a black context.

The General Executive report of the UPWF to the General Assembly of 2014 noted steady growth and membership decline in the association this can be attributed among other things to controversy around issues of uniform (Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, Papers for the 11TH General Assembly 2014:259). According to Buqa (2012:67) the struggle around issues of uniforms often discourages some from joining the UPWF. Buqa (2012:32) pointed out that issues around uniform in associations also

hurt congregations financially; he cites an example where in one congregation some members of the UPWW decided to make church no further contributions to express their displeasure with the ways the process of uniforms was handled.

The MCG Executive reported to the General Assembly of 2003 that their inaugural annual conference in 2001 ran into serious difficulties shortly before the General Assembly when they tried to finalise the constitution of the Guild and the uniform which would be acceptable to the former two denominations (UPCSA, GA 2003:87). Disagreements over issues around uniforms led to rising tensions and finally to a walkout of a substantial number of members of the Guild, all formerly members of the Presbyterian Men's Association Guild of the former PCSA. Representatives of this group handed a petition to the MCG before leaving the conference, they later founded the Uniting Presbyterian Men's Fellowship (UPMF) (UPCSA, GA 2003:87).

According to the report of the MCG Executive to the General Assembly of 2008 the following uniform was adopted (UPCSA, GA 2008:264):

- A white jacket without a vent with two silver buttons
- A black pair of trousers
- A white shirt
- A plain black tie and black pair of shoes and a black pair of socks and MCG badge
- A white waistcoat

Buqa (2012:84-85) has listed the elements of the new MCG uniform taken from the former PCSA and RPCSA.

Elements taken from the former PCSA Men's Association in MGC:

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

Elements taken from the former RPCSA Men's Association in MGC are:

- The MCG name that sounds similar to YMCG of the former RPCSA
- The colour of the new jacket of the MCG is white like the former RPCSA

The General Secretary of the UPCSA reported that in a meeting of the 9 March 2007 in Port Elizabeth he had met exclusively with the members of the Men's fellowship which was constituted completely by members of the former PCSA whose view was that the new uniform of the MGC is not new and accommodates members of the RPCSA (Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, Papers, Proceedings and Decisions of the Executive Commission 2007:188). This view is problematic if one considers that only two elements were taken from the former RPCSA and six from the PCSA. Therefore I concur with Buqa (2012:5) that perhaps there are other deeper issues underlying the Church Associations uniforms issue.

The report of the mediation team cited fear of losing identity and heritage in the larger Associations as one of the reasons for instance women of the PCSA disaffiliated themselves from UPWF and formed UPWW (Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern

Africa, Papers for the 11th General Assembly 2014:93). The Men's Association (UPMF) which is dominated by members of the former PCSA also indicated to the mediation team that the stumbling block to unite with the MCG was not uniform but the fundamental problem with the MCG and UPMF is the way both conduct business (UPCSA, GA 2007:88). Buqa (2012:104) confirms that in some of the interviews he conducted the informants identified, governance decision making processes within the united church, strong Xhosa dominance in the new denomination, power, pride and control as some of the underlying issues which have nothing to do with uniform.

Some ministers became entangled in church associations uniform debacle and as a result they have been accused of causing conflict and breeding divisions within church associations (UPCSA, GA 2014:74). Membership of associations such as MCG and UPWF is open to ministers and their wives in some cases they even serve in the leadership positions of these associations. However the danger is that when conflicts arise within church associations it is difficult for them to intervene and be neutral or non-partisan since they are a conflicted party. Once ministers are members of a particular association there is also temptation to send distorted information to congregants regarding church associations conflicts as an attempt to save the credibility and reputation of the association they are affiliated and as a consequence congregants end up being ill-informed regarding church associations conflicts.

6.4 Poor Communication

According to Sofield and Julianos (in Karecki 1999:92) poor communication is one of the most frequent causes of conflict. Lack of communication in any organisation or community (including the Church) is a central factor in breeding of rumours and gossip when information is not shared in an appropriate manner with the people concerned then suspicion arises and trust decreases. In this connection, Duncan (2005a, 2005:46)

claims the Special Commission on Union (SCU) was often accused by various groups including church associations for failing to communicate and carrying its mandate of facilitating the process of merging different associations in the UPCSA.

This emerged in the healing and reconciliation service of associations I had a privilege to attend in Tshwane Presbytery in September 2015 at St Marks Presbyterian Church as members of various associations were sharing their pains and hurts regarding conflicts in Church Associations. Members of different associations mentioned that in the initial stages of the union the Special Commission on Union (SCU) failed to communicate with the highest structures of different associations regarding the process of merging associations. As a result members of associations were often in the dark regarding how this process would unfold. The breakdown of the unity negotiations between the Presbyterian Men's Association of the PCSA and the Young Men's Christian Guild of the RPCSA is also attributed to poor communication on the part of SCU. To attest to these claims the executive of the SCU later apologised to the General Assembly of 2000 for failing to initiate the union of the church associations (UPCSA, GA 2000:236).

Another source of conflict according to Sofield and Juliano (in Karecki 1999:92) is loss. They (ibid) point out that loss not only occurs when someone experiences the death of a relative or friend, but when things are changed without their consultation or without information being provided. Loss most often causes pain and anger. Duncan (2005b:203) indicates that some of these sentiments were expressed by the Women's Christian Association of the RPCSA claiming that they had not been adequately respected and consulted during the period leading to union. When some members of the PCSA terminated their membership of the UPWF they cited poor consultation regarding decisions on issues around uniforms and other related matters as a reason they decided to form the Uniting Presbyterian Women at Work (UPWW) which is not recognised by the UPCSA (UPCSA, GA 2009:18).

Furthermore, in 2000 Amatola Presbytery which was an amalgamation of two strong presbyteries of the former denominations, the one totally black and the other multi-racial yet dominated by whites experienced problems including the union of women's organisation. According to Duncan (2005b:202) this related to the role of ministers' wives in the respective women's associations of the former denominations. The WCA of the RPCSA claimed that lack of clarity on this issue is a classical example that they had not been adequately consulted during the period leading to the union (Duncan 2005b:203). This problem was not only a local matter restricted to Amatola presbytery as the Executive Committee of the SCU claimed (in Duncan 2005b:202) similar issues were emerging throughout the denomination the Amatola incident just happened to be the tipping point.

In his report to the General Assembly of 2014 the former General Secretary Rev Professor J Pillay accused some ministers of not sharing information with their congregations on certain matters including Church associations (UPCSA, GA 2014:74). I suspect this has to do with the conflict surrounding church associations, especially in cases where some ministers are members of some associations any information which they deem it as anti-the association they are affiliated to, they might not feel free to share with their congregations since they are conflicted by being members of such associations. This is unfortunate since according to Professor J Pillay the denomination relies on ministers to take the lead in distributing and sharing information with their congregations (UPCSA, GA 2014:74).

