

**African Women, Hospitality and HIV/AIDS: The case of the Mothers'  
Union of St. Margaret's United Church of Zambia.**

**By**

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## Dedication

First and foremost, I dedicate this dissertation to my mother Mrs Nolia Mwiinga Cheelo who taught me the art of African women hospitality starting from the time I was a child. Secondly, I dedicate it to my husband Davy and children for their support during the time of working on my dissertation.



## **Acknowledgement**

The completion of this dissertation has been partly the efforts of the following people whom I feel deserve my acknowledgement. Firstly I want to thank my supervisor, Professor Isabel A. Phiri for the guidance and supervision of this dissertation. Secondly, I want to acknowledge the input of my husband Davy and the children, Suwi, Chipu, Ndina and Malumbo for their support during the writing of my research and their tolerance of my absence from home over long hours. Thirdly, I also realise that my research is not solely my own effort but also the effort of the community in which I conducted the fieldwork. I therefore want to extend my gratitude to the Bishop of the United Church of Zambia for allowing me to conduct the research in his consistory. A special thanks goes to the Mothers' Union group of the United Church of Zambia and all the non- Mothers' Union members whom I was able to interview.

Finally, I want to recognise the effort of the Institute of the Study of the Bible who offered to sponsor my field trip financially, to and from Zambia and for the use of their material. To all these people, I hold myself accountable and wish them God's blessings.



## **Abstract**

The problem of African women's hospitality has not been well handled in most churches in Africa. Although many churches seem to attach great value to African women's hospitality, there are still a lot of situations related to African women's hospitality that have been dehumanising and oppressive to African women both in the church and in the society. Issues such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, economic hardship and sexuality have all affected African women's practice of hospitality. The fact that problems related with African women's hospitality surface within the church goes to show that this kind of hospitality needs to be re-examined by the Church if it has to be free and liberative to African women. Despite all these effects, African women themselves have valued and accepted hospitality as part of their calling in their service to God.

The aim of this thesis is to discuss African women's hospitality from an African woman theologian's perspective. Writing as an African woman theologian, the researcher was able to bring out some of the effects of African hospitality to African women. Apart from hospitality being an African way of life and a virtue that needs to be embraced by both African culture and Christianity, hospitality is also viewed as a command from God to all the Jews and Christians. On the other hand it is also important to mention that hospitality is a gift from God in that there are people who are gifted in extending their acts of hospitality to others.

Hospitality as a concept, which has been practiced mainly by women in most African societies has impacted many dimensions of life especially in the Christian faith where African women's hospitality has been viewed as God's command to God's people. Although there is some literature produced on hospitality, the researcher noted with special interest that not much literature has been covered from the theological side on the issue of African women's hospitality and HIV/AIDS.

The study was undertaken in the United Church of Zambia with the Mothers' Union group of St. Margaret Church of Kitwe. Among many others, the study reviewed the need for enculturation and contextualization of the African culture and the gospel.

Chapter one is the introduction to the study. This includes the background to and motivation for the study, statement of the problem, the methodology used to collect data and the literature review. Chapter two brings out the historical background of hospitality both from the Biblical and African concept. The chapter shows African women's practice of hospitality in all these aspects and how their practises impacted the communities and people who lived at that time. Chapter three looks at different ways African women express their acts of hospitality. The effects of this expression of hospitality are also discussed. The other issues that have been covered are the response of African women theologians' to African women's practise of hospitality.

Chapter four examines how HIV/AIDS has affected the practise of African women's hospitality and how these women who continue to offer hospitality under HIV/AIDS conditions cope with the risks involved in the practice. Chapter five analyses the research findings using cultural hermeneutics of Kanyoro 2000 as the frame of reference. Chapter six concludes African women's understanding of hospitality. This chapter states that African women's hospitality is a gift from God and women who are involved in this practice should be encouraged to do so. However, there is need for the church and community to re-examine the practice and look out for oppressive structures that are destructive to the African women's practice of hospitality. The chapter has also called on the church to be supportive to African women in their practise of hospitality.

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## Abbreviations

HIV/AIDS= Human Immune Virus/ Acquired immune Deficiency Syndrome

KBBK= Kwafwana Kwabana Mayo Mubwina Kristu

UCZ= United Church of Zambia

T.B= Tuberculosis

St.=Saint

## Chapter one

### 1. Introduction

African women have understood hospitality differently as one of the oldest virtues of most African societies. To some, to be hospitable is what it means to be human while others may look at it as a gift from God that needs to be used if they have to attain their full spiritual maturity. While all these assumptions may be right, the issue at hand is: what is hospitality to an African woman in today's world with economic hardships and prevailing situation of HIV/AIDS? This is the main aim of this dissertation. In answering this question partly, this chapter discusses the motivation and background to the topic, the literature review and location of the study, the methodology used and the limitations of the study.

### 1.2 Background to and Motivation for the Research.

The background and motivation for choosing this topic comes from the writings of African women theologians like Mercy Oduyoye (2001) whose work has a comprehensive approach to the issue of African women and hospitality. The first motivation for this study is based on reading Oduyoye's writings on this issue. Oduyoye is of the view that "hospitality is inherently and genuinely African,"<sup>1</sup> meaning that Africans are born with the concept of hospitality and they live and die experiencing hospitality. This resonates with my background experiences as a child growing up in a Tonga ethnic group of Zambia, where we are taught from childhood that, 'when a visitor comes in your home you should not look at his/her face but look at the stomach.' This kind of teaching in my culture is mainly given to a woman who is said to be the most important person in feeding and looking after the visitors and strangers.

Furthermore, when a girl child is born in a Tonga family she is visited and given a gift especially from women. It is believed that if people do not bring gifts to this girl child, the child may grow up to be stingy and not hospitable to people.

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<sup>1</sup> Mercy A. Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology*. Maryknoll: Academic Press. 2001:94.

A young bride in the Tonga culture is given a dog to take care of before she is given in-laws to look after. Depending on the growth of the dog, the woman will either qualify as being a hospitable wife or will be labelled as unkind and songs and proverbs will be used to describe her behaviour. Commenting on the same, Oduyoye says “a repertoire of Africa’s ‘shaming songs’ is directed towards women who do not know how to welcome their in-laws, never give anything or are too busy to be disturbed by others. Women are expected to be available to all who claim their attention and their service.”<sup>2</sup>

Although this kind of hospitality may seem to be demanding, women in Africa find themselves practising this hospitality. Oduyoye quotes Mbombo who claims, “Without women’s tenderness and hospitality, security at home would be impossible,” for as she claims, “the other sex is not committed to such things.”<sup>3</sup> This is true in most African countries in that society is made to understand that a ‘home is not a home without a woman,’ meaning a woman’s hospitality is what makes a home. These are some of the statements that have motivated me to find out how the practice of hospitality has affected the lives of African women.

My second motivation for this study is based on the prevalence of AIDS patients among church members today and bearing in mind that women are mainly the caregivers. As Phiri puts it, “traditionally women are care providers for everyone in the home.”<sup>4</sup> Since caring for people especially the sick in an African society is seen as being hospitable, some women have risked their lives during this caring period either by being infected with HIV/AIDS unknowingly through the handling of patients or by providing sex to their partners who are HIV positive. To this I say, women’s hospitality needs to be re-examined by both the church and society if it is to maintain its meaning in Africa today.

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<sup>2</sup> Oduyoye, 2001:10.

<sup>3</sup> Oduyoye, 2001: 91.

<sup>4</sup> Isabel A. Phiri, ‘African Women of Faith Speak out in an HIV/AIDS era’. In Isabel Phiri, Beverly Haddad and Madipoane Masenya (Eds). *African Women, HIV/AIDS and Faith Communities*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 2003:15.

When Kialu in Oduyoye says “women’s hospitality should be abundant, free and all inclusive,”<sup>5</sup> my questions are: to what extent should this kind of hospitality be practised? How safe are the African women when practising this kind of hospitality in the era of HIV/AIDS?

The third motivation for this study is based on the works of the Mothers’ Union in the United Church of Zambia. As a member of this group, I have found it fit to examine their acts of hospitality, which they have been practising both in the church and their communities. The aim therefore was to find out how these women have viewed their acts of hospitality in today’s society where there is economic hardships coupled with the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

### **1.3 Preliminary study and the location of the research within the existing literature**

The literature used in this study is divided into three main categories. The first category consists of literature on the understanding of hospitality from the African women theologians’ perspective. The second category is of literature on understanding of hospitality from biblical perspective, and the third category is of literature on understanding of hospitality from the African male perspective.

#### **1.3.1 Literature on African women theologians and their view on hospitality**

##### **1.3.1.1 Mercy A. Oduyoye**

Oduyoye is one of the African women theologians who have written much on African women’s lives in the context of the church. As an African woman theologian, Oduyoye has provided a good amount of information on the subject of hospitality. According to Oduyoye. “Offering and receiving hospitality is a key indication of the African emphasis on sustaining our life-force at all costs, both as individuals and as communities.”<sup>6</sup> When Africans give and receive they are simply wishing the giver or the receiver long life so that the act of hospitality may be prolonged and encouraged in the community.

Oduyoye also views the issue of hospitality as being a risk to women’s lives. She observes that when women practise hospitality they are always vulnerable to all kinds of

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<sup>5</sup> Oduyoye, 2001: 92.

<sup>6</sup> Oduyoye, 2001: 93.

risks. For example, Oduyoye points out that “men do what they want with the bodies of women in the name of hospitality and few women are able to resist sexual hospitality.”<sup>7</sup> This is a very well known factor especially in today’s world where issues of sexual violence have become so prevalent even in the communities of faith. The other issue Oduyoye discusses is economic hospitality where she quotes Murigande (1996:23) saying, “What is hospitality in the midst of no housing, slums, neglect of hygiene, criminality, malnutrition, unemployment, delinquency, prostitution and so on?”<sup>8</sup> Oduyoye sees all these as risks to hospitality. She however does not condemn hospitality but questions the way it is being practised especially when it is done for the benefit of one person at the expense of the other.

When defining hospitality, Oduyoye lists four concepts that make up the meaning of hospitality: “(1) Welcoming/receiving, reception; (2) Charity/almsgiving; (3) Boarding and lodging/hotel, hospital; and (4) Protecting/sanctuary and integration.’ She goes on to say: ‘Receptions, hospices, hospital and even integration, as in acquiring citizenship, have monetary price-tags in our contemporary experience.’<sup>9</sup> In agreement with Oduyoye, Byrne sees hospitality as “conjuring up the context of guests, visitors, putting on meals for them, providing board and lodging, making the stranger feel ‘at home’ in our home-enlarging our home to make that wider ‘at home-ness’ possible.”<sup>10</sup> The literature of Oduyoye will therefore be used in dealing with aspects of hospitality that the author has dealt with in her books.

### **1.3.1.2 Musimbi R. Kanyoro**

Kanyoro’s writing will be used when speaking from the African women’s cultural hermeneutics point of view. The author views African culture “as a thread which strings our beliefs and social set up together and therefore cannot be condemned.”<sup>11</sup> Commenting on the issue of hospitality as a cultural norm, the writer sees African women as custodians of cultural practices. The author comments on harmful traditions that are

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<sup>7</sup>Oduyoye, 2001:104.

<sup>8</sup>Oduyoye, 2001: 97.

<sup>9</sup>Oduyoye, 2001:93.

<sup>10</sup> B. Byrne, *The hospitality of God: A reading of Luke’s gospel*. Minnesota: The liturgical Press. 2000:4.

<sup>11</sup> Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro, ‘God calls to ministry: an inclusive Hospitality’ in *To be fully human*. EATWOT Women’s Theologies. Manila: 1988: 31.

passed on as cultural values and are not to be discussed challenged or changed. She cites the idea of offering women to guests as a form of hospitality.<sup>12</sup> On issues concerning culture, the author feels that women have not yet found a lasting solution on the cultural norms surrounding their lives, for example the issue of sexuality as a form of hospitality. The author calls for all African women theologians to take responsibility for this issue with their reading of the Bible if there is to be a theology of liberation when dealing with culture and hospitality.

### **1.3.1.3 Isabel A. Phiri**

Phiri is among the African women theologians who have recently written on the issue of HIV/AIDS and women in Africa. Phiri is of the view that, traditionally, women are care-providers for everyone in the home. The author goes on to say; “The HIV/AIDS pandemic has increased women’s workload, as AIDS patients require home-based care for a long time.”<sup>13</sup> Women have sacrificed their health, jobs and time to nurse their dying relatives, children and husbands in the name of African hospitality. The writing of Phiri (2003) will therefore be used to show how HIV/AIDS can be connected to the issue of hospitality in relation to women’s lives in Africa.

### **1.3.2. Literature on the Old Testament and hospitality.**

The work of Pohl (1999) will be used on the survey of the Old Testament’s response to hospitality. Pohl sees the Old Testament as having several narratives where hospitality was practised. The author cites texts like Genesis 19 where the host had to offer the concubine to the men of the city to protect the Stranger in his house. The writing of Byrne (2000) will be used when relating to the people of Israel and their understanding of hospitality. The Israelites who understood themselves as strangers also saw it fit to care for those who were vulnerable, especially travellers. To the Israelites that was what it meant to be a people of God. Hospitality involved welcome, refreshment and protection.

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<sup>12</sup> Musimbi Kanyoro, ‘Engendered communal Theology: African Women’s contribution to Theology in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In Nyoronge N. and Musa W. Dube (Eds) *Thalitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 2001: 159ff.

<sup>13</sup> Phiri, 2003:15.



### **1.3.3 Literature on the New Testament and hospitality.**

For the understanding of hospitality from the New Testament perspective, Byrne (2000) uses the gospel of Luke as his point of departure. The author brings out different aspects of the hospitality of God by showing how God expresses God's love to the people through the act of hospitality. The main passage that the author uses for his argument is Luke Chapters 1-2 where Luke talks about the story of the infancy of Jesus as the inauguration of Jesus' mission to Nazareth. According to the author, it is God's hospitality that led to the coming of Jesus in a human form for the salvation of humanity. Byrne also talks about the episode in the house of Simon where the unnamed woman anoints the feet of Jesus Luke (7:36-50), while Simon the owner of the house only welcomed Jesus to his house and did not abide by the customary Jewish law of welcoming strangers. This Byrne says, "Shows the contrast between the two kinds of hospitality offered to Jesus between Simon and the woman."<sup>14</sup>

Pohl (1999) also quotes Acts (2:43-47), and (Ephesians 2: 19) to show the practice of hospitality within the household of God which also included Christians from other ethnic groups like the gentiles. The writing of Oduyoye (2001) will be used to show the relationship between the hospitality of Jesus and that of African women.

### **1.3.4. Literature on understanding of hospitality from the African male perspective.**

On the understanding of the African male perspective of hospitality, Moila (2002) sees hospitality as "African cultural and moral values that are not theoretical but a way of life."<sup>15</sup> Mbiti (1991) sees the concept of hospitality as being as wide as African religion and that it permeates all spheres of life. Moila goes on to say that "African hospitality is brotherhood and sisterhood between the members of the same family."<sup>16</sup> Other writings to be used in this section are Mbiti (1969), Mbiti (1991) and Lwasa (1978).

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<sup>14</sup> Byrne, 2000: 24.

<sup>15</sup> Phillip, M. Moila, *Challenging Issues in African Christianity*. Pretoria: CB Powell Bible Centre. 2002:1.

<sup>16</sup> Moila, 2000:2.

#### **1.4 Research problem**

The statement of the problem for this study is, 'to what extent has African women's hospitality affected the lives of the Mothers' Union of St. Margaret's church in the era of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and economic hardship?' To answer this question, the study will try and analyse the following sub-questions;

1. What is hospitality and what constitutes hospitality?
2. To what extent is African women's hospitality understood as a cultural practice in Africa?
3. How have the HIV/AIDS pandemic and economic constraints affected the traditional notion of hospitality among the Mothers' Union of the St. Margaret Methodist church in Zambia?
4. What would constitute the abuse of African women's hospitality?
5. How do African women theologians view the issue of hospitality in Africa today?
6. What has been the impact of the Christianity and the African world-view on the way in which hospitality has been practised on women in Africa?
7. How should hospitality be practised in the church so as to avoid it being oppressive to both men and women?

#### **1.5 Theoretical framework**

The frame of reference for this research is mainly African women's theology of enculturation and contextualization. Using the work of Kanyoro (2002) who views culture and the gospel as being inseparable, the study will aim at showing how women's practice of hospitality is affected by the gospel and culture. Kanyoro states that, Christians cannot think about the gospel apart from its engagement with the culture in which that gospel is being communicated.<sup>17</sup> Kanyoro (2001) sees most of the African cultural practices affecting women as oppressive and not to be encouraged.

The quest for African women's liberation from both African cultures and church practices that oppress them have received a lot of response from the African women

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<sup>17</sup> Musimbi Kanyoro, *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics: An African Perspective*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press. 2002.

theologians. This is all the more reason why African women theologians' cultural hermeneutics enrich the theoretical framework of this study. Although the main framework for this study is the African women's theology of enculturation and contextualization, this may not prevent the researcher from drawing on a variety of other sources like historical, sociological, patriarchal and other cultural insights where relevant and applicable.

### **1.6 Research design and research methodology**

The main concern of this proposed research is not to duplicate what other authors have already written on the issue of hospitality but rather to try and critically analyse hospitality from a woman's perspective as the study relates to the Mothers' Union of the Methodist Church of Zambia. Philpott is of the view that:

Members of the oppressed community are often the invisible participants of society, the superfluous unknown people, marginalised by the dominant sectors of society. Yet they are usually the majority of the society and are those who must pay the heaviest price for the maintenance of the current system. Not only are they invisible but their knowledge and practices, their wisdom and experiences are also invisible and undervalued.<sup>18</sup>

Using Philpott's approach, the researcher managed to collect valuable information from the women in the church who in most cases are the marginalised. This was done during the Tamar campaign Bible studies which were conducted with the Mothers' Union groups of the Methodist Church of Zambia.

The Tamar campaign Bible studies is the main methodology for this study. Using 2 Samuel (13:1-21), the Bible studies were conducted with the women. During the discussion, besides the outlined topical questions used during the normal Tamar campaign Bible studies, I also tried to find out from the women their views on the same topics in relation to the issue of hospitality and HIV/AIDS focusing attention on the role played by the woman in the text. This was done in the form of a discussion. West (1999) was used during the Bible studies as he talks about reading the Bible 'with' the people in the community and not 'for' the women.

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<sup>18</sup> Graham Philpott, *Jesus is tricky and God is undemocratic: the Kingdom of God in Amawoti*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 1993:17.

The other fieldwork methodology that the study used was that of Phiri (1997) which traces the contribution of the Chewa women to the Presbyterian churches of central Africa. For the construction of the in-depth interviews both for the oral interviews and Bible Studies, Phiri (1997) and Philpott (1998) were used. Phiri's experience among the women of the Malawian Presbyterian Church was useful when conducting interviews since the present research was also targeting women's groups in the United Church of Zambia. Philpott's approach was useful when dealing with the women as the marginalized. The interview was conducted on 30 women 25 from the Mothers' Union and 5 non-members of the Mothers' Union. Besides the women, 10 men were also interviewed using in-depth interviews in order to hear their experiences on the issue of hospitality and HIV/AIDS. The reason for choosing members of Mothers' Union was because the study is focusing on women. The reason why men were interviewed was as a way of inclusiveness and gender balance since hospitality and HIV/AIDS are gender issues. These informal interviews, guided by unstructured open-ended questions were used to allow free discussions with the people interviewed so as to attain objectivity. The research concentrated mainly on addressing women's understanding of hospitality in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa. The unstructured open-ended questions included name, marital status, age (optional) name of congregation and position in the church.

### **1.7 Sampling procedure**

Purposive sampling was used for this research as it focused on various categories of key leaders in the Mothers' Union in the church. The other group the study worked with were ordinary active members of the Mothers' Union groups and other non-members including men were all interviewed. Within these categories, the researcher interviewed men and women who might have been abused within their communities in the name of hospitality. After the Tamar Campaign Bible studies there were some men and women who came out in the open and spoke of their abuse and need for counselling. These people did not speak to the whole group but decided to approach the researcher as an individual and requested that their names and status be kept confidential for various reasons which were not

disclosed. Using this method, the researcher was able to get the information from the targeted informants.

### **1.7.1. Methods of Data collection**

The study was conducted in two phases namely fieldwork research and library work

#### **1.7.1.1 Primary Data**

This methodology included Bible studies, personal interviews, participant observation, and informal discussion during and after the Bible studies and use of archival material.

##### **1.7.1.1.1 Oral interviews**

The study adopted a narrative method, which was more preferable than the questionnaire due to its flexibility in allowing the interviewees to freely speak. Through this method, there were also free interactions between the interviewer and the interviewee and in-depth discussions during and after the Bible study. The questionnaires were used as a guideline tool to the questioning. Open-ended questions were preferred during this study as these do not limit the expressions of the interviewee. The methodology laid down by Phiri (1997) and Philpott (1993) were used in all these deliberations.

##### **1.7.1.1.2. Participant observation**

Since the researcher was directly involved in conducting the Bible studies, this provided opportunities to observe women's response to the ministry of hospitality in the church and among themselves. The first observation made was on the act of hospitality among the people of Zambia. Everywhere we went for Bible studies, the women offered us food and sung welcoming songs. The other observation was on the women's non-verbal expressions. As the discussion on sexuality and hospitality proceeded, most of the women in the Bible study group looked down with murmurings and winking of eyes among themselves. To the researcher, this was a sign that issues of sexuality among the women in Africa are treated as cultural taboos that should not be discussed in public like in a Bible study. The opportunity to lead the meetings and explain the purpose of the visit also helped to bring out the issue of hospitality which was later discussed by the groups

##### **1.7.1.1.3 Archival materials**

The research used the written materials from Kitwe (Mindolo Archival Centre) and objects and symbols related to African hospitality. For example, studying a carving of a woman with a calabash pot on her head walking towards a group of men seated under a

tree. This symbolized an African woman offering beer to men to quench their thirsty on a hot day.

#### **1.7.1.2 Secondary data.**

The research has used both published and unpublished materials that are relevant for the study, from the library and other reliable sources. This includes books, journals, theses, Internet materials, published articles and unpublished articles.

#### **1.7.2. Data analysis**

Data obtained from both the primary and secondary sources were compared for verification and analyzed according to the hypotheses and objectives of the study. Finally the transcripts from the recorded data were translated into English since some of the interviews were done in Bemba (one of the local languages of Zambia).

### **1.8 Limitations**

My research was limited to the Mothers' Union of the United Church of Zambia, St. Margaret congregation in Kitwe district of the Copperbelt province of Zambia. However, other men and women who are not members of the Mothers' Union group were also interviewed. The time allocated for the meetings and the interviews with the participants affected the findings. This is due to the fact that the research was conducted away from the place of the researcher's present location. It was also difficult for the researcher to easily fit in the group of women after being away from this particular group for a period of three years and besides most of the old members of the group who would have been the potential informants have also since left the group.

