

**A CRITIQUE OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE'S
(ELCZ) ENGAGEMENT IN LOCAL ECUMENISM AMONG THE KARANGA OF
MBERENGWA IN ZIMBABWE.**

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DECLARATION

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**, in the Graduate Programme in **MINISTERIAL STUDIES**, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late father, Ben Edson Hove, and mother Regina Hove (nee Sibanda) who did not live to witness my academic achievement they worked so hard to see from my primary level of education. It is also dedicated to my wife Sithembile and our two daughters Anesuishe and Akudzweishe Hove, who accompanied me throughout this academic pilgrimage.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission
AICs	African Indigenous Churches, African Initiated/African Independent Churches
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CSM	Church of Sweden Mission
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
ECLF	Ecumenical Church Leaders Forum
EFZ	Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe
ELCZ	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe
ETM	End Time Message
FOG	Family of God
GNU	Government of National Unity
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HOCD	Heads of Christian Denominations
LDS	Lutheran Development Service
LUCSA	Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa
LIT	Lutheran Theological Institute
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PHD	Prophetic Healing and Deliverance

SDA Seventh Day Adventist

UFIC United Family International Church

UTC United Theological College

WCC World Council of Churches

ZANU-PF Zimbabwe African National Union. Patriotic Front

ZAOGA Zimbabwe Assembly of God Africa

ZCBC Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference

ZCC Zimbabwe Council of Churches

ZCC Zion Christian Church

ZINATHA Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers Association

ABSTRACT

Ecumenism is the fellowship of the denomination at any given level attending to their spiritual, social, economic and political needs. The church is an institution that affects people's lives, its ministry and operations are also impacted by the culture of the local people. This study explores the missio-cultural factors influencing the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe's (ELCZ) local ecumenical engagement among the Karanga in Mberengwa. The study seeks to find out the nature of local ecumenical activities and the impact of the missional and cultural factors in shaping local ecumenism in Mberengwa, Zimbabwe. While there are divisions due to the growth of many denominations in Mberengwa the study shows that there are various forms of ecumenical engagement taking place. Besides being shaped by missional factors such as evangelism and Diakonia, the cultural factors have greatly impacted the ELCZ's local ecumenical engagement.

The research notes that the culturally shaped ecumenism is not led by the clergy but is an accidental social space of interaction among denominations, either called by local community leaders or a response to natural phenomena such as attending funerals. The question of non-structured local ecumenical engagement is blamed on poor participation by the local ELCZ clergy in Mberengwa. The study argues that the Karanga concepts of *ukama* and communalism continue to help members of different denominations including the ELCZ to develop the habit of meeting and working together. The Karanga culture has provided a footing in shaping local ecumenism in Mberengwa. Among the benefits of local ecumenism are the promotion of community development and the unity of the churches and the local people in general that result in religious, social and political tolerance especially in an area known for political polarization and violence during times of elections in Zimbabwe.

The study utilizes postcolonial theoretical framework. Postcolonial theory is important in this study as it unmask the domination and power imbalance that negatively impede the ELCZ's local ecumenical engagement. This phenomenological study uses qualitative methodology with in-depth interviews conducted through snowball, purposive and convenience sampling methods.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The study of ecumenism in general and local ecumenism in particular is provoked by visible divisions and search for unity among churches locally, nationally and globally. Denominationalism which was bred in the North was imported into Africa. In Africa and Zimbabwe, in particular, there are many denominational groupings with different strands. Those that come out of the missionary founded mainline denominations are further divided. The recent development being the formation of Pentecostal/charismatic movements and ministries from both mainline and Pentecostal churches. These divisions have grown to the extent of dividing family and community members. In one family, each member has his/her denomination hence some disagreements in some instances like handling family matters or events such as weddings, funerals, and memorial services. This directly affects Christianity and the African lifestyle which always appeal for unity (oneness) and communalism. These gatherings are sacred hence family, friends and neighbours far and near ought to attend in unity. They are believed to bring together the living and the dead because ancestors are invited at every event of life. Africans and the Karanga in particular, are known to be communal with their relationships based on *ukama* (social kinship relations). While scholars like Zwana (2009), Matikiti (2009), Kessler and Kinnamon (2000) concentrate their studies on national and international ecumenical movement this study focuses on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ)'s ecumenical engagement in the local congregations in Mberengwa.

Despite the denominational differences and divisions, local congregations in Mberengwa are found to be working together in different situations hence the need to explore what influences these forms of local interactions. The study seeks to find the factors that influence the ELCZ's praxis in local ecumenism. It is within the ELCZ's mission objectives, "to work together with other denominations for the expansion of the kingdom of God" (ELCZ 2012:9). The study pursues to unveil how the ELCZ carries out its ecumenical objective especially at grassroots levels. To investigate the factors that influence local ecumenism, the study will be guided by the responses of the members from the ELCZ congregations who are interviewed for the study.

The participants will give their ecumenical perspectives and experiences on how they participate in local ecumenism.

The study will use individual in-depth interviews which will be carried telephonically and through WhatsApp conversations. It will involve both the clergy and the laity in Mberengwa under the ELCZ central diocese. The study employs a post-colonial framework to interrogate the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement. The study hopes to expose the mission-cultural and theological factors influencing local ecumenism in Mberengwa.

This chapter is a summary of what is expected in the study. It has seven main sections. The first section gives an introduction to the study and the chapter. The second section is on the background to the study that includes the contextual realities, the ELCZ general overview of the denominations which the ELCZ interact with within the local congregations in Mberengwa. It ends with motivation. The third section underlines the research problem, research questions, and objectives. Section four is the preliminary literature review, followed by section five on preliminary methodology. The sixth section is discussing the limitations of the study. The seventh section concludes the chapter with a summary of chapters of this study.

1.2 Background to the study

1.2.1 Contextual realities

There are four realities to be highlighted about the context in which this study is done. These include the rural Karanga lifestyle, the growth of different denominations in Mberengwa, competition among denominations and their cooperation at different levels. The study is undertaken among the Karanga in Mberengwa. These are part of the Karanga in Masvingo and Midlands provinces of Zimbabwe. They also fall under the Shona people with many dialects, like Kalanga, Korekore, Manyika, Ndau, and Zezuru (Bucher 1980, Shoko 2007). They are known for a communal lifestyle that is strengthened by their religious, social and economic life. Although a majority of them have become Christians with both the advent of the ELCZ mission stations and the growth of other churches found by Africans, some of them continue to live a religious life of believing in ancestors and participate in ancestral veneration (Moyo 1996, Moyo 2016). They hold ceremonies like *kurova guva* (bring back the dead relative home) in honouring their departed ones. Gundani (1994) avers that, the ceremony is a form of bonding between the living and their dead loved ones. They also come together for rainmaking

ceremonies where they ask God for rains through their ancestors (Taringa 2006). The Karanga meet during social gatherings such as weddings and funerals. In their economic life, they help one another through *humwe* (working cooperation) where they work together in planting and harvesting to make sure members of the community have got enough to survive on (Chimuka 2001, Komanisi 2014). For that reason, they remain united. Their social lifestyle is based on *ukama* (kinship relationships) that helps to unconditional love and help one another (Gelfand 1973, Mhaka 2010). These social relations go beyond the living hence the ancestors form part of the community. They are known for punishing wrongdoers and rewarding the obedient and give prosperity to their descendants (Bucher 1980). Moyo (2016) avers that good communal relationship has to do with religious observances and appeasing the ancestors. Their belief system cements their social relationship. Moyo (2016) further argues that in African contexts the understanding of African religion creates a health community. The Karanga communal lifestyle keeps people united from family to the larger community even beyond the living.

Notwithstanding the growth of the ELCZ as a dominant denomination with many local congregations in Mberengwa, there are many other denominations. These belong to the mainline, African Indigenous Churches (AICs¹) and the Pentecostal and charismatic movements. The AICs fall under the Zion and Mapostora of different types. Among the Pentecostal churches include the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA), Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), Family of God (FOG), and Assemblies of God. The mainline or missionary founded churches include the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, Church of Christ, Dutch Reformed Church, Roman Catholic Church, and the ELCZ. The growth of different denominations in Mberengwa has neutralized the dominance of the ELCZ in Mberengwa and calls for cooperation with these various denominations operating in the same locality.

The historical denominational competition which the missionaries witnessed continues to be a challenge among the local denominations in Mberengwa. Competition for membership seems to dominate than cooperation (Kobia 2001, Zwana 2009). Zwana (2009) argues that although competition for numerical growth is positive, it impedes local ecumenical cooperation among the denominations. Denominational competition has also seen the mainline denominations

¹ 'AICs' is a term used to refer to African Instituted/ Initiated/ Independent/ Indigenous/ Innovated or International churches. Scholars have generally differed on how they describe these churches. See, Mapuranga, T.P 2014. *Surviving the Urban Jungle: AICs and Women's Socio-Economic Coping Strategies in Harare (2000-2010)*. Chitando, E, Masiwa, R, Gunda, R and Kügler, J., 2014. (Eds.) *Multiplying in the Spirit. African Initiated Churches in Zimbabwe*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press. pp. 227-240. <http://www.uni-bamberg.de/ubp/>.

including the ELCZ losing members to the AICs and Pentecostal denominations due to their faith and miracle healing programs (Amanze 2013). The growth has led to the desire to outdo one another. That has led to the preaching of sermons attacking one another and demonizing each other's doctrine and practices (Moyo 2016). This is done to prevent members from leaving their denomination and join the other. The competition does not promote unity among the local churches in Mberengwa.