Channels of communication are important especially when they concern the affected party in this case members of associations. Those who represent members of associations in high echelons of the church must always be mindful that they are accountable to them. Failure to account to one's constituency (in this case members of church associations) can result to ignorance, prejudice and rumour mongering which

according to report of the special committee on reformation has found its way around denomination far more efficiently and speedily than the “official” communication (Progress Report from the Special Committee on Reformation 2002:1).

6.5 Issues of Representation

The concern has been expressed that committees of Presbytery and other structures of the new denomination tended to be made up predominantly of either former PCSA or former RPCSA members (Report of the Special Commission on Union, UPCS, Proceedings and decisions of the 6th General Assembly 2004:379). Already in 2000 the first moderator of the UPCS Rev Cliff Leeuw warned that the impression should not be created that what took place in September 1999 was incorporation of the RPCSA into the PCSA and not the PCSA (The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, Papers for the General Assembly 2000:323). One can deduce from this statement that Rev Leeuw was hinting to issues of representation and absorption in the new denomination. Such sentiments were expressed from both divides of the former RPCSA and PCSA. For instance, Duncan (2005a:47) observed that, on the part of the RPCSA there was a fear that the union may lead to their domination by the predominantly white PCSA. On other hand, the white members of the PCSA were coming into the union with the feeling that, as a result of the introduction of the new political dispensation, they might lose everything to the former RPCSA.

These sentiments predate the organic union in 1999; such fears were already expressed during the initial stages of union (Xapile 1994:123). This phobia of absorption or “swamping or swallowing” as expressed by some in the circles of the Uniting Presbyterian Men’s Fellowship (UPMF) of which majority belong to the former has come to haunt church associations. For instance, Buqa (2012:90) argues that the dominance of the RPCSA members in Church associations became a sore point, even

though it was inevitable that the RPCSA by far had a larger membership in the union as compared to its counterpart the PCSA.

The UPMF raised a concern to the mediation team which was requested by the General Assembly to mediate between various associations, that the composition of the team which was initially supposed to break a deadlock pertaining to issues they disagreed with MCG was dominated by RPCSA members except one person who belonged to the RPCSA. (UPCSA, GA 2014:87). As a result the team could not be neutral and make fair decisions. Issues of majority-minority divide in the PCSA and RPCSA resurfaced again in a meeting the General Secretary of the UPCSA had with same UPMF on the 2 March 2007. The UPMF indicated that they were committed to one association of men in the UPCSA but often their input is not valued since they are regarded as a minority by MCG which is constituted by a majority of members from the RPCSA (UPCSA, GA 2007:183).

In an interview (Buqa 2012:61) conducted with a former member of UPWF the informant alluded to the fact that at times in the conferences of this association the members would vote along former denominational lines (i.e. RPCSA-PCSA) and since members of this association is dominated by members of the RPCSA often views from the PCSA were overlooked. As a result former denominational divides separated them into churches instead of one denomination, the UPCSA.

The claims that members of the RPCSA have dominated the MCG and in the process marginalised UPMF are questionable. Buqa (2012:91) refutes such claims since the former presidents of the MGC between 2004 and to 2014 came from the former PCSA. Duncan (2005a:209) argued that if one was to do a small exercise and list on a piece of paper things which the former RPCSA had to let go since the union, we are likely to discover that the union was biased in favour of the former PCSA. For instance, the

former RPCSA adopted the manual of faith of the former PCSA, the method of collecting assessments, the method of paying stipends. Therefore was it not an opportunity for association members of the former PCSA to reciprocate, instead of bemoaning about being absorbed and out-manoeuvred by ex RPCSA members in church associations as the former Moderator Rev WD Pool claims in his opening moderator's address in 2007 (UPCSA, GA 2007:260).

6.6 Manual of Faith and Order

According to Buqa (2012:16) the *Manual of Faith and Order* is the church polity of the UPCSA approved by the General Assembly in 2004. Vellem in (Buqa 2012:20) states that both the PCSA and RPCSA approved the 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 will be replaced by the reference to the Uniting Church. After the 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.

According to Buqa (2012:20) the Uniting Church appointed a Manual committee in 1999 to prepare the chapters of this manual in a draft form, a process that led to the First Edition *Manual of Faith and Order of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa*, a new name approved by the General Assembly in 2004.

However at a later stage it turned out that the *Manual of Faith and Order* was fraught with limitations, as a result there were a number of concerns raised against this important document and the manner it was applied (Duncan 2005b:196). A case in point is the omission of church associations in the *Manual of Faith and Order*. Hence the MCG executive committee in its report to the General Assembly of 2008 expressed a concern that the *Manual of Faith and Order* in its 18 chapters does not have a single chapter or section dedicated to the associations which are an important component of the church and have contributed to the growth and development of the church both materially and spiritually (UPCSA, GA 2008:266).

The report of the executive committee of the MCG further notes that:

- The existence of church associations is not recognized in the manual with the risk that their existence can be viewed as illegal.
- The manner in which church associations as bodies relate to the Church Councils at Multi-national, Synodical, Presbyterial and Congregational levels is not regulated in the manual.
- The manner in which church associations are represented in the church councils and how they report as well as the kinds of reports they are expected to submit and the frequency of reporting are not regulated by the manual.
- The manual is silent on the kind of Ministry that the personnel of the denominations especially the ministers are expected to give to the church associations.
- The status of the “Constitution” of the church associations in relation to the *Manual of Faith and Order* is not spelt out. This must entail an expression of the superseding role of the *Manual of Faith and Order* to regulate those areas in which the constitutions of the associations may fall short.
- The manner in which disputes arising within the church associations maybe channelled to the church councils and the avenues available to the church councils in dealing with such disputes are not spelt out.
- The existence of the Church Associations Committee is not given effect to in the

Manual of Faith and order.

- *The Manual of Faith and Order* does not have a deadlock breaking mechanism.

Even though the Church Associations Working Group in its (UPCSA, GA 2015:61) suggested that the process of writing a chapter on Church Associations must be suspended until the process of writing the constitutions for the Church Associations is completed, this study would argue in the light of the above concerns raised by the MCG executive pertaining to the omission of Church Associations in the *Manual of Faith and Order* and the gravity of conflicts thereof it is vitally important and urgent that the General Assembly through the Church Associations Committee revise the *Manual of Faith and Order* in a manner that reflects how associations relate to church councils at all levels. This process among other things explores possibilities of convening a summit of church associations that will among other things jointly reflect on the state of church associations in the UPCSA and develop proposals for the Manual Committee on issues that the church associations would like to reflect in the revised manual.

6.7 Third Force

Within the circles of the UPCSA there are diverse opinions what constitute a third force. On the one hand it refers to conservative white congregations who do not wish to be swallowed up by a black majority in the UPCSA and see disruption of the union as possible way out, and on the other hand according to Buqa (2012:105) it refers to former RPCSA members who feel that they have lost autonomy and heritage in the process of the union and seek to reverse the process. Lastly, the term is also who used to refer to those who are afraid of being swallowed up by a singularly strong Xhosa bias subsequent to the union. In the case of the conflicts which have dogged the church associations in the UPCSA the term third force is applied more or less to the first definition proposed by Buqa (2012:ibid).

