

***“Becoming a Christ for your neighbour”*: exploring Luther’s
notion of neighbourliness in light of *ukama* and *ubuntu* in
the Zimbabwean Lutheran church**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of MTh (Theology and Development) in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

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ABSTRACT

The history of conflict in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ) has had negative results for the life of the church. This history has seen at its best the disintegration of the strongest social cords that ever existed, including the indigenous resources *ubuntu* and *ukama*. In the communal life of the Shona and the Ndebele in Zimbabwe, the concepts of *ukama* and *ubuntu* challenge, in a neighbourly way, negative views that people hold against each other. This position is strengthened by Luther's teaching on neighbourliness through the metaphor of "becoming a Christ for your neighbour." This metaphor expresses the deeper relationship that exists within members of the same faith shared with those outside their boundaries. Luther's notion of neighbourliness can be combined with the local resources to achieve unity and break tensions within the local communities in Zimbabwe. Divisions and tensions tarnish human identities and mar the future potential of people in the country in general. Besides, the tensions and divisions distract the vision and purpose of the church in society. An indigenous African theology of unity can be constructed to counter the dehumanization of humanity. This study attempts to construct a local theological framework of unity that can guide the ELCZ in the continuing divisions and tensions that exist.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my wife Siphilanzima and our son Anotidashe Tanatswa. They both reminded me through practical ways how connected and interconnected we are to each other as a family and to the rest of the world to which we belong. Such love through belonging and connectedness kept me warm and focused in my study. May that love shared through the concepts of *ukama* and *ubuntu* continue to bind them and shape them in this world in a way that people will always remember the unity of humanity.

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Chapter One

Introducing the study

1.1 Introduction

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ) has, since its establishment in 1903, harboured tensions within its structures over three different periods of administration. From observations and from the reading of church minutes, a rift is looming in this organization. These tensions might one day explode into permanent ethnic and social divisions which, in turn, compromises the unity of the church expressed in the administration of the holy sacraments.¹ This negative development affects the relationships of people within the present church structures of the Western, Central and Eastern Dioceses. The gradual reversal from a promisingly unified body in 1903 to complete social misery has affected the purpose and dignity of people from different echelons of life. Many struggles to regain dignity and live a life of fullness have occurred but with minimal success. Yet, it could be argued that local indigenous resources are available to settle the impasse such as notions of *ukama* and *ubuntu* evident in the Shona and Ndebele people of Zimbabwe. Relationships, which in this study, are summed up in the idea of “neighbourliness”, which is a social and religious pointer to gaining full humanity. The issue of neighbourliness is central in our time, especially in rural communities in Zimbabwe where human abuses abound due to religious and political intolerance.

Some of the questions we are confronted with when addressing the issue of neighbourliness in the Lutheran church in Zimbabwe include the following: what are the main causes of divisions and impasse in the community?; what insights from indigenous concepts of neighbourliness can be used to bridge the tensions within the community?; how does Luther’s view of the concept of neighbourliness provide a helpful resource for developing a local theology of unity? These questions will be explored and answered through an investigation and analysis of the structures, teachings and minutes of meetings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Zimbabwe (ELCZ).

¹ The ELCZ observes two sacraments that it follows as a fellowship, namely, the sacrament of Baptism and the sacrament of Holy Communion. Both sacraments testify to the unity of the body of Christ.

To answer these questions this study seeks to describe the situation that represents tension in the ELCZ; draw commonalities in the indigenous concepts of *ukama* and *ubuntu* as a remedy to this tension; articulate this as an appropriate indigenous resource base that can be used to build an African Lutheran theology of unity. As local Shona wisdom asserts, a solution to any problem is found in the problem itself. So a discussion of the background information may help in unpacking the problem which will in turn help in the formulation of the solution.

1.2 The context of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe

The ELCZ has a three-pronged strategy of evangelization that it practices through preaching, teaching and healing as evidenced the establishments of churches, schools, and hospitals (Bhebe 1984:126). These values of preaching, healing and teaching as an appropriate means of humanization have been in existence since it was founded. This strategy of evangelization builds on the prophetic role of the church in community and hence marks the extent to which the church is connected to the community. The three strategies of preaching (representing faith), teaching (representing knowledge), and healing (representing health) continue to be the major concerns of the ELCZ.

The church worked largely under the tutelage of white missionaries from Sweden from the time of its establishment in 1903 up to 1975 when the first black bishop was elected (Bhebe 1984:12ff). The first three people commissioned by the Church of Sweden Mission (CSM) were Reverends Axel Liljestrang and Adolf Hellden and Jeremias Makubu, a Zulu speaking evangelist from South Africa who accompanied them (Söderström 1984:19). His presence bridged the gap between the missionaries and the local people. Generally missionaries became good neighbours to the communities they visited. As a result “the missionaries brought the Gospel to Africa but indigenous Christians, evangelists and teachers, brought the Gospel to the Africans.” (Söderström1984:34). Unlike their white counterparts who wrote letters back home, these African helpers engaged local people directly. Their traditionally despised voices were the most important ones for the local churches at that time. An important feature of the early Lutheran church in Zimbabwe was that people from different race and ethnic groups journeyed together.

The church devised a two-tier system, one for the Swedish people and the other for the local people in Zimbabwe. These structures were for ‘convenience’ yet at the same time divisive. One

of the early missionaries, Skold, before he became a pastor, commented that the Church of Sweden Mission was “indolent and careless for the mission in Rhodesia” (Söderström 1984:30).² This institutional passivity, as will be seen later, is what triggered a serious crisis in the ELCZ. The ordinary people lacked meaningful pastoral connection with the missionaries. The names of some people such as Kleopas Hungwe (who became the first convert of the Lutheran church in Zimbabwe in 1911, and was also one of the first evangelists in 1912) were left as “dead names”³ in the church records. As late as 1924 when the church had 24 evangelists a “grave problem” faced by the church was a lack of “proper training of the evangelists” (Söderström 1984:36). Some of the evangelists were given very basic training after baptism and others were trained at Morgenster by another denomination.⁴ This seems to support Idowu’s assertion that today African leadership is inadequate both quantitatively and qualitatively (Parratt 1987:13). An aspect of quality leadership is relevance to the language and practices of the people.

Even though the missionaries arrived in 1903, it was only in 1928 that the first translation of the Swedish liturgy into a local indigenous language was completed. Even then, the translation completed by Elisabet Bernander was duplicated in two versions “one complete, to be used by the missionaries, and one abbreviated to be used by the evangelists” (Söderström 1984:33). The full liturgical structure was therefore not easily accessible to the majority of the members. Structurally this showed a divided church. Despite attempts from time to time to indigenize the African church, to use Parratt’s language, “very little emerged in the way of genuine African Christian thinking” (Parratt 1987:1). Local leaders expected a religion in which they would take on leadership responsibility and reach the most sacred places without restrictions. This was not so, especially for the evangelists who were restricted from conducting certain religious rites. Some missionaries were automatically senior to their black counterparts despite age and training. For example a white deacon was head of the ELCZ even though there were black ordained pastors and senior evangelists available.⁵ Despite the hiccups experienced during the initial years “indigenous co-workers faithfully carried on the work” (Söderström 1984:32). However, many

² Rhodesia is the colonial name given to Zimbabwe by Cecil John Rhodes.

³ “Dead names” referred to those people who appeared in church registers but were physically no longer attending church.

⁴ Morgenster was a Dutch Reformed church training centre where evangelists Petrus Kgobe and Jeremias Shumba got their training. Samson Sibanda and Kleopas Hungwe also received their basic training here.

⁵ Skold became the head of the church in Zimbabwe although he was not yet ordained.

historians do not mention the work done by these local people but just state their presence without indicating their proper duty and identity.

This structure of black and white churches within the Lutheran church was not openly challenged because of the hope that things would get better one day and benefit all people. That pattern of failure to challenge wrong practices by administrators became a recurring weakness of the church. The white establishment was far more self-sufficient than its black counterpart. Up until 1931 the church did not have a local pastor to do work in this nascent church. Some pastors were trained and ordained from 1931 onwards to pave a way for black leadership. The training of Rev J Hove in 1931 marked the beginning of a major change in the church but this process also had its problems. One problem as alluded to earlier had to do with the false hope that the Lutheran family would overcome that natural division between black and white by the preaching of the word of God alone. However, with the training of the local pastors division became inevitable. The first division resulted from a decision to demarcate Deaneries along ethnic Ndebele/ Shona lines. A lot of infrastructural and human development was sacrificed during this period of the so called Deanery growth. The true colours of who this local church can be is seen when the leadership of the church is elected. A case in hand happened in the deployment of Rev Hove and Rev Mathibela; it was evident that the problem had spilled over into ethnical divisions. These problems which were overlooked for the sake of church progress are evident in the divisions and tensions currently haranguing the church.⁶ For example, when the current Dioceses were instituted, the self acclaimed representative structure of pastors in the church called ELPAZ (Evangelical Lutheran Pastors Association in Zimbabwe) became a non-starter. The structure was unconstitutional and did not have any serious recognition in the church constitution. Observation by many pastors is that ELPAZ was formed to pacify pastors who would freely contribute and make suggestions to the organization that never went anywhere with these issues.⁷ The ethnic divisions first introduced by the missionaries have continued to play themselves out in both the church and society in Zimbabwe.

⁶ Söderstöm (1984:32) shows how the ordination and deployment of the first pastors, Rev J Hove and Rev Matibela were in the first place problematic. One (Rev Hove) who was senior was deployed to a rural setting while the other was promoted to the position of a Dean although deaneries had not been demarcated physically. These two pastors were divided by availability of resources which resulted in them not working together as good neighbours thereafter.

⁷ The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Zimbabwe constitution does not mention the presence of this association.

As Bhebe (2004) shows, the arrival and establishment of the first missionaries in the rural district of Mberengwa fuelled, to some extent, a history of warring conflicts in Zimbabwe. The original struggle was there between black and white rulers. Because of the struggles within the black liberation parties, two political parties were born; the ZIPRA party from ZAPU⁸ was dominated by the Ndebele people. The ZANLA party from ZANU PF⁹ was dominated by the Shona. Around 1975, at the outbreak of the Second Chimurenga war (war of liberation in Zimbabwe), the church got “embroiled in the turbulent and violent politics of Rhodesia...” (Bhebe 2004:126). The same year, 1975, the first black African leader, Bishop J. S. Shiri, was at the helm of the Lutheran church. The story that many people received was that black people had taken over the administration of the church by force. Force, violence and intimidation underlined all communal activities in the areas. Violence has since become a way of dealing with conflict between people of different classes both in church and in the secular world. Banana (1996:30) reminds us that the church “existed and exists within a context where political occurrences may only be ignored at the risk of losing the church’s purpose...”. In this case neither the purpose nor the structure of the church exhibited unity but rather tensions and divisions. Since this political climate has created the relationships that exist in the church today, a look at the structure of relationships among the Shona and Ndebele would be helpful.

1.3 Social life of the Shona-Ndebele communities

Zimbabwe’s population comprises about 98% African, and 2% of other ethnic groups.¹⁰ The Shona people (who make up about 84% of the total population) use the notion of *ukama* to describe relatedness and interrelationships (Murove 1999). The Ndebele (who are about 14% of the total population) also use the term *ubuntu* to refer to humanness and human dignity. Both terms show how one person is in relationship with all others in the community. Although these concepts of relationship used by the Shona and the Ndebele share common meaning with other words in these vernacular languages, there remains some outstanding uniqueness in the concepts of *ukama* and *ubuntu* that this study seeks to explore in light of Luther’s understanding of being a neighbour.

⁸ ZIPRA is an acronym for Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) an armed wing of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU).

⁹ ZANLA is an acronym for Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) which was the military wing of the Zimbabwe African National Union.

¹⁰ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/zi.html> (accessed May 24, 2008).

Shona is one of the three major languages used in Zimbabwe. Most Zimbabweans identify themselves as either belonging to the Ndebele or Shona ethnic groups. This concept of belonging is rich in people's identities in that it makes up a major component of the local people's understanding of humanity. The word "Shona" is derived from the Ndebele word *itshonalanga* ("where the sun sets").¹¹ The original use of the word was derogatory. Continuous use of this term became a generic identity of the people living in the local communities of the Midlands, Manicaland and Mashonaland provinces. The Shona language, which is spoken in six of the eight provinces in the country, is a combination of five major dialects namely Zezuru, Karanga, Manyika, Korekore and Ndau. Karanga is the main dialect in the Midlands province and especially in the Mberengwa district where the Lutheran church has its stronghold. Shona, as Terrence Ranger (1967:12) states, does not relate only to people who live in the area known as Mashonaland in Zimbabwe but in adjacent territories such as Mozambique and Zambia. It is in the Shona language that the idea of *ukama* is used strongly both socially and religiously. Local language impacts strongly on how people practice their faith and relate to each other. The notion of being a neighbour has strong connections to the faith and practices of to the people of Mberengwa. *Ukama* is used to denote relatedness and interrelatedness. It has very close links to the Ndebele term of *ubuntu* as shall be shown in this study.

In Shona society there are few individuals who can go their own way because one is seldom free from the control of, and dependence on, relatives (Kileff and Kileff 1970:78). This connection is not always in the sense of dependence but in the form of sharing. From a very early age a Shona child is taught to share all that he has with his brother, sister or cousin. It is also at this tender age that respect is drilled into children even involving punishment at times. Kileff and Kileff (1970:78) show that even in married life when the wife brews beer, the first people to be called are the closest relatives – those in *ukama*. Men also have the customary responsibility of looking after the wife and children of his deceased brother. There is a strong belief that one good turn deserves another. Another important feature of family unity is a son's duty towards his parents. According to Shona thinking, anyone who abandons his parents is not fit to live and the reason for this is that the person has abandoned the core value of life (Kileff and Kileff 1970:80). From this thinking we can already see that *ukama* has potential to unite people in community. Those

¹¹ Matshobana Ezika available at <http://www.bulawayo1872.com/history/shona>. accessed 27 August 2008.

who joined the Lutheran church in Zimbabwe did not leave the essence of their living behind. As shall be seen in the context of the Lutheran church, the key to membership was not faith but association with others they knew.

The key research question of this study is “How can the concepts of *ukama* and *ubuntu* together with Luther’s concept of being a neighbour be resources of an African Christian Theology of unity within the Zimbabwean Lutheran church?” The hypothesis of this study is that a deeper understanding of *ubuntu* and *ukama* can enrich Luther’s view of what it means to be a neighbour for local communities, especially the ELCZ and so theologically speak to the tensions that exist. When *ukama* and *ubuntu* are combined with Luther’s teaching on becoming Christ for one’s neighbour becomes useful when constructing a theology of unity. This study is an attempt to show that neighbourliness is a local social resource already available for both religious and secular systems that can work towards the unity and healing of the country beginning with religious communities. The study, however, does not attempt to give a full ethnographic study of the Shona and Ndebele communities, nor does it attempt to give a prescriptive text for national unity though knowledge of this work would greatly assist people through programmes of emotional healing.

1.4 Research problem

This study uses African Theology as its theoretical framework. African Theology, as used in this study, embraces a wide range of ideas about “African or ‘indigenized’ Christian Theology and the Theology of African religions that strive to confront crucial socio-political realities of the day” (Shorter 1975:27). It seeks to address issues of liberation and justice as the local people understand these issues. Mbiti (1986:46) identifies three areas of African theology namely written theology, oral theology (produced through songs, prayers, conversations, sermons and stories), and symbolic theology (mainly depicted through art, drama, symbol, ritual and dance). African theology gives preference to issues of the identity and culture of the African people. Some of its main themes include fecundity (because of its esteem of for interpersonal relationships) and “man-in-community” (sic) which embraces three aspects namely “spiritual view of life, the sense of family and sense of community” (Shorter 1975:35). These ideas of community and interpersonal relationships suffered greatly at the disruption of social fibre by

violence and ethnic tensions. The concepts of humanity and family affinity, which used to strengthen religious obedience, broke down and many African people remained emotionless in their religious surrender. In many ways the African Church, and even more so its theology, remained patterned on European models (Parratt 1987:2). As Shorter (1975:35) rightly notes, theology from Africa can teach the whole world about human relationships. The basis of life is in relationship of equal dependence. Hence African Theology does not align itself with orthodox Christian theology for the latter owes “its virtual identification with the *status quo* or the prevailing cultural ethos” (Imasogie 1993:38). To avoid uncritical support of the status quo a local theology of unity has to be developed.