The issue of gender was another limitation to the study as some men especially from St. Margaret United Church of Zambia were not interested in discussing the subject of African women's hospitality. The men viewed women's hospitality as being something that is a normal act for women to practise and not needing any further discussion, which may only bring in wrong interpretations of the whole subject of hospitality. When it comes to cultural issues like that of sexuality and hospitality, most women in Africa are not free to tell their stories of oppression. This could have been due to fear of either victimisation or offending the patriarchal structures that surround them, especially in the

church. Therefore, while the study may have been for their benefit, some women decided to keep their stories to themselves and were not willing to be interviewed or get involved in the discussion. Due to the travelling involved in the research that is, from South Africa to Zambia and back to South Africa, the issue of finances also was one of the limitations for the study.

### **1.9 Research ethics**

With due respect and honesty, I declare that this research is the original copy of my own findings and that any published or unpublished work that is quoted is acknowledged. . In order to prevent diminishing the quality of the study, the views of the people involved in the research were respected and therefore did not try to force information out of those members who were not willing to be interviewed. Even those who came to be interviewed were free to withhold any information they felt was sensitive and also to have the names either changed or withheld at the time of reporting.

### **1.10 Time frame**

The time outlined in this dissertation is subject to change depending on unforeseen circumstances that may occur during the period of the research. However the outlined time frame will be effected and followed efficiently.

**May 2004** - Working on the proposal.

**June –July 2004** - Trip to Zambia for the purpose of undertaking a fieldwork research.

**August 2004** - Compiling and analysing of the data collected during the fieldwork

**September 2004 - October 2004.** - Working on chapters 1-3.

**November 2004** - Working on chapter 4, 5.

**December 2004** - Working on chapter 6 and the first compiled and corrected draft.

**February 2005.** - Handing in the final draft.

### **1.11 Outline of chapters**

Chapter one is the introduction and background of the whole study. The chapter also discusses the literature used in the study, the methodology and the study's frame of reference together with the statement of the problem. Chapter two explores the historical

background of hospitality both in the Old Testament and the New Testament times, its relation to women, the culture of that time and the gospel. The chapter also focuses on how hospitality was practised in Africa paying special attention to African culture and the role of women. Chapter three discusses different ways of looking at women's hospitality in Africa. This includes sexuality and hospitality, spirituality and hospitality, economic hospitality, hospitality as a cultural norm, perversion of hospitality and African women theologians' view of hospitality.

Chapter four focuses on the effects of HIV/AIDS on African women's hospitality. The main focus of this chapter is to show how different aspects related to women's lives and the HIV/AIDS illness have affected African women's practise of hospitality. Chapter five is the findings from the fieldwork. The chapter deals with the compiling of these findings and interpreting the findings. Chapters six is the summary of all the work covered. The chapter comments on the issues that have come out of the paper and thereafter give further recommendations on the research.

## **1.12 Conclusion**

Chapter one is the introduction of the main study. Its main focus was to give the brief outline of what the whole dissertation will be discussing. The chapter has also outlined the theoretical framework and methodologies that will be used in the study and the location of the study and the limitations of the study. The chapter outline has also been given, showing how each chapter will be related to the other.



## Chapter two

### History of hospitality

#### 2. Introduction

Hospitality has always been considered as a profound duty in most cultures and religions that are found in the world. As a universal issue, hospitality becomes a norm in the Bible and most African cultures. The practice of hospitality in the Bible has a lot of similarities with most African cultures as will be reflected in this chapter. The aim of this chapter is to describe the concepts of hospitality from the Old Testament perspective, the New Testament perspective and also from the African point of view. The act of hospitality embraces all spheres of life namely the physical, social and the spiritual dimensions of human life and its relationships. The chapter will try and show how women's lives have been affected by the acts of hospitality found both in the Bible and African societies. To begin with this chapter will define the meaning of hospitality according to different authors.

#### 2.1 Definition of hospitality

According to Barton, the Greek word for hospitality is *Philoxenia* while the Latin word is *hospitium*. Both words describe the social process by means of which the status of someone who is an outsider is changed from stranger to guest. Barton further speaks of the three stages of this process. The first stage is the evaluation and testing of the stranger to see whether incorporation as a guest is possible without undue threat to the purity of the group. The second stage is the incorporation of the stranger as a guest under the patronage of a host and in accordance with the culture-specific code of hospitality imposing obligation upon both the host and the guest. The third stage is the departure of the guest as a stranger now transformed into either a friend, if honour has been satisfied or enemy if honour has been infringed.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> S.C. Barton, 'Hospitality' in Martin R. and Davids P.H. (Eds.) *The Dictionary of the later New Testament and its development*. Illinois: Inter Varsity Press.1997: 501.

Barton shows how in the Bible a stranger was evaluated despite being offered hospitality. The assessment in most cases was necessary because most of the people who were being offered hospitality were strangers. The host as well as the stranger needed protection and safety if hospitality were to be practised effectively. As a cultural norm, hospitality also followed the rules and regulations of the cultural setting in which hospitality was to be offered. It is from these three stages that hospitality sometimes became a threat instead of being a blessing to the parties concerned, especially to women.

de Bethune sees hospitality as belonging to the realm of *ethos* which consists of letting the others in, of ourselves entering the other's space. Communication in hospitality is made mainly by gestures, which are less explicit than language but also less ambiguous. It also means sheltering a stranger or offering food; it is antecedent to *logos* and also goes beyond it.<sup>20</sup> The gestures mentioned by de Bethune are much more common in African practice of hospitality than in other continents. Instances like the official welcome of the bride into the new family among the Bemba people of Zambia calls for the host to prepare food for the bride, which is presented through symbols and gestures that are related to her acts of hospitality towards her in-laws. The giving of a chair or extending the handshake to a stranger is a sure sign of welcome for the stranger in most African cultures. Hospitality also implies the act of reciprocity, allowing both the host and the guest to benefit from the act of hospitality.

Byrne is of the view that, "hospitality conjures up the context of guest, visitors, putting on meals for them, providing board and lodging, making the stranger feel 'at home' in our home-enlarging our home to make wider 'at home-ness' possible."<sup>21</sup> The author outlines some of the concepts that are very profound in the African women's practice of hospitality namely the feeding of strangers, which is wholly a woman's duty in most African societies. While the provision of board and lodging may be associated with both men and women, the entertainment of strangers becomes a woman's duty. This kind of

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<sup>20</sup> Pierre-Francois de Bethune, OSB. *By Faith and Hospitality –The monastic Traditions as a model for Interreligious Encounter*. Herefordshire: Grace wing. 2002:3.

<sup>21</sup> Byrne, 2000:4.

entertainment comes in different forms, some of which become oppressive to women, as we shall see in the next chapter.

## **2.2 Location of hospitality**

When thinking of the location of hospitality we usually think first of the home. According to Pohl, the location of hospitality has always strongly influenced its meaning and practices. Changes in the household, church, economy and political life have had a major impact on the practice of hospitality, but hospitality and its commitments have also helped to shape those institutions.<sup>22</sup> As much as it is true that hospitality has helped to shape these institutions above, at the same time the institutions themselves have also affected the practice of hospitality to a large extent. African women's practice of hospitality for example has been met with a lot of challenges in most of these institutions. The main locations of hospitality to be discussed in this study follow below.

### **2.2.1 The home**

Hospitality has always been most closely associated with the home or household though never exclusively meaning that other places like the church, political settings and the community are all not locations of hospitality. In addition to this statement, Mains says that:

the home was integral to the early church. Formal worship for those Jewish Christians continued for many years to centre traditionally in the temple but the home was the place where Christian fellowship occurred and everyday in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching about Jesus as the Christ.<sup>23</sup>

The home still displays an advantage of hospitality in most African settings even today. A stranger who visits a home will be awarded more hospitality than one who is met outside the home. In a home location of African hospitality, women are mostly the ones to welcome, feed, shelter, protect, entertain and make these strangers feel at home. African women have an anonymous task to do while hospitality is being practised in the

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<sup>22</sup> Pohl, 1999:29.

<sup>23</sup> Karen Mains, *Open heart. Open home. The hospitable way to make others feel welcome*. Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press. 1997:20.

house. As a mother and housewife, the central place of her activities becomes the home where she is expected to offer hospitality to every member of the family at all times. This kind of location of hospitality has encouraged strangers or even the family members to abuse women's hospitality in many ways. The fact that the location is a home, has led to many women's experience of rape as they provided shelter to the men. Others have been infected with HIV/AIDS in the process of providing hospitality to the household, as we shall see in the next chapter.

It is also important to note that the household location also provides fellowship both to the host and the guest. The shared meals, like those in the early church, provide a setting in which the Christians are able to come together and share their love and commitment to the Lord. This kind of fellowship provided a setting for the communal response to the needs of the poor in the early church. These made the church members strong and live in harmony with one another, as was the case in Acts chapter 2. Even today, African women have found fellowship with one another in their practise of hospitality within the location of the household. One example is the 'Women of Faith Fellowship' established among the international women in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. This fellowship has provided spiritual, physical and moral support for women from different countries in Africa.<sup>24</sup>

### **2.2.2 The church**

As an institution of God, the church is also another location where African women's hospitality has been practised. According to Pohl:

Churches are potentially rich settings for nurturing a life of hospitality. In some churches expanding the hospitality that members offer to another would be an important first step. Churches that have not nurtured a common life among members will find hospitality to strangers quite difficult.<sup>25</sup>

This is what is common in most churches in our African societies where the churches' efforts to offer hospitality to one another fail. The failure is mainly because the other part that is normally the male, find it easy to receive the hospitality offered by the women in

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<sup>24</sup> This group was founded in 2001 by international Christian women most of who are African Women Theologians. As a group of Christian women, it has provided hospitality to many Christians especially women. Located in a Christian home, the host (Prof. Phiri) has played a very influential role in encouraging women to provide hospitality one to another be it in the form of spiritual, material or social support.

<sup>25</sup> Pohl, 1999:157.

the church without reciprocity. When the church fails to create an equal place within the church for all members to receive some kind of hospitality from each other, even its acts of hospitality to strangers outside the church will be affected. This is because these strangers, who are being ministered to, may not be able to see the love of God in the church that is offering them the hospitality of God. Jesus when talking to his disciples in the Gospels of John (13:35) said “people will know that you are my disciples if you love one another (NIV)”. The love mentioned here is inclusive and this is the reason why the church as a location for hospitality should be able to see all its members as equal before God.

Women are said to be *the backbone of the church* because of the activities associated with hospitality that they are involved in within and outside the church. As hospitality is located in the church, African women who are found in the church extend their acts of hospitality to all who need it in the church as part of their service to God. In most African churches, women fund-raise for the church and use the money to take care of the needs of the church. African women believe that they are part of the family of God, which is the church. That is why they find it fitting to practise their hospitality in this location. Commenting on the need for the church to involve all its members in the practice of hospitality, Pohl argues that:

the churches have the material, social and spiritual resources to practice vibrant expressions of hospitality, yet the sad testimony from a number of practitioners of hospitality is that the people they welcome often do not find welcome in local churches.<sup>26</sup>

The majority of the people who are normally disadvantaged in finding welcome in the church are women. Most churches in Africa have limited the chances for women to fully participate in the activities of the church despite their active participation in the church’s ministry of hospitality. This makes these African women feel unwelcome in their own churches.

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<sup>26</sup> Pohl, 1999:160.

### **2.2.3 The Economic and Political location.**

As for the economic and political location of hospitality, women's presence is not acknowledged in these locations. Although they may be seen as holding influential positions, what they do is attributed mainly to their male counterparts. For example in the rural areas, projects may be initiated by women to help support the government's strategies of development. These programmes are initiated mainly by women who are mentioned only in passing if at all they are, when these projects become successful. In most parts of Africa women do most of the economic work. Through farming and also selling at the markets, African women contribute to the economy of the nation as well as that of their families. In agreement to the statement, Manuh states that:

Women provide the backbone of the rural economy in much of the sub-Saharan Africa. About 80 per cent of the economically active female labour force is employed in agriculture and women comprise about 47 per cent of the total agricultural labour force. Food production is the major activity of rural women and their responsibilities and labour inputs often exceed those of men in most areas in Africa.<sup>27</sup>

Although Manuh is focusing on the situation in sub-Saharan Africa, the author's statement is very relevant to Zambia whose major economic income is from agriculture. Most of the women in Zambia have their hospitality located in agriculture where they are required to produce food not only for their families but also for the rest of the nation. Yet most of these women do not even benefit from their products or sales. Instead their husbands, who in most cases are not even employed due to the high rate of unemployment among men in Zambia, are the ones who benefit from these sales.

As for the location of hospitality in the political sphere, women in Zambia are the ones who take the most active part when it comes to voting for the political leaders. These Zambian women are not only involved in voting but they are also the ones who welcome the political leaders during the campaigns. Women in rural areas provide hospitality to these politicians who do not even look into the welfare of women in their respective

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<sup>27</sup> Takyiwa Manuh, *Women in Africa's development. African recovery briefing paper* <http://www.un.org/ccosocdev/geninfo/bpaper/maineng.htm> down loaded on 13/12/1004. 1998:6.

areas. These acts of women go to show that African women's hospitality is located both in the political and economic spheres.

#### **2.2.4 The hospital**

Hospitality can also be practised outside the homes depending on many factors some of which will be discussed later in this chapter. According to Pohl, "the other situation most commonly associated with hospitality is the church and the institutions that have derived from the church such as monasteries, hospitals and hospices."<sup>28</sup> Even in these institutions, women's acts of hospitality are more prevalent than those of men. Hospitals for example have always used women as nurses until recently when male nurses have also been employed. The duties of these nurses are not only to provide medical services but are also to nurse the patients, by feeding, bathing and doing laundry for them. Although this could be seen merely as a paid job, it also involves some acts of hospitality making it a spiritual duty to some of these African women who work in the hospitals. The same goes for monasteries and hospices.

#### **2.2.5 The market**

Hospitality can also be located in hotels, restaurants, economic development sites, (donor countries) traditional and political spheres, (welcoming refugees). In Africa today taking care of refugees as a form of hospitality is very common. This is due to conflicts and wars in many parts of the continent. Most of the people especially women and children are displaced by these wars, which turn them into refugees. Oduyoye alludes to this by saying, "in the turmoil of Africa, refugees are received in the 'modern' camps for the masses, but the small groups that arrive meld into the local population, especially if they have the same language. Camps are still open for refugees."<sup>29</sup> In Zambia, most refugees from Democratic Republic of Congo who settle on the Copperbelt province speak Bemba which is one of the Zambian languages spoken on the Copperbelt. The majority of the refugees are women who are now trading as marketers.

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<sup>28</sup> Pohl, 1999:39.

<sup>29</sup> Oduyoye, 2001:92

Although the welcome of these refugees has had an impact on the country's economy, it is the African heart of hospitality that makes the Zambian community to accept these refugees. In relation to the idea of caring for refugees, Pohl is of the view that even in the earliest time of the tradition, care for the strangers went beyond the household. It involved community responsibility providing and depending on legislation as well as generous individual responses. The author goes on to say that there was never an assumption that individual response alone could care for large numbers of needy strangers and the strangers were often encountered in a more public place.<sup>30</sup> This collective approach to hospitality with its main setting in the house was also very common in Africa. A stranger in Africa was not one's visitor until he/she has passed through the chief who had the right to know who was coming into his/her territory or going out and later on would ensure the security of both the visitor and the host. This is where the issue of offering women to strangers for entertainment as a sign of hospitality by the host community was being practised

### **2.3 Old Testament view of hospitality**

The Old Testament stories related to hospitality focus on the Jewish traditional ways of caring for the widows, orphans, the poor and travellers. This is seen in the way God addresses the Israelites at their time of wondering in the wilderness through Abraham after promising him that he will be the father of many nations Genesis 15. In addition to this, Pohl commenting on the command of God to Abraham states that, "in the midst of all these promises, Abraham was warned that his descendants will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, will be slaves there and will be oppressed for four hundred years Genesis (15:5-21)."<sup>31</sup> This is the promise God used to remind them even after they inherited the land that they should treat the strangers that came in their land in the same way they were treated by the people they met during their time of travel to the Promised Land. This made the Jews' approach to hospitality to become part of their religious practice because it was seen as a command from God, which had to be followed without question. A stranger in the Jewish culture was protected, fed, loved, sheltered and clothed

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<sup>30</sup> Pohl, 1999:41.

<sup>31</sup> Pohl, 1999: 27.



if need be. The command to love the alien was parallel to the command to love the neighbour, as recorded in Leviticus (19:13), laws on gleaning, the triennial tithe and Sabbath keeping made reference to the sojourner Deuteronomy (24:19-22). Judges were instructed to deal impartially in matters between the aliens and Israelites; cities of refuge were open to aliens and native-born alike Numbers (35:15). All these instructions showed the importance the Israelites attached to the acts of hospitality, as they perceived God as a hospitable God who provided manna, protection and shelter for them while in the wilderness.

### **2.3.1 Women's acts of hospitality in the Old Testament.**

The Jewish culture was patriarchal, which placed men in a position of superiority over the women and made Jewish men have dominion over women. Despite this, women in the Old Testament played a very significant role in their practising of hospitality. Acts of hospitality were more profound among the women than the men. This sometimes made women vulnerable to sexual abuse in either wanting to protect the men or in reciprocating the hospitality offered to them by the men. (This will be expanded further in chapter three.) Reisenberger commenting on the Jewish women's activities in their homes states that Jewish women are called *Akeret ha Bayit* which literally means the pillar of the centre of the house. The author goes on to say that most Jewish holiday rituals centre around the dining table, where people eat together, sing together and share their thoughts and feelings.<sup>32</sup> Even today in a Jewish home, women are the ones to decide the meals and how food will be prepared and presented before the guests. This is also the same trend in most African cultures where the place of the woman is in the kitchen. As soon as an African girl child is able to do some minor duties like washing dishes or making a fire, she will be introduced to the kitchen and be reminded constantly of the need to be hospitable and know how to cook and serve food for the family.

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<sup>32</sup> Azela Talit Reisenberger, 'South African Jewish Women and HIV/AIDS.' in Phiri I.A., Haddad B. & Musenya Madipoane (eds). *African Women HIV/AIDS and Faith Communities*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 2003:176.

The story of Abraham, Sarah and the three strangers (Genesis 18:1-21) is the most significant story on hospitality in the Old Testament due to the story's persistent formative role in the instructions and motivation of the people of God. Pohl sees the writer of Hebrews as giving this story special status by referring to it in chapter 13 saying, 'Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers for thereby some have entertained angels unawares' v2.<sup>33</sup> In the story, Abraham welcomed the three visitors who came to his house as they sat outside the tent with his wife Sarah. As a Jewish custom they offered these visitors water to wash their feet, food and perhaps even a place for them to rest. The mention of Abraham and the servant together with Sara in this act of hospitality is what African women are requesting hospitality to be like: the kind of hospitality which is inclusive and calls for both men and women to work together towards achieving good will. This is what Oduyoye (1995) is calling for when she talks about 'calling both men and women to account.' Just as African women theologians are calling for inclusiveness in the church so should hospitality be. In this way, the abuse of women's hospitality will be lessened.

The story of Moses (Exodus 2:1-10) is yet another striking incident of hospitality practised by three women namely: Miriam; Moses' mother, who is rarely mentioned and the daughter of Pharaoh whose name is also not mentioned in the Bible. The hospitality of these three women led to the salvation of a man who becomes a hero and a deliverer of the entire Israel. To an African woman who has known the risks of hospitality, the actual heroines in the story are the three women who faced the fierce anger and wrath of King Pharaoh and went against his command by hiding and protecting the baby Moses. Moses' own biological mother and sister hid him in the river and later arranged for feeding and care from the adoptive mother who also braved the King's wrath by taking a Hebrew boy to her father's house, which was a forbidden thing then. This whole scenario depicts a very striking act of hospitality. The three women are all working together to save life without any reported incident of revealing the whole story to the Egyptians. Their ethnic background was no longer a barrier to their act of hospitality, what mattered then was the

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<sup>33</sup> Pohl, 1999:24.

life of the boy Moses. The mothering hearts of women is what led Pharaoh's daughter to risk the father's anger and decide to adopt the Hebrew boy who she saved from the river. The story of Rahab is among the stories of hospitality in the Bible where a woman had to risk her life to serve others. This kind of risk taken among the Old Testament women is very common even today. African women have faced a lot of risks in their lives in the name of hospitality for the sake of their relationships with men. According to Schipper:

In several Old Testament stories, women had important roles as hosts. Rahab hides Joshua's spies in her house in Jericho and helps them to escape from the king of the town incurring a grave personal risk. She does so out of faith and shrewd sense of political foresight for she is sure that the Israelites will manage to conquer the city. Further she asks to be spared together with her immediate family, when the day of victory comes her request is honoured (Joshua.2).<sup>34</sup>

Another story cited by the same author is that of Abigail who despite her ill-mannered husband, provided hospitality to David and his men and later became the wife of David. In her encounter with David who was fleeing from Saul and trying to build up a following, Abigail was a polite woman far beyond what was required. She was a woman of high socio-economic status by virtue of her marriage to Nabal whereas David was not yet a king and was on the run. Yet she acted towards David as though he was the lord and she was the servant. Abigail's good manners succeed in protecting Nabal from David's wrath (1Sam. 25).<sup>35</sup> Despite all the risks that were involved in this expression of hospitality, Abigail managed not only to provide protection to Nabal but also prevented conflict between Nabal and David which would have led to the death of either of the two men. Another act of hospitality mentioned by Pohl involving women in the Old Testament is of the widow in 1Kings (17-18). The author states that:

in the midst of doing battle with foreign gods, the prophet Elijah went to a foreign town and a foreign widow to ask for her hospitality. Anticipating death for herself and her son the widow responded helplessly to Elijah's request for drink and food. Elijah however assured her that if she would share her meagre resources with him,

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<sup>34</sup> Schipper, 'Women in Scripture.' in Meyer's C. General Editor. *A dictionary of named and unnamed women in the Hebrew Bible. The Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical books and the New Testament.* New York: Houghton Mifflia Co. 2000: 79.

<sup>35</sup> Schipper, 2000: 43.

the God of Israel would provide for her needs; her supply of flour and oil would not run out until the drought ended.<sup>36</sup>

Because of the compassionate heart of the woman, she took the prophet at his word and took him in without looking at the little food that she had and instead, she trusted God to be the supplier of her and her guest's needs. The prophet was protected and sheltered through the hospitable heart of the woman. And God provided for their daily needs because the widow trusted in God. African women too are sometimes found in such a situation where they have to use their only resources available to feed the people of God in order to show their acts of hospitality.

Elisha too had more or less the same experience as that of Elijah when a Shunnamite woman arranged to build a special guest chamber for Elisha so that he could stay in her household every time he passed near Shenem. The story provides details of furnishing of the special room with: a bed, table, chair and a lamp (2 Kings 4:10). Elisha grateful of her hospitality sought to repay her.<sup>37</sup> Nothing much is mentioned about her husband this shows that although she could have been married, the duty of looking after visitors and strangers still fell on her as a woman. This act of hospitality is still very common to most African women in the church today. Women in most cases are the ones to take care of a minister's welfare making sure that his life is made comfortable as he goes around preaching the gospel. In some congregations, the minister will have a special woman to welcome him and provide lodging for him at every station he visits to preach the gospel.

The story of Naaman and the servant depicts yet another act of hospitality which is worth noting as we look at the African women's understanding of hospitality. Moved by compassion and pity for the suffering of Naaman, the slave girl offered to take a risk and revealed what she thought would be the solution to Naaman's suffering to her mistress, the wife of Naaman. As an Israelite, this slave girl overlooked the consequences that might befall her should her prediction not come true for the sake of the healing of Naaman (2 Kings 5: 1-4). This story reflects the true nature of how most African women

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<sup>36</sup> Pohl, 1999: 26.