Even though the majority of white members do not belong to church associations given their history with the black section of the PCSA which by and large was shaped by politics of dominance, somehow they became entangled in denominational politics and conflicts of the Church Associations. Minority of white members are perceived exploiting the conflicts in church associations as an attempt to counter black majority whose strength lies in church associations (UPCSA debate conference, Easton 28-31 May 2007). Buqa (2012:75) in an interview he conducted with a member of one church association the informant indicated that some whites know that if the membership of associations is divided they can use them for votes to reclaim positions of power in the General Assembly and other powerful church structures.

This study will argue that the Third Force element in church association conflicts is traceable to power relations between white and blacks of the PCSA. Although the PCSA became a preponderantly white Settler church, Tucker (2012:1) asserts it subsequently planted congregations among indigenous people. As a result the white dominated PCSA always sought to control, maintain and perpetuate a dependency syndrome over black congregations within their ranks since they were regarded as the product of their mission enterprise. Hence is not surprising as Buqa (2012:29) has rightly observed that many black congregations in the PCSA were financially dependent on their white counterparts. The consequence of this pattern of mission between the white and black congregations in the PCSA was often paternalistic tendencies and relationships of dominance. In some cases relationships of dominance across racial lines within the denomination manifested in form of finances as the former moderator Rev Professor G Duncan noted in 2004 in his retiring moderator's address (UPCSA,GA 2004:468). Thus money became a means of exercising power and control over black congregations rather than a means of liberating them. I would argue that this can be attributed to *inter alia* traditional understanding of mission which according to Duncan (2007:55) has been practiced as a current flowing only in a single direction: from North to South, from the rich to poor, from the powerful to the powerless, from male to female,

from the white to black, from 'Christian' civilization to godless cultures. This understanding of mission has limitations since it reduces mission to something that some people do to others, rather than a common sharing in God's mission to the whole world.

Secondly, paternalistic mission structures can also be traced from this problematic skewed view of mission. Makofane (1999:89) maintains that this old model of mission perpetuated a vicious cycle of dominance and dependence which in turn further breeds complexes of superiority and inferiority on the part of both white and black congregations. Buqa (2012:71) recounts an incident in February 2009 where a member of an association refused to be charged for misconduct by a white minister who was then a clerk of a certain presbytery since he perceived him to represent the third force and has nothing to do with church associations business.

In his moderatorial address to the General Assembly in 2007, Rev WD Pool remarked that he noted that at the MGC conference to which he was invited, he can only account for a handful of ex PCSA members who were present (UPCSA, GA 2007:260). What I can deduce from his remarks is that he took a keen interest in the issues of associations even though he was not a member of any. He further claims that perhaps members of the PCSA were absent because they have been outmanoeuvred by the ex-RPC members in the Associations. Rev Pool's observation might be spot on however the tone of his remarks relating to lack of participation by ex-PCSA members at this event points to the perception of "swamping-swallowing" by majority who happens to be former RPCSA members in the abovementioned association might tempt one to affirm third force factor in the conflict relating to Church associations.

In the same healing and reconciliation service I attended at St Marks Presbyterian Church in Tshwane Presbytery some of the Church Association members in their

testimonies did confess that often they are approached by a few white members including ministers not co-operate with MCG or UPWF since these two are dominated by the RPCSA. They claim that few white members and ministers often tried to influence some members of the black section of the former PCSA not join either MCG or UPWF since according to them the two associations have eroded the heritage and tradition of PCSA. This leads to and perhaps answers the question: who benefits from the dissonance in the associations? One response that is credible is: white people who are insecure in future of their hold on power who see division within the majority black *corpus* as a means of holding on to power.

6.8 The Bible as an important resource in conflict situations

Even though there have been concerted efforts by the leadership of the UPCSA to bring reconciliation among warring factions in church associations it is equally important for the UPCSA to tap into theological resources which can help to address some of these challenges. The bible is one such important resource that the UPCSA can mobilise to address conflict situations such as the one which has engulfed church associations. For the simple reason that is accessible in diversity of languages and cultures represented in the UPCSA therefore it addresses quite a diverse audience in this denomination. Biblical passages that are fraught with encounters that cultivate a spirit of reconciliation can be useful. One biblical passage Kritzinger (2011:7) has identified and find empowering in situations of conflict is Acts 9: 10-19 between Ananias and Saul.

According to Kritzinger (2011:8) when we think of the miracles in the New Testament, we usually think of Jesus healing the sick, the blind and the lame, or even raising the dead; and that is true. However one of the greatest miracles in the New Testament happened when Ananias, the Christian disciple in Damascus, walked down Straight Street into the home of Judas, laid his hands on Saul and said to him “Brother Saul”. It

was not easy for Ananias to do that, given the fact that as a persecuted follower of the Way, he witnessed Saul persecuting fellow Christians and he nearly became a victim of Saul's fierce persecution of the church. You can imagine him saying to the Lord: "Lord, Saul is the enemy. You know how much harm he has done to your people in Jerusalem; and now he has come to Damascus to arrest us also. How do we know he is not trying to infiltrate our group by pretending to be a disciple, so that he can arrest all of us?" But the Lord convinced him to go and pray for Saul, his former enemy and persecutor. The miracle of reconciliation takes place as Ananias places his hands on his former enemy and calls him "brother". This is the kind of miracle I think conflict ridden associations in the UPCSA need today. To recognise that at the heart of God's work of reconciliation through Jesus Christ there is the fundamental belief that people can change and that enemies can become friends.

However Kritzinger (2011:15) caution us that this does not mean that forgiveness is never easy. Ananias talked back at the Lord, and objected when the Lord told him to go and pray for Saul. With a robust spirituality reminiscent of the Psalms, Ananias wrestles with the Lord about this. Reconciliation is not a superficial "kiss and make up" exercise for the sake of peace. When reconciliation is sincere and driven by values such as honesty, it is always accompanied by pain, sometimes even by confrontation, since reconciliation is about the healing of wounds and the restoration of broken relationships and hence Duncan (2005b:39) warns that consequently it cannot be done hastily. It is also about the struggle against my own refusal to reconcile, to find a way out of the dark cave of my hatred in which I hide from God and my neighbours (Kritzinger 2011:15). Perhaps this partly explains why the amalgamation of church associations has dragged for so long, people are still dealing with their pain caused by conflicts in church associations and indeed they must be afforded time to find closure.