In this study the concepts of *ukama* and *ubuntu* have been put into dialogue with a foreign idea of ‘becoming a Christ for a neighbour’ to construct a relevant theological description of social relationships in the Zimbabwean context. Data collection will focus on content analysis from secondary sources such as books, journals, electronic information and unpublished materials. Church documents such as minutes of meetings are also used. The advantage of using such material is that they have an “obviously ‘constructed’ nature and are a means by which ideas and discourses are circulated in our society” (Terre Blanche *et al* 2006:316). Another advantage of content analysis is that it gives the researcher the language to handle some of the social facts. As Neumen (2006) asserts, the central aspects of social interaction are readily accessible through content analysis. This study will analyze content in the local resources of *ukama* and *ubuntu* in light of how Luther understands the concept of a neighbor in dealing with local tensions.

1.5 Structure of the study

Chapter Two gives the context of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe in light of the problem posed. The chapter shows and analyses the three epochs of administration through which the tensions between the Shona and Ndebele have been built.

Chapter Three discusses and analyses the concepts of *ukama* and *ubuntu*. Their origins and application to the Shona and Ndebele people in Mberengwa district will be restated. *Ukama* and *Ubuntu* represent the faith and practice of the local people in Zimbabwe. The chapter also shows how ethnic tensions promote disparities within communities that dehumanize people. Key factors of each concept are discussed as they relate to the issue of neighbourliness.

In Chapter Four Luther's response to divisions and tensions during his time are outlined. In this chapter Luther's idea of a neighbour will be explored as brought out by contemporary writers on Luther's works. There are four key themes, namely, love, unconditional acceptance, sharing and becoming a unity in Christ that Luther brings together in his concept of a neighbour. Each of these aspects will be discussed.

In Chapter Five the notions of a neighbour, both in the Shona and Ndebele contexts, together with Luther's understanding of neighbour are synthesized. Luther emphasizes love for the neighbour through service and faith in God as the key to godly living. In *ubuntu* and *ukama*, the emphasis is on life and service to the community. Life is fulfilling when looked at through the eyes of a community. In these two categories of understanding (that is, of Luther and the *ukama*), the human community is shown as bearing a divine dignity, through substantial qualities of an individual's make-up, relational connectedness, and functional needs in people. By virtue of being human, individuals have a need to be free yet responsible beings; and many individuals in society need to identify connections through relationships which finally are shown in the communal functions of humanity. Whilst Luther put love as the binding force of community, the Shona and Ndebele put a holistic life as the ultimate goal of all living. Three issues that are placed in dialogue with one another are humanity (*ubuntu* and *ukama*), identity (rural black Zimbabweans) and faith (religion as represented by ELCZ).

In Chapter Six some recommendations that can be used to construct a theology of unity for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe are suggested. The practical implications of *ukama* and *ubuntu* for the ELCZ are discussed. This chapter shows that divisions impact on the very fabric of communal life, all of which need to be redressed.

Chapter Two

Tensions within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Zimbabwe

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has shown that the church is an extension of society and indicated that tensions exist within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ). Chapter Two traces these tensions during the pre-independence era and shows how tension and disunity mounted over years until they reached their climax in the early 1990s. Also discussed are the points of tension that arose shortly after the Church of Swedish Mission handed over the administration of the church to the local people in 1975. The three areas around which these tensions revolved manifested as financial and administration hitches, discipline, and spirituality. These will be discussed in three epochs namely, the first years of black leadership 1975 – 1980, the post independence era of mounting tension, between 1981 -1992, and the years of separated growth 1993 onwards. The periods through which the chapter shall be arranged are not uniform but generally represent the church's five-yearly plans followed by the church.¹² Although these periods have been identified, two of the periods will not be discussed in much detail, and the main focus of this study would be on the ten years between 1982 and 1992. A close look at each area is carried out in an effort to show that the current emotive situation in the church, which is like a time bomb, might erupt one day if there is no attention and intervention.

2.2 The period from 1975 to 1980

The year 1975 marked the dawn of a new era for the ELCZ when the then Rev Dr Jonas C Shiri became the first black bishop of this church (Shiri 1986:1). It was also a year when the protracted war of independence started in the country. However, little did people know that the coming of power was also the beginning of new challenges. Power came with extended responsibility and a need to adjust significantly. This was most evident in the administration of the church which at this stage had already shown some glitches from the previous leadership.

¹² This idea of five-yearly plans is drawn from discussions with H Moyo about church strategic plan and vision during the time of the four bishops namely Bishop J C Shiri, Bishop DD Sphuma, Bishop Dr A Moyo, and Bishop L M Dube, at 29 Golf Road on 24th August 2010.

Before the coming in of Bishop J C Shiri as the new leader, the church was officially divided into two Deaneries in 1962, to mark what later became officially known as the Eastern Deanery and the Western Deanery. The Eastern Deanery was predominantly a Shona speaking area and the Western Deanery was chiefly an Ndebele speaking area. According to Church Assembly minutes CA 31¹³, Bishop Albrekson appointed Rev S Strandvik to become the first Rural Dean of the Eastern Deanery, and Rev M Mathibela to become the first rural Dean of the Western Deanery. In the Eastern Deanery, then, a number of pastors could have been chosen to ease communication between the laity and their missionary leaders, but this option was deliberately avoided. This was the beginning of a “divide-and-rule” strategy. It has been suggested¹⁴ that the possible candidature of senior pastor Rev J B Hove¹⁵ instead of Rev S Strandvik was not taken because Hove often ‘erupted’ in meetings against the Swedish leaders over alleged favouritism. The appointment of two Deans outlined above, was first heard of in an open letter and later confirmed by the church assembly of 2nd July 1962.¹⁶ From some pastors who were there, the development of having Deans shocked the pastors although it could not be challenged openly. However, not long after the handover by the Swedish missionaries to the local leaders, some members of the church, both from Eastern and Western Dioceses, did challenge the abuse of power by the method of administrators handpicking leaders (rather than allowing people to vote) who did not qualify for posts.¹⁷ From the onset we can see how leadership challenges were evident in this nascent church.

Before 1975, the administrative centre of the church was at Mnene and it was moved to Bulawayo¹⁸ from 1975. As already alluded to above, the two deaneries were mainly divided along ethnic boundaries. From a lay person’s point of view, the movement of the Head Office to the city was symbolic of attention away from the Eastern Deanery to the Western Deanery. It seems to be the source of what Musume later expressed in an assembly saying that “all

¹³ CA 31 reporting on the Church Assembly minutes of the 2nd of July 1962.

¹⁴ Personal conversation with Mrs. Moyo, wife to the late Dean A Moyo. May 2010 Queenspark Bulawayo.

¹⁵ Rev J B Hove was the first pastor to complete training in the ELCZ though he was ordained four years later because of lack of funds from the local church to support his ministry.

¹⁶ Appendix 1 of the Minutes of 9th and 10th November 1990 opening remarks.

¹⁷ Minutes of the Church Assembly CA 31 and an undated open letter to Bishop A Moyo about Musume Hospital.

¹⁸ Church Assembly at Masase resolved that the Head Office be moved from Mnene to Bulawayo. Date of the assembly not specified.

Christians were to be treated the same”.¹⁹ Any form of division, especially among the Shona people in Zimbabwe, creates tension because one part tries to outwit the other. The Eastern Deanery had a white missionary spiritual mentor although it was predominantly Shona speaking whilst the Western Deanery had a Sotho speaking leader yet it was predominantly Ndebele speaking. Two brands of Christianity were already in the making as a result of this administrative approach; one rural and the other urban. This has resulted in a permanent line of division creating camps that later rose up against each other as hostile competitors. The understanding of having both deaneries and dioceses was to have one church with separate “districts under the pastoral care of a Bishop.”²⁰ Later Bishop J C Shiri bemoans that “The division which exists in the church started after the creation of deaneries.”²¹ By division here the Bishop meant tension that had started rising within the church structures. In this bemoaning, Bishop Shiri charged the previous administration for creating a mutation people could no longer control.²² An observer quickly notices that an administrative instrument that was set to put order in place was already creating crisis and chaos in the church.

Although the general environment in the ELCZ was peaceful at the time, it is clear that there were bells raised when a Bulawayo parish stated as follows; “*Chigaro chovu Bishop chive nenguva yakatarwa* (The position the Bishop holds should be for a limited period).²³ During this period the country was going through leadership changes, which could have been why people in the church anticipated such.

2.3 The period from 1981 to 1992

While 1975 began unpleasantly with the war of liberation in the country, the year was rosy for the ELCZ which had received its independence from the missionaries. The year beginning 1981 was the first year of joyous hope of independence for Zimbabwe, yet in the ELCZ the situation started to turn sour. In the secular society 1981 was marked with feelings such as this one: “Problems are gathering. Zimbabwe is going through a crisis right now... Strikes occur, but so

¹⁹ CA 28 Minutes of the 28th Meeting of the ELCZ Church Assembly held at Njube Lutheran Youth Center from 12th to 15th August 1982.

²⁰ Minutes of Pastors meeting at Mnene on the 9th to 10th of November 1990.

²¹ Bishop’s welcome speech at a Pastors’ meeting on 9th to 10th November 1990.

²² Bishop’s welcome speech at a Pastors’ meeting on 9th to 10th November 1990.

²³ Church Assembly minutes, December 1980.

far, among those working in education and medical care.”²⁴ Problems had emerged in the financial and social systems in the country as a whole and the church also had its share of problems as shall be shown later in this section. In the ELCZ a move towards self-reliance was already campaigned for. The coming in of black leadership was welcome because it brought power to the people but was not so welcome because it also brought financial responsibility that many saw as a move by one ethnic group to uplift itself at the expense of the other. What is glaringly obvious about the ten years of post independence in the ELCZ, is the gradual mounting of ethnic tension that eventually led to the meltdown of financial, spiritual and administrative structures.

1981 to 1985 were years without much recorded activity in the ELCZ. People, however, wanted to see a smooth handover of the baton from the ‘acolytes’ of the colonial masters. Instead of resolving the issues met in the first five years of leadership, the church continued to grow into the Eastern and the Western camps through the established deaneries, which, according to this study, is as a mutation that eventually led to the final crisis in the early 1990s.

From 1986 the situation did not change much as observed by some concerned Christians.²⁵ In one article that summarized the situation in the ELCZ there were these opening words; “it is with a heavy heart and much pain of spirit that this statement is made. The situation in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe is such that no longer can those whose conscience is pricked by the Holy Spirit remain silent about the divisions and the strife within our church.”²⁶ This statement came when the division of the Western Deanery and that of the Eastern Deanery was more than just physical but systematically antagonistic. The West was for Ndebeles to look after while the East was for the Shonas to control. Any decision and developmental plan had to be sensitive to this unarticulated internal divide. Correspondences and meetings convened showed some aspects of hostility going on within this teething church. A letter dated 22 July 1987 explains why some five council members of the Western Diocese walked out of a council meeting in protest saying that they did not want to be used “as jockeys to ride the horse (Western

²⁴ Letter to C E Zhou, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Zimbabwe, by Tord Harlin. October 28, 1981.

²⁵ Unpublished source. Statement on the current situation in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe. 1991; Bulawayo.

²⁶ For uniformity and ease of referencing this paper shall be referenced as Statement On Current Situation 1991 (SOCS 1991:1.0)

Deanery) for its ungrateful master (the Bishop).”²⁷ The members who walked out of the council meeting were from the Western Deanery while the Bishop continued with the remaining members of the Eastern Deanery. The language of likening some Christians to jockeys and ungrateful masters point to the development of a mechanical relationship among the Lutheran Christian community.

True to the situation at hand is the fact that, “the practical divisions in the Church (ELCZ) prevented [people] from seeing the larger theological issues at stake [then].”²⁸ The church was blind to its own practices because of ethnic belonging. Yet failure to identify the theological issues within an institution may fuel a fire that finally destroys the social fabric. For a number of reasons, it is claimed that the Western Deanery was “without a caring and hearing shepherd for a long time.”²⁹ One reason is that the political turmoil in the country would not have permitted free movement in Matebeleland and the second possible reason is that where tension is present, the work of a shepherd is very difficult to discharge. It is not surprising that the Church Assembly (CA 31) at Masvingo held on the 16th to 17th of October 1987 raised a motion to form Dioceses. This motion was called as a follow-up to the 1986 August 14th to 17th Assembly at Zezani. Separate dioceses would increase the chances of members from each side to rise to the position of a Bishop.

As early as 1987, the question of the formation of dioceses was raised by Bulawayo parish but was later brought to the Church Council by the Dean of the Western Diocese. (The dioceses were successfully implemented in the church some twenty years later in 2006.) The rationale for proposing this seems to be that if the Western Diocese has its own Bishop, then pastoral care would be more frequent. Regrettably, before the deliberations of the day were over, some members walked out in protest. Besides pressing for the formation of Dioceses, Bulawayo parish also noted with great concern that nepotism and favouritism in church appointments was rife.³⁰ Only one lone voice identified as the Provincial Administrator tries to answer and bring sanity in the discussion by saying that “disagreements by church authorities affect those at grassroots level. The leaders must remember that they were chosen to serve the people but not their own

²⁷ Western Deanery letter of petition signed by five Council members.

²⁸ SOCS 1991:4.1.

²⁹ SOCS 1991:2.1

³⁰ CA 31 Church Assembly held at Masvingo on 16th and 17th of October 1987.

interests.”³¹ If such a statement had come from those who held positions of power in the church, tensions were going to be arrested before they got out of hand. As indicated in the first chapter, the traditional Shona culture respects the intervention of a mediator but values even more the equal discussions of the warring parties to avoid further clashes.³² The tendency is that unresolved disputes will reappear again later in life. From the area of tension noted above we find that operations seemed impossible in the church. This was not the last hurdle to cross.

By 1988, the separate Shona and the Ndebele camps were so clearly demarcated that even in the Head Office, certain language clichés had developed as a way of avoiding other ethnic members. However, people were determined to speak out through writing letters, both signed and anonymous. We can judge from the tone of some of the letters and minutes that people were no longer patient with each other. On the 15th of January 1988, a letter signed by seven members of the Western Deanery challenged the position of Dr B Hove as a constitutional committee chairperson since he was already the church’s legal advisor. In another letter, sometime after this, it is stated that “the church is facing a crisis of confidence”³³ and as a result one pastors’ meeting came to the point of electing a delegation of senior pastors to go and speak to the Bishop who was said to have closed himself from the rest of people outside his group. On 19th August 1988 yet another letter was received by Rev N Shava “raising a lot of questions.”³⁴ It is claimed that the “leadership of the church has now opted for whipping up tribal support and surround itself with blinkered tribal and family loyalists to whom is given half truths for fear that if the full truth is given to them it may open their eyes to the shocking realities and also lose their confidence.”³⁵ In other words, the leadership was accused of building an empire of family loyalists based on lies. If this claim was true, both the image and purpose of the church was defeated at the administrative level. What seems to be genuinely an administrative strategy is, thus, used to gain ethnic ground. To control abuse at church level, a council was elected in 1986 but before the end of 1987 both the council of the church and the chairperson of that council

³¹ Appendix to CA 31 Church Assembly held at Masvingo on 16th and 17th of October 1987.

³² The idea is derived from Kileff and Kileff 1970:78.

³³ SOCS 1991:2.2.

³⁴ CA Meeting Minutes of the ELCZ Church Assembly held at Njube Lutheran Youth Centre, 20th October 1990.