While there are competitions the local denominations find themselves cooperating on religious and social events taking place in the community. During these circumstances, the clergy and the laity from various denominations work together. These include community or church leaders' workshops, prayer meetings, and community meetings and social gatherings such as weddings and funerals. The local denominations cooperate since these issues affect the church and community at large. So, in these situations, there is some level of cooperation that marks local ecumenical engagement which is the focus of this study.

1.2.2 Denominational groupings in Mberengwa

There are different church groupings in Mberengwa. Denominations in Mberengwa are found in four categories. These include the African Indigenous Churches (AICs), the missionary found or mainline denominations, Pentecostal/Charismatic movements and sectarian denominations.

1.2.2.1 The Africa Indigenous Churches

These are spirit type churches found by Africans on the Africa soil. Among the Karanga, they are commonly known as *Kereke dzoMweya* meaning spirit type churches that emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit through prophets particularly the founders of these churches. Originally, these came into being as a response to lack of African religious texture in the mission founded churches. Chitando (2004:120) asserts that;

Africans also felt that the style of worship in the mission churches was too static and they endeavoured to implement a lively style. The demonisation of most African beliefs and practices by the missionaries also encouraged Africans to seek alternative havens of belonging.

They became religious protest movements resisting marginalization (Chitando and Mateveke 2014). The AICs include denominations such as Zionists and Mapostora (Apostolic churches). They came into being around the 1950-1960s (Musoni and Gundani 2016). While the Zionists are known for their appeal to the biblical Mount Zion, the Holy city of God, the Mapostora are well known for claiming to follow the footsteps of the Apostles of Jesus hence belong to the true church (Shoko 2006:4). Some of the AICs were born out of the mainline denominations while others are offshoots of other AICs. They are characterized by “schisms and splintering” and expanding creating massive diversity among themselves (Shoko 2006, Chitando et al. 2014). They are usually led by prophetic charismatic leaders who are respected for their prophetic and spiritual powers (Pobee 2002). For that reason, in the Mataruse area of Mberengwa, there are Zionists of Chisasa, Matsveru, Mutati and the other form of Zionists known as the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) of Nehemiah Mutendi. The Mapostora also have Mugodhi Apostolic Church, Paul Mwazha’s African Apostolic Church, African Apostolic Church of Johane Marange, and Johane Masowe and Johane Masowe Chishanu ye Nyeredzi. The above listed Apostolic churches account for over five million adherences in Zimbabwe (Chari 2014). The names come from the Charismatic leaders and founders of these apostolic churches. Another apostolic church specializing in prophecy, healing and refusing the use of the Bible is Madzibaba with many leaders depending on the places they live. The name Madzibaba refers to all male members of the church while females are addressed as Madzimai (women). These are indigenous in their establishment, leadership and funding. They keep on promoting African leadership, culture, and spirituality. Shoko (2006) avers that the African Indigenous Churches are known to have developed their theology with an African ethos. They follow a charismatic form of spirituality with an African flavor (Bhebe 1999, Shoko 2006). They do not demonize prophecies and spiritual healing since African cosmology is based on the world full of bad and good spirits. Their liturgy has a special time of consulting prophets and deliverance from demons and spiritual attacks and healing from various diseases believed to have spiritual origins. Healing is through prayer, anointing oil, salt, herbs, water and (*ndaza*) strings (Ngada and Mofokeng 2000: 37, Shoko 2007:53). Other than the aspects of healing and patriarchy, the AICs adopted the African culture of polygamy. Their ability to blend Christian faith with the African worldview has led them to flourish among the Karanga in Mberengwa.

1.2.2.2 The mainline denominations

There are also mainstream or mainline churches such as the Roman Catholic, ELCZ, Methodist Church, Dutch Reformed, Church of Christ. These are missionary founded denominations with various mission stations around Zimbabwe but have congregations in Mberengwa. Due to partitioning of Zimbabwe into mission areas the churches became known as regional mission-related churches (Zwana 2009, Bhebe 1999). Each missionary group was allocated an area of influence hence the Mberengwa became predominantly Lutheran area. The Roman Catholic has got only one mission station in Mberengwa while the ELCZ is the only one with the majority of the mission stations and congregations. These denominations follow the western approach to faith and ministry. Their administrative structure, their emphasis on word and sacraments and negating prophecy and faith healing, following western ideologies. They are well known for their mission stations with hospitals where people are attended by medical professional staff using western medicine. They believe in physical and spiritual salvation hence the spiritual side attended through the preaching while the physical health attended through western medicines (Söderström et al. 2003, Manyonganise 2016). These denominations usually undermine the AICs and Pentecostals as sectarian churches lacking theological education. They regard themselves as the best churches with sound theology and doctrines. This causes their hostility against prophetic and faith healing churches (de Waal 1990).

1.2.2.3 The Pentecostal and Charismatic churches

The other major grouping is that of the Pentecostals. This is the fastest-growing group of churches in Mberengwa. The main ones being the ZAOGA, AFM, Family of God (FOG) and smaller ones like Word of Fire and Word of Life. The latest type of charismatic movements are the United Family International Church (UFIC) of Makandiwa and Prophetic Healing and Deliverance (PHD) of Magaya, the Good News Church formerly the Spirit Embassy of Uebert Angel (Chitando and Bhiri 2016, Mpofu 2014, Manyonganise 2016). The healing ministries are popular in the urban areas but have small clusters of members in Mberengwa. These denominations belong to the African Initiated Churches because they are found by Africans. Like the AICs, they are led by charismatic leaders, specialize in prophecy, spiritual and faith healing (Garba 2014). They hold special deliverance sessions where healing and exorcism take place during their church services. Healing is through prayer, laying of hands and anointing oil

(Shoko 2007). They are also known for promoting prosperity theology by emphasizing economic growth, good health and successful weddings and marriages to their followers. They appeal to the young generation like students, the working middle class and business people with a desire to climb the social and economic ladder and have a successful life (Heuser 2013, Mtata 2013). Those who are sick particularly with life-threatening chronic diseases and those with marriage problems also visit these denominations to be assisted. However, some may have dual membership. They belong to the mainline churches but still visit these churches and their prophets when they have problems or alternate their Sunday services.

1.2.2.4 Other denominations in Mberengwa

There are other denominations found in Mberengwa which the ELCZ officially classify as sectarian movements such as the Seventh Day Adventist, Jehovah's Witness, and the End Time Message (ELCZ, 2012). These denominations have a strong isolationist stance that tends to condemn other denominations (Zwana 2006). They differ from the ELCZ and other denominations in matters of doctrines, church governance and practices (ELCZ 2007). Their strict observances of religious traditions such as days of worship and dietary rules make them distinct from others. These denominations dissociate themselves from post burial rituals such as *nyaradzo* (consolation) services which are held to enable the bereaved to cope with the loss of beloved ones.

1.2.3 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe

Missionaries from Sweden and South Africa (Appelsbosch Mission centre) established two mission camps outside Mberengwa in Shurugwi and Vugwi and later established a mission station at Mnene in Mberengwa in 1903. The ELCZ remained a rural church of Mberengwa, Gwanda, and Beitbridge for many years. It only began spreading into urban areas around the 1960s with an effort to shepherd its members who migrated to urban areas for employment purposes or running away from rural war zones (Bhebe 1999). The ELCZ grew on its three-pronged approaches namely preaching through evangelism, teaching through schooling and healing through hospitalization. Thus, in most ELCZ mission stations, there was a chapel, school, and hospital. While the missionary pastors looked after the institutions and administration of sacraments, evangelism and pastoral care were left to evangelists. Evangelists were effective on evangelism and teaching catechists because of their knowledge of local language and culture hence they won many souls for the church (Bhebe 1999). By 1928 the

ELCZ rapidly expanded into Gwanda and Beitbridge areas of Matabeleland South. The emphasis of the ELCZ remains on preaching the gospel from scripture and healing mainly through western medicine as pastoral care. For that reason, every hospital has a chaplain to offer pastoral care services. Matters of prophecy and miraculous faith healing are marginalized. Those who practice them are treated with suspicion, marginalized or rebuked (Shoko 2006, Shiri 1985). These matters are relegated to the spirit type churches including the AICs and Pentecostals. This has led the church to lose members joining the AICs and Pentecostal churches who practice these forms of spiritualities.