<sup>37</sup> Pohl, 1999:26.

render hospitality to others. Most of them risk not only their lives but also their reputation should their act of hospitality not succeed. Like most women of the Bible, the names of this slave girl and her mistress are not mentioned, indicating the patriarchal situation from which most of the stories of the Bible were drawn. Commenting on the same, Laffey states that:

the two nameless women make the story happen. Had the Israelite maid not had faith in the prophet of God and had she not spoken to her mistress and had the mistress not spoken to her husband, Naamaan would have remained a leper. The women are the nameless heroines who did what was needed to be done, yet are forgotten when the credits are rendered.<sup>38</sup>

Naaman did not remember the girl who was the initiator of his healing but instead was quick in wanting to reward the prophet. Nothing much is said about her after the healing of Naaman, her history is lost and her act of hospitality is forgotten. Yet the results of her hospitality led to relationships between nations, the healing of Naaman and the recognition of the God of Israel as a living God by Naaman who was an idol worshipper.

#### **2.4 New Testament hospitality**

The New Testament contains very significant situations where hospitality was practised. Scott argues that:

it is impossible to read through the New Testament without seeing that hospitality was not commanded, the early Christians practiced it freely and they loved it. For Christians, hospitality was not an option it was a necessity of life. Neither was it a gift given to just a few or even to most.<sup>39</sup>

This is seen in the way women made themselves available to Jesus and to whomever was in need of hospitality. The act of hospitality among the people in the New Testament also took a new turn. The idea of God being the guest of his people was more pronounced than it was in the Old Testament. The birth of Jesus was seen as a hospitable act of God who offered to give God's only son to humanity. According Oduyoye, "women look at human hospitality as a response to God's hospitality, a way of reflecting God's

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<sup>38</sup> Alice L. Laffey, *Wives, Harlots and concubines. The Old Testament Feminist Perspective*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1988:137.

<sup>39</sup> Latayne Scott, *Open up your life a woman's workshop on hospitality*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publications. 1984:15.

hospitality through our dealings with nature and in the human community.”<sup>40</sup> Moreover this is the reason why hospitality among the African women is seen as a way of life and an appreciation of the hospitable act of God. Women do their acts of hospitality to glorify God and as a way of thanking God for being hospitable to them.

#### **2.4.1 Jesus and women’s hospitality**

The person of Jesus was mostly surrounded by women, from the time of the annunciation of Jesus’ birth to the resurrection. It is some of these women that practiced hospitality to Jesus and also towards whom Jesus also practised some kind of hospitality. Scott therefore observes that from the birth of Jesus up to the resurrection, women who surrounded him practised one kind of hospitality or another. The practice of hospitality that to a degree may seem strange today was quite common in Biblical times. The author also points out that Jesus’ instructions to the apostles and the seventy to take nothing on their journey presupposed that they were to rely upon the hospitality of the people to whom they preached.<sup>41</sup> This shows the amount of confidence Jesus had in the people who were practising hospitality towards these apostles and the seventy. The fact that most of the acts of hospitality that Jesus received were from women could also have prompted Jesus’ way of sending out his followers knowing that in a similar manner these women ministered to Jesus, they would minister to these apostles and the seventy.

This kind of hospitality is not very common today even among the Christian communities. The reason is that the economic situation of most countries, especially in Africa, has restricted people’s giving and therefore limits the kind of hospitality that was practised by Jesus when sending out the disciples on missionary journeys. The main differences that we find between Jesus’ hospitality and some of that which was practised in the Old Testament is that, Jesus’ hospitality was reciprocal. As Jesus received the women’s hospitality, Jesus also reciprocated in one way or another. Kayoya Mukamwezi observes that:

ahead of his culture, tradition and time, Jesus is quick to recognize women’s goodness and potentiality and he (sic) utilizes them for the greater glory of his

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<sup>40</sup> Oduyoye, 2001: 74.

<sup>41</sup> Scott, 1984:14.

father, women are involved at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of Jesus' life. It was to women that the moment of revelation of incarnation was given (Luke 1:26-45). Thanks to Mary's acceptance of the Lord's offer a saviour comes into the world. When all the others had failed Jesus, women stayed at the foot of the cross and later on offered to prepare the body for burial.<sup>42</sup>

The other incident of women's hospitality towards Jesus happened in Simon's house where Jesus was invited for a meal by Simon and ended up encountering the unnamed woman's hospitality. Byrne says that:

Jesus had been invited to dine by a leading Pharisee named Simon. Simon the host did not offer even the most basic gestures of hospitality to Jesus. He does not wash Jesus' feet, he fails to greet him with a kiss, he does not anoint his head with oil instead, and the unnamed woman with the reputation of being a public sinner gate crushes the party and begins to supply the hospitality Simon had ignored.<sup>43</sup>

As is the custom of the Jews, when a visitor enters the house, the host is supposed to take off the visitor's sandals and wash the feet of the visitor in preparation for a meal. This was the initial stage of hospitality which was not supposed to be overlooked by the host. Yet Simon neglects to perform this act of hospitality and a woman whose identity has always been questioned by many writers, came in and did exactly what was left out in order to complete the act of hospitality. Although her action was condemned by the on-lookers because of her status of being known as a prostitute by the society (Luke 7:36-50).

As women perform their acts of hospitality, there will always be some opposition especially from the men who may even view what women would call an act of hospitality as a waste of resources. The unnamed woman poured the oil on Jesus' feet partly as an act of appreciation for what she had received from Jesus before and this is what hospitality should be. Jesus accepts hospitality from a person who is seen as a prostitute and an outcast by the community. This makes the attitude of Jesus to women exceptional and different. The unnamed woman who was also a prostitute did what the owner of the house could not do for Jesus. This again shows how women's way of practising hospitality becomes part of their feminine attitude which they practise as second nature.

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<sup>42</sup> Ann Mary Mukamwezi Kayoya, 'African Women and Morality' in Mungambi J.N. K. and Nasimiyu-Wasike A. (eds). *Moral and Ethical Issues in African Christianity*. Nairobi: Initiative Publishers 1992:47.

<sup>43</sup>Byrne, 2000:74.

This is the reason why we see women in African communities making themselves available in the service of the community without asking for payment for the services rendered.

Since hospitality is also about offering food to strangers, sharing of meals was the main approach to Jesus' ministry of hospitality. As a host and a guest, Jesus did not only avail himself to men but Jesus was also the guest and host of women especially those who were rejected by the community. Jesus' teachings about the kingdom of God were also figured in the context of the shared meals. The illustration in Mathew 25 shows the most important aspect of Christian hospitality to strangers and the less privileged in society, who are mainly women. Oduyoye says "there is a spirituality that shines through this practice of hospitality. It is a life style that seeks to respond to the nature of God."<sup>44</sup> Women, like God would not want to see a naked person and not cloth him/her, a hungry person and not offer food, a sick person and not visit or a stranger and not give him/her some water to drink.

#### **2.4.2 Women and hospitality in the early church**

Like it was in the New Testament, the house was the central place for the practice of hospitality in the early church. As we read Paul's letters, it becomes evident that to Paul, hospitality was one of the most important ministries a Christian was called upon to embrace. As a Christian virtue, hospitality was viewed as an important practice to be observed by all the Christians as a way of building the kingdom of God. Hobbs adds to this by saying "in his contribution therefore, Paul exhorts his fellow believers to contribute to the needs of the saints and practise hospitality (Romans 12:13)."<sup>45</sup> Like Jesus, Paul's support during his ministry came mainly from the hospitality of women that

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<sup>44</sup> Oduyoye, 2001: 74.

<sup>45</sup>T.R. Hobbs, 'Man, Women and hospitality' in Koenig (Ed). *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with strangers as promise and mission*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1993:502.



surrounded him during that time as is recorded in 1Corinthians (9:4-14) and Acts (21:4-7). Instead of sharing hospitality also in the temple, members of the early church practised their hospitality in the homes where they also came together for fellowship and prayers.

These were mainly homes of women who were deaconesses or widows; only on a few occasions would we find homes of married couples. Belleville gives an account of how deaconesses in the early church qualified for their service in the church as follows:

the duties of female deacons in the post-apostolic period were quite varied. They taught children and youth, evangelised unbelieving women, disciplined new believers, visited the sick, cared for the ailing administered communion to the shut-ins and disbursed funds to the needy.<sup>46</sup>

All these activities listed above are acts of hospitality. Instead of preaching the gospel in the pulpits as women called to be preachers, the Deaconesses in the early church ministered to people through their acts of hospitality. Paul could have been influenced by the compassionate hearts of women who served him during his journeys, to outline the services of Deaconesses in the church in the way he did. Besides that, women's ministry in the church has always been associated more with rendering of social services than with preaching the word of God together with the men. This could be one of the reasons why the church has had a problem with the ordination of women since it feels that women are already involved in the ministry in one way or another.

Another group of women that is mentioned in the early church as offering hospitality in the church were the widows whose qualification for widowhood was only accepted by the church after some conditions were met. Belleville outlined the conditions as follows:

the widow was to be over sixty years, the wife of one husband, known for her good works such as raising children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to every kind of good deeds. Visiting those in prison and providing shelter for those fleeing from persecution.<sup>47</sup>

A widow in the early church had a very serious duty to perform as a way of contributing to the ministry of the church. Like the Deaconesses, the widows served God through their

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<sup>46</sup>Linda Belleville, 'Women in Ministry' in Beck R.J. and G.L. Blomberg (eds). *Two views on women in ministry*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publications. 2001:90.

<sup>47</sup>Belleville, 2001:90.

service and acts of hospitality. This is a very common trend even today in some churches. Women carry out taxing jobs of evangelising, visitations, providing shelter for the needy and other kinds of ministries associated with hospitality. Despite all this, at the end of the day they are like the unnamed women of the Bible who were left out after doing exploits for the Lord. The glory of all that they do goes to the men who are the named figures in the church. This is all the more reason why society is able to define women as supposed to be 'seen and not heard' although the church is able to see what women are able to do; little is said from the pulpit about their good works of hospitality that uplifts the ministry of God.

The other woman of the New Testament whose services of hospitality had an impact on the early church is Thabitha also called Dorcas, an excellent example of the woman with the gift of service. Bowman alludes to her by saying: "Luke describes her as a disciple who was always doing good and helping the poor."<sup>48</sup> The focus of Dorcas' ministry of hospitality was in offering service to the needy in the communities which was yet another very important ministry in the early church as it touched the lives of many people. This was proven by the way in which these poor people begged the disciples to do something about the death of Dorcas. The miracle of her rising to life was as a result of the acts of hospitality displayed to the poor who had to plead for her to be brought back to life. Women's lives can also be sustained by the works of hospitality that they perform towards others. As God sees what they are able to do for the extension of the kingdom, God is able to reward their labour in different ways. This kind of scenario has been reflected also in the Old Testament where women's acts of hospitality were rewarded in different ways.

### **2.5 African hospitality**

The history of hospitality in Africa has its roots in the African way of life meaning the social, economic, spiritual and physical lives are all associated with acts of hospitality. To the Africans, hospitality is a way of life, which permeates all spheres of a person's life. To be hospitable is what it means to be truly African. Hospitality is practised in many

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<sup>48</sup> Ann Bowman, 'Woman in Ministry' in Beck R.J. and G.L. Blomberg. *Two views on women in ministry*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publications 2001:382.

ways namely, though communal fellowships, sharing of meals, helping in the fields, rejoicing in times of joy, grieving in times of grief and participating during ritual performances. In all these aspects of hospitality, women are seen to be playing a pivotal role in enhancing the community's acts of hospitality.

According to Moila, "hospitality in Africa means a very close fellowship of a group of people, friendly reception of others; and unity in spirit and practice. It means love and common concern for each other."<sup>49</sup> This concern mentioned above is the centre of African hospitality and it is seen in the way in which Africans are centred on the concept of *Ubuntu* which in most African countries is the humanistic approach of seeing each person as being potentially in need of the other. This concept of *ubuntu* brings the idea of oneness which binds Africans as brothers and sisters in need of each other.

In addition to the ideas above, Lwasa sees an important consequence of the brotherhood/sisterhood between members of the same family group or even of the same clan as the duty of hospitality by which each member of the group is bound to offer food and shelter to any member of this group who needs it.<sup>50</sup> Sharing of food in Africa is a very important phenomenon that cannot be overlooked by any person in the community. This sharing of food is associated mainly with the women who are seen as the most important people in the community in as far as offering of food as an act of hospitality is concerned. Proverbs, songs and poems are performed and they all point to the women's acts of hospitality.

A woman's duty of hospitality as earlier said is observed and strictly followed by the community from the time of her birth until she is dead. Even after her death reflections on how her acts of hospitality have impacted the community will be passed on to her lineage. The songs, proverbs and poems will be either to praise her for her being hospitable or to censure her for not being hospitable. Women's hospitality is to be given

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<sup>49</sup> Philip M. Moila, *Challenging Issues in African Christianity*. Pretoria: C.B. Powell Bible Centre. 2002:2.

<sup>50</sup> Damcan Lwasa, 'Traditional and Christian Community in Africa.' in Shorter A.W.F. (Ed.) *African Christian Spirituality*. London: Geoffrey Champman. 1978:148.

mainly to their husbands, children or in-laws. As a girl is being prepared for marriage, she is given specific instructions on how to look after the family she is going to join. The girl is also reminded that her in-laws are more important than her own life, meaning she needs to sacrifice her hospitality to them if she has to enjoy a happy marriage.

### **2.5.1 Different aspect of African women's hospitality**

Since Africans live in a communal way, women in these communities practise their hospitality as members of a community as well as individuals. Their social life includes, welcoming, providing food, entertaining, protecting and helping with various duties of the community. Among the Tonga people of Zambia, when a stranger or a known visitor comes to the village, women play a very important role in welcoming that person by preparing food in advance for him/her. The food to be prepared normally means special activities like slaughtering of the goat, chicken or cow depending on the status of the visitor. The women are also advised to prepare traditional sweet beer *cibwantu* which must always be in every woman's home. This drink is given to passers-by and visiting strangers to quench their thirst as they pass through the villages. In relation to the provision of food to visitors, Oduyoye quotes Justine Kahungu (1996:56) who asserts, "One can arrive any time of day or night without notice or prior arrangement and will receive *qu'il y a de meilleur*."<sup>51</sup> There is a proverb in Tonga that is associated with Kahungu's statement that says, *bulo bwamwenzu mbuyalulwa* (meaning a visitor is free to come and go at any time of the day without giving notice to the host.)

Women among the Tonga ethnic group are advised when they marry that their homes should never run out of food. Whether the husband is able to provide or not, the wife must always have food in the house or else she will be labelled as a non-hospitable woman or worse still a witch. This kind of hospitality is supported by proverbs that are associated with the woman's responsibility in the home like, *weenga ciko mukaintu* meaning it is the woman who is responsible for the feeding of the family.

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<sup>51</sup> Oduyoye, 2001: 94.

Other ways of welcoming a visitor or stranger among the Tonga people may be in the form of songs, dances and poems indicating that the person coming is welcome in the community and should feel at home. This kind of welcome is normally common when welcoming a king or an important person to the village. In most cases, it is women who do the dancing and singing and these cultural dances will be associated with exposing women's bodies. Women will have to perform a dance before the visitor while wearing only short skirts and exposing their breasts. This group of dancers will normally be young virgin girls chosen by the community. This is a way of showing the kind of women that are found in that particular community. It is from these dancing queens (as they are normally called) that the visitor will have to choose a woman to entertain him during his period of stay.

In terms of a known visitor as soon as he/she arrives in the home, the woman of the house is expected to welcome him/her at the entrance to the village. The host will then carry whatever luggage is there, give the visitor a handshake or hug thereafter lead him/her to a comfortable place and provide him/her with a stool or mat to sit on and then give him/her a jar of sweet beer. Only then will the hostess be able to hand over the visitor to the men to give a second welcome associated with a greeting which is longer than the first one. The Tonga way of greeting the visitors includes the use of idioms and greeting everything a person owns. The greeting embraces the person's well-being as well.

Housing of the visitors among the Tonga people still remains a woman's duty. Although a man may decide as to where the visitor spends the night, the preparation and the entertainment during the night may all be a woman's duty. This will include making the bed for the visitor, keeping the visitor warm and having a sexual relationship. (Although the culture of offering sex to visitors is dying out in most parts of the Tonga people due to the coming of modernization and fear of HIV/AIDS infection.) Commenting on the same

Mbiti asserts that:

there are areas where sex is used as an expression of hospitality, meaning that when a man visits another man, the custom of the host is to give his wife (or daughter or sister) to the guest so that the two can sleep together. In other societies brothers

have sexual rights for their brothers' wives as a way of entertainment during their visits.<sup>52</sup>

Although this topic will be discussed further in the later chapter when looking at sexuality and hospitality, mentioning the idea of sexuality and boarding helps us to see how hospitality in Africa has been used as a tool to oppress women even within their families.

Commenting on women's role in relation to hospitality in an African society, Mbiti sees women pictured by society as being extremely valuable in the sight of the society. He looks at women as not only bearing life but as the ones who nurse, cherish, give warmth and care for life since all human life passes through their bodies.<sup>53</sup> This aspect of nurturing which is seen as the biological and social aspect of women is commonly used in the Tonga societies. This is the reason why women in this society are seen to have all the other attributes that are outlined by Mbiti namely of nursing, cherishing, providing warmth and caring for life. Commenting on women's suffering as they act as mothers in their societies and as providers for their families, Oduyoye states that, "women's daily experience is that they have to forgo a lot simply to keep their families fed. The costs of being motherly in terms of lost opportunities are incalculable."<sup>54</sup> In agreement with Oduyoye, it is worth noting that a mother among the Tonga people is the main figure in the society. Her presence makes life easy for the community whether she is the main source of income in the home or not, her attributes of hospitality will be seen just like the woman in the Bible (proverbs 31.)

It is also interesting to note that among the Tonga people, child bearing is regarded as an act of hospitality. Apart from offering food and other services, a woman should be able to provide her husband with offspring and only then will she be regarded as worthy of being called a woman. Even if the woman married to a Tonga man comes from a matrilineal background, the children will still belong to a male factor who may be a brother, father or uncle to this Tonga man. To further the argument on childbearing, Mbiti sees motherhood as a very important African concept. He sees parental blessing as running along the line

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<sup>52</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy.* London: Heinemann Educational books. 1969:147.

<sup>53</sup> John S. Mbiti, 'the flower in the garden: the Role of Women in African religion.' in Olupona J.K. (Ed). *African Tradition Religions in Contemporary Society.* New York: Paragon House Publishers. 1991:63.

<sup>54</sup> Oduyoye, 2001:104.

of clans. This is also evident from the Kamba proverb which says 'may you bear children like bees! May you bear as many children as calabash seeds.'<sup>55</sup> The more children a Tonga woman has the more blessings she receives and this is also seen as an act of hospitality that only benefits the recipient of the children. This is evident in the way the community treats a woman with many children. In most cases this woman will not be allowed to do hard work especially on the farms because she already has done her work by bearing many children.

In relation to the social aspect of hospitality, women among the Tonga people work together in order to lighten one another's burden. In times of sorrow, joy, death, birth, cultivation and harvest, women are all there to support each other practising hospitality. Even the caring of children is regarded as the job to be shared by every woman. As a child from a polygamous marriage, I learnt at a tender age to take care of every child brought into our home in the same way I would look after my own brother/sister. This is another reason why polygamy is also associated with hospitality because most men who advocate polygamy use the notion that when one woman is sick, the other ones will be able to look after her children. Mbiti also agrees with this view when he says, when a family is made up of several wives within their households, it means that in times of need there will always be someone around to help. Mbiti continues by saying that if one wife is giving birth there are other wives to nurse and care for her other children. If one wife is barren the wives will bear children for the family. Where peasant farming is the means of livelihood, the many children in a polygamous family are an economic asset.<sup>56</sup> In some areas of the Tonga ethnic group, women in a polygamous marriage will have no problem with breast feeding each other's baby should they all be breastfeeding at the same time.

The main problem with all these ideas used to promote the concept of polygamy is that they all benefit the men and not the women married. While women may find pleasure in helping and receiving help from each other there are other aspects of polygamy which are oppressive and dehumanising to women and which make hospitality oppressive to these women. As women practise hospitality in a communal setting, there is a need for them to

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<sup>55</sup> Mbiti, 1991: 64.

<sup>56</sup> Mbiti, 1969: 143.

guard against the negative issues that may arise from their practices and which may act as barriers to their mutual relationship with one another.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Hospitality is one of the virtues that have been practised in African societies over a long period of time. The Bible records situations when God's people had to practise hospitality either to strangers or amongst themselves. This chapter has tried to show how women practised hospitality in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, during times of the early church and in African societies with particular reference to the Tonga people of Zambia. Women's hospitality in all these periods took more or less the same form where their acts of hospitality were always for the benefit of the people to whom they ministered. However, there have also been special occasions where women benefited from their practice of hospitality. The practice of hospitality can be oppressive to most African women if reciprocity is not encouraged. For this reason, the next chapter will concentrate on different ways of practising African women's hospitality. Although there are many stories of women's hospitality in the Bible the researcher in this study has decided to use only a few examples since this is not the main focus of the study. Other examples of women's hospitality from the Bible dealing with sexuality will be discussed in the next chapter.



## Chapter three

### Different ways of African Women's practice of hospitality

#### 3. Introduction

In the previous chapter the study investigated the background of hospitality and how women in different places in history practised it. This chapter will now focus on different ways in which African women practise their hospitality in their respective communities. The main focus in this chapter will be the church because this is where the study drew some case studies of how African women today are practising their hospitality. When African women practice their hospitality, they use their God given talents, efforts and even their own bodies for the benefit of others. Only in very rare cases are they able to benefit themselves because they believe that if the community is happy with their hospitable act then God who enables them to do whatever acts they do, is also pleased with them. As Paul says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (NIV)" (Philippians 4:6). African women believe that whatever they do through their acts of hospitality is done for God and finally they receive their reward from God who sent them to do their acts of hospitality.

There are also times when it is demanded by the patriarchal community of African women to perform certain acts of hospitality for the benefit of others. Because of the patriarchal structure surrounding their lives, African women find themselves involved in some of the acts of hospitality which are dehumanising and oppressive to them. Some of these oppressive acts that will be discussed in this chapter are sexual hospitality. This involves the use of women's bodies by men as a sign of offering hospitality to other men or receiving hospitality for themselves from the women; spirituality hospitality will focus on how society has used women's spiritual activities both in the church and society as an act of hospitality. Women's spirituality and hospitality will be explored further when looking at how African women relate to God as a sign of hospitality.

When looking at economic hospitality, the chapter will focus on how the present economy has affected African women's practise of hospitality and how the coming of

colonialism and globalization has made most African homes close their doors to strangers and members of their extended families. This paper will also raise the issue of land and farming and try to show how land in Africa has always been associated with men, even though the African women especially in the rural areas do most of the farming. This will be discussed with reference to the Tonga ethnic group since not all African tribes deny women the right to possess land. The issue of land will be dealt with in detail, as the study will try to show how lack of access to land ownership affects African women's hospitality. The other thing that the chapter will deal with is how hospitality has been misused in African societies especially when it is perceived as a cultural norm that has to be practised by every woman without question. African women theologians' response to African women's hospitality will also be discussed in this chapter. The African women theologians' voices will help to show how they respond to different ways that African women practise hospitality as discussed in this chapter.