³⁵ SOCS 1991:2.3.

were accused of failure to implement what they were voted to do.³⁶ The accusers were known but never given the platform to discuss the matter at a round table meeting.³⁷

Though not explicitly stated, this statement was sounding a vote of no confidence in the elected members of the council.³⁸ Two issues that they had failed to do was “to redress glaring omissions with regard to appointments in the Head office and into other responsible positions in the church,” and to address “issues such as tribalism, nepotism, financial mismanagement, withholding of information, misuse of funds and church property, lack of accountability, distortion of facts and false innuendos...”.³⁹ The list is almost endless but this was a reality in the ELCZ. Further claims were that people outside the church, saw the ELCZ as a “feuding, tribalistic, and financially broke” institution.⁴⁰ Internally, the pastors are said to have been “frustrated” and the clergy were seriously ostracized and facing ‘victimization’ on a daily basis and had reached a point of fearing to meet for “study, prayer and fellowship”.⁴¹ This fear made people to act contrary to what they believed. Where fear rules, people put on a public face to please the powerful yet privately and inwardly they seriously oppose the position. Spiritually some people felt deprived of the services they deserved. This was mainly caused by a lack of a qualified pastorate. Of the 52 ordained pastors only 30 were employed full time.

The problems continued unabated and eventually the whole system almost crumbled with “The decision to dissolve the Interim Council (IC), which was a symbol of peace and reconciliation, and to elect an all Eastern Deanery church Council, effectively divides the church and literally means that it is now run on tribal support to maintain itself.”⁴² It was in 1990 and 1991 when some council members were forced to resign,⁴³ tensions in the ELCZ were constantly reported in newspapers, protest walkouts and singing during assemblies were rife under emotionally charged environments, and when meetings were postponed constantly. The tensions had erupted. In one assembly, ballot papers were grabbed by a delegate and destroyed before the

³⁶ Personal conversation with former Dean SSM Vudzijena on 14th August 2010 in Bulawayo.

³⁷ From statement of the current situation in Zimbabwe a way forward is suggested of meeting warring parties at a round table with a mediator to iron out creases in the church administration.

³⁸ Church Council is the highest governing board of the ELCZ which implements Church Assembly resolutions.

³⁹ SOCS 1991:2.2.

⁴⁰ SOCS 1991:2.1.

⁴¹ SOCS 1991:2.4.

⁴² SOCS 1991:3.1.

⁴³ 14th December 1989 in a Pastors meeting chaired by Dean M Moyo who is said to have “strongly advised the pastors from the Western Diocese who were members of the Church Council to resign with immediate effect.”

process of election was over.⁴⁴ On two Sundays, church services at Mzilikazi and at Thsabalala were almost halted due to staged demonstrations that were organized with media people invited to capture every motion from beginning to the end. In one Church Assembly, a Dean who was chairing the session collapsed and eventually died when respect for order was no more.⁴⁵ No wonder that Mr. M D Marumo and Mr S Mlaudzi advised the CSM that what the church in Zimbabwe needed “spiritual rescue.”⁴⁶ At one point, the Assembly was attended by a Minister of Defence, Richard C Hove in order to handover and discuss the new draft constitution of the ELCZ. The meeting is said to have been conducted peacefully but one wonders what the members of the Western Deanery felt when they remembered what had happened in that region during the Gukurahundi era.⁴⁷ The minutes of the Assembly also indicate that there were vivid memories of bitter conflicts, together with shame and pain at hurts caused to one another and to ecumenical partners.⁴⁸

The nature of the problem was not only social and spiritual, but also financial. Many statements about finances had been made and these did not throw kind words to the administration of the church at the time. The Sunday News of 17th December 1989 claimed that the bishop’s wife received a salary five times more than an ordinary pastor. As a result congregations in Bulawayo such as Waterford and Bellevue did not send their collections to the Head Office until Church Council had to intervene. According to the Church Assembly report (CA32) presented at Chegato the church’s financial status was not in good shape as from 1980 and became worse each year as the years unfolded to 1989.

In 1983 when both the deficit and the bank overdraft rose, a couple of reasons were given as to the cause. There was a general salary increase that year and above that, hospitals were treating patients for free and schools had very low fees. The church has three referral hospitals and five boarding schools whose main source of revenue was the Head Office since all funds were centralized. Institutional spending was more than what they received. Though the deficit

⁴⁴ Bishop’s address to an Extraordinary Church Assembly Number 34 at Njube Lutheran Youth Centre in Bulawayo on 20th October 1990.

⁴⁵ Dean M Moyo is said to have died chairing a meeting when tensions in the ELCZ were at their worst.

⁴⁶ Bishop JC Shiri reported that some members had written to CSM.

⁴⁷ Many people had been labelled as dissidents and killed during that period. Some church members also fell victim to this exercise.

⁴⁸ CA 37 Assembly message from the Bishop on 18th February 1993.

continued getting worse, the church council resolved that no bank overdrafts were to be entertained any more from 1986 onwards.

The church, as Mr Leif Bostrom noted “depended on overseas grant for its running expenses.”⁴⁹ Back in 1984 alone, this represented 54% of the total budget. Some areas noted were that there was lack of control of the finances in general. One of the observations of this audit was that “the cost of running the church has greatly increased yet the income is not as much.”⁵⁰ The question raised is if these signs of divisions and crises remain, what justification would the church have to support its existence? The structures are made by people and can be manipulated though at cost but humanity cannot be altered with the same results and still maintain its dignity.

2.4 The period from 1993 to 2010

Many programmes that began with the introduction of black leadership in the church in 1975 are being fulfilled in this period. These are planned and unplanned. Examples of such programmes include decentralization as an aspect of financial autonomy. The other plan that is currently being practiced now, though vehemently opposed by many people, is the issue of Dioceses. The period from 1993 to date seems to be a period of fulfilment of old plans that started long ago. Though most of these are positive, there is a probability that negative trends might still surface. One of the fiercest trends is that of ethnic division between the Shona and the Ndebele.

The leadership of the ELCZ changed many times from 1993 to 2010 displaying a variety of leadership styles in the church. However, the social direction of the church has not changed. The Western Diocese, which is just a conversion of the former Western Deanery boundaries, still exists without much disturbance. That position maintains the position that existed before of the Western region being for the Ndebele. The danger of this position is that the church can be viewed ethnically without people relating across ethnic barriers. Yet physical unity is a demonstration of the unity of purpose inherent in church teachings. The demonstrations and walkouts that happened in the previous era stemmed from the need to recognize the Western Deanery as autonomous and as important in the body of Christ. If the Western Diocese, which was formerly Western Deanery continues to stand as an ethnic division, it follows that a

⁴⁹ CA 29 held in July, 1984.

⁵⁰ Appendix 2 CA 29 of Financial Statement.

candidate from any two Dioceses available, that is, Eastern and Central may not lead this diocese as a Bishop. Likewise, any member of the church from the Western Diocese may not qualify to lead the Eastern and Central Diocese.

2.5 Conclusion

From the discussion above, it is clear that both laity and the clergy were involved in ethnic tensions and both groups need to take responsibility for this. As a way forward, the “Concerned Christians in the Eastern Diocese” say “We must come together in the fellowship of the communion of saints to forgive, love, and be reconciled so that we can renew our task to spread the word and show concern for all our neighbours.”⁵¹ In saying this, they are acknowledging that it is possible through the “gospel” and the “fundamental Lutheran heritage” which sees us all as a “communion of saints”. This tradition could be used to heal the present breach. Over and above this they say “any solution to the problem must begin with reconciliation.”⁵² I agree with this view although the actual resources referred to only touch the religious side of the people concerned. The other aspect that is left out of this debate is the local indigenous resources of *ukama* and *ubuntu*. These local indigenous resources are the subject of the next chapter.

⁵¹ SOCS 1991:4.5.

⁵² SOCS 1991:3.2.

Chapter Three

Neighbourliness through *Ukama* and *Ubuntu*

3.1 Introduction

Having discussed the tensions in the ELCZ which continued unabated from 1975 until they erupted in the early 1990s, this chapter discusses the traditional notions of *ubuntu* and *ukama* of the Ndebele and Shona people in Zimbabwe. It argues that *ukama* and *ubuntu* are local indigenous resources that could help bring unity and dignity back to divided communities in Zimbabwe. It is through these two concepts that a theology of unity and love can be developed in the Lutheran Church. Unity in *ukama* and *ubuntu* is formative for the community of faith and gives power to weaker groups in society. This unity is a process of humanness that restores the dignity of people since “one’s life is a continual becoming more of a person through interaction with others” (Shutte 2001:12).

3.2 Defining *ukama*

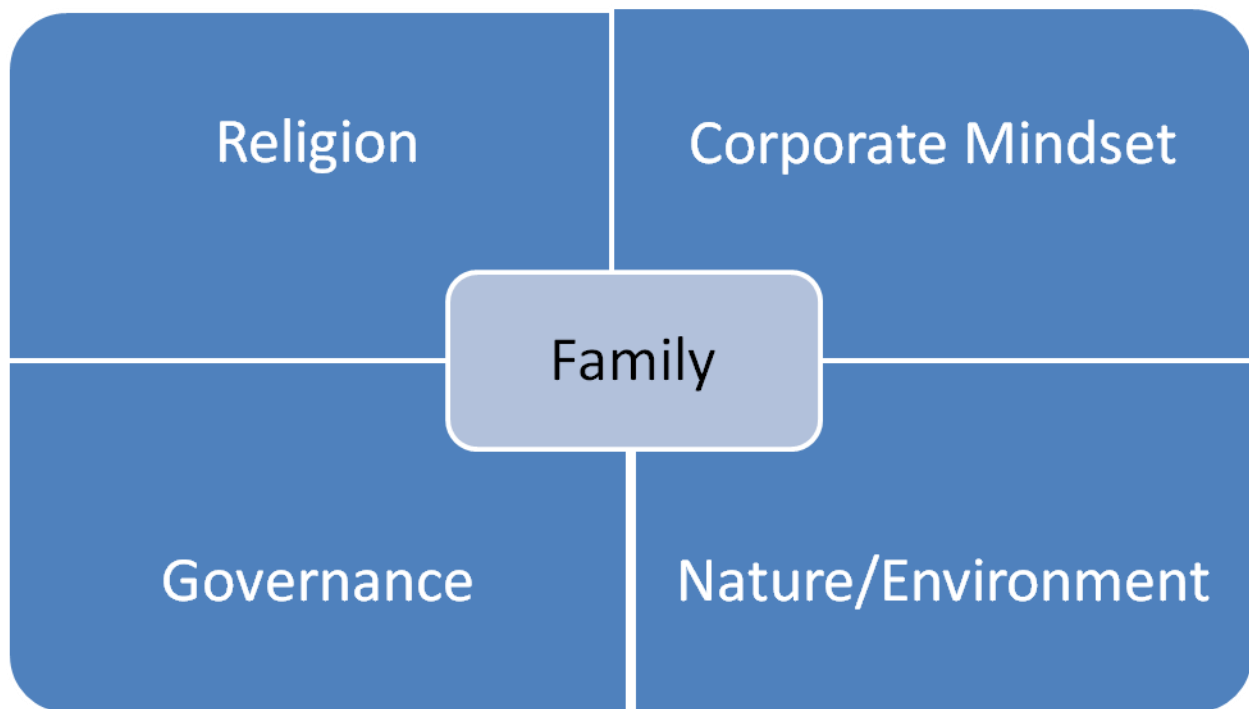
The term *ukama* is an adjective that stresses the importance of relationship between people in the Shona culture. Its root stem is *hama* which means a relative. That relative could be human but the meaning is not limited to that. *U* is an adjectival prefix and *kama* is an adjectival stem. Taken as a word on its own *kama* becomes a word which means ‘to milk’ especially an animal. Milking does not always carry negative connotations, as the “idea of milking in Shona thinking shows closeness and affection” (Murove 1999:7). Milking suggests a connection between the source, the means of livelihood, and the beneficiaries. In *ukama* the *kama* part is suggestive of a relative (*hama*). This might be extended to refer to anyone with whom we share boundaries. Unrelated people (in terms of blood connections) as Bourdillon (1976:34) suggests, can adopt terms like *sekuru* (grandfather/uncle) or *muzukuru* (cousin/nephew) towards each other to express friendly relationship from both the father and mother’s side. “In essence *ukama* is a brotherhood [*sic*] in which members of the group share with one another and find peace of mind through love of all in the extended family group, or clan” (Gelfand 1981:ix). Nuances of family unity are suggested in *ukama*. Potentially therefore, people are related through blood (father’s side) or by social

contract (mother's side).⁵³ Neighborliness is the third type of relationship or connectedness that surpasses paternal and maternal boundaries of relationships mentioned above but still referred to as *ukama*. From this definition, there is quite a lot more that is involved in *ukama* than mere lateral connectedness.

3.3 Components of *ukama*

3.3.1 Relationships

Family is central to all forms of relatedness and interrelatedness of people and nature in Shona culture. Religion, culture, governance and nature are looked at as forms of family extension. Diagrammatically this can be represented as follows:



The structure above was motivated by John Mulinde's⁵⁴ talk in the Trumpet Mission. There are structures or institutions whose legitimacy and functionality can be traced back directly as coming from God. The family, corporate mindset (belief systems), religion, governance and

⁵³ Among the Shona in Zimbabwe, blood relationship is counted when it comes from the father's side. However, people can still be relatives through social contracts such as marriage.

⁵⁴ John Mulinde (AfriCamp 2008) is a preacher on revival that includes all aspects of human life. Although he stated four of the five institutions given above, he did not present it as shown in this study.

responsibility over nature are some of the connectors of human identities. Belief systems guide people in determining right and wrong. Religion helps people have communion among themselves and with God and care for nature and the environment. This promotes responsibility and resourcefulness of people and enhances maximum human potential. The family sets the first educational curriculum of the child which covers all social institutions. The ability to order humanity through structures of power is one of the strengths of governance. Proper family governance acknowledges the divinity of God. The idea behind all forms of governments as seen by the local Shona people is shepherding. A good shepherd looks after the flock and does not just expect to get meat and wool from a flock that is not taken care of.⁵⁵ People become fully human by expressing the relationship they have with God. If all authority to rule comes from God, then any kind of relationship has to honour people by giving them their place as full human beings.

To Zimbabweans, life is only possible within a community of interaction. This community is made up of people and forces that are related. The community is made up of concentric circles of power and respect. As we approach the centre of this community circle, respect increases (Nürnberg 2007:23). The relationships “by blood, by marriage or by mere association (neighbour) are emotionally seated and cherished daily” (Setiloane 1986:9). Every person is related to another person and all relationships are believed to have stemmed from a *pater genitor*⁵⁶ who is ultimately connected to God (Gelfand 1981:128). “The *family* is the most basic expression of solidarity one can find.”⁵⁷ All people are connected in that kind of relationship to each other, and to God. If *ukama* is mainly understood within the confinement of relationships as shown above, then the concept of a neighbour can be likened to a magnet. The nearer one member is to the other, with similar magnetic properties, the stronger the bond. Each individual then becomes a centre of communal attention as much as the progenitor is the centre to the whole community. People are linked both laterally and vertically with ancestors and God. This matrix of relationships highlights the concept of a neighbour.

⁵⁵ The biblical text John 15, though not addressing an African situation, identifies the responsibility of good shepherding.

⁵⁶ A *pater genitor* is the first man (*sic*) who started the clan which has produced a brotherhood of clansmen headed by the chief.

⁵⁷ Nürnberg (2007:23) says the circle is the most basic expression of solidarity... and I have extended his statement to refer to the family as well.

“The idea of community is the heart of traditional African thinking about humanity” (Shutte 2001:12). Since all relationships begin with a family unit, the common understanding is that human relationships grow outwards from the nuclear family through the extended family to connections with nature. The family is interpreted as having been made of both seen and unseen realities. Human connectedness influences and also draws from these realities for continuity. Both seen and unseen realities take on human form, that is, they can be addressed as living beings. Besides identifying with these realities, the family also benefits from them for its stability. In other words life cannot continue meaningfully outside the family images. Within and without these natural and social groupings are also found spiritual beings and above this entire complex is God and other spiritual guardians. This horde of divinities permeates politics, religion, education and nature for the benefit of individuals who make up a family. Blood ties define the family.