1.3 Motivation

1.3.1 Study slot

There is an array of literature on ecumenism and the majority of the studies are on the national ecumenism in Zimbabwe. Matikiti (2009) explored ecumenism at the United Theological College (the mainline theological college in Harare). The study unveils the way the mainline denominations including the ELCZ contribute and participate in ecumenical engagement through training of ministers. The college is run by heads of the participating denominations through the denominational secondment of staff from these churches (Matikiti 2009:6). The study further reveals that both the students and church leaders from participating denominations share worship services to strengthen their ecumenical ties (Matikiti 2009, Zwana 2009). The study is based on a national level and focusing on theological training. It does not bring about the ecumenical participation of the local congregations of these denominations.

Zwana (2009) investigated the challenges of ecumenism in Zimbabwe in particular, on the establishment of institutions of higher learning such as universities citing the challenges and the development of these denominational universities. The study shows that denominations could not easily become united in building universities because of their ethnic and political backgrounds and geographical locations (Zwana 2009). Denominations with their stronghold in Matabeleland, Manicaland, Mashonaland or Masvingo provinces aligned themselves with political leaders in the area who happen to be members of such denominations hence it becomes a regional politics that is detrimental to ecumenism. He further attests that attachment to their sister churches that offer financial support for the projects could not promote cooperation in this regard. For that reason, each denomination went to establish its independent university.

The study posits that the establishment of church universities has proved the failure of ecumenism in Zimbabwe.

Chitando and Togarasei (2010) explore the role of the church in the mitigation of political crisis in Zimbabwe. They draw their conclusion by analyzing the work of the ZCBC, ZCC, and EFZ during the political polarization and violence in Zimbabwe in 2008. Churches undertook to bring civic education, provision of food and refugee for the victims of political violence. They further assert that despite the efforts by these church groupings their efforts were disturbed by division and political alignment of individual Christians and denominations. Chitando and Togarasei's work is focused on national ecumenism particularly ecumenical work done by the main ecumenical organizations in Zimbabwe.

Chitando and Bhiri (2016) also explored ecumenism among the newly formed charismatic movements. They explored cooperation among the main charismatic leaders namely, Magaya, Makandiwa, and Engel. They do not belong to the EFZ or the evangelical grouping, but they have their ecumenical movement. Chitando and Bhiri (2016) argue that these charismatic leaders have changed both the Christian and ecumenical landscape in Zimbabwe. The study posits that the projected competition and downplaying between Magaya and Makandiwa has been proved wrong by Magaya's open acknowledgment of the role of Makandiwa in his ministry. Chitando and Bhiri (2016) also aver that these founders of prophetic movements regard each other as core workers in ministry. The level of ecumenism remains at a national level and concerning the leaders leaving out members in the grassroots hence this study seeks to bridge the gap by bringing the discussion of local or grassroots ecumenical engagement. Moyo (2013) reports on the work of the Ecumenical Church Leaders' Forum (ECLF) in peace and reconciliation. Born out of the ELZ, ZCBC, and ZCC the ECLF operates as a trust addressing issues of peace after many years of political violence which caused a loss of homes, property, and life. According to Moyo (2013), the ECLF's purpose is to promote peace and nation-building in the context of political polarization and paralysis of the church and civil society organizations. The work involves counseling, equipping the church and local leaders in conflict prevention, management and resolution (Moyo 2013). While the literature reflects the work of ECLF's work among the communities it is a national initiative hence the literature is based on the national ecumenical movement.

As shown above, the majority of scholars did not discuss the role of local congregations in the ecumenical movement. The current study seeks to add literature with voices from local congregations, particularly from the rural ELCZ congregations. It seeks to explore ecumenism from below so that the local experiences can be taken seriously by both church leaders and scholars. The key motivation is this academic gap the study is perusing.

1.3.2 Impact to the society

1.3.2.1 Revival of the spirit of ecumenism

The advent of missionary work has witnessed different denominations coming into Zimbabwe. These carried their denominational brand and mandate hence the various denominations found in Mberengwa. The imported denominationalism and divisions among denominations are a hindrance to local ecumenism. Those denominations formed out of the missionary founded denominations seek to distinguish themselves from other local denominations hence escalation of divisions. Besides doctrinal differences, divisions are caused by among other issues, the understanding and praxis in pastoral care, healing, church leadership and administration of sacraments. The spirit of ecumenism can only be revived through recognition of ecumenical movement and opportunities in the grassroots. The study is a quest to acknowledge local congregational efforts and promote local ecumenism being informed by cultural experiences. When local ecumenism is promoted it will as well strengthen national engagement as it will inform and open a form of ecumenical engagement that is inclusive and broader.

1.3.2.2 Sustenance of communalism

Among the African and the Karanga in particular, life is lived communally, and the people strive to promote it. Socio-economic and religious activities are used to enhance communalism. In the current religious set up the churches, ecumenical engagement can be used to sustain communalism in Mberengwa and elsewhere where different churches operate. Ecumenism promotes unity and cooperation among members of different denominations. It is a fulfillment of oneness that Jesus desired the church and unity preached by the apostle Paul (John 17:21-23; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27). It promotes the spirit of communalism which is central in African life. Since the study is done in local Mberengwa among the Karanga people, it seeks to promote their lifestyle. The unity of the church sustains the life of the people and community hence the motivation of this study.

1.3.3.3 Social cohesion

In Zimbabwe people and families are divided by political parties and denominations. This makes it difficult for people to work together towards religious, and socio-economic progress. Ecumenism seeks to bring churches and people together. Thus, ecumenism becomes a platform where people from different denominations converge and work together. This study of local ecumenism is meant to cultivate the spirit of cooperation among Christians that will result in community development. It exposes opportunities of ecumenical engagement that heals divisions and tensions and promotes cooperation among local denominations and community in general. The study helps to explore the different benefits of the local ecumenical engagement ranging from church unity and the socio- economic benefits.

1.3.4 Pragmatic motivation

I am a Karanga man who grew up in a polygamous family and living in a community where life is communally lived. Children from different mothers ate from one plate, shared the blankets, and shoes. We worked together in the house, garden, and fields. As the local community, we shared local resources. Land, water and wild trees and animals are communally owned. Sometimes the community worked together supporting one another in the fields. It is that spirit of living together that motivates me to see the church promoting the spirit of ecumenism. All forms of division are a challenge to my background.

My personal experience as a High school teacher has exposed me to the life and work of the Scripture Union. For five years I was advisor and coordinator of Scripture Union. I worked with teachers and pupils from different denominational backgrounds from schools in the Mberengwa district. Since Scripture Union is an interdenominational movement it forms the basis of ecumenical engagement. From this background I engage in this study as a way of finding how the local churches work together and promote cooperation such as the one, I experienced in Scripture Union.

As an ELCZ Pastor, I lived and worked in different ELCZ parishes and congregations. I have always encouraged my congregations to work with other denominations based on the word of God and our (ELCZ) constitution. I took initiatives to invite local churches whenever my Parish has functions. In some cases, I was invited to lead services and burial ceremonies of none-ELCZ members. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the phenomenon of the ELCZ local

ecumenical engagement through the experiences of the members of the local congregations in Mberengwa.

1.4 Research problem, questions and objectives.

1.4.1 The problem

The question of ecumenism dates back to the divisions of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15) whereby different branches of the early church came together to resolve the conflicts that were about to divide the church. From this point, divisions continue to haunt the church to this day. The quest for church unity grew from Jesus who prayed for oneness among his disciples (John 17:21). The challenge is when churches continue to be divided and fail to find each other. But there are two levels of ecumenical engagements where the ELCZ seems to participate in Zimbabwe. There is a national level that is initiated by the national bodies such as the ZCC, HOCD and the ECLF and local levels spearheaded by local congregations. These ecumenical movements are motivated by different factors. This study is an analysis of the ELCZ initiatives and participation in local ecumenism. It seeks to find out how the mission-cultural factors contribute to the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement.

1.4.2 Key research question

What are the missio-cultural factors that influence the ELCZ's local church ecumenical engagements in Mberengwa?

1.4.3 Sub- questions

- i. What are the forms of ecumenical activities in Mberengwa among the Karanga that involve the ELCZ
- ii. What are the missional factors that influence ecumenism in local ELCZ congregations?
- iii. What are the cultural factors that influence the ELCZ's local ecumenical engagements in Mberengwa?
- iv. What are the benefits of local ecumenism in Mberengwa?

1.4.4 Research objectives

- i. To identify forms of local ecumenical activities in which the ELCZ is involved in Mberengwa.
- ii. To examine the missional factors influencing the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement.
- iii. To investigate the cultural factors that influence the ELCZ's local ecumenical engagement.
- iv. To explore the benefits of local ecumenism in Mberengwa.

1.5 Preliminary literature review

The literature for this study is informed by the work done on key concepts particularly in the field of ecumenism. Most importantly was the selection of books and articles from Zimbabwe and those that have dealt with ecumenism and theology of ecumenism at the global level. This is meant to see the interaction of local and global views on ecumenical engagement. The literature reviewed helped in identifying the gap and narrowing the scope of the study to focus on an area that is not extensively explored. The study continuously blends the scholars to be informed by worldwide scholars on the study.