### **3.1 Spirituality and hospitality.**

When talking about African women's hospitality and spirituality, the study is relating to African women's spiritual dimension most of which is expressed in the form of hospitality towards God, humanity and the world in which these African women live.

African women's spirituality according to Rakoczy is:

the new perspective that the women bring to the Christian symbols of God, Christ, church and the practices of the faith-prayer, worship, community action – which are making distinctive contributions to Christian spirituality.<sup>57</sup>

The definition given by Rakoczy brings out all the activities that African women engage in, in order to express their hospitality to God, to Jesus Christ, to the church and to the community. When African women respond to the ministries in the church they are also offering their spiritual gift to God. Their response is a way of reciprocating to God for all what God has done for them. Women who see God as their father and giver of life

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<sup>57</sup> Susan Rakoczy IHM, *In Her Name: women doing theology*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 2004:375.

express their spiritual hospitality to God's people as a way of showing love to God, when they see God as being present in the people and as such whatever they do to humanity they see it as being done to God.

Most of the activities that African women are involved in especially in the church are all focused on the spiritual attachment to God. For example women in most churches offer their time and energy in visiting and praying for the sick, attending funerals, conducting bridal showers and weddings for the young people in the church and teaching the young women on how to protect their marriages. When women engage in all these activities, they are responding to the call of God in their lives as co-workers with God. In agreement with the statement, Oduyoye argues that:

it is in the same vein that women reason that if God has been so hospitable in providing for us in the world around us, we too should reciprocate by providing hospitality to others, who like us are the children of God.<sup>58</sup>

What the women are merely doing is to respond to God's hospitality by attending to the needs of others. In relation to these acts of hospitality mentioned above, the Mothers' Union group in the Methodist church of Zambia, who is also the main focus in this study, are a very good example of these outlined activities. During funeral ceremonies in the church, the women move from their homes to stay at the funeral house until the day of burial. One of the qualifications for membership in this group is that one knows how to wash and prepare bodies for burial. Therefore during the period when these women are undergoing classes to be included in the fellowship as members of the Mothers' Union group, they are assigned to prepare a body for burial together with a senior leader of the group. When a woman passes this test, she is considered as a true disciple of Jesus who is able to serve the Lord without any fear. This kind of hospitality poses a great risk to the women's lives in that, in cases where the deceased was suffering from AIDS and the preparation of the body is done without any protective gloves, the women get exposed to the HIV/AIDS pandemic should they have any exposed sores on their fingers, as they practise their hospitality.

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<sup>58</sup> Oduyoye, 2001:73.

When talking about offering hospitality to the sick, the Mothers' Union group has divided itself into sections. Each group will visit the section assigned to them and check on the sick people in these homes. The group will then minister to them through prayers or through providing any kind of physical need to the family. These women have gone to the extent of offering home-based care to patients who are suffering from AIDS in some homes where they have visited. If the family they visit does not belong to any church organisation, they will also encourage the family to join their church and later on introduce the family to the church leadership. The group has also adopted some wards in the hospital which they visit and supply to the patients some physical needs like bathing soap, washing detergents, food and blankets. The KBBKS,<sup>59</sup> as they are mostly known by the community perform these activities in remembrance of the words of Jesus (Mathew 25). According to these words of Jesus, the good works one would have achieved while he/she was alive is a guide for a person's access to eternal life. That is helping the needy, visiting the sick, offering food to the hungry and clothing the naked. This teaching attaches great importance to what African women call the spirituality of hospitality.

As for the Mothers' Union group of the United Church of Zambia, these acts of hospitality are accompanied with songs and dances that echo their acts of hospitality. As Moyo (2002) states, African women do their theology through songs and dances these women have adapted one song which is very common as it is sung in Bemba saying:

<i>Nayo nayo Nayo milimo yaLesá</i>	Even this is the work of God
<i>Nokupempula balwele</i>	Looking after the sick
<i>Nokusambika ifitumbi</i>	Preparing the corpse
<i>Nayo milimo yaLesá</i>	It is the work of God
<i>Nokupempula balanda</i>	Visiting the poor
<i>Nayo milimo yaLesá</i>	It is the work of God.

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<sup>59</sup> KBBK is a Bemba name given to the women's group in the United Church of Zambia. The letters stand for, *Kwafwana Kwabana mayo Mubwina Christo* which translates as Women helping Women in Christ. Even though women in these groups go beyond their fellow women in the church in showing their acts of hospitality, most of the works done by these women are all for the benefit of the men in the church and the community.

In all these aspects of hospitality, women are trying to answer the call of God in Romans (12:1-2) where Paul urges Christians to offer themselves to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, as their form of spiritual service. This to the African women is what it means to be a child of God. Rakoczy therefore agrees with the view of these African women and she sees hospitality combining a woman's conviction of her dignity as a human person loved by God; her image and approach to God including prayer, her approach to scripture as a liberating word; her belonging in the church community; the principles of ethical reflections which guide her life and her approach to the praxis of justice, peace and the integrity of creation.<sup>60</sup> With most African women, the idea of seeing themselves created in the image of God is very strong. Yet when it comes to hospitality, they fail to apply the principles of ethical life that are mentioned by Rakoczy. This is mainly because of the African culture which binds African women and will not allow them to question anything done to them as this may be seen as a taboo.

### **3.2 Sexuality and hospitality**

In most African societies, African women's bodies have been associated with their sexuality. This is an important reason why the subject of sexuality is often associated with women. In most ethnic groups of Zambia, men who may be husbands, uncles, fathers or brothers own women's sexuality. In relation to hospitality, these male custodians of women's bodies do whatever they wish with the women's bodies in the name of hospitality. African women too have in some instances offered their bodies to the men as a sign of being hospitable to their partners. Some of the examples of how African women's bodies have been used sexually as an act of hospitality as quoted by Oduyoye are:

The exchange of wives by men who went to the same initiation school, offering of women to visitors as a way of entertainment. Sterile husbands may appoint surrogates in order to have children and the idea of a healer having sexual relationship with a woman who is said to be barren in order to open her womb.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Rakoczy, 2003:374.

<sup>61</sup> Oduyoye, 2001:102.

The idea of exchange of wives by men who went to the same initiation school is not found in most tribes of Zambia due to the fact that many of these ethnic groups do not practise the initiation of men. What is common is the appointing of another man to help a sterile husband conceive children with his wife. In all these situations, African women are there to be hospitable to the men as well as the community as a whole. Whether women are in agreement with the arrangement or not, the acts of hospitality will still be extended.

Oduyoye views procreation as the most important factor governing marriage in Africa.<sup>62</sup> The husband and the community as a whole always praise a woman who has many children as already seen in the previous chapter. This is because the husband knows that through the children, he stands to gain if they are girls in terms of lobola especially among the Tonga ethnic group. Oduyoye also sees marriage as locating a woman in socially validated relationship that enables her to procreate to the advantage of either her matrikin or her affinal kin.<sup>63</sup> A childless marriage is regarded as being the worst nightmare in an African woman's life. A woman in African society will do everything possible to bear children for the husband. This is where the idea mentioned by Oduyoye (2001) of having a sexual relationship with a traditional healer comes in. Among the Tonga people, this act has been performed by most women through the influence of their mothers or just as a personal decision. The main idea behind all these aspects of marriage is to offer children to the men as a sign of hospitality.

Moyo who also talks of the idea of women using sex as an economic security measure among the Malawian women, argues that "women need to maintain their marriages by satisfying their husbands sexually."<sup>64</sup> This kind of hospitality where African women have no or little say in matters of sex in their marriages has also been encouraged especially in

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<sup>62</sup> Oduyoye, 1995:141.

<sup>63</sup> Oduyoye, 1995:134.

<sup>64</sup> Fulata Moyo, 'Singing and Dancing Women's Liberation: My story of Faith' in Phiri I.A. et al *Her-Stories hidden histories of women of faith*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 2002:398.

the church by the doctrine of submission which is explained by Paul when he encourages wives to submit to their husbands as to the Lord (Ephesians 5:22). The crux of the matter comes in v. 24 where Paul is quoted saying “Now as the church submits to Christ, so also women should submit to their husbands in everything.” The other scriptures that are commonly used to back up African women’s submission to the sexual needs of their partners without question are in (1Corinthians 7:5-6). Saying, “Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement .....that you may devote yourselves to prayer.... (NIV)” Most African women have been trapped in such scriptures to the extent that they have ended up being sex objects of their partners in trying to hold fast to the Biblical teachings. This kind of submission to their husbands as a response to the word of God leaves most of these women vulnerable to diseases like HIV/AIDS and uncontrolled childbirth. Accordingly, reading further in the same chapter of Ephesians one discovers that Paul also gives the task to men to sacrifice for their wives as they would for their own bodies. But since the verse is mostly read from a patriarchal viewpoint by most readers, the readers in most cases fail to see the role men have to play in the area of sexuality for the act of hospitality to be balanced.

The idea of offering women to strangers or to rich people in exchange for wealth is another way in which men can show their hospitality to one another, while for African women it is a sign of oppression. In some African societies, like among the Tonga ethnic group of Zambia, a father was free to offer his daughter in marriage to a traditional healer who in most cases was a polygamous man for the healing or protection he may have received as a way of saying expressing gratitude for the job done. The arrangement was normally made between the two men and the girl concerned would only know about it the day of departure to her new husband, while the mother was only informed but not consulted. In some cases a son-in-law visiting for the first time in the village was offered a young girl by the in-laws to sleep with him and take care of him during the time of his visit.<sup>65</sup> These cultural practices have undermined African women’s lives and caused their hospitality to be abused by the males in their communities. It is in this respect that Oduyoye calls for the spirit of resistance when she says:

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<sup>65</sup> This incident was very common among the Tonga people especially those in the Gwembe valley of the Southern province of Zambia

African women know that to resist death one must be ready to risk death and so the Esther types take their lives in their hands as they declare. 'If I perish let me perish, I am going to see the king' (Esther 4:16). This is done as the stance of one impelled by spirituality for life, one who seeks the transformation for relationships.<sup>66</sup>

If the liberation of women has to take place in the area of sexuality and hospitality, there is need for the African women themselves to resist some of the practices of hospitality that are oppressive and pose a danger to their lives. African women can do this by breaking the chains of silence that have entangled them for a long time and raise their voices as Esther did.

### **3.2.1 The Phoebe tradition and hospitality**

The Phoebe tradition is the practice of hospitality that has been going on in some of the Presbyterian churches of Malawi as is recorded by Moyo (2003). According to Moyo, this church tradition occurs where a minister who has more than one congregation to take care of is given a woman at least in each of these congregations to offer him every kind of hospitality he may require during his time of visit. Moyo adds by saying that, "churches in their quest for hospitality set female-headed households for their visiting pastors where these pastors will be provided with hospitality by these females in every aspect of their lives."<sup>67</sup> Adopted from Paul's letter to the Romans (16:1-2) the church, not only the Malawian Presbyterian church mentioned by the author but also other congregations have been found wanting in that they adhere to the practise of the Phoebe tradition. This is all the more reason why the church cannot ignore issues of HIV/AIDS because apart from the immorality found within the congregation, there is a sexual trend that occurs within the leadership of the church in the name of hospitality.

The idea of misinterpretation of scripture in order to suit a person's liking and behaviour has been very common among some Christian men especially when the intension is to oppress women. Most of the churches that have been involved in the Phoebe tradition

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<sup>66</sup> Mercy Oduyoye, 'Women resisting violence: spirituality of resistance and reconstruction' 1996:165

<sup>67</sup> Fulata Moyo, 'when the telling itself is a taboo: the phoebe practice' *Journal of Constructive Theology*. Vol. 9. No 2. 2003: 7.



have one thing in common and that is the culture of silence. Telling such a story in the church even when one has proof enough is a very serious offence to the church. Even when the story is told, the church may hide it in the name of culture and tradition, as Oduyoye states, “ ‘it‘ ‘it is our culture’ says one man ‘our religion demands it’ says another”.<sup>68</sup> These are some of the reasons which have also been used as tools for women’s oppression and have played a very important role in the church in as far as the perversion of women’s hospitality and the dehumanising of women’s bodies is concerned. The greatest culture tool used in the Phoebe tradition is the culture of silence and it is mostly women who are told to keep this secret in order to protect their pastors.

Regarding the issue of silence, Moyo who sees women as the key factor in breaking the silence argues that, “...if women decided to break the silence on abuses in the life of the church, there would be a breakthrough in the efforts to bring meaningful healing and transformation in the fight against HIV/AIDS.”<sup>69</sup> This however can only be possible if women’s orientation during the period of initiation and marriage is dealt with. The idea of telling women to submit, to be loyal to their husbands in all ways makes it impossible for them to denounce whatever evil they may see happening in the lives of their male counterparts. This also goes to married women who may feel that exposing the husband’s bad behaviour especially the pastor’s behaviour is like bringing shame to her own household. For example in Zambia, society sees women who expose their husbands’ secrets as ‘not cultured.’<sup>70</sup> This comment is full of judgement and is taken very seriously as it makes women feel ashamed and unfit for marriage.

The other factor that makes women keep secrets about men’s sexual behaviours used as acts of hospitality is the fact that most of the women depend on their husbands for their economic standing and so to expose the breadwinner of his misconduct may be risking his job and her well-being as well as that of the children. Therefore in order to maintain the economic position of the family, most women have risked their lives and exposed themselves to dangers of HIV/AIDS.

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<sup>68</sup> Oduyoye, 2001:15.

<sup>69</sup> Moyo, 2003:6.

<sup>70</sup> A cultured woman is one who has been taught by women called *bana chimbusa* (a Bemba name for Matrons) who teach a young bride on how to look after her marriage.

### 3.3 Effects of culture on African women's practice of hospitality.

Since African hospitality is viewed as a cultural norm that needs to be practised by every individual, African women have not been excluded from this cultural practice. As observed earlier on in the study, it is demanded of African women to be hospitable at all cost without questioning how far they will need to go in their practise, since that is what their culture demands of them. Kanyoro sees the culture of silence as having damaged so many lives of women such that it becomes imperative that such a culture of secrecy in an institution such as the church be exposed, though it is as difficult and painful as the sharing of their stories of sexual abuse and rape.<sup>71</sup>

The culture of silence therefore cannot be separated from hospitality and sexuality. Since the voices of women in African have been silenced on cultural issues, their hospitality and sexuality have been compromised. Oduyoye closes her chapter on hospitality by calling to attention the necessity of making a distinction between making a sacrifice and being sacrificed as a victim.<sup>72</sup> In relation to Oduyoye's remark, the story of the Levite in Judges (19:22-30) where the Levite opted for his wife to be a victim of rape and abuse instead of him shows how men have used women's bodies as a sacrifice for the sake of hospitality. Though the story does not record the response of the wife at the time of the incident, the normal situation could have been that the woman did not refuse to leave the house at the request of the husband due to the culture of submission that was going on at that time among the Jews. Other related scriptures are (Genesis 19:1-8), where Lot offered his virgin daughters as a sign of hospitality to his male guests. Commenting on the issue of sexuality and hospitality, Trobisch states that; "the story of Jacob hints towards this problem when it reports that Leah had to 'buy' her husband for a night from Rachel in Genesis (30:16)."<sup>73</sup> In polygamous marriages, sexuality and hospitality are inseparable. Wives will either be pleasing the husband by offering themselves to him sexually or they will be in competition with each other as they offer their acts of hospitality to the man in order to win his favour.

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<sup>71</sup>Musimbi R Kanyoro, 'Celebrating God's Transforming Power' in Mercy Amba Oduyoye, (ed.) *Transforming Power. Women in the Household of God. Proceedings of the Pan African Conference of The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians*. Accra: Sam-Woode Limited. 1997:19.

<sup>72</sup>Oduyoye, 2001:108.

<sup>73</sup>Walter Trobisch, *My wife made me a polygamist*. Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press. 1971:32.

In relation to the Phoebe tradition mentioned by Moyo (2003), instead of the church being the healing point for the HIV/AIDS pandemic, it becomes the vehicle for transmitting the disease. The women who are used by the church to entertain visiting pastors and the pastors themselves may not be willing to take any preventive measures like using condoms. This is because the church in most cases is not a very strong advocate of the use of the condom and also, due to the spiritual attachment given to the pastor by women in the church. Yet when it comes to issues of sexuality, there are some secret relationships set aside for the pastors in the name of hospitality. The Phoebe tradition as it is called in the Presbyterian Church in Malawi has been viewed as a culture of the church and yet this kind of culture is one that was created just by a few patriarchies within the church for their own benefit. Kanyoro therefore calls on the church to account when she says “the church needs to be a nurturing community where members are not forced to live secret lives in order to meet some unreasonable standard of human behaviour.”<sup>74</sup>

### **3. 4 Economic hospitality**

The present economic situation in most African countries has affected the way in which African women have been practising their hospitality. African women who see hospitality as part of their every day obligation have not been able to fulfil the economic demands of their nations, leading to their questioning of the meaning of hospitality in relation to the present day economic hardships. Oduyoye commenting on economic hospitality quotes Murigande who asks; “What is hospitality in the midst of no housing, slums, neglect of hygiene, criminality, malnutrition, unemployment, delinquency, and prostitution and so on?”<sup>75</sup> As African women look at all these issues that have affected Africa in recent years, they see hospitality also getting phased out due to these factors. They see people no longer living the community life of sharing and the former idea of a stranger being one to welcome is slowly fading since the stranger has become the enemy who may attack one at any time.

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<sup>74</sup>Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro, *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics: An African Perspective*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press. 2002:67.

<sup>75</sup>Oduyoye, 2001:96.

Poverty in Africa is another aspect that has affected African women's hospitality. Women who are ranked among the poorest in Africa have struggled to access enough resources that would enable them to continue their practice of hospitality and yet they are still expected to offer hospitality to their families at all times. The change of direction in the African way of practising of hospitality where people are no longer concerned with the extended family has also been influenced by the economic hardships especially in urban areas where the family has to buy most of the food. Even then what is observed in these homes in the city is a situation where the women are the ones who are blamed for the move away from extended families to the nuclear families.

The experience of poverty in Africa has not only affected the communal fellowships experienced in the homes but it has also made people lose their self-worth as Oduyoye states, "poverty means more than lack of economic resources, it also means a loss of human dignity."<sup>76</sup> When African women go out to look for food for their families they can end up in different vulnerable situations such as becoming sex workers for the sake of raising money to feed the family. This kind of life where women practice such hospitality for the sake of others is what makes African women lose their dignity. Njiri commenting on women's involvement in the community in trying to provide for their families says: "The activities in the home are almost exclusively the responsibility of a woman. She is responsible for survival tasks which are essential for daily life."<sup>77</sup> In view of the African women in the rural areas, life is much tougher for them in as far as the issue of providing for their families is concerned. Among the Tonga ethnic group, women in the rural areas despite being married are the main providers of food and other essential services of the homes like school fees for the children. Therefore, there is need for them to be economically productive in order to maintain the well being of the family.

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<sup>76</sup> Oduyoye, 2001:96.

<sup>77</sup> Edith Njoki Njiri, 'Women's hospitality and economic development' in M.A. Oduyoye. (Ed) *Transforming Power; women in the household of God*. Accra: SamWood Limited. 1997:129.

When it comes to agriculture, African women in rural areas especially the Tonga where farming is the main source of income are the ones who do most of the farming even though they are not entitled to own land. Njiri alludes to this saying “a woman cannot own land in traditional African society. The land she cultivates and even the woman herself belongs to the man.”<sup>78</sup> It is also worth noting that this trend is not common in all African communities. Some African matrilineal societies allow women to own land while others like the Tonga ethnic group will not allow the women to own land. Land will only be assigned to her for cultivation if she is not married so that it will enable her to feed her family. True ownership of the land will still belong to the male figure in the family. Even when she wants to build a house, a woman in the Tonga ethnic group will have to build her home within the village of a male figure from her family. That is why Muthoni Limakani in her book (passbook Number F47927) talks about women emerging as nameless supporting characters in a play dominated by men.<sup>79</sup>

Women are the most economically productive group in most African societies. It is from these agriculture products that they grow in borrowed land that women get the resources that they use to extend their hospitality to others. At the same time we still see African women’s hospitality being misused by the society in the area of food production. This is done when women work for the men who in most cases are the owners of land. Writing from personal experience, during my childhood my mother and her girl children in the family were expected to work on the farm every day while my father and brothers did the lighter work of ploughing with oxen or looking after the cows.

Despite all this labour, after the harvest it was my father who was in charge of the sale of the products, while my mother was left with only enough produce to see the family through the next season. My mother was then told to depend on her smaller piece of land assigned to her by her husband for her financial support. Sometimes the food was not even enough due to a larger number of visitors that she might have had during the year. These are some of the economical hardships that African women undergo in their endeavour to practise their economic hospitality.

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<sup>78</sup> Njiri, 1997:132.

<sup>79</sup> Limakani Muthoni, *Passbook Number F47927*. London: Macmillan Publishers Limited. 1985:6.

### 3.4.1 Women's hospitality in a changing economy

The coming of globalisation into Africa has had a diverse effect on African hospitality. People are no longer ready to open their homes for others and even when they do there isn't much for the host to share with the guests because of economic hardships affecting the continent. The Structure Adjustment Programmes (SAP) brought by the International Monetary Fund has left most of the families in Zambia with no option but to reduce the number of dependants because they are not able to cope with large families due to financial hardships. Most of the poor of the poorest in Zambia are women. Both in the rural and urban areas, Structure Adjustment Programmes have proved to be a very serious problem among these women. It has meant death from malnutrition in both mothers and their children. It has meant disruption of the family life for women in that most of these women have to get up very early in the morning every day to queue for foodstuff for sale to the markets. Some of their concerns are so basic; like where the next meal will come from, whether the family will have a place to sleep the next day and whether the children will have fees for their education. Commenting on the same, Jere-Mwiindilila writing on the effects of SAP on women in Zambia says:

Most women leave their families every day to go and perform any kind of activity that will bring a little extra income to provide sometimes as little as one meal of nothing more than maize meal porridge. Many others leave their homes and families for several weeks to go to fishing villages or other remote areas to bring back whatever they think will sell in the towns to earn them money for food. The devaluation of the local currency (Kwacha) has brought unimaginable suffering to women because prices have shot up way over their heads to levels most of them cannot afford. It is worth mentioning here that women head a lot of households in both urban and rural Zambia. Families are getting larger and larger as women take in dependants orphaned by the ravages of diseases such as aids, malaria and cholera. Even in households where there is a husband, women still have to bear the burden of feeding the family because very few people earn a living wage in Zambia. It is very unlikely to find a woman waiting at home for her husband's salary in Zambia.<sup>80</sup>

The idea of women in the cities working outside the home especially in industrial areas is a new idea among most ethnic groups. During the colonial period and before the coming

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<sup>80</sup> Priscilla Jere-Mwiindilila, *The effects of structural adjustment on women in Zambia*. <http://www.warc.ch/pc/rw942/02.html>. Down loaded on 2004/12/17. 1994:5.

of privatization, most of the women in Zambia, especially those who were married in towns were not allowed to do any kind of work apart from taking care of the children and the husband. The trend however has also been affected by the economic decline of the country such that women now are almost the main providers in most of the homes. As observed by Jere-Mwiindilila, SAP has affected Zambian women in such a way that even the economic activities they are involved in are all motivated by their hospitable hearts which drive them to look out for the well-being of their families. The situation is made worse when the men have no employment as Jere-Mwiindilila observes that wives of men who have been made redundant have to work twice as hard, as all the burden of feeding the family now rests entirely on their shoulders. Where the women are the ones made redundant it has resulted in the same misery.<sup>81</sup> Hospitality amidst such economic hardships is no longer a joy but instead it is done as a duty as women see it being expected of them from their communities.