As shown above, in religion for example, spiritual forces (referred to here as spiritual guardians) work more effectively for people who are connected either by blood or by consent. Religion is the sum total of human beliefs. Most importantly, for the Shona, religion is there for communion. All males in a family are in line for priesthood. This means, religiously, males enjoy an equal status as link people with other ‘priests’ from other families. Family priests connect the family to God and to the spirit world. The connectedness is a source of relationship which includes everything in the seen and the unseen world. Among the Shona, the expression *mwana wamai* (child of my mother) reserves the best services to those close to us (Bourdillon 1976:34). Other expressions like *zamu guru ndere kwamai* can roughly be translated as “the true relative is the one from the maternal side”. Among the meanings that could be attached to this and other similar expressions is that people are linked through family relationships as children from the same mother. This view covers potential differences that can arise among people. Whatever one does in politics, religion, education or any other social institutions has strong relevance to one’s immediate family. As a result, the metaphor of a family appeals strongly to the Shona as a central image of human relationship. Within this matrix of relatedness values of sharing, love, respect, unity and continuity are exhibited.

The common Shona term for a neighbour is *Muvakidzani*.⁵⁸ Embedded in the meaning of this term is the idea of building together. Good neighbourliness (one-to-one community interaction) is seen in working together. The Shona relationships of *mwana wamai*⁵⁹ (child of my mother) form the hub on which every aspect of life is connected. Before people look at how close their homesteads are to the person next to them, they first consider how they are related by blood, by marriage or by association (Setiloane 1986:9). People sharing boundaries do not automatically become neighbours until they find *ukama* (relationship) with each other. Identity is therefore communally owned: it is a responsibility and a call for everyone to be in *ukama* and one only becomes fully human in reflection of others living around him or her. A neighbour, in the Shona thought pattern, is anyone who shares life and boundaries with the other people in community.

3.3.2 Community

The “sense of being connected, bonded in one common life, informs human relationships and defines behavioural patterns” (Sindima 1995:127). Community is the soul of African life (Shutte 2001:11). *Ukama* sees an individual in the light of the group one belongs to. Usually it is the behaviour of that individual that is used as the pointer to what community the person belongs to. Every person is connected to others and this connection builds a community of relationships. A person’s behaviour is therefore mainly controlled by communal expectations. As mentioned before, in Shona society, few individuals can go their own way because there is hardly any person who is free from the control of and dependence on other relatives (Kileff and Kileff 1970:78). The self is not hidden within oneself (as with *id* or *ego*) but “the self is outside the body, present and open to all” (Shutte 2001:22). This does not mean that individual choices are completely overridden but the individual does exist within an accountable social structure. Transparency is a virtue of people’s connectedness. That openness as opposed to “quiet diplomacy”⁶⁰ is the key to life. Relatedness and interrelatedness with everything in existence is what makes *ukama* unique (Murove 1999:4).

⁵⁸ Gelfand (1981:126) calls a neighbour *sahwira* as someone, especially a neighbour, whose interests are similar to one’s own.

⁵⁹ (Gelfand 1981:ix) says, the principles of Shona way of life basically revolves around their close family relationship or in the expression *mwana wamai*.

⁶⁰ Quite diplomacy is the approach that the then president of South Africa adopted for solving African problems.

The Shona people in Mberengwa district are among other people who view life as a unitary block. This comes mainly from their worldview; they belong to an African traditional worldview which views the “universe as one full of life – life transcending itself through fecundity” (Sindima 1995:1260). The fullness of life is a potential which is only realized when “possibilities are allowed to reach their maximum in personhood” (Sindima 1995:126). To the Shona the world is a unity. All people belong to it; no one is above it and all things in existence are bound together in an “unbroken circle”.⁶¹ People, their resources, belief systems, nature and what makes up their identity is looked at as a whole as summed up in what Sindima says the “African traditional society deals with the totality of persons.”⁶² A person in his/her totality can only be in union with nature and others. Although an individual is a member of a particular family, that individual still belongs to the wider community. Unity is the power of people to overcome any challenges that confront them. Therefore, living by the ethic of *ukama* means seeing oneself in connection with other people (Murove 1999:1). People find fulfillment through an “interpersonal network of life” (Shutte 2001:12; Sindima 1995:127) or web of life that “provides a basic framework of the interpretation of the world” (Sindima 1995:126). The present and transcendent lives are encompassed in this network.

There is usually an appeal to the deceased as part of the web of life in the Shona tradition. Life is not mere existence but participation in the activities of life. “The essence of being is “participation in which humans are always interlocked with one another. The human being is not only a ‘vital force,’ but a vital force in participation” (Setiloane 1986:14). Life is collective and people become fully human by participating. Relationships determine the shared responsibilities. The implication is that tarnishing the face of an individual is tarnishing the face of all people who associate with that individual at different levels of life. Thus conflict with one is conflict with all.

The community is also bound by language and codes of communication that people understand and cherish. As shall be shown later on, language determines the value people accord to others

⁶¹ Tony Balcomb, Prof of Systematics at University of KWaZulu-Natal, uses this term in his Systematic Theology lectures, 2006.

⁶² Sindima (1995:125) says “By interacting with nature, both creation and people give a new meaning of life and through this life discover themselves within the totality of all creation... In the interaction with nature people discover their being inseparably bonded to all life.”

within a locality. There are some statements and proverbs in the Shona language that show the importance of this connectedness and interconnectedness. For example, using proverbs people can discuss delicate matters in discrete and indirect ways (Murove 1999:11).

Examples of proverbs and African wisdom on neighbourliness include “*Ukama makore hunopfekana* (relationships are like clouds; they interpenetrate each other). *Waramba ukama wapa huku yangu upenyu* (Denial of relationships prevents me from serving my chicken). These proverbs would be told to someone who doubts his/her relationship to other people. A person who doubts relationships loses the benefits of connectedness if he/she does not see this relationship with others. Another proverb is *Ukama igasva hunozadziswa nokudya* (Relationship is a half-measure; it finds its fulfillment in sharing (food) (Murove 1999:11). Those who do not want to share food with strangers are usually encouraged with this proverb. Other proverbs include: *Muenzi haapedzi dura* (Entertaining a visitor does not destroy one’s store of resources); *Chindiro chinopfumba kunobva chimwe* (One good turn deserves another). It is important to note from the examples of proverbs given above that the importance of coexistence as neighbours is emphasized through relationships, connectedness and sharing and community. Denial of that coexistence is not entertained among the Shona people who use *ukama*. An explanation of this can be found in Parratt (1987:119) who says, “For man (sic) lives in society. He becomes meaningful to himself and his fellows only as a member of that society”. People have an added value when they share a common life with others and this is the purpose of human existence. “It is the creation of conditions, both material and spiritual, which enable man (sic) the individual, and the species, to become his best” (Parratt 1987:118). The quality of communal life depends on the quality of investment of lives people share with others. Looking at the Shona and Ndebele communities should not leave out this holistic view of people as one community.

3.3.3 Sharing

As alluded to earlier from the proverbs, sharing is valuable to Shona communities. One common proverb under this theme is “*Muenzi haapedzi dura*” which can roughly be translated as “no one can starve by showing hospitality to a stranger”. When people share, the belief is that they do not get poorer but instead store up their riches in another basket for later use. According to Gelfand (1981:24) “... the real joy in a *person’s* life comes from giving to or helping others”. From the

early age of four a Shona child is taught to share all that he/she has with his/her brother, sister or cousin (Kileff and Kileff 1970:78). The teaching on sharing is repeated until the child is able to share spontaneously with other siblings. Sharing is an inbuilt virtue of Shona identity. Shutte (2001:12) argues that freedom as a value is not automatically present in human action. Freedom is inculcated through repeated social interaction. But when people are not sharing and interacting, they are not free, and hence they become less human. “The less free we are, the less free our actions are our own, the less fully human we are able to be” (Shutte 2001:12). Acting contrary to one’s beliefs is an indication of a lack of freedom. One thing that helps someone to act freely is having some resources to share with others. The ideology of *ukama* suggests that one pools resources and skills together for the benefit of all. This brings freedom for all. Freedom connotes independence yet community connotes dependence on others. In *ukama* as in *ubuntu* “the more one depends on community *in a certain way*, the freer one is.” (Shutte 2001:13). *Ukama* is not a theoretical concept but an existential reality which should be enacted through the sharing of food and possessions (Murove 1999:12). Life that is shared is more fulfilling, as deemed by the Shona people, and this understanding is basic to their general view of life.

3.3.4 Love

Connected to the idea of sharing among the Shona is the expression of love. Love is both a demand and a gift. It is a demand in that all people are expected through the social rules to love others. To be indifferent when others need our attention is the opposite of love. Nürnberger (2007:44) rightly observes that “nothing is considered to be so devastating for life in its fullness than secret enmities, grudges, open conflict or insubordination under the communal good.” Both expressions of love or hatred can be expressed openly or secretly by people. Love is a gift in that it is given as an expression of the heart without considering the physical or social status of the other being, hence the proverb *Moyo muti unomera paunoda* (Love is blind - literally - Love is a tree that grows where it desires). Murove (1999:3) argues that the view of native against foreigner, North against South, developed against undeveloped, is to put life into a “dichotomous relationship”. Such a view is exclusivist. On the contrary love is inclusive. It embraces all people including those with limited abilities and resources.

As Shutte (2001:13) observes, “in the traditional African views the world is not composed of things but of beings.” These beings find fulfillment through interaction in love. Love and care unites all people. The usual Shona expression *munhu wese ihama yangu* (everyone is my relative) demands the recognition of other people as more than just close acquaintances. The understanding is that human beings develop themselves and their environments into a unity when they focus on their commonalities more than on their differences. In this context love is used for maintaining community solidarity. “For the development of men, (*sic*) and the development of peoples, demands that the world shall *become* one and that social justice shall *replace* the present oppressions and inequalities” (Parratt 1987:121). The demand for love is a demand for justice; hence love is the displacement of injustice.

3.3.5 Peace

Gelfand (1981:125) rightly elucidates that *ukama* embodies solidarity, collectivism and peace. For peace to prevail there should be justice in the land otherwise the spirit world will be angry. The Shona often talk of the soil getting angry when there is no peace and justice in the land. This demonstrates how people are connected to each other and to nature. Another aspect (not dealt with in this study) is the unity found in *ukama* which brings about reconciliation. But this reconciliatory role of *ukama* only finds fertile ground in the unity through peace that people share in different communities. Shutte (2001:11) shows that freedom in the history of Europe is when people are self-determining or free from the influence of other people. The Shona do not look at peace this way. Peace is not defined in terms of freedom from or freedom to do what one chooses. The determinant factor of peace is community. If the community is not satisfied with one’s choices, then peace is at stake. Although people may not be at war with any tribe or clan, there might not be peace. Peace encompasses the presence of sound health and the absence of war or strife within a community where justice prevails.

3.3.6 Unity

Unity in *ukama* is opposed to division. It needs not be overstated that the aim of maintaining unity in community is to promote justice and shake off the chains of oppression. It is easier to fight oppression when people are united than when they are not. One way of ensuring connectedness is by keeping a common name for the community which may be in the form of a

totem. Totems are identities that families use based on a non-human object or animal. This usually works for a family or clan but in Shona communities it may include everyone within that vicinity. For example the Hove area which predominantly consists of the Hove people, has other totems present. According to Gelfand (1981:9) totems can refer to the close brotherhood of the nuclear family or the wider extended unity beyond nuclear parameters. All people sharing a common totemic title belong to one group. The totems (as a kind of single faith) are believed to maintain continuity and impact on the living in such a way that acting contrary to the totemic lineage causes disharmony and bad luck (Gelfand 1981:9).⁶³ It can also be observed that totemic observances have conservative aspects to nature. For example, those whose totem is an elephant believe that their power is connected to that animal and therefore will not kill an elephant for meat or for trade. One is not a member of the family or clan by individual faith or by what one does but by incorporation into the larger community.⁶⁴

3.3.7 Continuity

Life is continuous and communal. “The traditional worldview emphasizes the communal approach to life” (Mokolatsie 1997:1). The individual’s welfare does not override the communal obligation. To most Africans, a community never dies but continually renews itself by the coming in of new individuals. In this way it maintains continuity. Moreover, to maintain continuity, families are allotted pieces of land that cannot be sold, rented or hired. Each family is entitled to a share. However, it is the male child who is usually entitled to this land portion on behalf of the whole family. Similar traditions of land inheritance called the *nahalah*⁶⁵ were there in the primitive Israel during the period of the settlement. The good aspect of land inheritance is that “under this system no man (sic) could become rich enough to be different from his neighbours and no one could control the lives of others” (Gelfand, M. 1981:9). Land helps

⁶³ All men of this patrilineal clan are linked together in a brotherhood and share a state of harmony (*kunzwanana*). *Kunzwanana* implies a state of understanding of one another and of belonging to a group in which all the blood relations are equal materially.

⁶⁴ Using sexist language Gelfand (1981:9) notes that “Man (*sic*) believes not because his particular belief is proven to be correct, but because it is part of him and arises from his instinct of hope, which in turn has given rise to religious beliefs... Hope has created religion and religion has not produced hope.” It is not in religion that hope is found but in the way people interact. This does not mean to minimize the significance of religion but to point to the fact that whatever we believe should not divide us physically or religiously since we are social animals of interaction.

⁶⁵ Wittenberg (1992:76) refers to the *Nahalah*, an ancestral estate or family inheritance of land. Usually in the *nahalah* was a family tomb. Also see Wright (1990:6).

people out of abject poverty. In the effort to humanize people, the issue of resources and social location should not be ignored.

The Shona people also generally believe that one's life is connected with the dead – the “living dead”⁶⁶ who share life with the living. “Religion is a communal affair, and being an integral part of culture, there can be no separation of the sacred and the profane; our approach to life is holistic” (Moyo and Pero 1988:81). There is no family that can appease or perform ancestral veneration without inviting and telling others about it. If one is caught venerating his/her ancestors privately, that person is likely to suffer scorn from the whole community. Worship and interaction with the life-forces has to be done communally. One does not believe him/herself to be better than others or to go to heaven as an individual as is emphasized in Christianity. People believe to belong. “Life-force”, or what Sindima (1995:135) calls “the vital force” is thus the fundamental reality in the universe that connects people (Shutte 2001:22). According to Nürnberger (2007:22), such “force” which he calls “dynamistic power”, is located in “material objects, natural processes, people, communities, roaming spirits, rituals, witches and their familiars...”. One can talk, interact and move together with these forces. They move along with people through history into people's future. They are also a source of inspiration and hope for what is unseen. But somehow, as elucidated earlier, the string of continuity has been broken by a history of land dispossession, a faith that encourages individualism, and ethnic tensions and divisions.

3.4 Defining *Ubuntu*

3.4.1 Humanness and Dignity

The Ndebele term *ubuntu* refers generally to notions of being or what Shutte (2001:2) describes as “humanness or humanity”. It “embodies an understanding of what it is to be human and what is necessary for human beings to grow and find fulfillment” (Shutte 2001:2). Identity and aspirations of people as a unity are encompassed in *ubuntu*. Desmond Tutu observes well that *ubuntu* “embraces hospitality, caring about others, being willing to go an extra mile for the sake of others... When I dehumanize you, I inexorably dehumanize myself...” (quoted in Coetzee and Roux 2002:329).

⁶⁶ Nürnberger (2007:22) uses this term.

The expression of *ubuntu* is usually found in the statement “*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*,” (a person is a person through persons.) In other words “... a person depends on personal relations with others to exercise, develop and fulfill those capacities that make a person” (Shutte 2001:12). This maxim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* or its Sotho version *motho ke motho ka batho* “underlines the vital importance of mutual recognition and respect complemented by mutual care and sharing in the construction of human relations” (Coetzee and Roux 2002:329). So basic to this understanding is the fact that a human being becomes fully human because of others.