1.5.1 Ecumenism defined

The word ecumenism comes from the Greek word *-oikumene* meaning the whole world and household (Conradie 2013). Historically, the whole world refers to the part of the world under the political influence of the Roman Empire (Conradie 2013). However, scholars define ecumenism in terms of division and unity of the church. Ecumenism means the unity of the church that is meant to heal and mend the broken relationships and denominational divisions that have taken place throughout the history of the church (Goosen 2001, Onwubiko 2001, Hendricks 2014, Werner 2013). The western divisions and hostilities that began in the West have spread in Africa (Kobia 2001, Onwubiko 2001, and Hendricks 2014). The move towards church unity is meant to promote cooperation and mutuality in the Body of Christ (Kessler and Kinnamon 2000, Matikiti 2009). Matikiti (2009) further avers that ecumenism does not seek uniformity of the various Christian denomination but strive for greater tolerance and cooperation among the denomination. The purpose of ecumenism is to have a reconciled diversity whereby the different denominations learn from one another as they walk together in faith and action in the world (Matikiti 2009, Koopman (2013). Ecumenism is necessary as

denominations and people of different faith continue to interact at different levels in the community (Goosen 2001). These interactions take place at regional, international, national and grassroots levels.

Ecumenism is provoked by continued segregation and hostilities among denominations signaled by the formation of national ecumenical bodies in Zimbabwe. The most visible and viable ecumenical movements remain that of the mainline churches (ZCC), the Roman Catholic one and the Evangelical churches (EFZ) (Chitando and Togarasei 2010). These sometimes work closely on national issues, especially when calling for peace and justice in Zimbabwe (Munemo and Nciizah 2014). The other churches are excluded by their own choice or by default. Unfortunately, these churches have formed their groupings independent from each other, like Fambidzano, a purely AICs movement (Daneel 1999). Initially, they were looked at as problem churches to be avoided but their existence, growth, and visibility cannot be ignored nor avoided (Amanze 2013). Literature in this section such as Conradie (2013), Hendricks (2014), Matikiti (2009), and Goosen (2001) define ecumenism in the light of divisions and the need for unity in the body of Christ. This is helpful since the current study seeks to analyze the phenomenon of local church unity as it is experienced by the ELCZ and congregations of other denominations in Mberengwa. However, the emphasis is given on national division and ecumenical movements. Therefore, this study wants to investigate the ELCZ participation in ecumenism at local or grassroots levels.

1.5.2 Theological basis of ecumenism

There are three issues emphasized by the scholars in this section. Firstly, Gassmann (2002) and Meyer (1999) argue that church unity is God's gift to the church hence Christian division is a historical scandal. For them, the words one, the holy catholic church which is found in the Nicene and Apostolic creeds are a confession of the gift of church unity that should manifest in visible unity among believers. Christian unity as presupposed by ecumenism is based on the symbol of Trinity and perichoretic unity of the Godhead (Gassmann 2002). Therefore, Christian confession of the creeds needs to be embraced and expressed in visible unity among the denominations.

Secondly, ecumenism or Christian unity is biblically grounded. Njoroge (2013) argues that the dividing wall between the Jews and Gentiles was broken to promote church unity (Gal. 3:28, Eph. 3:1-6). When the barrier was broken the new nation and church of Christ were found; the

Body of Christ. Their oneness in Spirit and baptism in one faith means that they belong together (Eph. 4:4-6). The unity and oneness cannot only be expressed through the preaching of the gospel but also the sharing of one baptism and Eucharist (Gassmann 2002). Meyer (1999), Best (2002) and Tillard (2002) argue that *koinonia* is a biblical model of ecumenism based on the Christian sharing both material and spiritual goods and meeting one another's needs (Acts 2:42). Such unity is meant to improve the quality of Christian mutuality in the body of Christ. *Koinonia* communion is experienced locally and globally as Christians share a common faith in Christ. According to Njoroge (2013), the biblical basis of ecumenism is a fulfillment of Jesus's prayer and vision in John 17:21. His prayer wanted him to see his disciples as one flock under one shepherd (John 10:16). The church's visible unity is a sign of its obedience to Christ who prayed for oneness (Njoroge 2013).

Thirdly, scholars such as Njoroge (2013), Gassmann (2002), Best (2002), Matikiti (2009), Meyer (1999), and Kessler and Kinnamon (2000) emphasize the question of ecumenism through the biblical image of the church as the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-14, Ep. 4) with many united parts. Kessler and Kinnamon (2000) argue that members of one Body of Christ mean sharing one another's joy and suffering and carrying each other's burdens. Within the one Body of Christ are many members or parts that depend on one another through the sharing of spiritual gifts given for the benefit of the church (Njoroge 2013). The unity in the Body of Christ is against the scandal of Christian divisions (Matikiti 2009, Kessler and Kinnamon 2000). Kessler and Kinnamon (2000) maintain that the unity of the Body presupposes the unity of the church that welcomes and accepts all in the Body of Christ. The image of the Body of Christ is an expression of the oneness of the church that can be promoted through ecumenism.

1.5.3 Grassroots ecumenism

Among the scholars who explored local ecumenism are Au (2008), Huliselan (2008), and Gibbons (2012). Au (2008) and Huliselan (2008) hold that national ecumenism is a movement of the elite while local ecumenism is found and driven by both the clergy and the laity. It is more inclusive than the national ecumenism. It involves the participation of a wider range of local denominations than those who make up the national ecumenical movement. The main purpose is fellowshiping with God and one another without focusing on social or economic status of members and denominations (Au 2008). The pastor and local congregations also meet during funerals, weddings and other community social meetings (Gibbons 2012). Local

ecumenism promotes life sharing among the congregations and the community in general. According to Au (2008), local ecumenism is influenced by the need for unity and healing. Healing is done through pastoral care, prayer, and deliverance services and celebrated by the local ecumenical movement as the body of Christ (Au 2008). The question of church unity and healing are important factors in influencing local ecumenism. While Goosen (2013) advocates for local ecumenism, he laments the problem of lack of participation from the clergy. For him, this is the major impediment to the growth and strength of local ecumenical engagement as compared to national ecumenical movements. He brings a key issue to this study focusing on clergy participation in local ecumenism. Verstraelen (1998) and Söderström et al. (2003) acknowledge that local congregations gather for worship as well as addressing social issues. They, however, lament the lack of ability to promote social and political justice which is core to the mission of the church. These observations are key in exploring local ecumenical engagement but do not give details on the factors that cause local congregations to come together. Although the literature explores local ecumenism it does not do it in the context of the ELCZ and the Karanga people in Mberengwa. Au focuses on a specific Western context while others discuss general observation from their contexts.

1.5.4 National ecumenism in Zimbabwe

Following the missionary ecumenism that took place in early 1900s the mainline denominations including the ELCZ continued to seek to cooperate with other mainline denominations at the national level. Both Matikiti (2009) and Zwana (2009) agree that mainline denominations actively cooperate in the field of theological education through the United Theological College in Harare. For them, the college has become the center of ecumenism which is not only expressed through education but also in fellowshiping together as denominations and leaders of mainline denominations. Besides cooperation in theological education, the mainline denominations established their national body known as the Zimbabwe Council of Churches which was formed in 1964. Shiri (1985), Munemo and Nciizah (2014), Muchechetere (2009), Dombo (2014) extensively discuss the participation of ZCC and other ecumenical bodies in socio-economic and political matters in Zimbabwe. Among other issues is their active participation in nation-building in the early 1980s when the churches were involved in the rebuilding of schools, hospitals and chapels (Shiri 1985). Through national ecumenical bodies, the churches took active participation in election monitoring programs, constitutional making processes and the formation of the government of national unity as well

as condemning political violence and injustices in Zimbabwe. However, others like Chitando and Togarasei (2010), and Dube (2006) emphasize on the challenges faced by the ecumenical bodies in addressing political problems in Zimbabwe. They state that there are divisions among the churches when it comes to dealing with political issues. Some would support the ruling party while others advocate for change. The result is confusion and lack of unity for their prophetic voice to be heard and accepted. The literature concentrates on national ecumenical bodies without giving any highlights on the role of the local congregations in shaping the church response to these social, economic and political matters. This is different from others like Werbner (2018) and Au (2008) who focused their discussion on successes and challenges of grassroots or local ecumenism outside Zimbabwe. Although the scholars explore the role of ecumenical movements in Zimbabwe, they do not do it with local ecumenism in mind.