Oduyoye commenting on the effects of globalization on African hospitality says, "Globalization knows nothing of hospitality."<sup>82</sup> This is true in the sense that with the coming of globalization, the main interest in the country's economy is the international marketing where all what is produced in the country tends to be for sale to the international market ignoring local consumption. Whereas traditionally the main focus of agriculture was to produce enough food for all the people in the community and only what was left was what was considered for sale.

In agreement with Oduyoye's statement on globalisation, Dube talking about the ills of globalisation in relation to HIV/AIDS and women sees globalization as having no human face and as being destructive to women's lives. The author further comments that "it creates vulnerability of women: that is, as it creates poverty in many families, it leads to an increased marketing of females as house girls and sex workers."<sup>83</sup> This is another area where women's hospitality has been compromised by globalization. The creation of

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<sup>81</sup> Jere-Mwiindilila, 1994:6

<sup>82</sup> Oduyoye, 2001:97

<sup>83</sup> Musa Dube, 'Talitha Cum! Calling the Girl-Child and Women to life in the HIV/AIDS and Globalisation Era.' In I. Phiri & B. Haddad (eds). *African Women, HIV/AIDS & faith Communities*. Pietmaritzburg: Cluster Publication. 2004:77.

poverty comes as a result of many factors and one of them is the loss of jobs due to privatisation of companies. This leaves most of the workers out of employment as is the case now in Zambia, especially on women who in most cases are the unskilled labourers due to insufficient education. Poverty in most of the female-headed households in Zambia has had a very strong bearing on their lives.

In relation to economic hospitality, an incident was observed by the writer while living among the Tonga people of the Gwembe valley in Zambia. A woman in her mid-sixties had sacrificed her meals for a period of two weeks to feed her grandchildren who were orphans. The situation resulted in her being hospitalised and when asked why she did such a thing, the woman's response was that it was better for her to starve than to see the young generation being wiped out due to starvation. The woman's response showed how African women's hospitality has been demonstrated even during times of economic hardship in that the woman thought it fitting to offer her food to the dying children out of a sense of hospitality. In view of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, young girls who are left as orphans have ended up in the street or working as house girls because their relatives cannot manage to offer them the needed hospitality due to the poor economic situation they find themselves in.

Rackozy quoting Oduyoye agrees by saying that, as Africa's economic problems increase, the impact on families is often severe and so people think twice about sharing when there is so little food on the table. The author goes on to show that the oppressive economic relations between Africa and the West are not just an academic discussion but also a serious spiritual deficiency.<sup>84</sup> This is all the more reason why the church should not over-look the issue of globalization and its effect on Africa. African women who are seen to be the most affected by the ills of globalisation, (Dube 2003) should not only point at the goodness of the technology it offers of bringing together of the world as a 'global village' but should also recognize its negative impact on their lives. The coming of globalization has affected the spirit of hospitality in Zambia, leaving women vulnerable as they endeavour to practise their hospitality.

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<sup>84</sup>Rakoczy, 2003:390.



### **3. 4.2. Economic development as a way of improving women's hospitality**

Despite all the ills brought by globalization on Zambia, women still need to strive and find means and ways of continuing in their practice of economic hospitality if they are to help alleviate poverty in the country. Oduyoye (2001) who views hospitality as being part of African women's way of life encourages African women to continue practising their hospitality despite the economic hardships. African women who have always tried to extend their hospitality even where there have not been enough resources to offer should try and improve their available resources within their communities so as to have enough not only for themselves but also for others too. Rahila is of the view that "hospitality should be seen as part of the economic development, and poverty as a major obstacle to development and hospitality."<sup>85</sup> This is an important reason why Zambian women should be encouraged to establish sustainable livelihoods where they could start their own businesses or grow vegetables for sale. This would help to sustain the family as has already been observed in some parts of the country. The women should emulate the life of Paul who though he received hospitality from the other Christians in the church, also lived a self-sustaining life. Paul also encouraged other churches to work hard and engage in some business ventures that could help bring income to the church and so help the poor, Ephesians (4:28) and he also encouraged the church to make contributions to the poor in Jerusalem Romans (15: 26-27).

Rahila sees income generating activities as being the only way in which women raise enough resources to help them continue in their practice of hospitality. In this way she says, "women will be able to support their families and also have enough resources to use in taking care of the poor and orphans."<sup>86</sup> Women in Zambia however will need financial support in these income-generating activities. This support will help them to begin projects to raise funds for themselves. This is necessary because of the deterioration in the economic situation of the country. In this respect there is need for non-governmental organisations to involve women in their funding of projects so that women can have their own capital to start their businesses.

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<sup>85</sup> Rahila, 1997:119.

<sup>86</sup> Rahila, 1997:123.

The idea of income generation in the homes should not only be applied to women while leaving out the men and especially the dependants who in most cases are the ones who abuse women's hospitality in the homes. Oduyoye quoting Nyerere when he linked hospitality with work and economic productivity states that "treat your guests as guests for two days and on the third day, give them hoes."<sup>87</sup> This is how women's hospitality should be practised in Zambia if Zambians are to see development take place. Everyone should be involved in the economic development of the nation. The dependency syndrome of dependants waiting on the owner of the home to provide everything for the family should be discouraged. Visitors who come to stay in homes should be encouraged to do whatever is done in the homes to generate income. There is also a need for them to be trained in life-skills that will help them even after they have left the homes. Visitors and dependants as they come to stay should 'not be given fish but be taught how to fish.' The Tonga people have a saying that *Mweenzu usiya cisisi* meaning a visitor always leaves his/her legacy behind. The tendency of sending women to the fields to do the farming and leaving the men to go drinking beer in the villages should also be discouraged.

### **3.5 African Women Theologians' response to African women's hospitality**

Although African women theologians have not written much on African women's hospitality, they have tackled in most of their literature issues that are related to the African women's practice of hospitality. Oduyoye (2001), who has written more literature on hospitality in Africa than other African women theologians, has seen hospitality as being part of African value and culture. The author however observes that African women are still grappling with the meaning of the word 'hospitality' and with how African hospitality has been practised in Africa especially in relation with women. Although Oduyoye (2001) sees hospitality as being part of African women's way of life, she is aware of how hospitality in Africa has been used to oppress and dehumanise women. Oduyoye also notes the spirit of injustice that has affected the practise of hospitality in Africa. She however sees hospitality as being central to African women's spirituality.

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<sup>87</sup> Oduyoye, 2001:95.

Rahila sees hospitality as being a necessary ingredient of any Christian community and says that it should be greatly facilitated by the availability of adequate economic resources.<sup>88</sup> Without any economic backing for African women's practice of hospitality, it will remain difficult for them to offer hospitality adequately; especially at present with the economic situation in Africa. However Rahila in appreciation of the act of hospitality rendered by African women continues seeing ministering hospitality as one of the privileges African women enjoy as Christian women. The author continues by saying:

The practice is not exceptional in our days especially with the economic hardships, we learn to extend the love of Christ to the needy as we open our homes and hands to give generously as Peter tells women to do 'practice hospitality one to another....' (1Peter 4:9).<sup>89</sup>

Although Oduyoye (2001) agrees with Rahila on the need for African women to practice hospitality as a command from God, she warns against the idea of seeing women as objects for men's pleasure. She therefore encourages women to resist any form of oppression and dehumanization as they practise hospitality. Calling on justice, Oduyoye is of the view that hospitality should be linked with God's compassion to all humanity and what it means to be human. As an author who has written on African women's response to hospitality, she comments that: "in their theology, African women have placed much emphasis on the subject of hospitality since they see it as a mark of divinity and therefore something to which human beings should aspire."<sup>90</sup> This shows that African women theologians attach great value to hospitality as they see it as God's calling for service. However, their main concern is the way hospitality has been practised especially by the men who have been using women's bodies, time and effort to please themselves or their fellow men.

This kind of hospitality has been seen as disobeying God's command which calls all humanity to practise hospitality. Oduyoye therefore calls for African women to respond

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<sup>88</sup> Rahila, 1997:119.

<sup>89</sup> Rahila, 1997:122.

<sup>90</sup> Oduyoye, 2001:73

to God's hospitality by stewarding nature, including their humanity and by being hospitable to themselves.<sup>91</sup>

When African women begin to look into their own affairs and take care of their lives, only then will they appreciate their true humanity. As people created in the image of God, there is need for these African women to take care of God's temple, which is their body by resisting behaviours that are dehumanising and are yet practised in the name of hospitality.

Njoroge defines generosity, mutuality, reciprocity and caring as the central principles of community building in Africa. Nurturing relations and righting wrongs are the foundations of African ethics. The author goes on to say that Christians cannot easily discard the theology of the cross as a source of ethical norms for Christians.<sup>92</sup> Writing about the spirit of resistance, Njoroge encourages African women to emulate the example of Christ who in practicing hospitality did not allow himself to be used as a tool of oppression by others even though Jesus sacrificed His life for the salvation of others. African women theologians therefore call for a kind of hospitality practice that will reciprocate and be inclusive. This call is also echoed by Phiri (2003) who sees the women's load of caring for their sick relatives during the time of illness in view of the HIV/AIDS pandemics as being demanding. The author sees this kind of hospitality as also being oppressive to women who in most cases do not have caregivers at the time of their own illness. Women become vulnerable to the disease through care-giving and also by wanting to maintain their marriages. Haddad commenting on vulnerability says; "Practising dry sex is common in most communities where women use substances such as methylated spirit or vinegar to dry out their vagina at the request of their husbands for their greater pleasure."<sup>93</sup> This practice, though done as a form of hospitality, exposes

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<sup>91</sup> Oduyoye, 2001:74.

<sup>92</sup> Nyambura Njoroge, 'Groaning and Languishing in Labour Pain.' in Kanyoro, R. A. M. & Njoroge, J. N. (eds.) *Groaning in Faith: African Women in the Household of God*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers. 1996:12.

<sup>93</sup> Beverly Haddad, 'Gender violence and HIV/AIDS a deadly silence in the church.' *Journal of theology for Southern Africa*. No 114 November 2002. 2002: 95.

women to the danger of contracting the AIDS virus. These are some of the dangers which accompany African women's hospitality and which African women theologians are trying to work against especially in the church if hospitality is to be an acceptable act for everyone to practise freely without being dehumanised or oppressed. Moyo (2003), writing on the 'Phoebe tradition' as an act of hospitality that has been practised by the church shows how African women's hospitality has been abused within the body of Christ. The author who narrates the incident from the Presbyterian Church in Malawi speaks more on sexuality hospitality, which she sees as a tool of oppression in the church, especially for the women who are targeted by the church to be used by Pastors for sexual entertainment.

Rakoczy whose writing on African women's hospitality is mainly taken from Oduyoye (2001) deals more on spirituality hospitality. The author sees hospitality as being one of the core values of African culture where people are welcomed in someone's home and food is shared with them. Rakoczy however observes that this trend is slowly fading out due to economic hardships and fears attached to hospitality especially concerning women's lives. She sees the risks of hospitality today as having increased from before. Quoting Oduyoye, (2001) Rakoczy sees the inability to render hospitality as a spiritual deficiency. Even then, the author calls for African women to demonstrate a spirit of resistance especially on issue of hospitality that are dehumanising. This she says is the only way African women will guide their spirituality.

Kanyoro (2002) sees hospitality as a cultural practice that needs to be understood according to the cultural context in which it is being practised. The author sees the culture of a reader in Africa to be more of an influence in the way he/she will understand the Biblical text and use it than the historical facts about the text. Kanyoro therefore calls for a cultural hermeneutics that will help to liberate the African women in their practice of hospitality. Kanyoro who sees the church as being part and parcel of the subject of analysis argues that "unless the church changes and opts to hold culture and the gospel in tension with one another, the women and men in Africa will continue to have crises of identity."<sup>94</sup> In relation to African women's hospitality, there is need for the church to

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<sup>94</sup> Kanyoro,2002:65

look at what the gospel says about African hospitality and to give an analysis that will be liberating to the women. The church should also question culture and denounce some of the practices that go against the demands of the gospel of Jesus. African women theologians have held hospitality as an important virtue to someone and yet they are cautious of the way it has been practised in Africa where it has left some African women vulnerable and dehumanised. This is the reason why they are now calling for inclusive hospitality, which will involve both men and women.

### 3.6 Conclusion

African people have different ways of practising hospitality. In all these ways, women's lives have been affected causing them to live under the subjection of the authority and rule of males, who in most cases not only control the way women practise hospitality but also their own lives. This control is visible in the church and society making women's spirituality and sexuality vulnerable in both places. Kanyoro commenting on the issue of women's vulnerability says, "the status of women within their church is a microcosm of their status within the society of which the church is part of."<sup>95</sup> Women therefore should learn to define themselves in terms of who they are. There is need for them to realise that they are God's temples and their bodies should be preserved for God's purpose and should not to be misused by other people. Oduyoye (1995) reminds women to act as women when she calls them to arise and denounce any form of oppression that may cause them to fail to appreciate their true humanity. This may be in the church, at home or in the society. Nasimiyu-wasike calls for women's freedom from all forms of oppression saying, "Sacrifice in the name of hospitality should not be accepted at the expense of one's body."<sup>96</sup>

African women should also work towards broadening their acts of hospitality through income generating activities. The church on the other hand should help women in their

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<sup>95</sup>Kanyoro, 2002:81

<sup>96</sup> Nasimiyu-wasike, 'Human sexuality and prostitution. In 'Phiri, A. I. Govinden, D. B. & Nadar, S. (eds.) *Her-Stories: Hidden Histories of Women of Faith in Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 2002:177.

striving to alleviate poverty in the society and this can be done by providing land and loan facilities to women who in most cases are not entitled to own any land. African women should also guard against the ills of globalization, which has also affected the way they have practised their hospitality. As this chapter has examined the different ways that African women practise hospitality, it has also helped to introduce the next chapter that will look at the effects of HIV/AIDS on African women's practice of hospitality.

## **Chapter four**

### **HIV/AIDS and African women's hospitality**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

Chapter three examined the different ways in which African women practise their hospitality and also how African women's hospitality has been misused by society. Some of the ways in which hospitality has been misused as outlined in the previous chapter are, in African women's sexuality, African women's spirituality and also in the economic situation. The aim of this chapter will be to look at the effects of HIV/AIDS on African women's hospitality. In this chapter, the main focus will be to look at how HIV/AIDS has particularly affected African women's acts of hospitality. The chapter will discuss what it means to be hospitable amidst pain, anguish and death.

Care-giving to patients during illness in most of the African societies is usually undertaken by women. As the incidence of AIDS increases in societies, so does the women's load of care-giving. Although this kind of care-giving is compatible both with African values and Christian values as a way of African women's expression of their God given gift of hospitality, there is a need for this act of care-giving to be re-examined if African women are to continue with their ministry of care-giving as a calling from God. Issues of vulnerability to the HIV/AIDS infection and stress during this period of care-giving will also be discussed in this chapter. In all these aspects, the main focus will be to show how HIV/AIDS has a bearing on African women's hospitality. In order to do this the study will discuss some case studies of experiences of African women during periods of illnesses and widowhood and how these events affected their way of practising hospitality.

#### **4.1 Effects of HIV/AIDS on African women's hospitality**

HIV/AIDS has caused a lot of unease in the world especially in Africa where the epidemic is also accompanied by poverty and oppression mainly of women and children. Most African women have struggled in trying to deal with the issue of HIV/AIDS in their homes, places of work, in the communities and in the church. Although HIV/AIDS is



said to be affecting both men and women in society, African women in most cases are more affected than men. This is because of the different biological and social constructs surrounding women's lives. The coming of AIDS in the home affects an African woman more than a man in that while the illness is present she is still expected to offer her hospitality in many ways. Some of the ways in which African women are affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic in relation to their acts of hospitality are discussed below.

#### **4.1.1 Increase of workload**

The increase of workload is mentioned by Phiri (2003), as she writes on women's vulnerability during the period of nursing. Phiri argues that traditionally women are caregivers for everyone in the home. The HIV/AIDS pandemic according to the writer has increased the workload of women who already are offering hospitality to the family as mothers and home-makers. Since the illness of AIDS needs a lot of time for nursing and caring, African women in situations where there is illness have had to sacrifice their time and efforts in expressing their hospitality to their sick relatives. Phiri sees the situation to be worsened by the fact that the majority of the women do not have financial support to carry out their duties properly and they also lack knowledge on how to protect themselves from the virus. In the course of nursing, some end up being infected through the process of care-giving.<sup>97</sup>

In agreement with Phiri, Tallis comments, "women are given little formal and informal support in caring roles and expected to carry the increasing burden of care giving in the context of HIV."<sup>98</sup> When talking about infection during the nursing period, in most African societies holding a patient while wearing protective gloves is seen as a serious taboo especially when it is a wife nursing a husband. Therefore, whether African women know the danger of HIV/AIDS or not, tradition will not allow them to use precaution measures that will show that they are protecting themselves from the illness of their partners. In cases of married women this can lead to victimisation and severe punishment by the in-laws after the death of the partner.

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<sup>97</sup> Phiri, 2003:15.

<sup>98</sup> Vical Tallis, *Aids is a crisis for women* in Agenda no 39. 1998:60.

In the United Church of Zambia this became a very serious debate at one time. Women complained of not having protective gloves when washing bodies in the mortuary and as they went out for home-based care visitations. The church in collaboration with the ministry of health provided protective gloves to these women, which made their ministry of hospitality less risky. But it is still a very difficult task in a home where a woman has no support from the community or the church but is expected to wash the body of the deceased. In some instances, African women have also been expected to nurse open wounds of relatives who have AIDS without any protective gloves. All these are risks to women's acts of hospitality.

Apart from caring for their relatives at home, some African women have also organised projects, out of their passionate hearts of hospitality that would look into the welfare of patients. One such example of a home-based care project where women have been able to express their hospitality in response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic is the *Under the Mupundu Tree* home-based care project found in the Copperbelt province of Zambia. This project is also found in Kitwe, a town where this research was conducted. Interestingly enough, some of the women who were involved in this project were also part of the group that was interviewed during the Bible Studies.

According to Williams et al. (2003), the *Under the Mupundu Tree* project holds over 500 volunteers in home-based care and most of them are women. The aim of the volunteers is to help the people understand the problem of HIV/AIDS and T.B. (Tuberculosis) by visiting and nursing them where possible. Although the work of these volunteers is very demanding, most of the women involved in home-based care have derived pleasure in their job. This is seen in the way these women have viewed this work as being a calling from God to help people who are HIV positive. A case study of the volunteers from the Mupundu project describes Pauline's attitude to the work she is involved in as one of the home-based caregivers saying:

“the thing I do each morning is to pray to God to give me strength for my daily work. Then I do my housework and after that I go and visit my patients. I see to it that they are taking the medicine correctly and if necessary I do some cleaning around the house.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Glen and Alison Williams et al, *Under the Mupundu Tree*. London: ACTON AID Publishers. 1999:14.

As Pauline has rightly pointed out, most of the African women involved in this work will view it as a calling from God and to them that is what it means to be a child of God. The work is a very clear act of hospitality while to others it will be seen as an increase in the workload of what they already have at hand. As a daily duty, visiting these patients and providing the much-needed hospitality has been another way of dealing with the issue of HIV/AIDS. The home-based caregivers have also been able to help people living with HIV/AIDS to speak out about their HIV status.

#### **4.1.2 Lack of support for women who are caregivers**

Women who are the caregivers suffer the pain of neglect from other members of the household who may not be willing to help them with the care-giving of the patient. This was the case with Sara F. a widow in this case study who had to nurse her daughter alone until she died. According to the story there was little or no support coming from the informal sector (her community) while the formal sector, which is the hospital, discharged her daughter while she was still sick and without any support in terms of transport.<sup>100</sup>

The situation is made worse if it is a wife nursing a husband. In most African communities the cause illness of the husband is always associated with the wife, and so even in the case of HIV/AIDS, women are normally seen as being the cause of the presence of HIV/AIDS in the home. This is the reason why when it comes to nursing of the husband, the relatives will let the wife endure the nursing period alone as a sign of punishment. Despite all this, most African women have continued to express their hospitality by providing care to their husbands and sometimes even to members of the extended families who may be brought into their homes to receive this hospitality. It is at this time that African women's hospitality is tested because some of these women may be aware of the fact that they too are infected with the illness and that it was their husbands

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<sup>100</sup>Catherine Cross, 'sinking deeper down: HIV/AIDS as an economic shock to the rural households.' In *Society in Transition Journal of the South African Sociological Association* Volume No.32 No 1 2001:136.

who infected them. Nevertheless, even in such a situation, African women still go on and provide hospitality to the people who have brought death to these African women's lives.

#### **4.1.3 Power relations**

The issue of power relations also plays an important role in downplaying African women's hospitality in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The situation of Rachel in the case study provided by Chauke about the experiences of Zimbabwean women on HIV/AIDS and the church's response is a good example of how power relations affect African women's practice of hospitality. Rachel was infected with the virus by her husband who was unfaithful, and when she tried to make an appeal to the community she was silenced by the community which felt that Rachael was just being jealous of her husband.<sup>101</sup> The issue of who has the power and who is in control of the other's life is what was influencing Rachel's situation. Since Rachel was seen as nothing more than a woman by the community her power and control over her husband's behaviour was being questioned by the community. In this respect, Rachel was therefore forced to offer herself to satisfy her husband's sexual need as a way of being hospitable to her husband and the community.

According to Karim, "the power imbalances between men and women and gender roles are recognized as crucial contributing factors to women's vulnerability."<sup>102</sup> The power relations in every African community can be associated with patriarchal rule on which most of the African societies are formulated. African women under these structures have little or no power or control over their own bodies: the one who has the power is the man and in most cases he is the one to decide what kind of sex will be practised and when he needs it from the wife. African women are taught by their African culture and Christianity not to refuse their husbands' sexual demands whenever they are made. This is seen as an act of being hospitable to their spouses when women surrender their sexual lives to men.

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<sup>101</sup> Elesinah Chauke, 'Theological Challenges and Ecclesiological Response to Women Experiencing HIV/AIDS: South East Zimbabwe Context.' In Phiri I. A. Haddad B. and Madipoane Masenya. *African Women, HIV/AIDS and Faith Communities*. Peitermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 2003:135.

<sup>102</sup> Quarraisha A. Karim, 'Women and Aids the imperative for gendered prognosis and prevention policy.' In *Agenda* no 39 1998:15.