3.4.2 Community

Among the Ndebele, community is also a powerful image as they express the concept of *ubuntu*. “African thought and actions are deeply determined by the community” (Bujo 1998:189). Other people in community define directly or indirectly the quality of life that one leads. As Bujo (1998:189) asserts, “The individual is no longer an “I-for-myself,” but has become an “I-in-the-community-for-others”. Emphasis is on people’s relational qualities of life rather than individualistic traits. Within community expressions of power and service are also evident. It is not about being in “control above everything”⁶⁷ but in finding harmony and fulfillment with everything (Shutte 2001:5). As people move forward they make sure that they move along with others. Participation, respect and seeking the common good of everyone are issues that people place value on. Moreover, “there is no atomized activity removed from other humans who constitute life in the community even beyond death” (Bujo 2005:431). The community has power above individual choices although this does not mean individual choices are completely inferior to community interests. Shutte (2001:9) mentions it clearly that “the community is not opposed to the individual, nor does it simply swallow the individual up; it enables each individual to become a unique centre of shared life.”

3.4.3 Relationships

The ideas of *ubuntu* place people in an “unbroken circle”.⁶⁸ There is no one at the centre of that circle besides the “ideals of a virtuous person” (Murove 1999:11). All people aim to imitate that

⁶⁷ Shutte (2001:5) argues that technology gives so much more control than human beings have ever had before and people come to appreciate more “control above everything.”

⁶⁸ Tony Balcomb, Prof of Systematics at University of KWaZulu-Natal, uses this term in his Systematic Theology lectures, 2006.

ideal person. As with the Shona, the Ndebele also seek to attach relationship to anyone who shares boundary with them. As Bourdillon (1976:34) suggests, people can adopt terms like *sekuru* (grandfather/uncle) or *muzukuru* (cousin/nephew) towards each other to express friendly relationship from both the father and mother's side. When new members join the 'big family circle', not only the circumference of the nuclear family grows but the outer circle of the community grows internally stronger. For example, if a person belonging to the fish totem (*Hove*) joins the one belonging to the elephant totem (*Zhou*) through marriage, then physically that core family has an added member and so has grown. This inclusion of a new member to a nuclear family only helps to strengthen the bonds of closeness. The Zhou family which this new member joins is now automatically joined to the Hove family from which this new member comes. This also means the Zhous and the Hoves are closely related and their relationship is stronger. If we view relationships as growing circle circumferences, the interpenetration of relationships enables one family to become related to others. Using this wider picture, in the rural congregations for example, all members are related to every other member of that parish or congregation. So when people rise against one another, they are tampering with their relationships and networks of their belonging.

3.4.4 Sharing

Ubuntu "resolves the problem of exclusion in bounded reasoning by prescribing mutual recognition and respect complemented by mutual share and caring" (Coetzee and Roux 2002:330). Sharing is done mostly in the spirit of care. Like the Shona, the Ndebele also teach sharing to their children from a tender age. This sharing can be in the form of food or other materials. A child is supposed to share with others of his or her family even if it means that the sharer ends up with too little. They extend the gesture even to sharing of pain and grief. Funerals or disasters bring people together as they contribute to reduce one person's bearing of the whole family burden. During gatherings that involve sharing people find space to discuss how they can overcome particular problems. Sharing is done as a way of incorporating all members into the family circle.

3.4.5 Life

Five characteristics of the Ndebele understanding of *ubuntu* that are shared here are respect, mutual recognition, mutual care and sharing. The aim of these is to promote life. This life is sacred and must be preserved by all means. Each person has space in which all characteristics of human relations are exhibited. *Ubuntu* also illustrates freedom through the life of dependence on others. Life has value in humanness which is only possible through community, partnership and human collaboration.

To the Ndebele shared life, health and faith are possible through physical connectedness and also by being linked to the spiritual world. There is nothing in the physical life that does not involve the spiritual dimension. Illness and even death have to do with the individual's spiritual state. To live is therefore to be able to be integrated into everything that supports dignified life. Therefore, loss of *ubuntu*, as viewed by the Ndebele, is loss of everything that encompasses human worthiness. People only become worthy in relationship with others. "If I exist only in relationships with others, and if the integration of my personality depends on integrating these relationships, then it is not difficult to see that we cannot have integrated persons without an integrated society" (Shutte 2001:24).

Ubuntu again is not materialistic (Shutte 2001:8). People remain people even without material attachments. However, this does not demean the importance of material things to back up one's life. The point is that people should not be treated as inanimate objects or only be considered valuable because of material opulence. The view of people as market forces reduces the proper value of people to that of objects. Although *ubuntu* has also economic implications, "a human being is not just an object that can be understood by science and controlled by technology" (Shutte 2001:8). People are valuable as bearers of precious life even without material attachments.

Ubuntu is not "individualistic in the way liberalism and capitalism are, trying to protect the freedom of the individual by separating them from community" (Shutte 2001:8). Instead one is protected by belonging to a community not by standing aloof from it. People depend and belong to others in order to find the full expression of their freedom. It is only through the lens of community that an individual's freedom can be experienced. An exclusion of the family in issues

of faith is problematic because of the identity and duty attached to it. As with the Shona, the family is a basic unit for human interaction.

Therefore, images and metaphors about the family are held with some respect and honour. Imagining life outside the family confinement is usually unthinkable. Although there is some hierarchy observed in the family, dominance is unacceptable. All inhuman behaviours are moderated by the two key concepts of *ukama* and *ubuntu*. With these ideals family members treat each other as important irrespective of age and gender. The idea of the church as a family is more acceptable within the local communities rather than conceiving it as a multifaceted power structure. With this background we can tell that something is amiss when violence, divisions and marginalization take place.

3.5 Conclusion

There is no real significant differences between the Ndebele and the Shona as far as the view of humanity is concerned. As noted above, community, life, sharing, relationships, justice, love and service all belong together for the benefit of community. All these aspects of life are present in the community living together more than in individuals as they live their solitary lives.

The next chapter looks at how Luther understands the issue of being a neighbour and by implication what it means to be the Christian community and how his ideas relate to concepts of *ubuntu* and *ukama*.

Chapter Four

Luther's concept of neighbourliness

4.1 Introduction

Chapter Three discussed *ukama* and *ubuntu* as viewed by the Shona and the Ndebele people in Zimbabwe. The two concepts of *ukama* and *ubuntu* represent the traditional understanding of neighbourliness. Before the introduction of Christianity, these concepts were sufficient to create space and facilitate dialogue and also used to resolve disputes by checking their actions against their common relationships. However, these local indigenous resources are not enough to articulate a theology that can address the tensions within the ELCZ as presented in Chapter Two. Thus, an examination of Martin Luther's understanding of being a neighbour and neighbourliness is imperative. In the previous chapter, neighbourliness in an indigenous sense has been shown as involving physical and spiritual relationships of the people and nature. This chapter, therefore, explores Luther's understanding of neighbourliness drawn from some of his works from 1520 to his gradual maturity as a reformer and a theologian around 1530. The main works that are dealt with are *The Two Kinds of Righteousness* (1519); *The Freedom of A Christian* (1520); *Luther's Small Catechism* (1529), and *Luther's Rose* (1530). Themes related to neighbourliness are drawn from these major works and an effort made to show how these relate to the traditional views of *ukama* and *ubuntu* discussed in the previous chapter. For purposes of this study, "neighbour" shall be used to refer to a person or persons in community and "neighbourliness" shall be used to refer to the act of staying together as people in close proximity.

4.2 Luther's teachings about the neighbour

Through the *Small Catechism* (1529),⁶⁹ Luther writes quite substantially about the neighbour. In the fifth commandment for example, Luther explains that, "God forbids us to take the life of a fellow sacred; both to us and to our neighbour. In that life, there is possibility of core-existence and support for each other. In this commandment, according to Luther, God forbids us to do two

⁶⁹ The *Small Catechism* (1965) is a question and answer book for teaching new believers

things, first to “hurt or harm our neighbour in his body”, that is, to do or say anything which may destroy, shorten, or embitter his life” and second “to bear anger and hatred in our hearts against our neighbour.”⁷⁰ Furthermore, “We should help and befriend our neighbour in every bodily need; be merciful, kind, and forgiving towards our neighbour.”⁷¹ Besides repeatedly putting the word “neighbour” in these statements, Luther shows that the focus of life is not on ourselves but on the people with whom we co-exist. Concentration on what is personal and internal brings the danger of sin for, according to Luther, a sinner is turned inward upon him/herself (*incurvatus in se ipse*) (quoted in Nürnberger 2005:249). To avoid this inward gaze, one has to consider the welfare of others first before thinking of one’s own comfort. Such thinking that places community values at the centre of human interaction resonates well with the idea of community in the African setting.

Explaining the sixth commandment which talks of marriage and purity, Luther says that “We should fear and love God that we may lead a chaste and decent life in word and deed, and each love and honour his spouse.”⁷² The focus of this sixth commandment is on the lover/spouse as an example of an immediate neighbour. Here, purity is not given a spiritual explanation of chastity alone but is rather linked with practical commitment to the spouse’s need for love and honour.

Another explicit occurrence of the teaching on the neighbour is found in the seventh commandment, which is “on property and business.”⁷³ According to Luther, “We should fear and love God that we may not take our neighbour’s money or goods, nor get them by false ware or dealing, but help him to improve and protect his property and business.”⁷⁴ One way of showing respect to a neighbour is showing respect to that person’s property. In this commandment, “God forbids every kind of robbery, theft, and fraud, as well as sinful longing for anything that belongs to our neighbour.”⁷⁵ A neighbour’s property is forbidden to all outsiders whether it is physically protected or not. For any such property “we should help our neighbour to improve and protect

⁷⁰ *A Short Explanation of Dr Martin Luther’s Small Catechism*, 1965:67.

⁷¹ *A Short Explanation of Dr Martin Luther’s Small Catechism*, 1965:67.

⁷² Luther, M. *Small Catechism*, 1965:65.

⁷³ *A Short Explanation of Dr Martin Luther’s Small Catechism*, 1965:67.

⁷⁴ Luther, M. *Small Catechism*, 1965:73

⁷⁵ Luther, M. *Small Catechism*, 1965:74

his (*sic*) property and business.”⁷⁶ Business partners are not to be fraudulently disposed of their property because they are neighbours.

Not only should people take care of a fellow human being’s physical property, but also be respectful of non-material aspects. In the eighth commandment as Luther says, “... we may not deceitfully belie, betray, slander, or defame our neighbour, but defend him, speak well of him, and put the best construction on everything.”⁷⁷ It is the fear of God that prompts people to act favourably towards their neighbours. In the seventh commandment, according to Luther, five things are forbidden that disturb this unseen reality namely, “... to make any untrue statement against our neighbor in court; ... to belie our neighbour; that is, to lie about him or lie to him or withhold from him the truth in order to harm; ... to betray our neighbour, that is, to reveal his secrets; ... to slander or defame our neighbour, that is, to speak evil of him and thus injure or destroy his good name; and to have evil thoughts against our neighbour or to plot against him.”⁷⁸ Witnessing falsely against a neighbour, withholding the truth and other such malicious acts against a neighbour do not only hurt the person we see but also the image of God in the other person. As shown in the eighth commandment, according to Luther, slander and belying another’s name can completely destroy that person. This applies to both legal battles and social conflict. Luther continues to show what it means not to destroy another’s dignity in two points when he says; instead we should “defend our neighbour; that is, we should take his part and shield him against false accusations” and secondly we should “... speak well of our neighbour...”⁷⁹ Thus the only place that conflict is allowed is in defence of the cause of a neighbour. The neighbour does not need to fight for their own interests but wait for others to do that for him or her.

The same focus is expressed in the ninth commandment in which the concerns for a neighbour are expressed. Luther says in this commandment God forbids “coveting, that is, having a sinful desire for anything that belongs to our neighbour” since such sinful desires “will move us to seek to get our neighbour’s inheritance or house by trickery or by a show of right”⁸⁰ It seems here actions are not treated independent of intentions. The intention has to be correct for the results to

⁷⁶ Luther M. *Small Catechism*, 1965:74.

⁷⁷ Luther M. *Small Catechism*, 1965:76.

⁷⁸ Luther M. *Small Catechism*, 1965:76.

⁷⁹ Luther M *Small Catechism*, 1965:77-78.

⁸⁰ Luther M *Small Catechism*, 1965:78.

be good.⁸¹ Any lasting solution to a problem needs to deal with the source which is the intention of the action. Instead of negative or evil desires, people should rather have holy desires because “such holy desires will move us to help our neighbour and be of service to him in keeping his inheritance.”⁸²

Luther thus opposes any violation of the neighbour’s rights physically or otherwise. As he concludes the teachings of the Decalogue by explaining the tenth commandment he says that “we should fear and love God that we may not estrange, force, or entice away from our neighbour his wife, servants, or cattle, but urge them to stay and do their duty.”⁸³ Although the context that this statement was written could have been influenced by a possessive chauvinist tendency of that time where women and children were taken as property of man, it is also clear that Luther valued the unified and sustainable nature of human being especially as reflected through the family. His concern is with attaining life in fullness which includes respect of the neighbour’s welfare. If property and family is ‘estranged’ from its owner, life in its fullness becomes compromised. In all this, one conclusion that can be drawn is that God acts through a neighbour for everyone’s advantage. Neighbours are there to give each other support. Through a neighbour people experience a fresh revelation of God. But if tension starts among neighbours, the full revelation of God’s plan with humanity is not seen.

Luther concludes that the second table of the commandments (that is, commandments four to ten in the Small Catechism) can be summarised in the commandment “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself (Matthew 22:39)”⁸⁴ Love is usually demonstrated in service. Love and service are themes that are raised from the traditional and even religious viewpoints. Luther explores these themes further in *The Freedom of A Christian* as shall be shown in the next section of this chapter. He devotes over seventy percent of his explanation of the Decalogue to how one must deal with one’s neighbours which is directly a demonstration of being in covenant with God. This is a deliberate diversion of attention from pietistic religion represented by an individualistic covenant between God and humanity, to a religious inclusiveness that sees God through our dealings with other people. Such a focus that is sensitive to the general all-inclusive harmony of

⁸¹ The idea is taken from one of Luther’s sermons in which he talks of good trees bearing good fruit.

⁸² *Small Catechism*, 1965:79.

⁸³ *Small Catechism*, 1965:79.

⁸⁴ *Small Catechism*, 1965:79.

neighbours is helpful in situations of controversy. This suggests issues may be treated separately from the individuals who commit them, an idea that will be explored more in the next chapter.

Having discussed Luther's teaching on being a neighbour, the next section will explain the kind of a paradigm shift and development of Luther's former understanding (around 1520) and his later understanding (around 1530) of being a neighbour. This shall be demonstrated by the two major works namely the "Small Catechism" and the treatise on the "Freedom of a Christian".

4.3 Becoming a Christ for one's neighbour

Korsch (2004:75) explains that a "compendium contains everything, but in an abbreviated, elementary form". Luther uses a compendium (*compendium theologiae*) to discuss many of the themes in his theology known as *Luther's Seal or Luther's Rose*.⁸⁵ It is from *Luther's Seal* that this study attempts to interpret the other two works mentioned in this study, namely, *The Two Kinds of Righteousness* and *The Freedom of a Christian*.

Luther's views about a neighbour developed as he matured in his theology and as a reformer. In 6 September, 1520, a few years after the inception of what later became widespread reformation, Luther wrote a treatise on *The Freedom of a Christian* in which he made two 'propositions' for the "unlearned" which was part of an "attempt to prevent a rift in the church" (Grimm and Lehmann 1957:329). The treatise is notably written in accommodative language as is seen in his letter to Leo X which was "written in a conciliatory spirit" (Grimm and Lehmann 1957:329).⁸⁶ The propositions went as follows; "a Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none" and "a Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all" (Grimm and Lehmann 1957:344). These statements look contradictory at face value, but Luther's explanation of them shows how they complement each other. Let it suffice that such a paradox in his statements reflected the tensions it was addressing. Freedom and duty are placed together as Christian values. Though these values complement each other, they are always in constant tension.

The Freedom of a Christian is suitable to give this study a language that can be used in a situation of conflict. Luther says "Although the Christian is thus free from all works, he ought in

⁸⁵ Korsch J. (2004) argues that Luther's seal can be used as an elementary tool to interpret Luther's theology.