Restoration of relationships between people often requires people who have conflict resolution skills. At the end of Acts 9, a reconciling figure by the name of Barnabas

displays mediation skills, reconciling the converted Saul and the congregation in Jerusalem. Kritzinger (2011:15) notes that it must have been difficult for the Christian community in Jerusalem to welcome Saul in their midst and understandably so given the kind of harassment as well as the various forms of abuses and the arrests they were subjected (Ac 8:8). It was there that he approvingly witnessed the stoning of Stephen and the scattering of the early Christian community (Ac 8:1). How could the congregation that was left in Jerusalem forgive and accept him?

There are many such broken relationships in the world. And they often do not get healed unless someone comes from the outside take an initiative as a mediator. According to Kritzinger (2011:16) Barnabas was such a mediator, a peacemaker who took the initiative to bring the two warring parties together, without anyone asking him to do so or paying him for it. Barnabas had recognized the potential of Saul as a Christian witness; he also realized that Saul would get nowhere if he was not accepted by the leaders of the Christian movement in Jerusalem. As so often in history, the unity of the church was at stake in a very pertinent way. It sounds so simple in Acts 9:27f: 'Barnabas took him, brought him to the apostles, and described for them. So he went in and out among them in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord'. Barnabas told then that Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus, that the Lord had spoken to him, and that he had openly preached in the name of Jesus in Damascus. These three pieces of testimony, on the authority of Barnabas, opened the door for Saul to be welcomed and taken up into the heart of the Jesus movement of that time. It was an important event in the history of the church, as portrayed by Luke. According to Acts, Saul's ministry would not have been authentic without this reconciliation between Saul and the church of Jerusalem.

Kritzinger (2011:16) argues that what worked in Barnabas' favour was that he had enough credibility on both sides of the conflict that he could act as a bridge-builder between them. Barnabas wants to gather God's people together in unity, to build

bridges of trust and acceptance between them, thus expressing this “mothering” ministry of God revealed in Jesus. Conflicts in church associations in the UPCSA require a “Barnabas” figure who has enough credibility on both sides of the conflict in order to serve as mediator. The UPCSA is blessed with such ministers who can play significant role in trying to bring reconciliation among the warring factions in the church associations. For instance, Buqa (2012:103) makes reference to one minister in the Presbytery of Tshwane who was the convenor of Church Associations and as a neutral person she was able to encourage various Executive committee members of different associations to work together and find a common ground. On the other hand the UPCSA must guard against assigning such role to ministers who have often failed to play the role of Barnabas the mediator since they are a conflicted party by being members of associations.

6.9 Conclusion

The church associations were part of the momentous occasion which gave birth to the UPCSA in September 1999 out of the organic union between the former RPCSA and PCSA. Sadly, the denomination is still struggling with the issues affecting the amalgamation of the associations which provided the spirit that drove that defining moment. The conflicts of the Church associations continue to hurt and damage the witness, work and unity of the UPCSA and that does not augur well for the union of the UPCSA. Over the years there were a number of initiatives taken to broker a way forward and to find reconciliation, peace and unity unfortunately such efforts have not yet yielded any positive results since associations such as UPWF and MCG are still struggling with unity within their ranks. In the interviews Buqa (2012) conducted for his MTh dissertation he concluded that it appears as if Church Associations are used as a scapegoat by ministers, elders and members of the congregation of both former RPCSA and PCSA who find it difficult to embrace the union.

Those who no longer hold positions of power in the new denomination and feel disgruntled disguise under Church Associations to express their frustrations and anger. In such cases the leadership of the church and the rank and file would need to be vigilant and have a sense of discernment to insure that Church Associations are not hijacked as a means to serve narrow sectarian interests. It seems all is not lost as some of these associations continue to evangelise, and exercise ministry and community work. They also offer care for retired ministers, provide grants and bursaries and support congregations. Such initiatives give one hope that the hurts, pains and suffering which many members had to endure due to conflicts in Church Associations can be overcome. Furthermore, what is encouraging is that the leadership of the UPCSA continues to bridge the gap of divisions amongst the associations through church structures and explore various options to address the issues surrounding the Church Associations. For instance, the General Assembly of 2012 passed a resolution instructing “The General Secretary to engage the services of Church based professional external mediators for the Associations which are acceptable to all parties involved, in accordance with the 2009 Executive Commission decision” (UPCSA, GA 2014:77). Sadly this exercise has failed due to the intransigence of some in the UPCSA who seemingly had an investment in the failure of the process – another piece of evidence regarding Buqa’s Third Force theory, perhaps?

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

This final chapter summarises and draws conclusions as well as proposing recommendations regarding unity in the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA). The purpose of this study was to revisit the subject of unity within the UPCSA consisting of three countries, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia in the period 1999-2009 and to assess how far the denomination has progressed with organic union since the union of the PCSA and RPCSA. The study observed that the union was based on what is now considered to be inadequate preparation and as a result many unresolved problems have emerged to test the witness of the denomination and to hamper the consolidation of the union. Hence despite ten years of organic union unity seems to be at cross-roads. Some of the key challenges which were identified in the early stages of the union relate to the manual of law, practice and procedure and properties.

In the case of this study the challenges which came under discussion centred around ministerial formation, differentiation in stipends of ministers and conflicts which have dogged the process of amalgamation of church associations in the UPCSA. It appears that these challenges are a consequence of organic union which was rooted on secular rather than theological foundations which were supposed to guide and inform the merger. The study argues that if these challenges continue to be unresolved they will have definite implications for tangible unity in the UPCSA. Furthermore, these challenges indicate that structural union was ongoing process; the historic moment which took place in 1999 with the union of the two denominations was merely the beginning of wrestling with some of these realities. That was only natural, given the

history of these two denominations including different cultures, language and racial groups. The general overview and orientation of this missiological case study was presented in the introductory chapter. In order to understand the intricacies pertaining to the already achieved unity in the UPCSA, chapter 2 reflected on a historical background of both the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (RPCSA) and the Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (PCSA) prior to the union.

The study observed that the histories of the PCSA and BPCSA (later renamed RPCSA) are ramifications of various traditions of Presbyterianism in South Africa. There were four traditions of Presbyterianism already operating in our shores, namely, the Free Church, the United Presbyterian, the Swiss Mission and the Settler Presbyterian tradition. The RPCSA was a product of mission originating from the Free Church of Scotland intended for the indigenous population, while on the other hand the PCSA was a product of the Settler tradition in South Africa. Between 1892 and 1897 Presbyterian family of churches cherished the ideal of a united church however this dream did not come to fruition as envisaged owing to fear of dilution of white power on the one hand and white domination and racism on the other. It was the same socio-political situation that revived unity talks between the PCSA and RPCSA which had come to nothing in the late nineteenth century and throughout most of the in the twentieth century.