The UNAIDS's (1998) research into the issue of power relations between men and women showed that AIDS prevention campaigns fail because they are urging women to get men to use male condoms. Women have little or no power to apply these condoms or practise abstinence or mutual fidelity.<sup>103</sup> The lack of power of African women over their own bodies makes them vulnerable in that they are likely to have sex with these men whose HIV status is in doubt. Simply because she is either a wife or a girl friend, she will have to submit to her partner's choice of the kind of sex he needs from her as a way of her being submissive and offering hospitality. This form of power relation can also be attributed to the African culture where a woman's sexuality is seen as being owned by the man. Commenting on the same, Mc Fadden states that, "female sexuality in all human societies is largely constructed in relation to a perceived male sexuality and pleasure and it is extremely linked to reproduction."<sup>104</sup> This idea of seeing women as sexual objects for men's pleasure affects all women in the society including the sex workers who in most cases are more vulnerable than wives because for sex workers, sex is rated by the client according to the way it is practised satisfactorily or not. As Mc Fadden argues, "the use of condoms therefore may lead not to getting enough money to meet the day's wage."<sup>105</sup>

#### **4.1.4 HIV/AIDS, procreation and marriage**

The relationship between HIV/AIDS and procreation/marriage also affects African women's hospitality. Marriage in Africa has always been strongly associated with child-bearing and so in some cases a man who already knows of his HIV status can force his wife to have children by him so that when he dies he will still live on through offspring. This has caused many women to die during child-birth or has weakened their immune systems even further due to attempted child-birth which was only done to please the partner. A story is told of a man in Kitwe, Zambia who after being told that he was HIV positive forced the wife to have a child by him. The reason for this was that the man

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<sup>103</sup> Vical Tallis, 'Gendering the response to HIV/AIDS: Challenging Gender Inequality.' in *Agenda* no. 44. 2000:63.

<sup>104</sup> Patricia Mac Fadden, 'Sex and Sexuality and the problems of AIDS in Africa.' in Meena R. (Ed) *Gender in South Africa: Conceptual and Theoretical Issues*. 1992:168.

<sup>105</sup> Mc Fadden, 1992:188.

wanted someone to inherit his riches after his death, and also to prevent the wife from taking his riches, which he felt belonged only to him and his offspring. After much struggle with the wife and other members of the family, the husband saw to it that the wife gave in and conceived. The child who was born died after three months and two months later the man died, leaving the wife who up to date is nevertheless alive and looking healthy.<sup>106</sup> This kind of submission where women have offered themselves to men for the sake of procreation has caused women who may even have been HIV negative to contract the virus.

Mc Fadden is of the view that patriarchal traditions like the levirate practice and death rite pose a threat to women especially the poor who are trapped in the cultural bind.<sup>107</sup> The case study of Sylvia, a twenty-five year old woman from Zimbabwe who was taken by the parents to go and look after her late sister's children at her brother-in-law's house is a good example of community's misuse of African women's hospitality. According to Chauke, Sylvia was told to go and live with the brother-in-law who was a widower and to take care of her sister's children. When Sylvia wanted to resist the order, her parents reminded her that those were her own children since they belonged to her late sister and that it was her responsibility to take care of them. Sylvia later on stopped school and became pregnant by the brother-in-law who later died after the baby was born. Sylvia was left with a lot of regrets because she also had become sick by the time of the interview.<sup>108</sup> Using culture as a tool for oppression, Sylvia's parents forced their daughter to offer her hospitality to her late sister's children. This led her to death and left the children she was meant to look after orphaned. These are some of the experiences of African women in the practise of hospitality in the HIV/AIDS era. In most cases African women suffering from AIDS do not offer their hospitality willingly: they do so either because culture calls for it or for fear of victimisation.

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<sup>106</sup> This is a true story from the researcher's own observation showing how African women's hospitality in this era of HIV/AIDS has been affected by society. The woman in mention despite being a member of a church did not receive much help from the church but instead the church too felt the man's demand of wanting to leave a child after his death was an acceptable norm in society. June 2004.

<sup>107</sup> Mac Fadden, 1992:185.

<sup>108</sup> Chauke, 2003:134.

#### 4.1.5 Displacement of households

The last point discussed on African women's hospitality and HIV/AIDS is the displacement of household that occur as a result of a death of a father or a mother due to HIV/AIDS. This is another factor that affects women in relation to HIV infection in the household, Barnet and Whiteside report that "sixty-five percent of households where the deceased adult female used to live before her death were reported to be no longer in existence in both urban and rural areas."<sup>109</sup> This proves the fact that African women are the ones who maintain the household despite not having good incomes or well paying jobs. Their acts of hospitality are what keep their households in place. More women than men are heads of households this includes girls, middle-aged women and grandmothers. Because of the nurturing aspect of women, they are now the ones to run these homes with orphaned children with little or no resources from the deceased relatives and only depending on their earning power or their pensions.<sup>110</sup> And yet the majority of these women are in the middle class employment or unskilled labour force where most of them are working as marketers or are living off subsistence farming where they earn insufficient funds for keeping large families. This makes African women more vulnerable to the HIV virus as they try to look for surplus funds for their families: they encounter problems of stress, sexual involvement with people who are HIV positive and problems of poverty which is also associated with women. As Cross puts it, women experience the worst poverty in South Africa. The author also sees the burden of coping with orphans to be gendered in South Africa.<sup>111</sup> The trend is also the same in Zambia where women are now in the forefront as the breadwinners in the homes, due to deaths caused by HIV/AIDS. This means that women are now the ones in charge of HIV/AIDS orphans as has already been seen in Sara F. in the case study. Elderly household heads with young children and homes headed by grandparents are another sign of the results of African women's practice of hospitality in response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Women have been foster parents and organised children's homes where possible and helped take care of homeless orphans.

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<sup>109</sup> Tony Banert and Alan Whiteside, *Aids in the Twenty First Century: Disease and globalisation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2002:188.

<sup>110</sup> Cross, 2001:141.

<sup>111</sup> Cross, 2001:141.

African women's hospitality has also been affected by the idea of child-headed homes that are mainly headed by girls. Most of these girls are orphaned children but because of their upbringing to have the caring heart of a woman which begins in childhood, these girls take on positions of parenting at a tender age. Due to hardships of parenting as young girls, some of these children have ended up as sex workers in order to earn an income for their siblings. Even though this kind of care represents what some of the African women would call true African hospitality, this hospitality has left most of these girls infected with the illness.

#### **4.1.6 Loss of employment**

As African women continue to nurse their relatives, most of these nurses have to give up their jobs because of the demands at home. This increases their burden because during the period of illness these African women need some financial support for food, medication and other essentials required in the home. The loss of a job means loss of income; even then these African women are still expected to provide these services, sometimes without even the support from other members of the family or the government. This makes African women question the meaning of hospitality especially in this era of HIV/AIDS and economic hardship. What is hospitality if it leads one to death? Is it the kind of hospitality that is of God? These are some of the questions that the paper has been trying to answer as it looks at African women, HIV/AIDS and hospitality.

#### **4.2 Conclusion**

HIV/AIDS has been viewed as one of the worst pandemics to hit Africa in recent years. African women's experience of HIV/AIDS is different from that of men. There are many factors that lead to this difference and most of them have been discussed in this chapter. As African women practise their hospitality, HIV/AIDS becomes one of the hindrances to their fulfilment of the practice of hospitality. Women who are the caregivers of AIDS patients have been affected in many ways by the illness during their practice. Even then, most of them still continue to offer this kind of hospitality as they view it as a calling from God. It is therefore important for the church and the community to critically analyse

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some of these effects on African women's practice of hospitality in relation to HIV/AIDS, and see how best African women can be helped to continue in their practice of hospitality without being vulnerable to the illness. The issue of cultural practices that make women vulnerable should also be addressed in order to help the enculturation of the issue of HIV/AIDS. Those African women who are voluntarily involved in projects like home-based care should be encouraged to continue and at the same time more men should also be encouraged to join these projects.

Finally as HIV/AIDS has also affected the continent of Africa, it is important for humanity to see the illness as every person's responsibility. African women who have sacrificed their time, energy, resources and jobs in order to take care of the AIDS orphans need the response of the government and the church if their hospitality is to be effective. Hospitality amidst the burden of HIV/AIDS can be very demanding on these African women. The only way they will be able to continue their practice effectively is when they receive the support that they need from the rest of the community and the church. African women who may not be able to have the chance to tell the stories of how HIV/AIDS and other aspects of life have affected their practice of hospitality also need to be given the chance to tell of the frustrations and joys in their practising of hospitality. Chapter five therefore will focus on African women's response during the researcher's fieldwork to the issue of hospitality. It is in this chapter that African women's voices on the understanding of African women's hospitality will be heard.

## Chapter five

### **Survey on the findings from the fieldwork on African women's hospitality**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

The previous chapter looked at hospitality and HIV/AIDS and how HIV/AIDS has affected African women's practice of hospitality. With the background of the previous chapter in mind, this chapter will deal with the response from members of the Mothers' Union group of the United Church of Zambia on their understanding of African women's hospitality. The Mothers' Union group of the United Church of Zambia has attached great value to the issue of hospitality. Despite the fact that these women have identified some areas of hospitality both in the church and in their community, which have been oppressive to their lives, these African women still look at hospitality as a gift from God, which needs to be exercised by every woman. Their engagement with church and community activities is all seen as being hospitality.

Apart from the Mothers' Union group, this chapter will also deal with the response from other people, who were interviewed during the research who are not members of the Mothers' Union group of St Margaret United Church of Zambia. The main reason for choosing this location was that this is the group with whom the researcher had worked over a period of ten years. During the time of being with this group, the researcher was able to participate in most of the acts of hospitality in which the group was involved. To write about this group therefore is like doing a review of what had been observed in this congregation over a long period of time. Writing from inside a situation is a very difficult in that as a researcher, there were times when it became necessary to hide personal judgement that might have interfered with the findings. This called for distancing oneself from the findings and work as a researcher despite being part of the group.

### **5.1 The Mothers' Union group of St Margaret United Church of Zambia.**

The Mothers' Union group of St. Margaret United Church of Zambia is one of the strongest church women's movements in the Copperbelt province of Zambia. The group acts as a forum where women can talk about their struggles both at home and in the church. The group also has created a platform for women to preach and to share their experiences of what God is doing in their lives, as most of them do not have that opportunity in the main church service. Solidarity with one another is the key to this group's spiritual growth. Although the group seems to have mutual fellowship and solidarity, there are some issues that need to be addressed as Haddad says "this does not mean to say that within the movement itself there are no oppressive forces at work against one another. Clearly there are aspects of the movement that are problematic to women's liberation."<sup>112</sup> Problems of leadership with a strong emphasis on seniority, the wearing of uniforms and social sanctions of women who are single or divorced are some of the problems that were identified in the Mothers' Union group of the United Church of Zambia, St. Margaret Congregation.

A brief history of the group shows that from the 1960s, the group was known as the sisterhood or KBBK as part of the larger group on provincial and national level of the women's group in the UCZ. The group maintained its name as sisterhood as they were known in some parts of the country and KBBK, as they were known on the Copperbelt until 1999. In the year 2000, the group decided to change its name to Women's Work and finally to Women's Fellowship in 2001 which is the name by which they are still known today. The main reason for change of names was mainly to include the women who may have been left out of the group for various reasons as will be explained below.

(A) The names like KBBK and Women's Work were all seen to be focusing on women's activities and leaving out the spiritual side of the women's lives. Women, who felt that this name was leading them to more social activities in the church with less involvement in activities like preaching in the church, participating in evangelism meetings and other spiritual matters of the church, felt the need to change the name to another name that

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<sup>112</sup> Beverly Haddad, 'The Manyano movement in South Africa: site of struggle, survival and resistance.' In Harper G. in *Agenda*. No. 16. 2004:11.

would reflect participation in all the activities of the church. The idea may not have been the same in all the congregations, but at St. Margaret United Church of Zambia where the research was conducted, this proved to have been the main reason for changing the name.

**(B)** The issue of inclusiveness in this group was a very serious issue at St. Margaret Church in that at one point it almost affected the group's involvement in the church activities. The group became divided on many issues and almost failed to work together to the point that the activities of the church were affected. Oduyoye commenting on the issue of inclusiveness in the Mothers' Union group, calls on churchwomen to transform Mothers' Union into a women's union in order to gain inclusiveness and a better representative voice in the assemblies of the church.<sup>113</sup> When the women in the church are divided, in most cases the men will use these divisions as a weapon to fight against the women. This is the reason why the spirit of inclusiveness in the women's groups should be encouraged. Some of the reasons that led to these divisions were the issues of church uniform, marital status, meeting times and literacy. Each of these issues will be discussed in the subsections that follow:

#### *Church uniform*

The first issue that affected the group is that of the church uniform. The group was divided about the usefulness of the church uniform. One group advocated that the uniform should be worn at all occasions, while the other group felt that they could do without the uniform and still belong to the group. Phiri, discussing the Chigwirizano movement in Malawi, observed that uniform had proved to be important to the women in many ways. Phiri went on to say, that the women did not look at the colours as having any significant meanings but that the uniform gave members a sense of authority over other women when they went out witnessing.<sup>114</sup> The issue was seen to be more serious when it came to occasions like funerals and Holy Communion where the group that advocated the wearing of uniforms during these occasions became offended to see members of KBBK participating in these activities without wearing the uniform. As Haddad says:

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<sup>113</sup> Oduyoye, 1995:198.

<sup>114</sup> Phiri, 2000:95.

the *Manyano* day is marked with the wearing of a church uniform. Each denomination wears a distinct uniform that usually includes a skirt, blouse, girdle and hat in a variety of colours enabling women to identify one another immediately. The *Manyano* women demonstrate the intertwining of the power of God as a spiritual reality of survival through the wearing of the uniform. The putting on of the church uniform is, on one level simply a sign of Christian commitment.”<sup>115</sup>

As seen with the *Manyano* of South Africa, the issue of church uniform has a very significant meaning even among the Mothers’ Union group in St. Margaret UCZ.

To those who advocated for the uniform, it was seen as a shield to protect them from the evil powers and also a sign of authority from God. It was also seen as being a symbol of identity to the world around them. Some of the women within the group also saw the uniform as being a defence from the patriarchal structures within the church. Haddad also sees the uniform as having a substantial quality, inherent in itself, which is conferred on the wearer.<sup>116</sup> This was the main problem in the church because those women who were already members and “bloused”<sup>117</sup> understood the meaning behind the uniform. As for those who were not “bloused,” they found problems with the uniform, as they could not understand certain symbolic meanings behind the wearing of the uniform.

This problem affected the ministry of women in the church so much that some of the hospitality ministries were affected to the extent that some members decided to stop serving in these ministries. One example of the hospitality ministry was the visitation ministry where the women were forced to wear uniforms as they went visiting in the communities or at the hospital. The controversy about uniforms went on for a long time, to the point where if a female member of the church who was is not “bloused” died in the congregation, the women who were “bloused” would only attend the funeral and would not offer any kind of help because that woman according to them was not a Christian.

An incident was witnessed in March 1999 where two women died in the church, one belonging to the Mothers’ Union group KBBK and the other a Christian and elder of the

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<sup>115</sup> Haddad, 2004: 6.

<sup>116</sup> Haddad, 2004:9.

<sup>117</sup> A word used to mean members who have finished the course and are allowed to wear the KBBK uniform.

church who was not a member of this group. When the day of burial came for both women, the KBBK group would not allow the coffin of their member to be placed next to the coffin of the other woman who was not a member of the group. According to the KBBK group, the other woman was not a true Christian because when she was alive she had refused to be “bloused” as a fulltime member of the KBBK. The minister, who was there at that time, was forced to conduct two separate funeral services. This was a turning point for the church to respond to the problem of membership in the Mothers’ Union group. The church saw the need to address the problem of the division, which had been going on for a long time among the women in the church. The tension also affected the leadership of the church who on that day of the two funerals were also divided on which funeral to attend.

#### *Marital status*

The second problem that brought division in this group of KBBK was the fact that most of the young mothers and unmarried women in the church had been denied membership. The unmarried women were left out mainly because they were perceived as a threat to the group, since most of them were suspected of having affairs with other women’s husbands within the church. Haddad also comments on the issue of marital status in the Mothers’ Union group when she writes:

upholding the sanctity of marriage was crucial to the work of the Mothers’ Union. Only married women who were ‘in good standing’ with the church were eligible for membership of the organisation. In practice, being in good standing required that you be baptised, bring your children for baptism as children. Accept the teaching of the Apostles’ Creed and be faithful to your marriage vows.<sup>118</sup>

This was the main reason why single mothers were not eligible for membership, since the main objective for the group was to keep the sacredness of marriage and children. The problem also arose during the Mothering Sundays when all women of the church were supposed to participate in conducting the service during those particular Sundays. Instead of all the women in the church being involved in the service, only those members who belonged to the KBBK group would be allowed to take part in the service. This kind of

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<sup>118</sup> Beverly Haddad, ‘Mothers’ Union in South Africa; untold stories of Faith, Survival and Resistance.’ In *Her-Stories: Hidden Histories of Women of Faith in Africa*. Phiri, I. A., Govinden, D. B. & Nadar, S. (eds.) Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 2002: 103.

treatment made the other women in the church who were not members of this group; demand that the church review the constitution of this group.

#### *Times of meetings*

The main days for meeting in this group are Tuesdays and Thursdays. Tuesday is marked as visitation day when the group goes to visit the sick, the needy and also to do some kind of evangelism. On this day, the women are supposed to be wearing their church uniforms and also carrying some money or groceries for distribution in the places they visit. This is one of the most demanding acts of hospitality that the KBBK carry out. The women who are assigned to visit the sick, are sometimes required to provide home-based care and nursing to the patients.

On Thursdays members of the KBBK group meet for Bible studies, preaching and sharing of testimonies. This is also another important day for the women. As the women meet on this day, they create opportunities for each other to use their gifts of preaching. The Thursday meetings help women to discover their ministerial gifts and share their joys and sorrows with one another. Since all these days fall during the week when some of the women of the church go to work, the working members of the KBBK demanded that the days be changed to Saturday and Sunday afternoons so as to allow them a chance to participate in the activities of the group. The change of days was not well received especially by the older members of the group who felt that these days were very special to them and carried a special meaning for their group.

#### *Literacy*

The initial situation in the KBBK group was that most of the women did not go very far with their education, although a few could read and write. This was because of the historical background of African women's upbringing where a boy's education in the family took precedence over that of the girl. The main reason for this was that an African girl's future was always focused on her marriage. Most of the parents perceived that educating a girl child might be a waste of resources because after all she was destined for marriage. This phenomenon was very common among most ethnic groups in Zambia and this is the main reason most of the women in most African societies who were born

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during that period do not have much education. The problem that arose from the Mothers' Union group was related to what has been discussed. The young women who have become educated could not agree with the older women, who are not very well educated, on a number of issues, especially those that are related to African culture. One of the important issues was the idea of preparing young girls for marriage. The teachings from the older women were despised as being old fashioned and oppressive to the girls. As a result, the relationship between members in the KBBK became very bad to the extent that some girls began to refuse to be taught by the older women when their time for marriage came.

### **5.2 Response from the Synod over the problems of the KBBK group.**

The Synod reviewed the constitution in 2001 and the new constitution had the following changes.

1. The name of the group was changed to Womens' Christian Fellowship. This was done so as to allow all the women in the church who might be interested to join the group to attend the lessons without any intimidation. This included single mothers and single women who are not mothers. The other reason for changing the name was the meaning behind the former name. The group felt that KBBK was reflective more of women's work in the church rather than of women's spiritual activities like preaching, prayer, prophetic ministry and healing.
2. After undergoing the lessons, the women were free to choose whether they wanted to wear their uniforms on all occasions or not. The issue of the uniform was made flexible in order to accommodate every member of the group.
3. The group chose one chairperson who was to be in charge of the both English speaking group and the Bemba speaking members. The chairperson also had two leaders one for each group, who oversee the two groups. The group, despite having different days of meetings due to its size and different activities in which members of the group get involved in at different times, follows the same constitution and teachings.



4. The group was also required to meet once every quarter to review the activities of each group collectively and finally the group agreed to work together in times of funerals, sickness, kitchen parties and fundraising projects.<sup>119</sup>

The new group has been working effectively for three years now, although there is still some resistance from individuals in trying to form a united group. The idea of preaching without a uniform is still a big problem to the group especially for the older members who have been in the group for a long time.

In relation to hospitality, the St Margaret Mothers' Union group is involved in many ministries related to issues of hospitality and for this reason, the group needed to work together in harmony in order to sustain these ministries. Some of the outstanding activities are visiting hospitals, homes and prisons; ministering to the student ministers within the consistory; offering teachings to the young couples and those intending to get married; fundraising for the church projects and helping the widows in the church. The fundraising aspect is mainly done within the context of union meetings and the funds raised are meant mainly to meet the needs of the members within the group, although in most cases the money is taken by the church to be used for other projects.

### **5.3 Models of fieldwork methodology**

The main fieldwork methodology that was used in this study was the contextual Bible study. This was done in collaboration with the Tamar Campaign Bible studies, which were conducted alongside with the interviews on African women's understanding of hospitality. Other methodologies used were personal interviews, participant observations, formal and informal discussions. When dealing with contextual Bible studies, West's ideas (2003) about the ordinary 'readers' to whom he also sometimes refers to as the 'other.' West's approach was used when identifying with these readers and their interpretation of the Bible while the writings of Phiri (2000) were used when working with the Mother's Union group as it deals with hearing the voices of women in the church especially the marginalized. Phiri's approach helped the researcher to understand the

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<sup>119</sup> This is the information from the constitution, laid down by the United Church of Zambia, which was handed to all the concerned churches. Unpublished article of the United Church of Zambia. (2001.)

Mother's Union movement since her work was dealing with the Chigwirizano movement of Presbyterian Church of Malawi.

Two groups of women were interviewed using the method of contextual Bible studies. The groups belonged to the Mothers' Union of St. Margaret UCZ, which is now called the Women's Fellowship group. The one group consisted of working class women and the other group consisted of housewives most of whom sell at the market. Individual interviews were also conducted with the two groups. The first group consisted of women from the Mothers' Union group of St. Margaret congregation and other UCZ congregations. The second group consisted of men from St. Margaret as well as other UCZ congregations. For all these groups, the researcher used open-ended questions with the narrative method. This method allows the interviewees to tell the stories of their lives as a part of their response to the interviews. Since the study was conducted using African women theologians' approach, which is the narrative method, using this method became relevant to the study because it helped the researcher to hear the voices of the women interviewed. The questions for the contextual Bible studies differed from those used for individual interviews.

#### **5.4 Tamar Campaign Bible Study conducted at St. Margaret Methodist Church**

##### **5.4.1 The first Bible study**

The first Tamar Campaign Bible study was conducted on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 2004, at St. Margaret Church with the Mothers' Union group. Since the group is divided into two groups, the researcher worked with the group that meets on Sunday afternoons. The group consists mainly of working mothers. The group usually meets from 1500 hours up to 1700 hours Zambian time. The total membership ranges from 45-50 women, but due to problems within the leadership, the number of members at the weekly meetings decreased to 10-15 women per week. On the day of the Tamar Campaign Bible study, only 10 women attended the meeting. Apart from the apologies from those who were sick, the others when asked the following week responded that if they had known that there was going to be a new topic they would have come, otherwise there was no reason given for not attending.