⁸⁶ Early works by Luther had been written in a much more attacking tone.

this liberty to empty himself, take upon himself the form of a servant ... be found in human form, and to serve, help, and in every way deal with his neighbour as he sees that God through Christ has dealt and still deals with him” (Grimm and Lehmann 1957:366). It can be deduced from this that Christian service is free and humbling like that of a servant, yet done in honour of what God did and continues to do in our lives. The yardstick for Christian duty is what God through Christ has done to the entire human race. All human work for the neighbour is thus seen as duty in response to what God has already done for us. This thinking is largely taken from Pauline theology as expressed in Philippians 2:6-7 in which Christ, who was God, never esteemed himself above the human race. In humility Christ came to serve people who never deserved any service by right of their good works. That work is, however, done not through contrition but through free response to what God did for humanity.

Therefore, in response to the “pleasing and acceptable” “inestimable riches” brought by Jesus, Luther says, “I will therefore give myself as a Christ to my neighbour, just as Christ offered himself to me; I will do nothing in this life except what I see is necessary, profitable, and salutary to my neighbour...” (Grimm and Lehmann 1957:367). It is this service of love given to others for no remuneration that is, “becoming a Christ for a neighbour”. To put it in other words Luther says, “Christians are called to different vocations but with one purpose, that is, wholeheartedly to serve the neighbour” (Yuen 2005: 119). Nürnberger (2005:250) asserts that becoming a Christ for a neighbour is, first and foremost, accepting other people without setting conditions, but tolerating their shortcomings and suffering under their unacceptability. In this expression there is an awareness that human beings are naturally unacceptable to the other human beings and more so before God because of a natural inclination to consider oneself better than others. Yet God, through Christ, meets humanity in their weaknesses as a way of raising them to the level of God. This is the first wonder brought to a neighbour – being raised to a position of Christ. In the second instance, we become a conduit through which the power and the love of Christ flow to our neighbours (Nürnberger 2005:250). Since God is love⁸⁷, this second assertion comes as a commitment by a Christ-like person to help others also experience what they enjoy. Thirdly, as a result, the Spirit begins to change people into what God meant them to be (Nürnberger 2005:250). Love is the only hand that can change the world into a mould desired by God. God is

⁸⁷ “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love” (1 John 4:8).

seen and experienced through the service of others. And finally, as Nürnberger (2005:250) asserts, all this takes place in the “community of believers”. The community of believers only exists if the three initial propositions of commitment to serving one another, love that looks beyond self, and change prompted by God’s spirit have been met. For Luther the basis of a firm faith is a good relationship with God and with one’s neighbour. The four aspects of acceptance, love, change and community cut through all relationships in human life. So an awareness of the position of one’s neighbour is imperative for Christian neighbourliness.

For this reason, service should not focus on personal comfort but on that of one’s neighbour. Just as Luther in his early days says, “For cursed and damned is any life lived or sought to one’s own advantage and use, cursed are all actions that do not spring from love” (Nürnberger 2005:252). Luther points out that just as our neighbours are in need and lack mercy, so we were once also in need before God and lacked mercy (Grimm and Lehmann 1957:367). But God through grace freely came to our help which shows us how we ought to help our neighbours, and “each one should become as it were a Christ to the other that we may be Christs to one another and Christ may be the same in all, that is, that we may be truly Christians” (Grimm and Lehmann 1957:367). This suggests that the community abounds with resources from its members that can support its functions and we can conclude from this that the refocusing of our resources together defines our identity as Christians. “Surely we are named after Christ, not because he is absent from us, but because he dwells in us, that is, because we believe in him and are Christs one to another and do to our neighbours as Christ does to us” (Grimm and Lehmann 1957:368). In Christ we have a relationship of doing with one another.

One of the titles given to Jesus is “Emmanuel”, which means, God with us. God who is transcendent is not completely absent from the midst of people but always immanent through those who bear Christ’s name. The real presence of Christ is still with people. In this world of capitalism, celebrity worship and competition, many people seek after personal merits and not value collective communal achievements. Yet generally speaking, when people put together their works in harmony, in this ‘global village’, the result is usually better than what each individual can achieve separately. This collective achievement could be more edifying if it comes particularly through the church (ELCZ in this instance) for the church acts as Christ to the world. Focusing on personal merits destroys the very social fabric that should together uplift us.

A further example of becoming a Christ for a neighbour is in *The Two Kinds of Righteousness*, in which Luther points out that there are “two kinds of righteousness just as man’s (*sic*) sin is of two kinds” (Lull 2005:135). The first and most important which is given at baptism to all who are truly repentant, is what he calls alien righteousness. It is alien because it is not naturally present in people at birth but comes from the work of Christ to people. Though it begins to work in people at baptism, it is not instilled all at once, “but begins, makes progress, and finally perfected at the end through death” (Lull 2005:134). It is from this alien righteousness that people acquire proper righteousness. Proper righteousness is not achieved until alien righteousness is instilled. This whole trajectory can be likened to one coming to terms with one’s proper identity because of a neighbour. In this work by Luther, alien may represent a neighbour or outsider who comes in for the purpose of saving and making the other part complete. Luther emphasizes that “In this world let us live soberly (pertaining to crucifying one’s own flesh), justly (referring to one’s neighbour), and devoutly (referring to God)” (Lull 2005:136). Life is like a display of relationships of self, neighbour and God. That relationship operates when it is outwardly focused and is part of righteousness. Righteousness thus “hates itself and loves its neighbour; it does not seek its own good but that of another, and in this its whole way of living consists” (Lull 2005:136). Therefore becoming a Christ for a neighbour is conducting oneself as if the neighbour’s “weaknesses, sin, and foolishness were one’s very own” (Lull 2005:138). In this scenario a person should not strike back when he or she is attacked, but it is the duty of the neighbour or free person to strike back only on behalf of a victim (Lull 2005:140). We can say Luther sees free selfless service to other people and to the community as a form of righteousness that stems from the righteousness of Christ. So when one serves the community freely, then one will be taking on the image of Christ to the neighbour. From this we can conclude that freedom, duty and service are shown through unconditional acceptance of other people, dealing with others in love, maintaining a relationship of change, and also being in communion.

4.4 Community and Communion

The community of believers provides the space through which three key elements of neighbourliness can be expressed: acceptance, love and transformation. “Community” in this study is viewed as a unity of people brought together by some ritual action. Christians commune around the Lord’s Table and are like a family unit before God. Their family ties are beyond the

physical ones; they are bound up in Christian love. Without the ability to form a communion, justice, peace and the integrity of creation remains an illusion (Brakemeir 1995:17). For Luther, as Christians commune together they express a family unity. The unity may start at local level and extend to wider levels. Communion is, for Luther, a remedy to internal divisions. In order for these divisions to be healed, there is a need for acceptance, love, and transformation.

In a tension-laden environment, one of the difficult things to do is to accept each other as people are. That repulsion of other people is most evident in family, church, and secular institutions (Yuen 2005:119). The institution of the church is given by God for the benefit of humanity and for it to function, there needs to be “unconditional acceptance” amongst its members (Nürnberger 2005:250). Luther sees the relationship expressed in the Triune God as a package of gifts and says “the Father gives us all creation, Christ all his works, the Holy Spirit all his gifts.” (Kolb and Wengert 2000:44). It is in this relationship of Godhead that we understand how we are as gifts of acceptance to other people. Acceptance presumes that we are a gift each to another person and this gives us the ability to act for others. It is these actions that build a community of love.

In Luther’s words, “Love by its very nature is ready to serve and be subject to him who is loved” (Lull 2005: 393). This is demonstrated in “*Freedom of a Christian*” when Luther explains to Pope Leo X that he seeks peace with everyone because of the affection he has for him (Lull 2005: 393). Luther traces how hard he tried to keep silent in order to maintain peace but to no avail and finally in his open letter pleads to Pope Leo X to intervene and stop the “flatterers” and bring peace and sanity to the land again (Lull 2005: 391). He pleads for the Pope as the *Servus servorum* (servant of servants) to intervene and promote love rather than allow contentions to flow (Lull 2005: 391). To Luther the treatise on *The Freedom of a Christian* was a token of love, peace and good hope. He passed the treatise on as a token of love to the Pope. So love gives freedom to serve others and bring peace within a community. The passing on of love is a duty for every Christian. Love can be passed on in two ways; through close affection and through correction. Luther acknowledges his indebtedness to the Christian community whom he was bound to warn against “a completely depraved, hopeless, and notorious godlessness” (Lull 2005: 388) in the church leadership of his time.

At this point it might also be important to explain what possibly Luther meant by love. The basis of all virtues for human living was Christ and the Word of God which Luther never wished to withdraw from under any compulsion (Lull 2005: 387). To Luther, Christ was the embodiment of the divine love. He was like a healing balm to the ills of society because he was full of compassion and grace.⁸⁸ It was this balm that could transform the world through sacrificial love. This transformation could be demonstrated through the love experienced by the Christian community.

Relationships of love enable change for the better. Luther hoped for a reformation to take place in the church, and he hoped the tensions he was causing through highlighting abuses could be resolved amicably. Only through change could alienated people live together again as neighbours. But there was tension and contention throughout the time of his life in the church till his final dismissal as a heretic. His whole life took a new direction because of his belief in change through new relationships. Transformation demands that both parties compromise their positions for a common goal. But, as already mentioned, Nürnberger (2005:250) argues that it is God's Spirit that transforms people.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter focused on Martin Luther's teaching on being a neighbour and what he understand by "becoming a Christ for a neighbour". This is most clearly demonstrated in the Christian community through the attributes of acceptance, love and transformation. All of these themes resonate with the indigenous resources of *ukama* and *ubuntu*. The next chapter attempts to integrate the ideas on being a neighbour and neighbourliness shared by Luther and indigenous Zimbabwean people. The chapter discusses the possibility of unity within communities such as the ELCZ and argues that a theology of unity is possible if people look at the commonalities in *ukama*, *ubuntu* and Luther's notion of being a neighbour.

⁸⁸ Quoting Jeremiah 8:22.

Chapter Five

Towards an indigenous Lutheran theology of unity

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter Luther's understanding of becoming Christ for a neighbour has been explored. It became evident that the Christian community is the centre of human interaction with God and therefore it is imperative for Christians to look after their neighbours as part of their Christian witness. This duty is observed in the quality of relationships that people exhibit to one another. Luther unmasked ecclesiastical abuses which in turn disrupted relationships among Christians. It may be restated that true Christianity, from Luther's point of view, serves God in faith and the neighbour in love. When faith and love are combined, then true humanity is revealed.

What was important for Luther in speaking out against the abuses was the unjust use of power. Luther's polemical language is a strong indication of what he felt about being unjustly treated when he says "a prince who lacks understanding will oppress many with injustice" (Lull 2005:392). The concerns of love, service, care and justice are also crucial in the Shona and Ndebele understanding of neighbourliness. In this chapter, issues common to Luther's view of being a neighbour and to the Shona and Ndebele's views on *ukama* and *ubuntu* are highlighted.

As mentioned in Chapter Three *ukama* and *ubuntu* form a complex base that includes unity, hope, love, power, justice and wellbeing. It has been argued that individuals were created with the ability to commune and share in power, hope and justice. These external functions of society promote the internal human qualities of love, relationship, sharing and wellbeing. These values are intrinsic and God-given. Luther extends the list of the internal value of humanity to include "life, truth, light, peace, righteousness, salvation, joy, liberty, wisdom, power, grace and glory" (Lull 2005:394). Because of these values, all functions of life which include power and service need to work to promote the image of God in humanity through community. A number of themes have been identified which provide a framework for an indigenous theology of unity and are discussed below.

5.2 Relationships

Any theological framework needs to begin with the theme of relationship. Luther, as has already been discussed, shows human relationships at two levels; vertically with God and horizontally with the neighbour. People are connected to God in faith and to other people in love. Luther says, "...a Christian lives not in himself (*sic*), but in Christ and in the neighbour... He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbour through love. By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbour" (Lull 2005:408). Graphically, this relationship can be represented by a cross. In fact, the cross (of Christ) determines all kinds of interaction that exists among people. Vertically people are connected to God through faith in Christ. To live is to be in Christ, otherwise without this faith one will be deemed dead in this relationship with God. On the horizontal plane, love connects people to their neighbours. It can further be argued that people were created to love.

Among the Shona and the Ndebele, this relationship is expressed on three levels; relationships among people, with the spirit world (God) and with nature. All the three levels are important since they complement each other in determining peace in society. As mentioned earlier, *ukama* is unique in that it describes relatedness and interrelatedness with everything in existence (Murove 1999:12). When one aspect of the relationship is disturbed, the whole web crumbles. There is an aspect of faith involved since people can redress a broken relationship amongst themselves, with nature or with God. Sin in this area is defined as absence of relationship. The idea of a perennial relationship brings in the image of family among the Shona and the Ndebele. The basis of all operations of humanity is relationship. This connectedness defines who we are in light of others. So to be truly human, one has to be connected to others.

5.3 Love and sharing

In being connected to others, one needs to be committed to an ethic of love and sharing. To indigenous Zimbabweans, "The handing on of this life, the sharing in this one life is the first link which unites members of the community" (Mulago 1991:143). Life is a shared communal experience that is only possible when people are all together. As already indicated, the community "enables the individual to become a unique centre of shared life."(Shutte 2001:9). Value of life is passed on from one generation to the other hence humanity is a shared concept of

community life. Solitary life is not consistent with the ideas of *ukama* or *ubuntu*. A neighbour becomes a member of the larger family with whom people share the experiences of life.

For the Lutheran church sharing is evident in the three pronged ministry of Jesus of preaching, teaching and healing. The ministries of preaching and healing are a demonstration of Christian love. Without love, the channel runs dry and cracks may result. In the case of a conduit, when it ceases to perform its proper duty, it is reduced to a beacon that points in emptiness towards the intended beneficiary of its love. This makes it superficial. Instead of living as an empty channel, Christians should live as Christ lived to his neighbours. Jesus was not just a channel, but actually demonstrated the love of God to the world. This picture seems helpful to the church in Zimbabwe in two ways; first Christians do not stand as icons waiting to direct love but they are the real love as they present themselves to others in need. The other important point is that God acts in love through the other person, so everyone has a value in this love. The value of the other person emanates from God and is demonstrated to us through the love that God shows in and through the human community.

It cannot be over-emphasized that in *ukama* and *ubuntu*, sharing and love demonstrate how much one person is connected to the other. As already discussed, sharing gives joy and fulfillment to members of a community. Similarly, in the Lutheran tradition God comes to us in community and in relationships. Therefore, “becoming a Christ for a neighbour” would be to share love with those people who are in need. This means being a sustainer of life and not a destroyer. It is being aware of the people around you; both their strengths and weaknesses and carrying the burdens of those who are weak so as to give them back their dignity.

5.4 Life and dignity

As argued before, human dignity is based on the divine image that people have. It is in the inclusive quality of life that the true image of God is seen in people. For this reason, human life is complex. This complexity is observed by Moyo and Pero (1988:78) who observes that life has both joy and suffering in it. “Black people everywhere belong together, suffer or rejoice together, and are oppressed or free together”. Whatever experiences of life, the black people believe that they are still united with one another and with nature. Luther’s view of a neighbour and the ethic of love together with the view of a neighbour in the concepts of *ukama* and *ubuntu* as used by the

Shona and Ndebele people are both the goal and the means towards the fullness of life. Although mentioned before, this love, is not merely “emotions of warmth, of passion, of happiness, of fulfillment” (Moyo and Pero 1988:78) but is central to human interaction and human dignity. It is an expression of relationship that cannot be shaken, faked or demanded in any circumstance or situation. Luther’s ethic of love incorporates the inclusion of a sinner into the free life of grace offered through Jesus Christ (Nürnberg 2005:71). But the value of what it means to be human cannot be separated from the acts of love that people show. Love is a gift of dignity found in others to express life and humanness in others hence it is not coerced or demanded. For both Luther and the indigenous people of Zimbabwe, life is made up of that connectedness of people to God in faith and to others in love. This is what makes life possible. Luther’s teaching and the local resources of *ukama* and *ubuntu* thus emphasize cooperation in building community.