In the spirit of national euphoria which gripped the first democratic elections in 1994, it came as no surprise when the RPCSA initiated union talks with the PCSA. The inception of Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) in 1999 is the fruit of unity between the RPCSA and PCSA after various unsuccessful attempts dating back to the latter part of the nineteenth century to effect union between the two denominations. Chapter 3 builds on the background given in the previous chapter by discussing the efforts towards structural unity and the struggles which ensued thereof. The initial stages of the unity negotiations leading up to organic unity demonstrate that it was not easy to weld together two streams of Presbyterianism in South Africa into one

functioning denomination. This state of affairs was not helped by racial polarisation which was still a feature of society and the church. The irony is that not the theological foundations but the changing political context in South Africa with the demise of apartheid rule and the dawn of democracy in 1994 shaped the model of union which was to guide and inform the merger.

In chapter 4 ministerial formations came under spot light as one of the challenges that have emerged to test the witness of the UPCSA in its quest for authentic unity. This study gave a brief historical account of theological education in both the former PCSA and RPCSA and proceeded to identify some of the challenges ministerial formation is facing since the two churches merged to form a uniting church namely, the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA). These challenges were identified as ecumenism, the relationship between church and university and Africanisation of the curriculum with special focus on language policy and spirituality. This study has attempted to look into these challenges in depth and in some cases suggest a way forward that could address them. Chapter 5 examined the economic unity with special reference to inequality of stipends among ministers as one of the contentious issues and challenges facing the UPCSA. What emerged is that denominational or what Vellem (2013:146) terms deficient structures transplanted by missionaries in Africa are too expensive to sustain with the fragile economic base of the African laity and the classical example is inequalities in stipends among ministers in the UPCSA.

The study discovered that there are glaring inequalities in stipends in the UPCSA between those ministering in the more affluent congregations (of which the majority are white ministers) and those labouring in previously disadvantaged (of which majority are black ministers). For this reason the merger has not been a complete success with regard to economic unity of which differentiation in stipends is one example. Chapter 6 was dedicated to challenges that have dogged the process of amalgamation of church associations in the UPCSA as a stumbling block which has a potential to threaten unity.

The study argues that given the different value systems, histories and traditions which were in operation among various associations in the former RPCSA and PCSA, it was not going to be easy to integrate various church associations in the new denomination. The challenges which have riddled the church associations have been identified as uniforms, poor communication, issues of representation, manual of faith and order and the so called third force. The conflicts of the Church associations continue to hurt and damage the witness, work and unity of the UPCSA and that does not augur well for the union of the UPCSA. The study went further to suggest some of the ways in dealing with some of these conflicts. This study will now bring the subject of unity within the UPCSA to closure by drawing reflections and evaluating the model of union which guided and informed the merger as an important lead to understanding the intricacies relating to the challenges already highlighted and the implications thereof.

7.2 Union sought on secular understanding of unity

Rev Professor G Duncan in his retiring moderatorial address at the General Assembly of 2004 remarked that we should be mindful that the historical background on which the UPCSA was found was marked by elimination, assimilation, domination, abandonment, toleration and alienation (UPCSA, GA 2004:467). This history which Duncan (ibid) has aptly captured so well obviously relates to the issue of racial tension (i.e. 'black/white divisions'). The history of apartheid deliberately created socio-economic and political wedges between black and white people in South Africa. This is the same history which had a fair share in contributing towards a Presbyterian family of churches divided along racial and ethnic lines, and consequently breakdown of unity negotiations between the former RPCSA and PCSA since the extent of racial and tension meant that there was no trust between blacks and whites (Vellem 2013:150). What is interesting is that the history that had maintained separation now facilitated the union between PCSA and RPCSA.

According to Buqa (2012:24) the six reasons for uniting that were adopted by the 1995 Assemblies of PCSA and RPCSA are:

- a United Church is valid witness to the power of reconciliation in a divided society;
- the fullness of Christian truth and worship between the two churches can only be truly expressed in unity;
- the church is truly the church when it ignores external factors and denominational labels;
- the two churches were formed not as separate churches but as two branches of one church;
- a negative social and political situation has been overcome;
- obedience to the gospel demands unity.

If one studies these reasons carefully it becomes clear that secular imperatives dominated the theological foundations which were supposed to guide and inform the organic union. A secular model of union was also motivated by the fact that the former PCSA was embarrassed that secular institutions were taking a lead in matters of reconciliation and to building a united nation while the church seemed to be being reactive rather than proactive (Duncan 2005a:41). One can also argue that due to unsuccessful union negotiations between the two churches in the past, the changing political landscape presented an opportune moment to seal a process that has been long and tedious.

Nevertheless, this model of union already posed a problem since it sought unity between a divided church separated for a century by racial divisions and inequalities bequeathed by colonialism and apartheid. Therefore I concur with Vellem (2013:156) that the PCSA and RPCSA were never equal when they entered in to a union to form the current UPCS. One can even argue that UPCS as Duncan (2005a:52) has rightly observed is:

the tale of two [or even more] denominations one white, relatively, prosperous, regardless of gender or geographic dispersal. It had access to a developed economic power, education, infrastructure, etc. The second was black and poor, with the worst affected being women in rural communities in general; characterised by deprivation and under-development.

The challenges which have been identified in this study still mirror these complexities of this scenario as sketched by Duncan above and I will argue is a reflection that the secular model of union which guided and informed structural unity in the UPCSA has by and large not been able to assist in overcoming the old divides between the former denominations (i.e. RPCSA and PCSA) marked by history of elimination, assimilation, domination, abandonment, toleration, inequalities and alienation. Thus within the diverse constituency such as the UPCSA often the subject of unity invokes a myriad of responses ranging from positive to negative; as a result a struggle continues to embrace diversity as an attempt to becoming an integrated, wholesome community Duncan (2004:467) is espousing.

Secondly, a context like this is often not conducive to a culture characterised by, tolerance, mutual respect and dignity that should affirm the diverse cultures of the UPCSA. It undermines the ideals which Rev M Ramulondi the outgoing moderator of the General Assembly of the UPCSA spoke of in his opening to the 11th General Assembly when identified as the “UPCSA which is a home for all, black and white, male and female, young and old, rich and poor, literate and illiterate, able and disabled always caring for each other making sure that we are one big family, the family of God” (UPCSA, GA 2014:503). What is clear is that a secular notion of unity alone does not provide enough glue to forge church unity as has been the case with UPCSA. The outcome of the process of organic union was secular in orientation according to Duncan (2005a:61) the underlying unity in Christ has not been a primary focus. It took until the end of 2004 for it to be recognised that:

“When transformed we will be One and like Christ”.

Having examined the secular model which was a guiding principle of unity in the UPCSA and locating it in a historical context I will now propose some recommendations regarding unity in the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa(UPCSA).

7.3 Liberation from complexes of inferiority and superiority

Lapoorta (1999:150) reminds us that apartheid in the Church and society has taken its toll on both black and whites. It has alienated sisters and brothers in Christ for years from one another, breeding elements of mistrust, suspicion, and fear towards one another. He (ibid:151) goes to point out that it also caused severe psychological damage in the minds of the oppressor and the oppressed. The decades of oppression due to policy of apartheid has instilled in blacks an inferiority complex and a superiority complex in whites (Lapoorta 1999:151). The ideological philosophy of apartheid was religiously, politically, socially and economically maintained. According to Lapoorta (1999:151) this system propagated that whites were superior to blacks, biologically, intellectually and otherwise.