The Bible study started with words of prayer from the chairperson followed by introductions and the handing over of the meeting to the researcher. After explaining the purpose of the visit, the group, one member from the group read the Bible from (2 Samuel 13:1-22). Following the outlined format of the Tamar Campaign Bible studies, the Bible study was conducted. This is the method where the group is given an opportunity to use contextual methods of interpreting the scripture. The leader of the Bible study is seen as a facilitator while the ordinary members are given more chance to discover what the scripture they are dealing with is all about, and then try to apply it to their context. This was followed by an identification of any form of hospitality that may have been demonstrated by any of the people in the rape of Tamar. Most of the women in the group identified with Tamar's hospitality to her brother Amnon who was sick. The group felt that Tamar was trying to use her hospitality to attend to the brother Amnon, who later on misused his sister's hospitality. Mrs Susan Musonda, a 55 year old retired mother and an elder in the church commented that:

David did what every parent could have done in our African society especially in most Zambian ethnic groups, by sending a girl child to cook for the brother. Tamar felt that it was her duty to care for the sick brother by providing him with food except that she was not careful to see what was coming ahead of her when the brother asked her to prepare the food from the his room.

Miss Joy Kabwe, 48 year old, single mother commented on the behaviour of the friend of Amnon Yona'dab saying that, by providing a plan for the friend to rape the stepsister, Amnon's could have seen it as a normal situation since women's sexuality can be used as a way of offering hospitality to men. (The speaker was now referring to her cultural background where women can be asked to offer sexual hospitality to men.) This became a very controversial issue to the group due to the group's different ethnical backgrounds. Some of the members of the group felt that offering of sex, by African women, as a way of hospitality should be a choice. One should be able to choose to do it or not, while Tamar's case was rape, without any choice. The group felt that women had the right to refuse to be used as sex objects by men and they further recommended that women should be encouraged to join support groups to avoid the incidences of rape and abuse from men. The group was able to voice all these different views on women's sexuality and hospitality because of its exposure to issues concerning violence against woman. The

other reason for such kinds of arguments was the literacy rate of the group. Of the members in this group, eighty per cent are working and have good knowledge of issues of women abuse. When asked to comment about the church's response to the issues of African women's hospitality, the group felt that the church had taken advantage of the Mothers' Union's acts of hospitality. Molly 29 year old member of the Mother' Union stated that, the church has been using our resources in order to raise funds for its own benefit. She cited times when the church was conducting fundraising dinners saying "the church prefers to ask us women to bring some food to be sold during these events from our homes without considering our financial positions. We are the Tamars of the church."

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The idea of the church using women's resources brought to light other issues like the system used by the church leadership of sending visitors of the church who are supposed to be hosted in the manse to single women's homes. Women felt that their hospitality is misused because in most cases these single women are not even consulted. Women feared for their lives too especially with the problem of HIV/AIDS. The group said that like Tamar they might end up being abused sexually by these visitors in the process of providing hospitality to them church visitors.

Mrs L. Chanda a member of the Mothers' Union group and a society steward blamed some of the women within their group for overdoing their hospitality and loyalty to the church leadership. She was referring to those women who do not question the church leadership's requests to do any kind of work for the church. Mrs L. Chanda voiced her opinion thus:

We should not be too loyal and voiceless like Tamar who only cried out when it was too late, but be able to say no to some of the oppressive and abusive ideas that may cause harm to our lives. The church leadership should not see us as a source of income to provide whatever they may need for their own benefit we also have families to look after.

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<sup>120</sup> Molly is also one of the women who were present for the Bible Study on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2004. What Molly meant when she said we are the 'Tamars' was that just as Tamar's hospitality was misused by Amnon so does the church misuse women's hospitality in the church.

The speaker was now referring to the issue of the church leadership's demands for women to provide foodstuffs for the parties and the bringing in of church visitors to the homes of the single women without any form of support from the church. This also brought to light the issue of young people preparing for marriage and how they have misused these women's hospitality by asking them to prepare kitchen parties for them without making any contributions.

The group called on Molly, who is a leader of the young women's group to comment on the behaviour of these girls, who the group felt even fail to come back and thank the group after their kitchen parties. Molly defended the group by saying that the young women felt that the older women demanded too much from them in terms of respect and submission such that these young women fail to come back and join the group. According to Molly's explanation, it seemed as though the young women had found that the group did not give them enough opportunity to express their own feelings on issues that affect their lives for example the issue of hospitality.

Three out of the ten women who were in the Bible study group felt that Tamar's submission to the father's order to go and cook for the brother was another sign of hospitality, which African women needed to re-examine if their hospitality was to be performed according to the will of God. Mrs C. Phiri an elder and committee member of the Mothers' Union group argued that:

The Bible encourages us to be submissive and obedient to authority and besides, whatever we do as Christian women it is all to the glory of God. Tamar did what was expected of her by being submissive to her father and to her brother's request to prepare the food from his room. However the only problem was that the brother did not respect the sister's submission and raped her.

According to Mrs C. Phiri submission is a very important aspect of a woman's life. Women are expected to submit to their husbands at all times. Asked whether the idea of submission had anything to do with men's misuse of women's hospitality, the group was divided on this issue. Out of the group, thirty per cent felt that women needed to submit to their husbands at all cost. While seventy per cent of the group consisting of young women felt that the subject of submission needed to be re-examined because it was due to submission that African women's hospitality has been misused by the men.

Asked how they viewed the issue of men's demand for women's submission in all areas of life. The group felt that submission was a cultural and patriarchal rule that was dominant in most cultures of Africa. One woman, who requested to remain anonymous, commented that:

Tamar obeyed the father simply because the father's voice in our culture is final and this is what the men want us to be, to obey them as though they were above God. To obey them sexually even when we do not approve of their movements (sic). With the coming of AIDS what if Amnon had AIDS whom would David blame? This is a difficult kind of hospitality because it is abusive to us women.

When asked how HIV/AIDS affects African women's hospitality in the church and their respective communities, all the women in the group agreed that the coming of HIV/AIDS has affected their practice of hospitality in many ways. First the group mentioned offering themselves sexually to their husbands. According to the group, most of the men have selfishly demanded sex from their wives without using condoms even when they know of their HIV status. A woman in her late 40s who requested to remain anonymous gave a story of how her sister's hospitality was abused by the husband saying:

My brother-in-law left my sister with six children and went to stay with another woman for one year. Within that time, he got sick and the girl decided to run away from him. The people who saw his suffering demanded that my sister should go and get him so that she can bring him home and nurse him. My sister tried to resist but the pressure was too much especially from the members of her church who always reminded her of the vows she had made during their wedding. Finally she gave in and got the husband home. A few months later the man began to demand sex from her without using a condom knowing very well that he was HIV positive and my sister was not. When my sister took the matter to church, some of the women of the church told her that God was going to protect her because she was doing the right thing, which is submitting to her husband. My sister followed that church teaching and gave in to her husband's demand of sex. She contracted the virus and died earlier than the husband due to depression. That is what hospitality could do to my sister!

The group identified with the pain this woman was going through in their silence as they tried to work through the bitterness and anger this member of their group was bearing as it was reflected though the way she related in tears her sister's story. Mrs. G. Mufana wanted to speak out on the issue that she felt has been neglected by the group for a long time. She spoke of the problem of support amongst themselves. Mrs Mufana a member of

the group and an assistant church secretary re-read some verses (2 Samuel 13:12-14) and said: "since the whole scene happened in the home why there were no voices of women even after the rape except that of Tamar who was the victim?" Mrs Mufana used this example to illustrate how the women group has been responding to each other's needs in the time of AIDS. She gave an example of the case of a member of the group who had been ill for a long time and yet very few members from the group had been to offer any kind of hospitality and solidarity during this period of illness.

The other examples Mrs G. Mufana cited were those of members who had lost their relatives in their homes and those who had patients within the homes. The speaker wondered why the group had failed to offer hospitality to each other and yet it was quick to respond when the church called for it to offer any kind of hospitality. She challenged the women to follow the example of Christ in this era of HIV/AIDS. Christ offered hospitality and compassion to all humanity without looking at their social status when Christ came to die for all humanity on the cross. The speaker challenged the women to avail themselves to each other if their hospitality was to be meaningful. Mrs G. Mufana concluded by saying that:

As Christian women we seem to be too busy for each other. There is need for each of us to analyse the rape of Tamar, perhaps if there were women around her they could have rescued her from the rape or better still comforted her after the rape. We need to be there for each other to offer protection to each other in times of crisis. Otherwise the men will organise themselves around us and we will be trapped in awkward situations like what happened with Tamar.

This made participants share their opinion on how the group had been functioning over the past few years. They reviewed mainly how the group had been offering its acts of hospitality to different groups of people including its own members. The group felt that much of the hospitality offered was for the benefit of others within the church especially the men and not for themselves or their fellow members. As Rabera says "collective action is the basis of the success of movements that have changed the course of history."<sup>121</sup> The group therefore resolved that there was a need for them to attend to each other's needs and be hospitable to each other. In view of the AIDS pandemic the group

felt that members who are sick or bereaved needed to be cared for first by the members of the women's fellowship where these women belong and in this way many others would be drawn to the group as they see the love of God at work through their ministry of hospitality. The idea of offering each other some kind of hospitality is what Rabera calls collective action. She says:

The gospel stories record images of a strong collective of women. The phrase 'a group of women' appears many times in the Jesus narratives. The strongest evidence of this group was at the foot of the cross. The women stood in solidarity with each other in a situation that must have been frightening and bewildering to them. Their collective support empowered them to keep going when there seemed to be no hope. Later when the disciples refused to believe Mary's report of her encounter with the risen Christ, a group of women went back to the empty tomb. Women believing in women.<sup>122</sup>

The statement above highlights the most important aspect of hospitality that was discussed during the Bible study. The discussion showed that women needed to support each other in times of crisis especially when it comes to issues like HIV/AIDS where there was a member in the group who was ill at home and needed the group to be available and to offer some kind of hospitality to her. The Bible study ended with a resolution that the group was going to split into two groups, one was going to visit a sick member of their group just after the meeting, while the other was going to visit another member who had just lost a child. Contributions in terms of finances were made during the meeting and the money was shared between the two groups and was taken to the two homes which the groups were visiting. The chairlady closed the meeting with a prayer.

#### **5.4.2 The second Bible study.**

The second Bible study was conducted on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2004 with a group of Mothers' Union members who meet on Wednesdays. This is a group of women consisting of housewives and marketers. The ages ranged from 27-75 years. The number of women who attended this Bible study was 15. Although there were other bigger groups meeting on the same day, the researcher purposely selected this one group, which had fewer women in order to

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<sup>121</sup> Ranjini Rabera, 'Feminist Challenge.' In Kanyoro R.M.A and Robins W. S. (eds.) *The Power We Celebrate; women's stories of faith and power*. Geneva: Lutheran World Publications. 1992:48.

<sup>122</sup> Rabera, 1992:48.



allow for proper group discussion where all the members in the group could have a chance to participate. The group started with praise and worship, offering and preaching. This is their main format for the weekly meetings. Thereafter the Tamar Campaign Bible study followed. Unlike the first group where the researcher was once a member, this group was unfamiliar to the researcher, therefore called for personal introductions, which included name, marital status, age (optional) and position held in the church.

During the discussion, the members of the group were not as open for discussion as was the previous group. Although some members tried to speak out on what they called 'sensitive issues,' there was still some form of silence and resistance that was easy to see in their facial expressions. This kind of behaviour alludes to what West means when he talks about reading with the ordinary people saying, "the culture of silence is a strategy and not the whole story. What is hidden is hidden and for good reason, so any attempt to penetrate the disguise is dangerous."<sup>123</sup> In agreement with West, it was observed that the silence and resistance of these women meant something that was also connected to their lives and so the researcher decided not to probe further but to allow them an opportunity to express themselves where necessary.

Mrs Mubiana, a young mother in her mid-thirties and an elder in the church read the Bible. She was later chosen by the group as a facilitator. The first outlined format of the Tamar Campaign Bible study was conducted. While the group was half way into the Bible study, the group introduced the topic of hospitality, in relation to David's behaviour (2 Samuel 13) it was felt that what happened in the house of David is very common in most of the Christian homes even today.

Mrs Mubiana commented that sexuality is very much associated with hospitality such that even in the homes sex is sometimes offered as a way of entertainment and a way of asking for something from one's husband or thanking the husband for what he has done for one. The comments by Mrs Mubiana led to discussion on dependants who the group felt are sometimes imposed on them by the in-laws. With a lot of cautiousness, one third of the group felt that the kind of hospitality displayed in most African homes especially in

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<sup>123</sup> West, 2003:29.

Zambia is aimed at oppressing the women. The group was also aware of the economic hardship that may have been causing some of these relatives from home to come to the city in great numbers, but in response to that issue Bana Bwalya as she preferred to be called, a member of the Mothers' Union, felt that the whole idea of relatives coming to visit one's family in the city is sometimes a way of misusing one's hospitality. The speaker supported the argument through the observation that these visitors in most cases attack only the woman in the home and not the man. If there is no enough food in the home it is assumed that it is the wife's fault even when she is not the income earner. The rest of the group agreed with her point and commented that hospitality in their homes is more of an abuse that one has to suffer rather than something one would want to do happily. Asked what they would say about the issue of the visit of their own relatives, most of them agreed that they would be able to handle their own relatives more easily than their in-laws when they become demanding. However, forty per cent of the group felt that even their own relatives were a bother, because they also sometimes misused women's hospitality. The whole discussion at this point was focused on African women's hospitality in the homes.

Although the discussion seemed to be leaving out the subject of the Bible study, which was the rape of Tamar, the researcher felt that it was also good because this helped the group to open up since it had started in a very reticent way. At this point, it was relatively easy to ask the group to identify any form of hospitality that might have been demonstrated during the rape of Tamar. The group felt that the rape of Tamar is still very common in most Christian homes and as it was with Tamar, most of the girls who are raped in this way are raped while offering hospitality to members of their family. It was also remarked on that these girls are usually silenced for fear of bringing shame to the family. The group felt that, just like David and his son Absalom who silenced Tamar. Seven of the women in the group voiced out strongly and talked about the issue of husbands raping the dependants in the home. This was seen as a very bad practice that has been entertained in many homes and has gone unpunished. One woman who requested to remain anonymous cited an incident in the church where an elder was in a relationship with his sister-in-law until he made her pregnant. The unfair thing was that the girl was

sent away by her sister to go back to her parents. On the other hand, the man was being comforted and counselled by the church and the issue was kept secret.

The women saw this kind of treatment as one of the ways in which the church and the men in the homes have misused women's hospitality. Mary Chanda, a single mother and a member of the Mothers' Union observed that, in most cases these girls who are raped in their homes by relatives are first reminded by the perpetrators that they are acting as they are because of the support these rapists offer to the victims. This can be in terms of education or upkeep. The same men also threaten their wives, should they want to speak out about the issue to the church or to the community. Since most of these women in the group seemed to be dependent on their husbands for their economic support, it was evident that what was being said by Mary Chanda could be applied to what most of them had experienced. This was observed by the writer through their facial expressions as their friend was speaking. At this point, it was important for this researcher to look out for what West (2003) calls 'the hidden transcript' which is displayed in most cases when reading the Bible with women like these who are trapped between their own culture and that of the Bible. According to West:

a focus on 'a partly sanitized, ambiguous, and coded version of the hidden transcript' that is always present in the public discourse of subordinate groups in the form of rumours, gossip, folktales, songs, gestures, jokes, theatre and other forms of popular culture, reveals forms of resistance, defiance and critical consciousness.<sup>124</sup>

These women because of the fear of speaking out, expressed their frustrations they called about their daily experiences, in their homes and the community by means of non-verbal expressions, which were also loud enough to be seen and heard. Asked what they should do in such situation, the rest of the group remained quiet and only one elderly woman by the name of Mrs Silungwe angrily said:

It will be better for me to lose my marriage and serve the lives of the young girls who are innocent and are being sexually abused. After all even me as a wife I'm

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<sup>124</sup> West, 2003:28.

also being abused mentally by the same man and what if anyone of us has AIDS?  
Does that leave me out of the circle?<sup>125</sup>

These remarks made the rest of the members slowly become less reticent and bring up the issue of culture. The group felt that the silence of David is still being practiced in the Christian community even today. Like Amnon who forgot about the hospitality of Tamar after the rape and instead saw her as a bad person, others treat the girls who are raped in the homes by throwing them out and forgetting about all the hard work they have been doing in these homes. Asked about the position of the church concerning this issue of women's hospitality, the group felt that the church had also put more emphasis on culture than on women's welfare. In response to the question, Mrs Siame, an elder in the church, commented:

We still have the Davids and the Absoloms in our church even today who will pretend that they have heard your problem of rape in the home but do nothing about it. This is the reason why AIDS is still affecting the church because the church seems to have more respect on culture than the lives of women.

The other issue that the group brought up in relation to the young girls who are raped in the homes was the danger of exposing these girls to the men in the homes. Referring to the rape of Tamar, the group felt that Tamar was too exposed to the brother when they remained alone in the house and that could have given the opportunity to Amnon to rape his sister. This was seen as the effect of hospitality in that it exposes women to a lot of danger; one of them being was sexual violence. The group resolved that there was need for them as parents to guard the girl children in their homes at all times and also to get closer to them so that they could give them the opportunity for them to speak out on any form of violence that they might observe or suffer.

The idea of having to guard the girls against sexual abuse was opposed by other members of the group. The Majority, seventy per cent of the members felt that the men themselves must become responsible people who would respect their children since the women respected their husbands' relatives by not raping them. This idea was followed by a discussion of the problem of these women's absenteeism from their homes over long

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<sup>125</sup> Mrs Silungwe is one of the oldest members of the Mothers' Union group and has been a member of the church for a long time. Her stand on issues against women abuse is very firm.

periods, since most of them are businesswomen who go to buy goods to sell in order to feed their families. The women felt that if they are out to look for food for the family it was because of their God given hearts of hospitality. Therefore when men remain at home and begin to abuse the girls left behind, they are also abusing the women's hospitality. Most of these women involved in business ventures observed that when AIDS comes into the home, mostly they are blamed by the community as being the cause of the illness because of their business trips. Yet in many cases the pandemic could have come from within the home. This is also stated by Garbus, in her paper on HIV/AIDS in Zambia, who observes that:

In many rural areas, HIV/AIDS continues to be viewed as disease of women and more specifically sex workers. A recent Panos study on stigma in a rural area of Zambia also found HIV/AIDS-related stigma was primarily directed at women, particularly poor women and single women. Blame for infection was frequently placed on women; mothers were blamed for infecting their babies, older women were accused of being promiscuous and grabbing young men at beer huts and school girls were characterised as only interested in 'sugar daddies.' Women traders and especially cross-border traders were blamed for bringing HIV/AIDS into the area, as were women seasonal workers on commercial farms.<sup>126</sup>

In relation to the discussion on African women's hospitality, which the group was engaged in, it is evident that all these accusations outlined by Garbus make women to be seen as the ones that bring the AIDS pandemic to the home. The vulnerability of most of these women is mainly because of the economic dependency on the men and the culture setting in which they are found, which in most cases demands that they be silent and accept the blame as it is apportioned by men. The study ended with the group agreeing to work as a team in order to support each other on issues of abuse.

### **5.5 Response from the personal interviews**

The personal interviews were conducted on different dates and locations in the months of June and July. The number of people interviewed in this category was fifteen. Ten men and five women, who were the people interviewed and the locations of the interview, were all purposively chosen. The purpose for interviewing men was to create a gender

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<sup>126</sup> Lisa M.M.P. Garbus, *HIV/AIDS in Zambia*. San Francisco: Aids Policy Research Centre: University of California. 2003:49.

balance on the issue of African women's hospitality and HIV/AIDS. Using the open-ended questions in-depth interviews were conducted. The questions asked were divided into three parts. The first part dealt with personal identification: this included name, age, marital status, name of the congregation and position held in the church. The second part dealt with the position of the interviewees on the issue of African women's hospitality: this included their understanding of hospitality, comparing how hospitality was being practised in Africa before and how it is being practised today with special focus on ethnic groups of Zambia. The third part looked at the hindrances to African women's practice of hospitality and the position of the church: this included issues of HIV/AIDS and the country's economic crisis. The answers to the questions were based mainly on personal experience. Unlike the Bible studies that were recorded, the personal interviews were unstructured and were conducted at any place that was considered suitable by both parties. After the interviews, the findings from the men and women were compiled separately. In this way voices of men on the issue of African women's hospitality were clearly and separately heard. The first part of the question carried individual answers since it had to do with a person's identity.

#### **5.5.1 Response from the men interviewed**

In answering the second part of the question which focused more on the definition of African women's hospitality, out of the 10 men interviewed, seven of them viewed hospitality as a way of offering services to the other person especially the needy.

When asked whether African hospitality is still being practised the way it was practised long ago in their societies, all the men felt that hospitality in their respective societies was no longer practised in the way it was formerly practised in Africa. The main reason given for this change was economic hardship, which the group felt had caused people in their communities to move away from extended African families to nuclear families an arrangement which has been adopted from Western countries. On the question of whether African women should continue practising hospitality considering the economic hardship or not, half the group felt there was a need for hospitality to be re-examined by most African communities so that African women, who want to continue practising hospitality in their homes are not oppressed, especially by dependants. The other half of the group

felt that African women should continue doing their acts of hospitality in their communities and should also see it as their way of life. (This group did not see any negative aspects of African women's practice of hospitality.) According to Mr Mwila who is from the second group, women were doing what they have been called by God to do and if they neglect their work or complain as they do this work, they are sinning against God. Mr Mwila went on to quote a verse from Colossians 3:17 which says "whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the father" (NIV). The speaker was strongly convinced that whatever kind of hospitality African women are involved in, it was for the glory of God and was to be done with a cheerful heart.

In relation to the issue of HIV/AIDS, the men felt that AIDS was an illness that would affect everyone and therefore women were obliged to look after the sick people in their homes as a way of showing love and support to those people who are sick. The group felt that this was the best way African women could show their God given gift of hospitality. Commenting on HIV/AIDS, sixty per cent of the group observed that illness is not an individual problem, but a communal problem. When people are ill they turn to their rural homes to be cared for by their extended family. According to these men, the people who should care for these sick relatives are women.

Three of the men interviewed expressed a different opinion concerning the issue of HIV/AIDS and hospitality by saying that both men and women needed to take care of each other in order to show true hospitality. Mr Musonda who is in his mid-thirties argued that:

If my wife offers me any kind of hospitality, she is doing it because she loves me and therefore it is also my duty as a Christian to please my wife by offering her some kind of hospitality that will make her feel loved and appreciated. As for issues of HIV/AIDS there is need for us to share the burden of nursing the sick person as a couple. If it is a man who is sick, it is my duty as a man to take care of the patient and if it is a woman I will let my wife to do the work. What I do not agree with is the idea of letting the women do all the work of being hospitable to the people when us men simply look on and in the long run receive the glory.

Musonda saw hospitality as a responsibility that should be shared by both men and women. His expressions differed from most of the men interviewed partly due to his exposure as a social worker to issues of women abuse. The group which did not identify sexuality as being a form of hospitality in most African ethnic groups emphasised services like offering of food and shelter, and entertainment to people that visit their homes as a way of being hospitable. Asked about the role of the church regarding African women's hospitality, the group felt that the church should be supportive of the good work that the women were doing. Commenting on some activities like cooking during seminars and taking monthly groceries to the manse, the group felt these were acts of hospitality benefiting the church. The men said that the church needed to encourage these women to continue performing these acts of hospitality.