5.5 Power and justice

Often cooperation in community is affected by power relationships which impact negatively on the life and dignity of people. When Luther appealed to Pope Leo X to refrain from abusing his power,⁸⁹ it can be argued that he viewed leadership as a privilege given to an individual by people for service to the community. The whole idea was that people in leadership positions have a responsibility to serve those over whom they govern. Luther was thus arguing that power is a gift and privilege conferred on the individual by the community. One therefore remains accountable to the community. Failure to reciprocate the responsibility imbued in this duty means that the community reserves the right to withdraw the privileges. Gene Sharp (1973:12) asserts that the sources of the ruler’s power depend “intimately upon the obedience and cooperation of the subjects”. If people withdraw their allegiance and support, the ‘ruler’ will remain without any claim of power over any ordinary person. Yet too often power dehumanizes others, and Luther would classify such power as “belonging to the devil”.

Power in Luther’s thought is closely tied to his understanding of justice. He believes, and rightly so, that issues of justice are not limited only to the theological sphere. Ethical and social spheres also use justice as a measure of freedom and wellbeing. Clearly, from the discussion on the tensions in the ELCZ outlined in Chapter Two, justice is needed with the structures of the church

⁸⁹ He wrote a devotional book entitled *On Consideration to Pope Eugenius III* discussing the duties of a pope and the dangers attached to this form of leadership (Lull 2005:389).

and between the different factions that reflect social divisions in Zimbabwe. If there is no justice, there can be no life. However, locally, people seek justice in terms of closeness to those who meter it out. Justice follows a pattern of an inclusive relationship with God and with people. In *ukama*, all people are related so there is no room to reject anyone from the community or from other people. As mentioned earlier, trying to leave someone out is robbing an individual of receiving divine benefits that everyone is entitled to. Locally, justice is done to please the divine presence in every human being. When laws are enacted locally, they are usually discussed communally and to give justice to all people. Involving all people would be a way to make people own their justice system and give responsibility to everyone to act as expected by the community. For Luther acceptance of others follows the channel of love that Christ demonstrated to the world. This love can transform unjust structures which is necessary if unity is to be achieved.

5.6 Unity

A major theme in the works of Luther is that of unity of the church both as a structure and as a group of people who hold on to a common faith under the Word of God. Luther speaks of the church as a priesthood of believers who have both authority to approach God and a unity to share life experiences. In both structure and form the church is mandated to fulfill the divine plan. Some scholars admit that his theology “is rich, complex and dialectical that he seems unreliable both as an opponent and as an ally” (Lull 2005:xix). In spite of this unreliability expressed by many, a unity of ideas can be drawn from his works. As an example, Luther draws the structure of the church from the Tabernacle which had three parts namely the Holy of Holies, the Holy Place and the atrium. Similar structures were maintained in the church designs of his time which had “the churchyard, the nave and the sanctuary” (Lull 2005:142). In terms of structure, the church is a unity of three levels of divinity which do not operate one without the other. The outward part (the churchyard) is “concerned only with outward works which are bound up with time and place” (Lull 2005:142). The first structure represents the doctrine of the “churchyard saints (*Atrienses Sancti*)” who specialize in ceremonies, fasting, the wearing of special garb, and the performance of specifically “religious” works (Lull 2005:141). In this stage, “human presumption takes over, and the hardening and blinding of men (*sic*) to their sins goes on apace” (Lull 2005:143). The relationship of such people with God is bound up in external observances

and is superficial. Such superficiality was observed in the discussion of *ukama* in Chapter Two when people live an unfulfilling life of ritual observance. But true community brings freedom. As mentioned before, in *ukama* as in *ubuntu* “the more one depends on community *in a certain way*, the freer one is” (Shutte 2001:13).

In the second part of the church as a structure Luther looks at the nave. The nave is the holy place and the most sacred of the church structure. Within the nave teachings of “humility, meekness, gentleness, peace, fidelity, love, propriety, purity...” (Lull 2005:144) are emphasized. In performing these teachings “a layman may do more of value than a priest, a priest more than a pope, a woman more than a man, a boy more than an adult, a poor man more than a rich man, a naked man more than a richly clad man; more of value may be done in the field than in the home, more in the secret chamber than in the church” (Lull 2005:144). Value is not in the position held but in the availability of the member to serve. A person becomes truly righteous by fighting “against pride, avarice, immodesty, anger, hatred,” and other negative traits of life (Lull 2005:144). These are precisely the values emphasized within Shona and Ndebele communities as discussed earlier.

The third and final stage of the church structure is represented by the sanctuary (*sanctum sanctorum*). This church has a life that grows and is perfected in the consummation of life at death. With the help of the Holy Spirit a believer is made pure, free, cheerful, and will have a loving heart “seeking no reward and fearing no punishment” (Lull 2005:145). Service is not done under duress but cheerfully without fear of punishment or with anticipation of reward. Good works are still there but the motivation has changed from that done in the churchyard or atrium. One is both free and fully human. In the *ukama ubuntu* matrix, the holy of holies is represented by an individual person who exhibits the most sacred part of human existence. Therefore no life should be destroyed because it is precious. The fullness of life is a potential which is only realized when “possibilities are allowed to reach their maximum in personhood” (Sindima 1995:126). Maximum potential is only possible when a person is free to act within the constraints of community. An individual builds his or her dignified life in unity with others. This unity of the Christian community is represented by the three aspects of the church structure. All three parts of the church form a unity and make one people in community.

As mentioned before, traditional African religion is characterized by the motif of wholeness of life. There is no separate community of religious people, because everyone who participates in the life of the community automatically participates also in its religion (Parratt 1987:95). Moreover, there is no special day for worship; life is a continuous whole so much so that not even death can disintegrate it. Life is a unity, and human beings can only be in harmony with this life if they also choose to be in unity. Unity gives power to the weakest groups in society so that their deficiencies will not be too obvious. People can only progress and grow in dignity by working together for their common good (Parratt 1987:122). Similarly, in Luther's understanding, human life, or "existential experience", is a continuous experience of God's presence (*coram Deo* – in the presence of God) (Parratt 1987:96).

Unity can be in the form of an intentional coming together or from natural belonging. "Belonging is the root and essence of being" (Setiloane 1986:10). There is a high sense of being in the right place with others in African life. Before people can have separate identities, they must first belong to the larger family structures. So a human being is not only looked at as an individual but as part of a larger family. If that individual commits a crime, the crime is part of the larger family's responsibility. This is true when it comes to avenging spirits (*ngozi*). The belief is that avenging spirits will wipe out the whole clan of the wrongdoer before it kills its enemy. Some people suffer for the wrongs of this person because they belong to one family. Even in a nuclear family, a child belongs to the whole community not only to the nuclear family, and therefore is taken care of by the community. The behaviour of that child is the responsibility of both the nuclear and the extended family. The church too, is a highly respected institution of belonging among indigenous Zimbabweans. This is seen during special occasions in the church calendar where most people in the vicinity and beyond come together to identify with that particular church activity. Those people who fill the pews on special occasions may not appear again until the next special day arises. But people interact constantly and always emphasize their belonging to the group.. "The social ties binding the African to his (*sic*) extended family and clan have always been stronger than the forces of separation that arise from members of different denominations. The important family occasions like births, marriages, funerals and clan festivals bring together in one place relatives with different confessional backgrounds" (M'Timkulu 1971:22).

So, for both Luther and indigenous people's way of thinking, unity is a constructed component of human interaction. There is always a common meeting point both in structure and purpose of human life. From African philosophy, it is argued that "just as the continent was once the place of the origin of humanity and an important contributor to civilization, this should empower Africa to help the world rediscover the oneness of the human race" (Coetzee and Roux 2002:17). On the basis of being human, people can work out their unity in order to gain their dignity. This often involves rules and systems. The Christian community lives as a family that observes certain rules for harmony just as local people also follow guidelines for building a virtuous society. That commonality is important as a step of building harmony in the church and in society.

From this argument, "becoming a Christ for others" is building humanity on the principles of unity taught and lived by Christ. Christ invited all people into a kingdom under the authority of God. So the family is an invitation of individuals from a secluded life into a communal one. In this kingdom, individuals lose their former identity and gain a common one. People are called together to accomplish a divine plan through communion. The potential to change and transform is found through the cohesion in the group. In this team approach, the potential of each individual is appreciated. Unity in diversity is a goal for a large family. Since each member is known to all other members of this family, and each is seen as unique. As a result, achievements are not individually based but communally owned.

5.7 Conclusion

The chapter has shown how theologically the concepts of *ukama* and *ubuntu* together with Luther's view of being a neighbour complement each other. For indigenous Zimbabweans, life oscillates around two axis: firstly, relationships and secondly, power. It is relationships that brings sharing through love. Though not discussed in this order, issues present in *ukama* and *ubuntu* draw from unity, hope, love, power, justice and well-being which agree with the extension of life, truth, light, peace, righteousness, salvation, joy, liberty, wisdom, power, grace and glory found in the work of Luther. It is, therefore, imperative that the church looks at its structures and deals with adverse political institutions for the restoration of peace and dignity for people. The next chapter discusses the implications of the major themes discussed in the

previous chapters. It will give a summary of the previous chapters, identify gaps, show the implications and give suggestions for a way forward for the Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe.

Chapter Six

Towards a conclusion

6.1 Introduction

As shown in the previous chapters, divisions impact on the issues that form the very core of *ukama*. The areas affected include unconditional acceptance of others, relationships in dignity, service in justice, sharing in love and communion in respect of life. If these areas are compromised, then the unity of people is disturbed. Inversely, if these are promoted, the unity of the community members of the church can be achieved. This chapter gives a summary of the previous chapters and identifies gaps that this study does not address. It gives suggestions for the church and finally proposes guidelines that the church can use towards an indigenous theology of unity.

6.2 Summary of the study

Chapter One introduces the study including the research question and the motivation for doing the research.

Chapter Two focuses on the context of the study, namely the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ). It highlights the tensions and divisions in the church and analyses the three epochs of administration through which the tensions between the Shona and Ndebele have grown.

Chapter Three focuses on the characteristics of *ukama* and *ubuntu* and their similarities. The relatedness and interrelatedness of people is emphasized through the qualities of love, care, sharing, respect, and human dignity. Relationships among the Shona and the Ndebele rest on three axis namely, with other people, with God and with nature. The image of family is an important one shared by these local resources.

Chapter Four addresses Luther's writings that deal with what it means to be a neighbour and includes his ethic of love and service. The cross, as a symbol of hope, has been shown as the central image that shapes relationships among members of the Lutheran communities. This

relationship is bilateral; people with God and people with other people. An analysis of Luther's teachings shows that both power structures and social relationships join with divine authority. This unity in the divine nature presupposes that there is a change of relationship from mere neighbours to brothers and sisters in one family.

Chapter Five attempts to show the commonalities found in the local resources for unity with Luther's teachings about being a neighbour. This chapter also suggests themes that make up an indigenous Lutheran theology of unity. The themes include: relationships, love and sharing, life and dignity, power and justice. It is argued that these values are only realised when individuals interact with others in a communal way. It is evident from the analysis that local resources and the Christian teaching from Luther's writings emphasize unity of the whole universe as a family. Tensions and divisions are a serious compromise of both people's humanity and of their belief as Christians. There is much potential in Luther's teachings and the local resources to suggest an indigenous Lutheran theology of unity. This is desperately needed in the divided ELCZ.

6.3 Resolving division in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Zimbabwe

It has been shown in Chapter Two that the Lutheran church in Zimbabwe continues to experience division within and outside the communities in which it operates. This division is made even more serious by the turmoil and conflict that exists in the political economic spheres of the country. When people are divided, the relationships both with God and amongst themselves are tarnished. Thus, the ELCZ has two major challenges that it needs to address namely, the church structure and the church's articles of faith. These represent the internal and external components of the Christian community. From the argument presented in this study, external and internal components of the church are not divorced from each other especially when dealing with the dignity of humanity. To address these structural and operational inconsistencies the relationships, the language and the issues of power have to be addressed through themes identified in Chapter Five. Relationships grow as people struggle together with the issues of life. It can be argued that the more we fight against our common enemies together, the closer we become to each other as brothers and sisters. Physical needs are a priority for all people when they think of growing in relationship. This means that the church has to redefine its internal structures to suit the freedom of the people who are related as a family of God. Relationships

determine who is welcome or left out of the fellowship. In African thinking, all people are part of the common religion and no one should be left out. The understanding of relationships should also determine what code of conduct is regarded as sinful or not. Relationships and inclusiveness form part of the demands of a spiritual life. From the Christian point of view, and as discussed by Luther, the church is understood as the body of Christ. This image is powerful in that it shows the body as a unity with a single intent and a single life. This unified life is sacred because it comes to people as a gift from God. Since the body image forms the core theological identity of the church, it needs a theological approach to change or make its meaning more enriching.

This approach has to deal with questions of power. Luther often uses strong language against those in authority. What seems to have been the centre of his contention was the way power was used both in church and state. This opens up a basis upon which the church can challenge abusive practices that often go with power. The power of those in authority needs to be held responsibly to meet the needs of the ordinary people in society. According to Luther, the church wields a lot of power that can enhance or disturb the relationships of people with God and of people with the rest of creation. The worst enemy of the correct use of power is self-centeredness that is, looking inwardly towards self (*incurvatus in se ipse*) because of the sin of wanting self-gratification at the expense of others. In Luther's language, "cursed and damned is any life lived or sought to one's own advantage and use, cursed are all actions that do not spring from love" (quoted in Nürnberger 2005:252). Luther makes a connection between power and love. Sharp (1973:12) asserts that the sources of the ruler's power depend "intimately upon the obedience and cooperation of the subjects". If people withdraw their allegiance and support, the 'ruler' will remain without any claim of power over any ordinary person. So power is a privilege that rests on the love and trust of those people who are led. Power makes sense if it is put in the perspective of the conditions that the human agents are going through. As a church, the ELCZ must remember that power is not a club or weapon for punishing others but a gift or sign of embracement to be held in stewardship to the service of the community.

The watchword for a new dispensation of critical solidarity is "prophetic faithfulness" (Boesak 2005:155). This calls for a vigorous engagement of the church in addressing the wrongs in society. Prophetic faithfulness is also the ability to resist the role of becoming a "watchdog" over government, its policies and practices" (Boesak 2005:161). Instead, it must become a

genuine steward “of the secrets of God” among people (Boesak 2005:161. Whether injustice is happening in the church or in the government, critical solidarity has to speak out and challenge it. It is a skill involving social analysis and a translation of that analysis into praxis. Critical solidarity is not living in the past or relying on “a few stock of ideas derived from Christian tradition and then uncritically and repeatedly *apply them* to the situation of oppression” (Kairos Document 1986:9). Tradition is good but it must not prevent people from seeing the best for the present time. Critical solidarity is the lens through which the church is able to “read the signs of the time” (Kairos Document 1986:9). Unity achieved in this way, helps people to live in peace and harmony, with God, with each other, and with nature.

The ELCZ has been growing and developing along racial and ethnic lines. This is evident in the structure and practice of the church for many years. Initially the structure distinctly separated the white establishment from the black one. Later it was an Ndebele and Shona issue which brought the necessity of deaneries. The constitution still bears some nuances of division between laity and pastorate which have ripple effects on the relationships between men and women, young and old, rural and urban. The leaders of the churches will specially have to take the issue of ethnic conflict more seriously. Of utmost importance is a better understanding of the social, political and theological factors involved. The church needs to appoint committees that investigate the historical origin of the conflict, examine social scientific literature on ethnic conflicts, study the theory and practice of conflict resolution, and devise instruments of popular education that raise people’s awareness of the issues at stake and communicate the biblical message of reconciliation (Baum and Wells 1997:viii). The atrocities that human beings inflict upon one another cannot be covered with facades of false peace (Isaiah 32:15-17) (Baum and Wells 1997:3). As long as divisions remain along ethnic grounds, all efforts at unity will be false and ineffective. The ELCZ has to become active in political issues with solid suggestions to bring peace in all contexts it finds itself in. Jesus’ life and teaching are characterized by a certain dialectic, for he holds together, on one hand, a radical love for the enemy, and, on the other hand, forthright confrontation with the perpetrators of injustice (Baum and Wells 1997:5). This should be more than just a ritual. In order for this to be the case, there needs to be much deeper theological reflection that leads to a commitment to action.