Even though I will argue that in the case of UPCSA complexes of inferiority and superiority are no longer only along racial lines but also between blacks of the former two denominations (i.e. PCSA and RPCSA) as this study has demonstrated with challenges that have dogged the process of amalgamation of church associations in the UPCSA. Therefore all those who are affected from all sides are in need of liberation, in order to move into a united church where these impediments will gradually dissipate.

Since the organic union was rooted on secular and weak on theological notions of unity, this study will propose some of the theological resources which the UPCSAs can tap in her quest to overcome the legacy of exclusion and division of the past. Even though the list of theological resources at the disposal of UPCSAs is endless for the purpose of this study I have identified three, namely spirituality built around anti-racist, inclusively African and unity values, vision and mission of the denomination and reconciliation as one of the tenets flowing from the vision and mission of UPCSAs.

7.4 Spirituality

7.4.1 Anti-Racist Spirituality

Kritzinger (2010:231) contends that a 'colour-blind' approach, which seeks to deny the realities of history, is not helpful. Similarly, Tshaka (2010:134) asserts that an ahistorical approach to issues of racism encourages an apolitical approach which, in turn, breeds indifference to this problem. An anti-racist spirituality should acknowledge the shortcomings of our racialised identities in South Africa over the centuries. Secondly, an anti-racist spirituality will be informed by two-strands, i.e. (a) a joyful self-acceptance, coupled with an affirmation of all other people as image-bearers of God as stated in the *Manual of Faith and Order* (20.20.1) (b)); a commitment and sacrifice to dismantle all attitudes, habits and structures that reinforce the oppression of people on the basis of racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, social status characteristics, African country of origin and to defend the weak against the wicked (Kritzinger 2010:232).

7.4.2 Inclusively African Spirituality

The UPCSAs has a diverse membership (i.e. the poor, middle class, old, young, black and white); as a result constant tensions and frictions often come to the fore as

members try to find their identity in a uniting church. A search for alternative models of co-existence spirituality of inclusion which is undergirded by the values of *ubuntu* (humanness or personhood in community) can go a long way in affirming and reaching out to people who are different. Dibeela (2014:231) holds that the concept of *ubuntu* is the glue that holds life together. It denotes the interconnectedness of all things. We share the source of life that keeps us alive by breathing the same air, sharing the food that nourishes us, walking together and carrying each other's burdens and celebrating and affirming what is good in each other. When enacting *ubuntu* as affirming personhood or humanness and respect for all human dignity, we begin to realise the value of embodying a spirituality of inclusion which reaches out to people who are different and the necessity of consciously thinking them into our lives as part of our worldview.

A uniting and diverse church as the UPCSAs cannot afford to underplay a spirituality of inclusion in its search for authentic unity as a way of building bonds of solidarity among its members and finding a new common language that will unite members to see themselves as part of the collective and becoming aware of their connectedness. For instance, instead of saying, "Those black poor communities in the UPCSAs struggle with Afrophobia" one can rather say: "in some of our communities in the UPCSAs, we struggle with the hatred of foreign nationals". This way a new language of collective ownership in the (UPCSAs) is cultivated.

A spirituality of inclusion informed by the values of *ubuntu* is a very important resource the UPCSAs can employ as a theological vision of unity and as it seeks to work towards promoting unity among its rank and file. Such an undertaking will require a commitment of all UPCSAs members with spiritual courage and bold humility. This will require as Duncan (2007:56) has rightly observed repentance/*metanoia* as a turning from complexes of inferiority and superiority in relationship towards interdependent

community (*koinonia*) in order that members of UPCSA can begin to listen to one another in a relationship of comparative equality.

7.4.3 Spiritual unity

Kritzinger (2015:12) warns us that Christian fellowship is not a “spiritual” unity that has to do primarily with preaching, praying, singing or discussing “holy things.” It is an authentic human *encounterlogy* in which people embrace each other as sisters and brothers “in the flesh,” to use the expression from Paul’s letter to Philemon: “a beloved brother both in the flesh and in the Lord (Phm 1:16). Kritzinger (ibid) has reservations the way in which racist and exclusionist practices were justified and legitimated theologically in South Africa by emphasising “spiritual unity in Christ” as a warning and wake up call to every theology of mission. The credibility of unity in every context depends on the extent to which Christians are able to connect with the people around them as caring human beings who enjoy sharing their daily lives with others, not in order for them to be “assimilated” but simply to be human together.

The Dutch theologian A.A. van Ruler made a strong point that our first responsibility is to affirm our humanity and to be happy that we exist, since we are not human in order to become Christian; instead, we are Christian in order to become fully human. This earthy creational emphasis is a healthy corrective to so much spiritualising and dichotomising that Christian faith has preoccupied itself with. Kritzinger (ibid) illustrates this insight by relating a story of the Jewish rabbi who was discussing with his disciples the precise moment when “daylight” began. The one ventured: “It is when you can see the difference between a sheep and a goat at a distance”. Another suggested: “It is when you can see the difference between a fig tree and an olive tree at a distance”. When they eventually asked the rabbi for his opinion, he said: “When one human being looks into the face of another and says, ‘You are my sister’ or ‘You are my brother,’

then the night is over and the day has begun". It is such face-to-face recognition on the basis of a shared humanity that is the heart of every transformative encounter: the affirmation of someone's humanity, saying YES to people in their concrete material existence.

For the rabbi, light does not make us see *differences* between animals or trees or people, in order to classify and compare them; light enables us in the first place to *recognise* people as brothers and sisters created in the image of God; and only then to explore the differences that may distinguish (or separate) us. A theology of difference and diversity in mission should always flow from a theology of mutual creaturely recognition, never the other way around.

This is the kind of spiritual unity which I think the UPCSAs must strive for since the basic assumption is that "*unity*" presupposes, among other things, people who share one faith, have one calling, are baptised with one baptism, eat of one bread and drink from one cup, work for one cause, share one hope, suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness and together fight against all which may hinder unity. My hypothesis is that such ethos whether lived out negatively or positively by the rank and file in the UPCSAs are what Kritzing (2011:1) calls *encounters* between people, between the living God who calls, sends, heals, and empowers people.

7.5 The vision and mission statement of UPCSAs

According to the Men's Christian Guild report the vision and mission statement of the UPCSAs envisages a denomination that 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 in Church and society;
- In providing a model of racial reconciliation (UPCSA, Men's Christian Guild report to the GA 2008:266).

Xapile (1994:58) rightly points out that church unity “cannot be discussed in isolation from the experience of those involved”. The vision of the denomination if shared and articulated to the members is a powerful tool to unite the rank and file of UPCSA irrespective of culture, colour or status. Buqa (2012:131) claims most members of the UPCSA are not clear about the vision and mission of the denomination. Therefore sufficient attention and resources has to be dedicated to resources in translating this vision to the members of the UPCSA. Organic union needs to be people driven; it cannot just be a preserve of few individuals involved in debates and discussions on church unity.