1.5.5 Culture and ecumenism

The question of the role of local culture in ecumenism is critical in the study of ELCZ local ecumenical engagement. Scholars like Moyo (1996), Bediako (1995), Parratt (1997), and Muzorewa (2000) argue that missionaries did not only condemn African culture but misunderstood it and excluded it in church life, yet it is crucial in African wellbeing. Unfortunately, missionaries thought that conversion meant African converts changing their values, norms and ethos adopting Western ones (Mushayavanhu and Duncan 2014). The systematic replacement of African culture with the Western worldview does not help the African church life since the local culture does not only influence local life but church life. In terms of local ecumenism, the church can use the local Karanga culture to enhance its ecumenical engagement. This is affirming the incarnation of the gospel through the local culture (Bediako 1995, Pobe 1992). Obiefuna and Kanu (2013) posit that the African culture based on hospitality and respect for elders is critical when it comes to ecumenical engagement. Hospitality helps in working together and building relationships among the local people. It strengthens people's local relationships. Being hospitable does not only help in Christian mission to care for the sick and the poor but also unconditionally welcoming one another and accepting one another in the Body of Christ. According to Magesa (2004), the mission of the church should be a correlation of the gospel values and local culture so that Africans achieve integrated spirituality. Moyo (2016) suggests a shift towards the Christian paradigm that respects human cultures as opposed to religious ideology. He is against the westernization of African Christians which was propagated by missionaries and continue to haunt the church

today. Although the literature in this section such as Moyo (2016), Bediako (1995), Muzorewa (2000) and Obiefuna and Kanu (2013) exposes the missionary failure to appreciate African culture it does not bring about the importance of the African culture and the Karanga in influencing local ecumenical engagement. The aspects of traditional religion and hospitality are key but are not thoroughly explored to find out whether they can help in giving insights on culture and local ecumenism or not.

1.5.6 Missionary attempts to ecumenism

Since the ELCZ is a missionary founded denomination there was a need to trace its ecumenical journey from the early missionaries. A few highlights on missionary ecumenism were given by Baxter and Burke (1970), Söderström (1984), and Söderström et al. (2003). They argue that Western missionaries in Zimbabwe had a problem of competition for converts hence decided to come together to resolve this challenge. This resulted in two ecumenical conferences held in Zimbabwe then Rhodesia. The 1903 and 1934 conferences were held in Bulawayo as a way of seeking understanding in the missionary field. The result was harmony and setting boundaries for missionary operations which resulted in the ELCZ the then Church of Sweden Mission sanctioned to operate in Mberengwa and other parts of the Midlands provinces and Matabeleland South province (Söderström 1984). The literature gives a historical background to the ELCZ participation in ecumenism in Zimbabwe but also raises important issues of denominational competition that continue to be experienced today. Generally, the literature review demonstrates that there is a lack of literature on ecumenism by the ELCZ and other local denominational congregations.

This section has highlighted some of the key scholars and their basic arguments, an expanded review is in chapter three of the study.

1.6. Preliminary Research Methodology

The study employed qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research was chosen in line with the research question of this study. Patton and Cochran (2002) admit that qualitative research aims to understand the experiences and attitudes of people. Zohrabi (2013) avers that while quantitative research uses closed-ended questionnaires in order to collect, scrutinize and interpret data, qualitative research methods make use of interviews, journals, situational observations and open-ended questions. The study utilizes in-depth interviews and the use of

secondary data. In-depth interviews were done with the clergy and the laity as discussed (see chapter 6). Since the study uses qualitative methods only twenty five (25) participants were chosen for in-depth interviews. The number of participants was arrived at through the use of purposive and snowball sampling. Qualitative inquiry does not need a large number of participants because they end up giving the same information with different presentation. The key to the selection of the participants was representation of all sectors of the church including men, women and youth (above 18 years). These organs have their own programs and meetings where they interact with other denominations at congregational, parish, deanery and diocesan levels. The study used phenomenological approach. According to Groenewald (2004:2), phenomenological method “aims at retaining the lived experiences of the people”. Therefore, it endeavours to ask the questions like, what is the meaning, structure and essence of the lived experiences of this phenomenon by an individual or individuals (Patton and Cochrane 2002). The research question and sub- questions of this phenomenological study of the ELCZ’s local ecumenical engagement requires this method to understand forms, experiences and expressions of ecumenical engagement.

Besides the use of the in- depth interviews, there was extensive use of secondary data. Secondary data refers to the information in various texts including books, journal articles from the university library and database, minutes and reports from data archives. These are documents that portray the realities of life (May 2011). To understand the context of research and phenomenon, this study consults published books, unpublished thesis and research papers, journals, papers, newspapers, and reports related to ecumenical work both nationally and globally. The secondary data was sourced from both libraries and online academic search engines such as Google Scholar, Ebscohost, Research Space, and Peer-Reviewed Journals. The secondary data helps in the literature review, discussing methodology, theoretical framework, and complimenting empirical evidence throughout the study. Special consideration was given to materials under arts, humanities and social sciences (Mouton, 2009). With the permission of the gatekeepers, this study used the constitution and reports of the ELCZ’s ecumenical engagement. Hofstee (2006) argues that the problem of secondary data is its broad use and applicability. However, documents such as the ELCZ Constitution (2012), and Diocesan reports (2012-2016) reflect the actual activities including the ELCZ ecumenical engagement hence they are more helpful in this study. A detailed discussion on methodology is in chapter five of this study.

1.7. Theoretical Framework

The postcolonial theoretical framework is utilized and runs as a thread throughout the study. As a discursive tool informing discourses of resistance, the postcolonial theory is presented as seeking to transform the impossibility into possible conditions, while critiquing colonial domination traits at the same time. This done by unmasking the different ELCZ approaches to local ecumenism and the importance of the Karanga culture in shaping these ecumenical activities in the local congregations and parishes in Mberengwa. The three forms of resistance built on ambivalence, hybridity, and mimicry are central in the postcolonial theory used in this study.

1.8. Delimitations

Since ecumenical discussions cover a variety of issues, I choose to focus on the ELCZ rural parishes and congregations in a selected district which is the hub of the ELCZ congregations. The rationale for choosing rural parishes and congregation is that these are the areas where the church was planted by missionaries and more members are found in Mberengwa. The other reason is that in the rural areas, the ELCZ is surrounded by various denominations than in urban areas hence they are more diversified interactions and experiences that need to be explored. I did not cover other areas such as urban and mission centres and other ELCZ dioceses to avoid mixing the experiences in various settings. These may need another research as a comparative study. The in-depth interviews were conducted among the ELCZ members to investigate their experiences in interacting with other denominations other than seeking the experiences of the various denominations in Mberengwa. Neither did I seek to discuss the national ecumenical experiences that have been researched by scholars such as Matikiti (2009), Zwana (2009) and Chitando and Togarasei (2010).

1.8.1. Contextual challenges

The contextual realities of the study show the challenges of office bearers and network problems. However, since the study will be done through telephone and WhatsApp conversation the researcher will seek to encourage the participants to find a suitable time and period when the network is strong. It will be a two-way process when the participants will confirm their availability and network strength while the researcher would confirm the availability of each participant. The other obvious problem is the use of focus groups. It may

not work due to the different geographical locations of the participants and the network strength differences. The only way to handle it is by using chats so that each participant gives his/her response within the day of the discussion.

1.9 The Ethical questions

This study is a Doctoral research project conducted for academic purposes. Therefore, this needed the gate keepers and participants to be informed so that they participate freely in the study. I got the gate keeper's letter from the bishop of the ELCZ Central Diocese. The letter gave me the permission to conduct interviews with both the clergy and the lay leaders in Mberengwa. The informed consent forms were distributed to the participants for completion as a written agreement that explains aspects of a study to the participants and asked for their voluntary agreement to participate before the beginning of the study. This is meant to confirm their willingness and assuring them the confidentiality of the information gathered through the research instrument and procedure. The researcher used the pseudo names for the participants to preserve their anonymity.

1.10 Summary of chapters

Chapter one is an introductory chapter that begins by introducing both the chapter and the study. The chapter has given the background to the study and identified the research problem, research questions and objectives, theoretical framework, preliminary literature review and methodology and discussion of the limitations to the study.

Chapter two is on the contextual background. It gives a detailed background of the Karanga. The background includes origins, geographical location, social life, and religious beliefs. It also traces the background of the ELCZ and its work in areas of health, education and ecumenical engagement. The chapter delineates various denominations that interact with the ELCZ in Mberengwa.

Chapter three is a review of literature particularly on the definition of ecumenism and the biblical and theological basis of ecumenism. It also reviews literature on conciliar and receptive ecumenism, ecumenism and church mission, grassroots ecumenism. The other literature reviewed is on the ELCZ's involvement in national ecumenism and the interaction between culture and ecumenism. The conclusion of the chapter is evaluation of the reviewed literature.

Chapter four identifies and discusses the postcolonial framework used in this study. It summarizes the features of the postcolonial framework, the weaknesses of the theory, and justification of the theory as critical lenses for this study.

Chapter five constitutes the methodology used to approach the study. These include the research philosophy, method of qualitative inquiry, phenomenological approach and sampling methods. The chapter discusses data collection procedures that involves the use of WhatsApp conversation in-depth semi- structured interviews. It also highlights the anticipated limitations and ethical considerations to the study.

Chapter six is a description of the data collection and in-depth interviews. It begins by giving responses by the clergy and then the responses by the laity. It gives a summary of the responses by combining similar responses and gives examples of direct quotations on specific responses.

Chapter seven constitute data analysis. This include discussion of themes drawn from the collected data and how these have an influence over local ecumenism.