As this study has shown, love, relationships, justice and power are key components of a life lived in community with dignity. Unity emerges out of equality and respect of the image of God in all people. Failure to recognize the presence of the *other* is giving that person a death sentence. Life has to acknowledge relationships that exist between different people as members of the family of God. This relationship should be built on love and respect of others. It is this ethic which needs to form the foundation stone of any theology of unity.

The challenge for the church is to recommit itself to work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. This will help develop the unity of the church so as to ensure that it expresses itself as *Koinonia* (Wolfgang 1998:65). The purpose of God according to Holy Scripture is to gather the whole of creation under the Lordship of Christ in whom, by the power of the Holy Spirit, all are brought into communion with God (Ephesians 1). The church is a foretaste of this communion with God and with one another (Wolfgang 1998:67). The calling of the church is to proclaim reconciliation and provide healing, to overcome divisions based on race, gender, age, culture, colour, and to bring all people into communion with God. Because of sin that has led to conflict and misunderstanding the churches are painfully divided within themselves. The scandalous divisions damage the credibility of their witness to the world in worship and service. Moreover they contradict not only the church's witness but its very nature.

The unity of the church to which we are called is a fellowship given and expressed in the common confession of the apostolic faith: a common sacramental life entered by one baptism and celebrated together in one Eucharistic fellowship; a common life in which members and ministers are mutually recognized and reconciled; and a common mission witnessing to the gospel of God's grace to all people and serving the whole creation (Wolfgang 1998:69).

We remain restless until we grow together according to the prayer of Christ that those who believe in him may be one (John 17:21). Unity enables strained relationships between brothers and sisters to deal with their past in a new way. Mutual trust and new relationships are possible. The images of conflict propagated by divisions are submerged and new opportunities of mutual recognition are created. Unity can be used as a step of peace-building and achieving reconciliation. Unless unity is observed, all other efforts of reconciliation are futile when each side continues to believe that their position is legitimate.

In African life, as has previously been discussed, even the dead are recognized as living and are believed to be sharing life with the living. To be in unity with others is to be alive, physically and spiritually. The church was sent into the world to reconcile the world to God so that all may enjoy the fruits of the kingdom. This shows a paradigm in which people move out of their comfort zones into the comfort of the church family. This idea is central to both Luther and the local indigenous resources, both of which emphasize the need to build unity. A practical way to understand the church as a unity is to construe community as an embodiment of true humanity.

6.4 Towards a theology of unity embodied in community

Indigenous Zimbabweans, through the notion of *ukama*, experience community as the space through which life of an individual can be measured. The community represents a powerful image of unity among local people. The community is a collective body of families whose collective image and activities uplifts the dignity of individuals. Although individuals in this extended family are different, they acknowledge one source and one focus in life namely, of living a life passed on from a common ancestry on earth, and live also as a spiritual family when they die. That true family identity has very little to do with personal achievements but comes through a covenantal union with others that cannot be broken under any circumstances. Everything that people have is communally owned; even the very nature of self. Theologically, this understanding stresses relationship, sharing, love, and dignity as values which are only possible in a unity of the people through communal interaction. This emphasis on the communal is similarly acknowledged through the idea of a Trinitarian God, which the Lutheran church stresses. As Paivi (2002:10) asserts “the being of God is a relational being: God is triune God, that is, God in communion”. Here the community is presented as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; the three are one and belong to each other. It is through this Godhead that salvation of humanity is complete. Thus what is being argued that from community, which is one body of different people living together, comes a relationship which enables the values of sharing, love, and dignity to be experienced practically. Through the sense of belonging to others, one experiences the true image of self which is recreated through relationship with the other. In this way the image of God is also reflected as people relate in wholeness to one another. This idea is emphasized in Luther’s discussion of the communion of saints. In his view of community, people’s tastes, appetites, and concerns for others are usually seen in fellowship with others and

on how they behave ‘at the table’. This interaction through sharing, love, relationship, and dignity exhibits a special kind of unity in a community, which is life in its fullness. These four elements of sharing, relationship, love and dignity, which are a true embodiment of the full humanity, will be discussed in that order.

Sharing is one of the major signs of unity in a community. In African thinking, it is expressly stated that “The handing on of this life, the sharing in this one life is the first link which unites members of the community” (Dickson and Ellinworth 1991:12ff). Life is a shared experience. It is handed down from one generation to the other. So a person’s life is indebted to others who lived before. In Pauline language, we are not our own (1 Corinthians 6:19b); we owe our lives to others. Our lives do not begin with ourselves; we live a life that was passed onto us by others who lived before. We also pass this life on to others who will come after us. What we do with our lives, determines what life will be like for others in the future. Sharing is the essence of life. In other words, the need for sharing is an acknowledgement of the imperfection and depravity in the world that we live in and hence sharing what we have becomes a remedy for the deficit experienced by others. Thus sharing has two functions; that of holding people in continuity together, and of putting right a communal imperfection. When the affairs of a family are not functioning well, sharing can be used as a remedy. People can share both material and immaterial aspects of life.

A shared life in the Lutheran church includes embracing the three pronged ministry of preaching, teaching and healing. All need to take place within a unified community to ensure truthful and effective ministry. Other levels of sharing include Christ’s sharing of the frailty and sin of a believer, and the believer sharing the power and the righteousness of Christ; believers sharing the imperfection and sin of others as others share with them the redemptive love of Christ; and finally the church sharing “the misery and depravity of the world and the world *sharing* the church’s access to God’s power and righteousness in Christ” (Nürnberger 2005:139). A Christian then stands as a Christ for someone in this depraved world through the act of sharing. One cannot be a Christian unless one shares with others in both material and immaterial things. The sharing act began with God through Christ and is consummated in Christians in the world. It is carried out in order to oppose impoverishment of others experienced through exploitation. The focus then becomes making things better for the other person. Sharing is a way of breaking the cycle of

poverty which in Paratt's (1987:100) view is a state of displacement from the rendezvous with God. The moment someone is displaced, one ceases to enjoy the fellowship and unity of divine presence. Therefore to "exploit and impoverish a neighbor is to displace him (*sic*) from the point in life wherein God's gifts are received..." (Paratt 1987:100). Poverty is a sign of exclusion and gross exploitation. So exclusion in any form from the rest of community is to cut someone off from the wholeness of life both in the past and in the future. Exclusion is a sin that the church should seriously stand against. This position demonstrates a profound theological understanding of what a full human being is like and what it means to live a life in its fullness. By belonging we carry the very nature of others in our bodies. So the image an individual has is the summation of communal attributes that each person is expected to have. In other words, the image of God (*imago Dei*) is the communal reflection of the unity of the individuals in that community. So without a family, a clan or a community, that image of God is not there. People need each other to express the essence of human nature. Living as divided people compromises this true humanity that is found when people are together.

Another important aspect of the view of community life and humanity is found in the understanding of what it means to be in relationship. Pivotal to Luther's understanding of neighbour and to the local people's understanding of *ukama* is an inclusive relationship that acknowledges human beings as coming from one source. This relationship, which has been described above as a community, is a demonstration of different family ties. This understanding holds together all people in history, in the present, and in the world to come. This inclusive relationship goes beyond race, colour, ethnicity, and gender demarcations. A family cannot be unless a relationship is there. Relationships make people aware of the value of their existence and the presence of God amongst them.

God is relational and maintains this relationship with creation for people to learn how they should relate with nature and with others. Differences are resolved amicably, not in violence, division and bloodshed. Since all relationships originate from God, this also redefines what is good or bad among the people. In this case, an abuse of the divinely molded relationship is a clear way of creating place for sin. Sin is lack of a relationship and fails to recognize the importance and freedom of the other person. Selfishness ultimately divides people rendering them victims when in fact they should be enjoying communion. In *ukama*, as with Luther,

relationships are a priority and give social support to one another. In the theology of creation everything that is most valuable to human life may be expressed in terms of relationships (WCC 1997:21). In good relationships there are rights and duties that each member is expected to fulfill. However, it is within the framework of the family, the village and tribe that people exercise in mutual fashion their human rights and duties (Komakoma 2003:171). These rights and duties are demonstrated in Christ through the incarnation. If God is human and relational, therefore, relationships are divinely ordained and are good for social order. Relationships build people who are not of the same parentage into a unity or family. Relationship, as has already been argued, needs to function on three levels, namely with God, with other humans and with nature. Before people can become fully human, they need to be in relationship. Churches and nations can also be built from this local treasure of life, therefore every effort must be done to find relationship with each other, with nature and with God so as to build God's kingdom on earth.

The third level of unity in community is love. This love operates fully when used with an ethic of justice. Love can also be taken as the third remedy to disunity and is the most important of all. Love and respect are core elements of unconditional acceptance. As argued earlier, division is a disease to social cohesion but love is a remedy that can cure this disease. Luther uses the ethic of love and argues that it encompasses unconditional acceptability of a sinner into the grace offered through Jesus Christ. Unconditional acceptance is a gift found in people to express humanness in others, hence its not coerced or demanded but given freely. For Luther, people are connected to God in faith and to other people in love. This love is expressed in unity. When love flows, acceptance of others follows and justice can be achieved. If the church is made up of people who desire to give love to others unconditionally, the church will be a living organism and a community of love and tolerance (Paivi 2002:10). Love of a neighbour stands as an absolute demand for justice, because charity must manifest itself in actions and structures which respect human dignity, protect human rights, and transform structures which prevent love (Komakoma 2003:23). Both the structure and the conduct of the church have much bearing on the effectiveness of its teaching on unconditional acceptance. The interaction of people builds a strong base for a peaceable condition of love and service to one another which translates into justice. We have noted that love justly serves the neighbour which then demonstrates a relationship with God.

The second trajectory that was identified together with love is justice. Luther reminds leaders that their duty is “to rule with justice over those who are subject to them and not permit them to do harm to one another” (Hertz 1976: 58). Ruling with justice prevents the harm of subjects. Violence is evidence of the lack of justice among people. Both the leadership and ordinary people have an obligation to see to it that justice is exercised. If people harm each other then they “devour one another”⁹⁰ and justice is not present in the land. Justice is an expected duty of all people in reverence to God. Two sets of opposing ideas stand out in meting out justice and these are, on the one hand, judgment and punishment, and on the other; defense and vindication. Justice is able to punish the wrongdoers and exonerate the innocent. When justice is exercised, usually peace will prevail. There cannot be peace without justice. Among the Shona and the Ndebele, justice has to follow religious and public opinion. All public decisions have to please God and the people concerned. The reason for exercising justice is to maintain unity and peace among people.

In a broad sense, there is no love where there is injustice. In the words of Parrat (1987:134), “It is impossible to separate love from justice and power”. The first obligation for the church is to be a Christ for others and to show love. The second requirement, which is not separated from the first, is to show justice. The church has no option but to act in love with justice as the salt of the earth. The vertical connection of Christians to God in faith is only true when the horizontal connection with other people through love is there. Moltman (1975:4) argues that Christian theology too often sets up false alternatives; evangelization and humanization, interior conversion and improvement of physical conditions, vertical dimension of faith and the horizontal dimension of love. Yet, he argues, there should be no alternatives in all these since any alternative is a destruction of the unity of God (Moltman 1975:4). Life is fulfilling when it is not compartmentalized but lived holistically which includes love and justice.

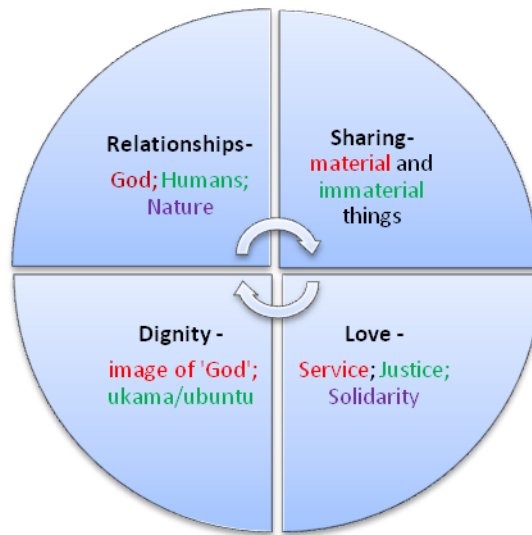
The utopian vision of a reconciled world in the biblical text from Exodus through the prophets, has been, and continues to be a rich source of inspiration for social hope and transformation (Baum and Wells 1997:5). Suffering and hope are opposite, yet one cannot be fully grasped without the other. Where there is a situation of suffering, there is at the end of the tunnel a light of hope glowing. But hope is not generated in a single person alone but through others relating to

⁹⁰ The expression is used in the sense of Galatians 5:15.

one another. Hope gives people power to move forward in anticipation of better things to come. But it seems violence and hopelessness are integral to the political and theological superstructure of our time. Exclusion from the main group becomes a way of inculcating an identity that one should carry in society. Luther's logic about neighbourliness is important, even for the present, now, where he argues that if salvation is by grace alone, all other external observations no longer serve anyone (Lindberg 1993:165). So no one should be lulled into thinking that his or her external state of wealth matters before God so as to give him or her some advantage. No one is supposed to "bear the cross" in order to be considered worthy before God (Nürnberg 2005:282). Poverty causes untold suffering in Africa. This situation cannot be reversed unless people come together to help one another.

Another area of unity in society is in language. A society gets together or breaks down because of the kind of language used. Certain nuances in language demand certain behaviour patterns and responses in people. Most words have direct and implied meanings depending on the social context of the individuals involved. In the Shona context of *ukama* where relationships and interrelationships with everything in existence are implied, certain behaviour is induced by the knowledge that one has in relation to the other person. Luther chose the language of "becoming a Christ for others" to appeal to the teaching and works of Christ our role model. The character of Christ is implied in his words and actions. Language has power to imply certain behaviour in people. As highlighted earlier with reference to songs and language of violence used in many political circles, certain ways of interaction among people are inculcated. This means the language in the songs and liturgy of the church needs to be monitored closely.

So in summary, theologically the four elements that demonstrate unity in the community are sharing, relationship, love with justice and dignity. Sharing presumes that there is a relationship existing among people in the community. This relationship is built on love which makes sharing become a spontaneous act of life. With this love with justice and respect the true dignity of a human being, who is a member of the community and a true image of God is visible. This then demonstrates unity among the people. In diagrammatic form this can be represented as follows:



The community, which is represented by the circle is built on relationships, sharing, love and dignity. The four elements also encompass the full understanding of unity. Any unity that does not include these four essentials is flawed even before it is tried. Binding the four elements is the revolving fullness of life. A community does not exist without these four elements which need to operate together. If one element is present without the other three, then there is no community. So both the theological and ethical implications of this study point to the need for unity among people. The communities of the early believers impacted heavily on the theological discourses that were current at that time. This framework provides the opportunity for the ELCZ to build a theological foundation for Lutherans in Zimbabwe. *Ukama/ubuntu* are local indigenous resources that guide all other experiences of life and lay a foundation on which to build a theology of unity. If the ELCZ does not take this theological matrix of unity seriously, then it could be heading for its own demise.

6.5 Conclusion

In summary it can be argued that the values of relationship, love with justice, acceptance and tolerance, and dignity can only be realized when people embrace unity through community. Violence, which is so prevalent in the Zimbabwean society, is the absence of these aspects of community. When all these aspects of cohesion are embraced, the country and the church can live as a unified family.

This study has shown how *ubuntu* and *ukama* together with Luther's understanding of "becoming a Christ for a neighbour" can be used as resources for unity within the Lutheran communities in Zimbabwe. These local resources can be used together with Luther's ethic of love to solve tensions within the church. A theological framework of unity has been suggested and suggestions made as to how the values that undergird this framework could be helpful to the church. Unity is power!

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