One way of achieving this is by establishing small intercultural groups of church ministers and members to grapple with an interpretation of specific tenets of the vision and the role members of UPCSA can play to bring about reconciliation in relation to them. I think this is one of the constructive ways the vision and mission of the denomination can play a significant role in galvanising membership of UPCSA to function together with a common purpose.

7.6 Creating spaces for reconciliation

Kritzinger (2011:12) reminds us that reconciliation between individuals is hindered or prevented by the attitudes, policies, laws and structures from the past that have alienated people and communities from each other. Since the apartheid past had a fair share in contributing towards a Presbyterian family of churches divided along racial and

ethnic lines it is necessary that the UPCSА creates intercultural “spaces” where deep and reconciling human encounters can take place. This may be one way of admitting the deep seated reality of estrangement and alienation which has separated the former PCSА and RPCSA for a century. Such spaces should afford an opportunity to members of the denomination to share stories of pain, anger, fear and hope. I propose this since, a climate of openness and trust is essential if the UPCSА is really serious about overcoming the old divides between the former denominations (i.e. RPCSA and PCSА) marked by a history of assimilation, domination, inequalities and alienation as illustrated by challenges which have been identified in this study. Members of the UPCSА will not do justice to unity if they fail to interact with each other regularly, and suspicion and false perceptions will continue across all divides.

This study argues that is one way of eliminating a hermeneutic of suspicion which is still prevalent in relation to conflicts which have dogged church associations and fostering a hermeneutic of trust. Some presbyteries are to be commended which are doing sterling work in organising reconciliation and healing services where members of various church associations meet to share their pain and frustrations regarding conflicts in church associations even though some admitted that this exercise has not really brought reconciliation between warring associations but grievances and feelings were ventilated. In such spaces even if people do not agree they are able to understand each other better. It is a pity that most white members are not part of church associations because such spaces will afford them an opportunity to share their stories regarding church unity within UPCSА. I think such initiatives should not be limited to church associations only but they must be denomination wide since the legacy of apartheid affected everyone including young whites who claim they were not even born when apartheid happened, without any acknowledgement of their connectedness with their parents and grandparents who had been born at the time and without owning up to the fact that they had benefited from their “whiteness”, even though they were never in a position to support or perpetrate apartheid. The unwillingness or inability to

acknowledge white privilege flowing from the apartheid system is a serious obstacle to reconciliation in South Africa, and it will have to be addressed.

At the moment such initiatives are hamstrung by the geopolitical context of the UPCSA because each one attends a church in the vicinity where one resides as Maruping and Tshaka (2010:3) have rightly observed in the case of Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). The UPCSA cannot wait for a crisis to emerge to realise the value of such initiatives they must become part of the structures of the denomination.

7.7 Diversity

The UPCSA is a transnational church constituted by a very diverse membership embracing different races, cultures, languages and economic groupings. Therefore, appreciation of diversity is important in this context. This is perhaps the most complex issue for unity, since there are strong vested interests from different quarters of the denomination. The central challenge is how to accommodate everyone without alienating others. I will attempt to employ the ethos of “roots and wings” (Kritzinger 2010:224) to demonstrate how this metaphor can help the diverse membership of the UPCSA to work together towards unity.

According to Kritzinger (2010:224) this approach is built on a Jewish proverb that parents owe their children two things in life: *roots* (which among other things include, language, a family, a worldview and faith) and *wings* (which among other things include the confidence to reach out, to travel, to explore, to listen and learn from strangers). Kritzinger (ibid) maintains the key to understanding the proverb is that children should grow up to hold these two dimensions together in a creative tension: to be as rooted like an oak tree which Duncan (2016:7) maintains no storm or natural disaster can uproot as

they are winged. In the case of UPCSA this would mean that members across different divides should not be uprooted from their language, culture but encouraged to affirm those roots. At the same time they should guard against affirming their roots in an arrogant fashion which alienates others, or romanticising past traditions, especially those which Duncan (2004:467) warns no longer serve the church well, they should at the same time learn to spread their wings and to fly, precisely through meeting people and ideas different to their own, without a sense of insecurity or arrogance.

The unity that I envisage for the UPCSA across Southern Africa is one that can open up the safe-risky spaces for such affirmative and transformative encounters to happen, not occasionally but as a way of life. This way the UPCSA can avoid a danger of *homogenisation* (everyone has to be the same, which means they submit to the dominant culture) and *polarisation* (in which unnecessary battle fields are fought to protect one's tradition), in favour of *hybridisation* (differentiated sense of being more than just one thing, in the spirit of "roots and wings". This means members of UPCSA across different divides open arms as a sign welcoming each other in the spirit of embracing while recognising their differences but being mindful that they belong to one denomination.

Kritzinger (2010:233) reminds us that Calvin once said there is only preaching in Geneva, but no reformation. What the *unity* of UPCSA needs is a thorough ongoing reformation (*semper reformanda*). This would require members of UPCSA to live down the legacy of exclusion and estrangement, to dismantle all the structures, habits and policies that impede unity.

7.8 Recommendations

Suggestions for further studies

This study concludes with suggestions and recommendations for further studies arising out of the aspects of unity discussed herein. This study has no final word on the subject of unity within the UPCSA but is a simple and humble attempt to galvanise an earnest debate about the subject. The following are the areas of research which I think can provide a fertile field of study on church unity within the UPCSA:

- a. A comparative study on other denominations such as Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) and Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) which embarked on a similar journey of unification like the UPCSA may be worth studying to assess how these denominations have progressed with unity and to establish whether there are common trends emerging with regard to the challenges the UPCSA is facing.
- b. Since it appears secular rather than the theological foundations guided the unity of UPCSA It seems to me a study on theological resources which can help the UPCSA to address some of the challenges is facing is important.
- c. The two churches (i.e. PCSA and RPCSA) opted to use the name UNITING with the hope that the other sister churches, in particular the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (EPCSA) and the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA), may in future form a united church. Bearing in mind that the organic union negotiations between these three denominations never came to fruition in the past a study investigating the reasons behind the failure of this organic unity warrants research.
- d. Other challenges facing the UPCSA in her quest for unity other than the ones identified in this study can further be examined.
- e. There is a need for a study that looks at the *Manual of Faith and Order* as well as the *Basis of Union* to identify their shortcomings and whether the two are in consistent with the realities of the united denomination.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

AIDE MEMOIR (INTERVIEW GUIDE)

(There will obviously be other questions in between depending on the response of the participant)

Some of The Questions Based On Chapters 4, 5 And 6 Of My PhD Thesis

(NB) In addition to written sources, this study relied on oral testimonies each serving as to verify and complement each other. I employed the unstructured, open ended interview. They will be one interviewee, at a time, using pre-determined questions but providing the opportunity for discussion.