Chapter eight presents the general conclusions, summary of findings, and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND: THE KARANGA OF MBERENGWA AND THE ELCZ.

2.1 Introduction

Chapter one focused on the introduction to the research problem, motivation, research questions and objectives, limitations and chapter outline. This chapter outlines the geographical, social and historical background of the Karanga people in Mberengwa. This is providing the setting of the historical and social context of the ELCZ in Mberengwa. While it discusses the history of the ELCZ it explores the potential ecumenical partners or other denominations in Mberengwa. This is meant to give a picture of the church and cultural context from which the study was conducted. Since one of the objectives of the study is to discuss the cultural factors influencing the ELCZ participation in local ecumenism among the Karanga in Mberengwa, this chapter gives the cultural background of the Karanga and members of the ELCZ who will share their experiences during the interviews. The chapter enables the reader to have a detailed understanding of the culture of the participants that shape the outcome of the study.

2.2 The Karanga of Mberengwa

The Karanga people of Mberengwa are part of the larger family of Karanga people in Shurugwi and Zvishavane districts in the Midlands province and some parts of Masvingo province (Shoko 2007). They are also a sub-group of the Shona people who form 65% of the Zimbabwean population, with the majority occupying the central and northeastern parts of the country (Taringa 2006). Since the Karanga people are part of the larger Shona group in Zimbabwe, they share some cultural traits with others that belong to Shona dialects. Karanga refers both to the ethnic identity and language of the people in Mberengwa (Shoko 2007).

2.3 Geographical location

This study was conducted among the Karanga people in a delineated geographical area of Mberengwa district. The district is surrounded by Zvishavane district in the North, Mwenezi district in the East and Gwanda district in the West. Mberengwa district forms the hub of the ELCZ since it has both the first missionary centre and the majority of its parishes, schools, and

hospitals. Due to their (Karanga) geographical location, they have specific cultural traits that influence their ecumenical experiences.

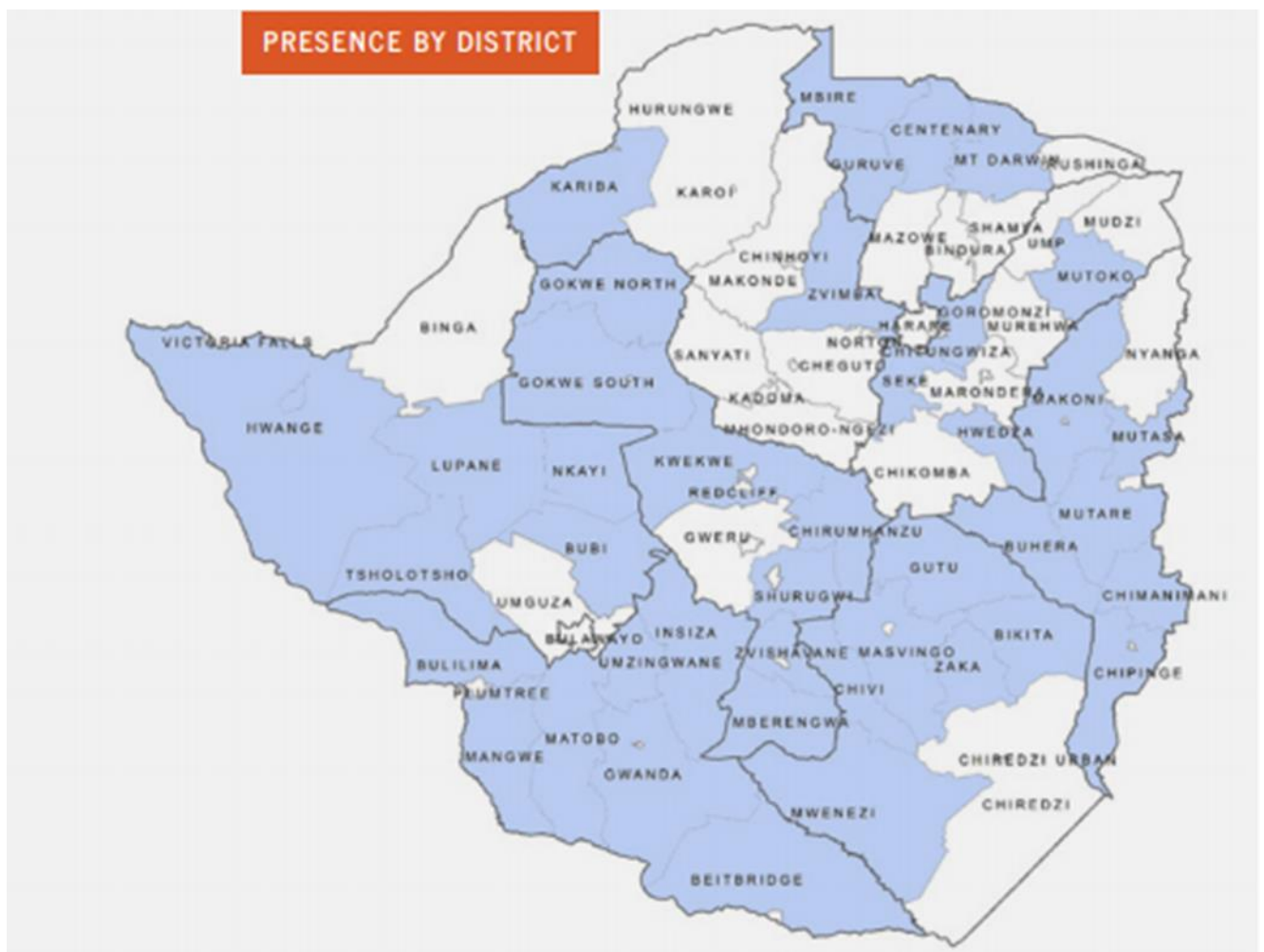


Figure 2. Map of Zimbabwe showing Mberengwa district (United Nations Agencies in Zimbabwe in action 2017: Website).

2.4 Social life of the Karanga

The Karanga community is organized around *ukama*² (kinship) lines. This structure regulates marriages and socio-economic cooperation among the people. Weinrich (1982) argues that the family forms the central part of Karanga communities. From the nuclear family of parents and children, there is the value of the extended family of parents’ parents and siblings that continue

² *Ukama* is the ChiShona version of the Zulu/Xhosa concept *buntu*. In Setswana (Bantu language belonging to the Niger–Congo family spoken in southern Africa) it is called *lesika*, and *letshinga* in Ikalanga (Bantu language spoken by people in Botswana and Zimbabwe). See, Grange, L.L., 2012. Ubuntu, ukama, environment and moral education. *Journal of moral education*, 41, 3.pp. 329-340.

to play different roles during rites of passage and problem solving (Shoko 2007:19). Although the extended family ties seem to be slowly diminishing, they come into force in times of marriage, funerals, and sickness (Daneel 1971, Weinrich 1982, Shoko 2007). According to Le Grange (2012:333), “the concept *ukama* embodies an inseparable oneness between the past, present, and future generations”. The basis of *ukama* is multiple patterns of network relationships from the family itself. *Ukama* is a social web that is created out of blood relatives, marriage relationships, neighbourliness and communal relationship (Daneel 1971, Gelfand 1973, Mhaka 2010). These networks of relationships known as *hama* are the people who matter in moments of happiness and disaster. The concept of *ukama* brings the whole family and community to unity.

The unity presupposes journeying together throughout social rituals from birth to death. But this does not end with close family or blood relatives, it is extended to community members and strangers. In Karanga they say, *Munhu wose ihama yako* (loosely translated to say every human being is a relative). Human beings belong together despite their different family background and totems. *Ukama* also marks human relatedness with ancestors or the spiritual world and all of creation (Grange 2012, Hatendi 1973). Estranged relationships and disharmony within these relationships are believed to cause suffering in one way or the other. Therefore, the Karanga strives to maintain *ukama* with all living beings, the environment, and the spiritual world³.

2.4.1 Karanga family life

Family (*mhuri*) consists of *veukama* (the blood relatives). These are people who are related by birth and *mutupo* (totems). According to Daneel (1971:46), *mhuri* is a combination of relatives that includes man (husband), a woman (wife) and children, and “those kinfolds who share birth marriage and illness among themselves”. The Karanga families use different animal totems to differentiate one family from the other and allow them to build new relationships through marriage and communal life. Totems like Hove (fish), Zhou (elephant), Shoko (monkey) and Shumba (lion) form clan names. It is a taboo for people of the same totem to marry each other because they are regarded as relatives. It is believed that the marriage between relatives may result in misfortunes such as barrenness and giving birth to children with disabilities (Shoko

³ Spiritual world consists of Mwari (the Supreme Being), *Vadzimu* (ancestral spirits) and *Mashavi* (alien spirits). These also form part of the Karanga community and influence the living in one way or the other.