Asked how the church should handle the issue of women who have been abused in the name of hospitality, the group did not comment much since from the beginning they did not seem to acknowledge that there was any form of abuse in African women's hospitality. The group simply responded by saying that the church should offer support to women who are nursing their relatives in their homes. Mwila also observed that the church should try and establish support groups for these women so that they can go and receive help on how to look after these patients: he spoke about training centres for home-based care where women can learn how to look after AIDS patients.

### **5.5.2 Response from the women interviewed**

The 5 women interviewed in the category of personal interviews, were all taken from different congregations but all belonged to UCZ. Like the other three groups, this group saw the old type of hospitality as not being practised any longer. The reasons given were the same as the ones given by the other groups. The only difference with this group which is worth noting is that, the group seemed to focus more on household hospitality rather than the external hospitality offered to people in the church or in the community. The group identified economic hardship as being a root cause for women's failure to effectively practise hospitality.



Chama, as she preferred to be called, from the Chimwemwe congregation observed that whatever happens in the home was associated with a woman. Chama specifically singled out the issue of hospitality saying “as an African Bemba woman, I was told by my mother that every visitor who comes in my house was my responsibility and the responsibility of my husband.”<sup>127</sup> The speaker, who saw hospitality with the present economic hardship as being a hard task for women to carry out, also complained of the dependants who in most cases were not at all helpful even to produce a vegetable garden at home. Instead they waited for women to do everything. This was also observed by another interviewee, who wanted to remain anonymous saying, her mother-in-law was a big problem in the home because she was the one who was controlling the budget when the husband was paid. As a result, the interviewee was forced to give out all the money to the relatives of the man while she starved with the children at home.

Asked on how they viewed the church’s position on the issue of African women’s hospitality three out of the five women interviewed saw the church as being a perpetrator of the abuse of African women’s hospitality. These women felt that since the church consisted of men and most of them were the same men found in the homes, this would not change the men’s stand on African women’s hospitality. This meant that the same way the men view African women’s hospitality in the church will be the same way they view African women’s hospitality in the homes. The women’s response to the issue of HIV/AIDS corresponded with the other two groups of women interviewed during the Bible studies. The only new element added by two members from this group was the idea of counselling. These two women felt that there was a need for the church to offer counselling sessions to women who were raped in the homes or were taken as wives by their relatives. The two women felt that since in most cases these women were not consulted about their marriages, they went into these marriages with a lot of hate and bitterness, which might result in depression.

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<sup>127</sup> The interview with Chama took place on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 2004 at her home where she had two boys who were neither studying nor working. They were brought by her husband from home to be looked after by her.

## 5.6 Interpretation of the findings

Five issues came out of the research that will be discussed in the following section:

*There is insufficient knowledge on the issue of African women's hospitality.* Most of the women interviewed seemed to have very little knowledge of the African women's acts of hospitality. This was evident from the way women responded to some of the questions like the one related to sexuality and hospitality which most of them did not see as being an act of hospitality. Although the issue of sexuality and hospitality was discussed during the research there was some kind of resistance from the women to talk openly about the oppressions associated with their hospitality. This was seen from the way that some women refused to be identified every time they made a contribution on the issue of sexuality. The problem that could have contributed to this reticence might have been the fear of victimisation by the men or might have been a cultural phenomenon.

*Women's hospitality has not been well managed by the United Church of Zambia.* The findings revealed that the church has taken African women's hospitality as a duty that women should perform for the church without questioning. As a Methodist church which has adopted the John Wesley approach to evangelism and the preaching of the Gospel as the main doctrine of the church, the church has neglected the founding father's doctrine that embraced acts of mercy extended to all, especially the poor. Wesley's model of shared meals, community fellowship, care of the widows, displaced children and the poor was adopted by all the members of the Methodist church especially leaders during the time of Wesley. Nevertheless, the UCZ today has left these acts of mercy to be done by the women, especially the Mothers' Union group. The church has forgotten the words of Wesley, the model of the Methodist church, who during the period of his ministry stated that:

For I myself as well as the other preachers who are in town, diet with the poor on the same food and at the same table. And we rejoice herein as a comfortable nest for our eating bread together in our Father's kingdom.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> John Wesley, 'Works of John Wesley: Plain Account of the people called the Methodist' 1989:268.

Wesley did not leave the work to the women alone but established some groups with leaders in every 'circuit' in some places, called 'cell groups' who would go out to perform acts of hospitality in the church and to the community outside the church. Using this model, many people were drawn to the faith of Jesus Christ. The situation today in the Methodist Church of Zambia, as was observed from the findings, is that these acts of mercy have become the work of mostly the women in the church, while the men sit back and receive the recognition when the work has been done.

At the same time, women are still invisible in the church as Sandab asserts that "women often identify this invisibility as a primary problem in society at large and most particularly in the churches. This invisibility of women is maintained by their 'assigned' positions."<sup>129</sup> Because of the position in which the men have placed African women in society, African women are given the taxing responsibility of offering hospitality to the people of God while the men receive the glory. St. Margaret UCZ which was the place of the research is very well known for these acts of mercy that are laid down by Wesley.

*Women themselves attached little value to their own lives.* The women from the Mothers' Union group of St. Margaret UCZ showed from their responses that they did value other people more than themselves. What illustrates this point clearly was the issue of providing services to the church like contributing food for fundraising dinners and also taking care of the male figures who visit the congregation. Kanyoro commenting on African women's identity asserts, "the Biblical image of human beings is that of being created in the image of God. (Gen 1:27-28). The concept of humanity created in the image of God speaks of equality for all the people before God."<sup>130</sup> Nonetheless, most of these women interviewed indicated from their facial expressions that they are not

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<sup>129</sup> Jean Sandab, 'The spider's web of triple oppression' in Kanyoro M.A.R. and Robins W. S. In *The Power We Celebrate: women's stories of Faith and power*. Geneva: Lutheran World Federation. 1992:33.

<sup>130</sup> Musimbi Kanyoro, 'God Calls to Ministry: An Inclusive Hospitality.' in *To be Fully Human..EATWOT Women's Theologies*. Manila: 1988:28.

accorded this equality that the author is talking about but they still go ahead and provide hospitality without first being hospitable to themselves and their households.

Giving reasons why women fail to attach much value to themselves in their practising of hospitality, Oduyoye argues that:

Women give of themselves because they believe that giving ensures life and preserves the life force, face and dignity of others. They hope that maintaining the traditions of sharing as a communal responsibility will teach reciprocity which brings peace, prosperity and blessedness to all.<sup>131</sup>

The idea of African women sacrificing their lives for the sake of others has serious implications for their lives in that instead of bringing peace, which these African women hope for, it exposes them to the dangers of being victims of rape. This danger comes mainly from those men who are guests in their homes. When reciprocity is not there from the people to whom they offer hospitality then the hospitality is not complete since the recipient has not responded after receiving the gift. Acolaste who sees the lack of self-worth of most of the African women as a sin states that:

self-immolation for the sake of the other is equally sin. It is a greater sin than self-assertion which is sometimes a virtue when it is done for the sake of the other. This is because self-sacrifice just for the sake of self-sacrifice can easily become individualistic and very self-centred.<sup>132</sup>

Most women who were interviewed showed that they were performing their acts of hospitality as a sacrifice and not as a way of life or as the answer to the call from God which they enjoyed doing. In agreement with Acolaste, it is imperative that Women develop self-assertiveness and value themselves within their calling as temples of God. Commenting further on what the writer called as the sin of African women, Acolaste argues that “if who we are and who we are to become is left to go to waste and we live sub-human lives then we are in effect throwing the gift we have been given in God’s face.”<sup>133</sup> The women in this study however, did not know that a lack of self-value is like not appreciating the way God created them as women. The idea of giving in to

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<sup>131</sup> Oduyoye, 2001:113.

<sup>132</sup> Esther E. Acolaste, ‘Rethinking sin and grace’ in Njoroge J. N. and Dube W. M. (eds.) *Talitha Cumi: Theologies of African Women*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 2001:131.

<sup>133</sup> Acolaste, 2001:132.

dehumanising situations in the name of hospitality was not considered to be sin by these women; instead some of them saw giving in as a sacrifice that brings them closer to God.

*Incest and rape in the house.* Commenting on the same issue of incest as a cultural norm, Dube quotes Kanyoro who discusses cultural hermeneutics arguing that African women cannot work from premises that celebrate “all cultural practices regardless of their negative impact on women.”<sup>134</sup> From the findings of the research recorded earlier on in this study, it was evident that African women need to carry out their gender analysis based on both the Bible and African culture so that issues like incest and other oppressive acts of hospitality practised on women can receive some form of enculturation. The story of Tamar, which was the main focal point for the research findings on African women’s understanding of hospitality in UCZ Zambia, is one that gives a very good example of how sexuality and hospitality are intertwined in African culture. In the hope of trying to be hospitable to the brother who was sick, Tamar is trapped in a sexual scandal. Commenting on the issue of incest Laffey points out that:

“feminist interpretation points to the woman as a victim of incest and rape. She obeys her father David’s request to provide for her brother Amnon but David does not provide for her when she speaks out to uphold the laws of Israel.”<sup>135</sup>

There is need therefore to look at enculturation in terms of the relationship between the gospel and African culture if the problem of house rape and incest has to be handled effectively by both the church and the community.

*The need for counselling.* This was mentioned by the last two women interviewed during the personal interviews. They felt that the church should provide a safe place where victims of incest and rape could receive counselling. The only way the church will be made to realise that incest and rape are dehumanising women and exposing them to the dangers of HIV/AIDS, will be to get them involved in such issues as counselling. The best way to do this kind of counselling is by allowing women and young girls in the

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<sup>134</sup> Musa Dube, ‘Introduction: “Little girl get up!”’ in Njoroge, J. N. and Dube, W. M. (eds.), *Talitha Cumi: Theologies of African Women*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 2001:19.

<sup>135</sup> Laffey, 1988:123.

church to break the silence surrounding their lives and talk about the dehumanising things that happen to them both at home and in the church.

### **5.7 Conclusion**

In concluding this chapter which looked at the research findings, as a women theologian, the researcher would like to mention that carrying out research on topics like hospitality has some implications that the male members in the church seem to always make regarding one's presence. This however did not affect the findings as the group involved in the research was ready and available to provide the information needed for the research. The subject of African women's hospitality although it is the larger part of the church's ministry, is mostly ignored by the church. This was evident in the way that the church positioned African women's hospitality in its ministerial hierarchy. The church has not viewed African women's hospitality as being a ministry that is part of the backbone of the church but instead has regarded it as the women's duty that must be done. Most African women in their homes also suffered the pain of offering hospitality to their relatives who did not appreciate them as people who also need to receive some kind of hospitality. For this reason it will be imperative to discuss ways in which the church can be helped to appreciate African women's hospitality and this will be looked at in the next chapter.

## **Chapter six**

### **Conclusion**

#### **6.0. Introduction**

This chapter concludes the work covered in this dissertation, its aims are to give a brief summary of the work covered, to discuss some of the issues that may have been raised in the dissertation and to provide a recommendation for further research on the topic of the practice of hospitality among African women. In summarizing the work covered, the chapter will deal with African women's understanding of hospitality: how African women viewed hospitality, some of the dangers of African women's practice of hospitality and how African women have managed to continue practising hospitality amidst obstacles and risks that endangered their lives. The other thing this chapter will examine is how cultural hermeneutics used in the study helped to uncover some of the cultural practices that acted as a barrier to African women's practice of hospitality.

#### **6.1 Summary and concluding remarks**

The concept of African women's hospitality as it has been discussed in this study takes on different dimensions especially in the way it is being practised. Each practice undertaken may have resulted in either a positive or negative attitude to African women's lives depending on how it affected the people to whom it was being practised. Although African women have valued their acts of hospitality, the consequences these women had to suffer in their practise of hospitality has caused some of them to question the validity of their calling to be hospitable to all humanity including nature. This was reflected in the findings of the research.

Hospitality in the Old Testament had a very strong emphasis on the need to welcome strangers and the sojourners. The acts of hospitality reflected in the New Testament provide a very good example for the church to follow if it is to make African women's hospitality effective in the church. Jesus and the Apostle Paul encouraged both men and women to practise hospitality. The inclusive kind of hospitality practised by the early church saw the growth of the church in many ways, because both men and women were

involved in the ministry of hospitality for the benefit of the church. The activity undertaken by Abraham, Sarah and the servant in providing hospitality to the strangers reflected inclusiveness that the church should emulate if African women's hospitality is to be meaningful to the church. Njoroge asserts that:

Jesus called women and men to follow him forming a community, which entered into solidarity with the suffering to eliminate the powers of evil. Jesus' community is the church and is hereby challenged to revisit its calling and work towards eliminating sexism, which for too long has caused great suffering at home, church and society. Both men and women must undertake the task if any change and transformation is to take place. Bringing life into the world is a community responsibility and so is the task for nurturing and caring for all life.<sup>136</sup>

Another important factor reflected in chapter three is the different ways in which African women's hospitality has been practised. In this chapter, it was established that through different ways, African women's hospitality has been misrepresented. This perversion of hospitality has resulted in the dehumanisation and oppression of women. Issues like the relationship between sexuality and hospitality have left most African women in vulnerable situations; like being forced into sexual relations and suffering rape.

According to Oduyoye, in African women's theology, 'hospitality' is a word that generates the themes of caring, providing, helping, sharing and ministering to the needs of others and most often the concept of mothering. Oduyoye also observes that African women experience traditional practices of hospitality that are accompanied by risk of disease and violence, not to mention economic strain.<sup>137</sup> Mothering is one of the main attributes of African women's hospitality. As these women use their God given mothering spirit, they are able to reach out to those who are in need of care, nurturing and ministry of any kind. This gift of hospitality however does not come without risks. As observed in chapter three and four, African women's practice of hospitality has many risks to which women are exposed.

As part of the African culture, African women's hospitality should be seen through the eyes of enculturation. Since African culture is not static, it is important to revisit some of the cultural practices that are practised on women in the name of hospitality. The issue of

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<sup>136</sup> Njoroge, 1996:12.

<sup>137</sup> Oduyoye, 2001:46.



seeing hospitality as a cultural practice was reflected when issues of levirate marriages and incest in the homes were discussed. These practices and others, like the offering of women to visitors for sexual pleasure as a way of welcoming these visitors, should be done away with because they only expose these women to sexually transmitted diseases and make them be seen as sex objects.

The issue of economic hospitality and how it affects African women's practice of hospitality was tied to the idea of land possession and women's productive roles in the community. Some of the facts discovered in this section were that African women, who in most communities are the main producers of food, were not able to own land. This was evident among most ethnic groups in Zambia. The fact that these African women were not able to own land made it impossible for them to produce enough food which they could use to feed their families as a way of providing hospitality. The other issue concerning economic hospitality was the idea of providing income generating activities for the African women so that they would be able to generate funds for use in their practising of hospitality. Globalisation and structural adjustment programmes were also viewed as hindrances to African women's practice of hospitality.

The influence of HIV/AIDS on African women's practice of hospitality showed that particularly when HIV/AIDS enters the home, the larger part of the family responsibility is shouldered by the women. As caregivers and providers of food during the illness, African women have had to extend their love and hospitality to these AIDS patients even in situations that brought risks into their lives. This kind of hospitality is very common in most African communities today. From the groups interviewed, it was discovered that HIV/AIDS had influenced their acts of hospitality to the extent that some of them ended up being vulnerable to the disease as they offered their hospitality to the people who were HIV positive. Women, who believed that hospitality is a gift from God and to be hospitable is showing obedience to God, saw the need to continue offering hospitality to these people with AIDS. They therefore agreed with Nicolson, who says:

....we have no choice about ministry to those with Aids. All of us are part of the problem. We share in a world, which has created the conditions for Aids. We are committed, as the people of God to those who suffer with it. We cannot be God's

people and not minister to people with Aids. And since we are all hurting with Aids, even though we may not know it, we all need ministry too.<sup>138</sup>

## 6.2 Recommendations

Having worked on African women's understanding of hospitality and HIV/AIDS, it was discovered that the issue of African women's hospitality has not been covered effectively in the theological world of research. To this end, I therefore recommend that African women's hospitality receive a further attention in the following areas:

- *Reciprocity in African women's hospitality:* The idea of hospitality being reciprocated should be taken very seriously if African women are to continue in their practice of hospitality without much hardship. It is important that these African women themselves also receive some kind of hospitality so that they are not there not only to give of themselves to others but also receive hospitality from other people.
- *African women's hospitality should be inclusive;* This would call for both men and women to work together in order to achieve the required model of African women's practice of hospitality. There is need for the men in both the church and outside the church to appreciate what the women are doing. As Oduyoye says: "not until we say that what hurts women also hurts the entire body of Christ, we will in truth be able to speak of one body."<sup>139</sup> Inclusiveness helps both men and women in the church to appreciate the ministry of hospitality as a calling for the body of Christ and not for women alone.
- *The issue of incest as a cultural practice;* This is another problem that has affected African women's hospitality. In the name of valuing African culture, men in some most African societies take in African women for sexual relationships or marriage. The African culture of having sex with a relative has been associated mostly with the practice of hospitality. This is because African women who are taken in marriage by their relatives are taken on the understanding that they are replacements for a deceased wife or aging relatives.

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<sup>138</sup> Ronald Nicolson, 'God in AIDS; A theological Enquiry.' London: SCM Press Ltd. 1996:86.

<sup>139</sup> Oduyoye, 1995:182

Most African women who are found in this kind of situation are not given a chance to decide whether they want to be involved with these men or not. As the women extend their hospitality to these men, most of them find it very difficult to live with the pain of knowing that what they are doing is against their will. It is therefore important that the church readdresses the issue of incest so that this cultural practice can be abolished completely by the church.

- *The issue of counselling:* African women who have been involved in acts of hospitality that are dehumanising to their lives need to be given special counselling sessions. Some of the incidents for which counselling will be recommended are those where African women are vulnerable to sexual abuse while they are in the process of offering hospitality to a man. African women who have also been experiencing stress and discouragement in their practice of hospitality will need to undergo some kind of counselling that will help them to see the work they are doing as a gift from God. Examples of such women are those who are involved in care-giving for HIV/AIDS patients and orphans.
- *Teachings on African women's hospitality:* The church needs to develop new teachings on African women's hospitality that will be able to discourage the idea of abusing African women's hospitality. The church should be able to appreciate that since most of these acts of hospitality practised by African women are done within the church, the church also stands to benefit through them. The church therefore should act as a nurturing place where African women find encouragement and support as they endeavour to continue in their practice of hospitality.
- *Opportunities for women within the church:* The church should also realise that it is within the church that African women hope to find opportunities to express their God-given gifts. Since hospitality is viewed as a gift from God, African women need support from the church if they are to be effective in their practice of hospitality. Paul's teaching (1Corinthians 12) that the church is a body with various parts each performing a different function, yet having the same honour,

should be embraced by the church as part of the church's response to women if the church is to understand African women's practice of hospitality.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

African women view hospitality as a God given gift which the church should embrace if it is to be relevant to the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Just as God commanded the Israelites to be hospitable to the strangers and the sojourners so is the church expected to extend its hospitality to all those who may be in need of it. African women who are also part of the church are all called upon to be hospitable to the people of God. Their hospitality should be seen as part of God's salvation for those who receive it. This is because African women have always understood their hospitality as a way in which God wants to provide salvation to God's people through them. This however does not mean that the church should take advantage of African women's hospitality in such a way that it oppresses these women as they practise hospitality. The church should instead aim at denouncing any form of oppression that might hinder African women's practice of hospitality.

The idea of contextualizing the gospel using a gender sensitive cultural hermeneutics should be seen as the only way in which the church will be able to deal effectively with some of the harmful African cultural practices imposed on women's lives in the name of hospitality. The church and the community should look at the context in which African women's hospitality is being practised and the cultural practices associated with hospitality. Finally, African women's hospitality is a practice that has benefited both men and women. It is therefore important that this practice, when revisited critically should be encouraged among the community of believers so that it continues to help extend the kingdom of God.

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## List of participants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Date of interview</b>
Joyce Kuyemba	29	25/06/2004
Katongo J.C	41	25/06/2004
Ireen Zimba	34	26/06/2004
M. Kanyimbo	68	27/06/2004
Chansa Mufana	41	27/06/2004
Joy Kabwe	48	27/06/2004
Molly chisanga	32	27/06/2004
Besta chitunda	46	27/06/2004
Dora kapambwe	46	27/06/2004
Catherine Phiri	48	27/06/2004
Susan Musonda	65	27/06/2004
Win Moyo	66	27/06/2004
Lizzy Muwowo	72	27/06/2004
Mary Kazabu	55	27/06/2004
Dorothy Kangwa	44	27/06/2004
Mr Miyoba Mainda	35	30/06/2004
Felistus Kuemba	25	1/07/2004
Belinda Phiri	33	1/07/2004
Julia Mudzimiri	38	1/07/2004
Mrs G. Chirambo	47	1/07/2004
Lilian Mfula	29	1/07/2004
Decoaness Sikaonga	38	1/07/2004
Mauren Kamangu	34	1/07/2004
Mrs. V. silungwe	76	1/07/2004
Mrs H. Mubiana	36	1/07/2004
Mary Siame	65	1/07/2004

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Date of interview</b>
Mary Chanda	61	1/07/2004
Bana Bwalya	70	1/07/2004
Mrs L. Mubita	37	1/07/2004
Bana Mwewa	66	1/07/2004
Violet Mwila	57	1/07/2004
Mr. Chuma	46	2/07/2004
Mr Paul Musonda	29	2/07/2004
Evangelist Mwila	42	4/07/2004
Harrison Chola	53	5/07/2004
John Mwale	48	6/07/2004
Danny Siansonde	32	6/07/2004
Kingsley sikalenga	35	7/07/2004
Nolia Mutambo	40	11/07/2004
Paul Saime	36	11/07/2004

**Questionnaires No 1**  
**Questions for the Bible study group**

Name.....

Marital status.....age (optional).....

Name of your congregation.....positions held in the church .....

Identify any form of hospitality that may have been demonstrated by any of the characters in the rape of Tamar? .....

How did each of these characters mentioned demonstrate the act of hospitality?.....

How do you make connection between HIV/AIDS and African women's hospitality both in the church and society? .....

Is there any relationship between the church's response and the response of the male characters in the story of Tamar's rape in relation to African women's hospitality?.....

Suggest any solutions that will help resolve some of the problems affecting African women's practise of hospitality? .....

## Questionnaires No 2

### Questions for individual interviews

Name.....

Marital status .....age (optional).....

Name of your congregation .....positions held in the church .....

What is your understanding of African women's hospitality .....

Do you think that African women are still practising the kind of hospitality that has been practised in your community before.....? If yes what are some of the acts of hospitality that these women are involve in? .....

If African women are no longer practising their hospitality as before what do you think has led to these changes?.....

Do you think that African women should continue practising hospitality in view of the HIV/AIDS and economic hardship? .....

What is the position of the church on African women's hospitality?.....

If African women are to continue practising their hospitality effectively suggest some of the ways in which the church should handle issues relating to African women's practice of hospitality?.....