List of Questions on Chapter 4 Ministerial Formation in the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA)

- (A) Which years were you a student of UPCSA at University of Pretoria?
- (B) Do you think the UPCSA has been successful in integrating theological training for both white and black candidates of ministry since the merger and partnering with UP?

- (C) Do you think there is enough interaction between white and black candidates of ministry in the UPCSA at UP?
- (D) As the church which has prided itself with a history of partnering with other churches in ecumenical education. Do you think the UPCSA is still continuing with this legacy or fled into denominational training scheme?
- (E) How are UPCSA candidates of ministry fairing in integrating academic and spiritual formation?
- (F) Do you think vocational aspect of ministerial formation in the UPCSA enjoys the attention it deserves?
- (G) In your experience as a student of UPCSA at UP. Do you think African theology is taught sufficiently in the curriculum?
- (H) What is UP's language with regard to theology being taught in one's mother tongue?
- (I) What do you think are some of the major challenges ministerial training and formation is facing since, opting for UP to be the major theological training centre for UPCSA in 2000?

List of Questions Based On Chapter 5 Ministerial Stipends in the UPCSA

- (A) Do you think UPCSA is offering its key employees/ministers decent stipends/salaries?
- (B) Since the merger do you think salary scales have improved?
- (C) If the salary scales have not improved, what do you think are the contributing factors to this state of affairs?
- (D) In your experience as a minister, can low moral and self-esteem among some ministers in the UPCSA be attributed to lower salary scales?
- (E) If you are not satisfied with the salary scale UPCSA is offering will you contemplate to join secular employment?

- (F) Is the integration of single salary system alone the answer to equalisation of ministerial stipends in the UPCSA?
- (G) If not, are there any alternatives which can be explored to insure that ministers in the UPCSA are remunerated better?

List of Questions Based On Chapter 6 on Associations in the UPCSA

- (A) Since the merger of UPCSA have you experienced serious conflicts in the Association which you are a member?
- (B) If the answer is Yes, what do you think are some of the causes of these conflicts?
- (C) Do you think there were any attempts to resolve some of these conflicts in your Association by the leadership of UPCSA?
- (D) Since the formation of UPCSA in 1999, has your association which you are a member also united to form a single organisation?
- (E) If not, you don't think that undermines the unity in the UPCSA?
- (F) Are there any efforts to unite your association into one body?
- (G) Are members of your Association drawn from all races in the UPCSA?

Thank you for your time and affording me an opportunity to conduct an interview with you



APPENDIX B

Department: Science of Religion and
Missiology

A LETTER OF CONSENT REQUESTING PERMISSION FOR MR MK MAKOFANE TO INTERVIEW MINISTERS OF THE UNITING PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

**Title of The Study: Unity At Cross-Roads: A Southern African Missiological Case
Study.**

Researcher: Mpeane Karabo Makofane

Institutional affiliation: University of Pretoria

Tel W (012) 429 4521

Cell Number: 0824856902

We hereby request permission on behalf of Mr Makofane who is a PhD student in the department of Science of Religion and Missiology to conduct interviews among ministers of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. The topic of his research is: **Unity At Cross-Roads: A Southern African Missiological Case Study.**

- **Purpose of the study:** The purpose of the study, is to assess how far the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa has progressed with unity and to ascertain the challenges faced by the UPCSA in its quest for unity. The results of the study may be published in an academic journal. You will be provided with a summary of our findings on request. No participants names will be used in the final publication.
- **Duration of the study:** The study will be conducted over a period of three years and its projected date of completion is end of November 2015.

- **Research procedures:** In addition to written sources, the study will rely on oral testimonies of ministers, which will serve to verify certain information as well as enhancing and enriching this study.
- **What is expected of you:** For the purpose of this study, I will employ the unstructured, open, ended interview. They will be one interviewee at a time, using pre-determined questions but providing the opportunity for discussion
- **Your rights:** Your participation in this study is very important. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without stating any reasons and without any negative consequences. You, as participant, may contact the researcher at any time in order to clarify any issues pertaining to this research. The respondent as well as the researcher must each keep a copy of this signed document.
- **Confidentiality:** All information will be treated as strictly confidential and you will be referred as anonymous source if you prefer your name to be undisclosed in the interview. The relevant data will be destroyed, should you choose to withdraw.

WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT

I hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature of this research.
I understand that I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the research. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions.

Respondent: _____

Researcher: _____

Date: _____

Contact number of the Researcher:

_(012) 429 4521 or 0824856902_____

VERBAL INFORMED CONSENT *(Only applicable if respondent cannot write)*

I, the researcher, have read and have explained fully to the respondent, named _____ and his/her relatives, the letter of introduction. The respondent indicated that he/she understands that he/she will be free to withdraw at any time.

Respondent: _____

Researcher: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C



09th November 2015

**Re: PERMISSION FOR MR MK MAKOFANE TO INTERVIEW MINISTERS OF THE
UNITING PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**

Permission is hereby granted for Mr MK Makofane to interview ministers of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa in line with the principles of research towards the completion of his doctoral thesis. The research topic is: **Unity At Cross-Roads: A Southern African Missiological Study.**

Ministers are encouraged to participate in the interviews. However, each minister may exercise his/her right to participate or not to participate in the interviews.

Yours in Christ.



The Rev Lungile Mpetsheni
GENERAL SECRETARY

APPENDIX D

PERMISSION TO ALLOW MR MK MAKOFANE TO USE THE ARCHIVES OF UNITING PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

This serves to confirm that **Mpeane Karabo Makofane** is a registered student at the University of Pretoria pursuing a PhD in the department of Science of Religion and Missiology. The research topic of his study is: **Unity At Cross-Roads: A Southern African Missiological Case Study**. The purpose of this study, is to assess how far the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa has progressed with unity and to ascertain the challenges faced by the UPCSA in its quest for unity.

The library at University of Pretoria is not in possession of some of the primary sources which Mr Makofane require to enhance and enrich his study. I therefore kindly request if he can be given permission to access the archives of central office of the UPCSA in Parktown, Johannesburg.

For further information, please feel free to contact me at

0724343728 or Graham.Duncan@up.ca.za.

Your cooperation will be highly appreciated in this regard.

Yours sincerely

Professor G Duncan



APPENDIX E



09th November 2015

**RE: PERMISSION FOR MR MAKOFANE TO ACCESS THE ARCHIVES OF
CENTRAL OFFICE OF THE UPCSA**

Permission is hereby granted for Mr MK Makofane to access the archives of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa in the Tiyo Soga House (Central Office) as part of his research towards the completion of his doctoral thesis.

Mr Makofane will make arrangements with Mrs Joan Botha when he wants to come to the office, so that he may get the assistance he requires. The contact details (telephone number and email address) appear below.

Yours in Christ.

The Rev Lungile Mpetsheni
GENERAL SECRETARY