2007). If by any means they accidentally get married and the marriage is difficult to terminate, the son-in-law is to pay *mombe yecheka ukama* (a cow for separating original relationship) based on blood and totem so that the marriage may be blessed by the families and the ancestors. The meat is shared between the two families and cloth as a sign of cutting the family ties (Janhi 1970). This is one of the Karanga rituals of appeasing the ancestors for the marriage to be fruitful and strengthen unity among them.

The family unit is maintained even in polygamous marriages (*barika*) where there are children of the same father but different mothers. They are united by the blood and each one has duties within the family structure like the father fending for the family by looking for work or doing some buying and selling. The mothers take care of the family in the household. They cook, wash and attend to the family fields and food security (Shoko 2007). Children have delegated duties according to gender and age. The young ones take care of the home when parents go out for work. Teenage girls help by cooking while boys look after domestic animals. They also take part in taking care of their siblings, farming, harvesting and other household chores (Weinrich 1982, Shoko 2007). Weinrich (1982) further asserts that when children grow up and have their income, they contribute towards family income and the education of their siblings. This division of labour is meant to unite and make the family functional and productive.

Members of the extended family have specific roles to play especially during the family functions and rites of passage (Ngada and Mofokeng 2000, Shoko 2007, Janhi 1970). Children are the responsibility of all the adults in the family hence they recognize their relatives by the roles they play in their everyday life. Parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters all play an advisory role towards the children of all family members. They take counselling steps and disciplinary measures. During marriage procedures, the aunts and the uncles give guidance and marriage counselling. Grandparents and *vazukuru* (nephews and nieces) are all peacemakers in times of conflict. *Vazukuru* are usually the directors of ceremonies during family functions (Shoko 2007). All members are represented at marriage ceremonies as well as funeral ceremonies hence these ceremonies become the unifying factors despite family and denominational differences.

2.4.2 Karanga community life

The community web grows from the family, neighbourhood and all local households in the village. In Mberengwa the homes are grouped into villages that fall under *Sabhuku* (village

head). The village head is the centre of authority and unity of the community. His role entails leading the community court, allocation of land to household heads, enforcing the keeping of *chisi chamambo*, (the chief's day of rest or local traditional holiday) and presiding over the *mutoro* (rainmaking ceremony) (Taringa 2006).

Several villages fall under a chief and several chiefs are under a district. Chiefdoms (*matunhu*) boundaries are marked by rivers and mountains hence no chief will ever encroach into another's land (Taringa 2006). Life is lived communally and individual behaviour is regulated by the values and norms of the community (Chimuka 2001). He (Chimuka) further asserts that one's "conduct had to be in line with the community's conception of *unhu*⁴ or *hunhu hwemunhu* (the moral character befitting a cultured human being" (Chimuka 2001:31). For one to remain connected and being part of the community, he/ she should behave in the manner that reflects *hunhu* (being humane) in the view of the Karanga. Community involves the living, the dead and natural environments that are united through rituals such as rainmaking ceremonies and some exorcism of evil spirits done in the rivers or mountains (Weinrich 1982). One would always strive to live in harmony with other members of the community.

Parents and elders of the community are the source of education, guidance, and inspiration to the young ones because of their experience in life (Chimuka 2001). The Karanga has a saying; *mukuru hanga haigari bvunde* (elders are always sources of knowledge and wisdom) meant to reinforce respect for community leaders and elders. Therefore, respect for parents and elders is always mandatory in African societies (Shoko 2007). Such an approach to life creates harmony in the community. Harmony is required in marriage and other personal or civic relationships. Such communalism among the Karanga promotes unity across their differences including the current denominational divide.

2.4.3 Karanga marriage system

Among the Karanga people, marriage is considered as the purpose of male and female life. Celibacy is not an option and considered a curse (Hatendi 1973). Marriage is meant for the

⁴ *Unhu* is a Shona word which is ubuntu in Nguni. The concept of *unhu* in Zimbabwe is similar to that of other African cultures. *Unhu* is a social philosophy which embodies virtues that celebrate the mutual social responsibility, mutual assistance, trust, sharing, unselfishness, self-reliance, caring and respect for others among other ethical values. It means behavior patterns acceptable to Shona people. See, Mandova, E and Chingombe, A., 2013. The SHONA Proverb as an Expression of UNHU/ UBUNTU. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*. pp. 100.

people of different totems whose history is known in the family and the community (Hatendi 1973, Shoko 2007). However, it has become an acceptable norm for marriage takes place not only outside the tribe but from different races and countries. Above all marriage is considered a life-long and permanent relationship (Hatendi 1973).

Traditionally, there were different forms of marriage ranging from *musenga bere* (abduction of a girl for marriage with the intended husband), *kuganha* (a girl forcing herself to be married by the man she loves without his consent), *kutizira* or *kutiza mukumbo* (elopement of a girl to join her boyfriend's family for marriage) (Shoko 2007).

Shoko further alludes to other forms like *kumutsa mapfihwa* or *sara pavana* (the woman gets married to replace her dead sister or aunt), *kugara nhaka* (levirate marriage), *kutema ugariri* (the man works to get a wife) and *kukumbira* (a formal way of marriage when the man asks for a wife for marriage) (Shoko 2007). The other forms have disappeared except *kutizira* and *kukumbira*. The majority of the forms of *roora* are prohibited by the Zimbabwean constitution which addresses women, children and human rights in general (Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No, 20) Act 2013). These forms of marriage are regarded as forced marriages and against the law that requires the consent of the people who get into marriage relationships.

The process of *kukumbira* begins by the girl and the boy having a courtship relationship that will be made known to the aunts, uncles, brothers, and sisters and sometimes to the pastor and the elders of the church (Weinrich 1982). When the time for marriage comes, the husband sends the *munyayi* (go-between) to ask for a wife from the in-laws (Weinrich 1982, Shoko 2007). All marriage arrangements are made public and after paying *roora*⁵ they do *mapinzo* (coming home ceremony) when *vakwasha* or sons-in-law are made known to all members of the wife's family. After *mapinzo* there is *kupereka* (the girl is accompanied by the aunts or sisters to her new family) (Janhi 1970, Weinrich 1982). This is done after family procedures or church weddings officiated by a marriage officer in the form of a magistrate or a pastor (Shoko

⁵ *Roora* is the payment made by the bridegroom in the process of marriage. It is paid in form of cattle, money and clothing. In traditional African culture and particularly the Karanga, it is a sign of love toward the bride and respect for one's in-laws. The father has his share like *danga* (a specified number of cattle for *roora*) and the mother has her portion like *mombe youmayi* (the cow of the mother in-law). See, Mudavamhu, J., 2010. "The Attitude of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe to Homosexuality: Towards a socio-Sexological Theological Investigation". PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham.

2007). Currently, *kukumbira* is the most acceptable and dignified that is also acceptable in the churches in Mberengwa including the ELCZ.

Among the Karanga, marriage is not between the husband and wife but a family and community institution. It involves all members of the family. During marriage not only, parents get roora (dowry/ bride price) but other members of the extended family get some tokens from part of roora (Weinrich 1982, Janhi 1970). This leaves them with a responsibility to contribute towards the survival of the marriage. They will also give some gifts during the wedding celebration to show their joy and support for the new family home. The women become part of her husband's family while the husband also belongs to his wife's family. This is strengthened by the Karanga saying; *wazvara hadzi wazvara ndume uye wazvara ndume wazvara hadzi* meaning the parent who gave birth to a daughter has already given birth to a son and vice versa because marriage brings a daughter or son to the family. Marriage forms the basis of unity and coming together among the people and families. These family, community and marriage relationships bring about understanding, tolerance, love and caring for one another which is important when it comes to local ecumenical engagement.

2.5 Karanga cultural values

Different Karanga values are cherished and promoted. These are known to build communalism where *ukama* and *unhu* are promoted. To discourage bad habits and values that destabilize society and encourage good cultural values, the Karanga use sayings and proverbs like; '*kugara kunzwana*', meaning "Living together is impossible without mutual respect and understanding" (Chumuka 2001:35). *Kunzwana* stretches from a family where relatives should maintain good relationships, neighbours are respected, and strangers are treated hospitably (Gelfand 1973). These proverbs are meant to teach and groom all generations to maintain the Karanga culture throughout their lives.

2.5.1 Unity and cooperation

Unity and cooperation are summed up by the word *mushandirapamwe* (co-operation) based on '*kunzwana*' (mutual understanding), '*kugarisana*' (peaceful coexistence), '*kuwadzana*' (fellowship), '*hushamwari*' (friendship), '*kudyidzana*' (mutual hospitality), (Chimuka 2001: 32-33). *Mushandirapamwe* consists of two words *kushanda* means working and *pamwe* means together hence working together or in short cooperation. This takes a practical form of

cooperation and particularly in the form of work. Unity and cooperation cannot be separated from *ukama*, connectedness in community living in harmony (Weinrich 1982, Gelfand 1973). Cooperation begins from a tender age when children are taught and encouraged to live together, working together, eating together from one plate (Mhondoro 1970). It is nurtured and reinforced at every stage of life and sought later in life like in marriage relationships and community life in general.

Cooperation is expressed by the Karanga concept of *humwe*⁶ (cooperation) when people work together during ploughing, weeding, and harvesting (Gelfand 1973, Weinrich 1982, Komanisi 2014). The Karanga *humwe* is the name given to the cooperation which is known as '*hoka*', '*nhimbe*', or '*jakwara*' in other Shona dialects (Tavuyanago, et al 2010:6, Komanisi 2014:1853). "Many homesteads do not enter formal reciprocal alliances but co-operate extensively with neighbours by participating in work-parties based on ad hoc requests for assistance" (Komanisi 2014:1855). This process is meant to assist the other to do his/her work by bringing resources such as animals, ploughing and harvesting tools depending on the nature of work. The family, relatives, and neighbours are invited to contribute thereby promoting unity. The owner of *humwe* provides food and drink in the form of *sadza* and meat, beer, *mahewu*, and water while those invited provide their labour and tools.

Humwe becomes a social site for the Karanga, where people celebrate life together doing productive work. There is both feasting, rejoicing, making fun but in fact, doing production. It becomes an opportunity of both production and community socialization (Tavuyanago et al. 2010). Through songs, informal discussions and sharing jokes, there is rebuking and counselling of those with bad habits such as stealing, or women abuse (Komanisi 2014). Such behaviour is condemned in jokes and *humwe* songs. *Humwe* is also a site for training youngsters on how to do certain kinds of work and introduced to their kith and kin and learn social behaviour such as ways of relating and respecting elders (Tavuyanago et al. 2010). People work together, eat together and share material and social resources. *Humwe* provides space for binding relationships and socio-economic development. Such cooperation breeds the local ecumenical spirit when it comes to local denominations.

⁶ These are working cooperatives whereby people come together as a family or community to help one another with domestic work such as ploughing and harvesting.

2.5.2 Hospitality

Hospitality is one of the central values in African culture. The value of hospitality is cultivated at a tender age when a toddler is given something edible and the mother will ask for a share teaching the aspect of sharing and hospitality (Mhondoro 1970). According to Mhondoro (1970), the mother enhances hospitality and sharing by punishing the child who refuses to share food with theirs. Hospitality is nurtured by giving food to children according to their age groups, eating from the same plate (Mhondoro 1970). Hospitality is meant to maintain and extend the spirit of community among the African and the Karanga in particular (Mandova and Chingombe 2013). It marks African generosity given to the other. Posselt (1978:111) has this to say about the Shona in Zimbabwe:

Hospitality has always been a shining virtue of the natives; it is readily extended to all members of a family or clan. The stranger, provided he does not belong to a hostile community, will receive shelter and food.

Hospitality includes caring for one's kins, neighbours⁷ and strangers. A relative and neighbour without food or resources are supported by his/her family and community (Obiefuna and Kanu 2013, Weinrich 1982). Those without cattle or seed are assisted so that they become self-reliant in the future. "Extending a hand of friendship was always symbolized by sharing food, hence the proverb '*Hukama igasva hunotozadziswa nekudya*' (No relationship is complete unless the parties end up dining together)" (Chimuka 2001:35). The poor are neither ignored nor undermined as he/she is regarded as *Munhu waMwari* (the person that lives under God's special care) (Gelfand 1973). The Karanga hospitality is inclusive despite the person's status, hence this becomes a space for diverse people to share their lives in the community.

Hospitality is expressed in good neighbourliness when people live together with their neighbours. Thus, maintaining good relations and caring for each other's needs and protecting each other's property and well-being. In Karanga culture sharing food is highly cherished. When food is prepared, it is more than enough to share with unexpected visitors (Chimuka

⁷ To the Shona, neighbours are not only acquaintances who live close by, but also those who have homes some distance away. Neighbourhood obligations include people who once lived next door to one another but left to settle elsewhere. Therefore, marriages amongst this sort of neighbour- people who were known and liked and understood. See, Gelfand, M., 1973. *The Genuine Shona. Survival values of an African culture*. Gweru: Mambo Press. pp. 149.

2001). No one books for a meal, but he/she can be given food on arrival (Obiefuna and Kanu 2013). Sharing food is a symbol of sharing love, life, unity, and reconciliation if there was a dispute when communal relationships are strengthened.

Through hospitality strangers and visitors are generously received, accommodated and fed (Gelfand 1973, Kiarie 2015, Obiefuna and Kanu 2013, Chimuka 2001, Mandova and Chingombe 2013). The acts of hospitality are motivated by the Karanga sayings: “*Mombe inopfuura haipedzi uswa* (A passing ox does not finish the grazing) (Mandova and Chingombe 2013). Mhaka (2010) also suggests that “*Muenzi haapedzi dura*, (Entertaining a visitor does not destroy one’s store of resources/ no one can starve by showing hospitality to a stranger)”. Obiefuna and Kanu (2013:7) also posit that, showing hospitality is believed to live blessings carried by the visitors who are fed and well cared for hence every community member strives to do his/her best in attending to visitors and strangers. If the visitor is a stranger, they would enquire for his/her totem so that they find a way to relate and be closer to him/her. As soon as the totem is known he/she will be called by the relationship as a cousin, uncle, aunt, father/mother-in-law or any other relationship suitable as the totem dictates. This brings people closer to one another so that when they meet elsewhere in the future they will hold to that relationship.

Community and religious leaders exercise different forms of hospitality because they welcome and feed those under their care. In case a stranger arrives in the Karanga village, it is the role of the Sabhuku to care and provide for the needs of the stranger. Sometimes he is just notified by the family which has received a stranger and authorizes the family to care for the stranger in the village. Religious leaders also give special hospitality to the sick and the unfortunate who visit their homes for healing and religious ritual performances (Kiarie 2015). Sometimes the sick persons stay for weeks, months or a year receiving treatment at the *n’anga* or prophet’s home. The clients do not pay for food and accommodation but provided by the *n’anga* or prophet’s family to show hospitality. Therefore, among the Karanga, hospitality is such a stringent duty that every individual is expected to do. As one of the core values of the Karanga people, it informs their local ecumenical engagement that is more inclusive and accommodative. It discourages disunity and lack of care among the members of the family and community.

2.6 Part of Karanga religious life

Ukama, also informs the Karanga religious cosmology. Their religious understanding is based on the understanding of the human and connectedness of all things (Beyers 2010). According to Taringa (2006:202), “Every homestead head is responsible for performing domestic rituals such as thanksgiving, healing, rites of passage, initiation, marriage, death, and birth”. Therefore, religion becomes a central aspect of Karanga's life and community. For Mbiti (1969), religion permeates all aspects of the life of every African society. It forms the basis for socio-economic and political life. Long before the advent of Christianity, the Karanga believed in Mwari (God) *musikavamhu* (creator) and source of all life (Masaka and Makahamadze 2013, Moyo 1996). According to Mbiti (1969: 36) “God is no stranger to the African people”. However, he is not accessed through the Christian way of Christ but *vadzimu* (ancestors). Besides God and *vadzimu*, the Karanga believe in many other spirits that are part of the spiritual world like *mashavi* (alien spirits) and *ngozi* (avenging spirits). In the advent of Christianity Karanga family and community members are affiliated with different denominations and religious groups seeking to build their relationship with Mwari. Despite religious differences, the Karanga continue to function as a family and community in addressing their family and community challenges.

Human relations are determined with what happens in the spiritual world hence there is always communication. The channel of communication between people and God is facilitated by the *vadzimu* who are believed to be closer to God. In the spirit world are also bad spirits (*ngozi* and *shavi*) that may cause misfortunes and death (Rutsate 2010). *Ngozi* means avenging spirit of deceased who was killed by another person, then comes to punish the ofender's family. The *shavi* is a wondering foreign spirit that was not brought back home by *kurova guva* rituals. This is a ritual conducted to bring back the spirit of the deceased to look after the his or her descendants (Shoko 2007). Officials who transmit spiritual communication between the *vadzimu* and human beings are *masvikiro* (spirit mediums) (Cox 2000). To perform this role, one has to be chosen by the *vadzimu* themselves and initiated by senior mediums.

2.6.1 Mwari

At the apex of the spirit world is the Mwari (God), the Supreme being. According to Beyers (2010), God is the Supreme being given different names across different traditions. He is regarded as the creator without beginning and end (Mbiti 1970). In Zimbabwe, he is Mwari

(Shona/Karanga), Nkulunkulu (Ndebele) and *mudzimu* (Venda). Among the Karanga, he is also given many names. He is known as *Mwari Musiki* (creator), *Musikavanhu* (creator of people), Nyadenga (owner of heavens), *Wokumusoro* (one of the above), *Samasimba* (most powerful) and *Dzivaguru* (pool of water and giver of rain) (Masaka and Makahamadze 2013, Shoko 2007, Moyo 2006). While God remains transcended and tremendously awesome to be arbitrarily approached, he is believed to be concerned with every aspect of human life (Masaka and Makahamadze 2013). His closeness and involvement in human affairs do not dismiss the fact that God resides in heaven, far away from the earth (Beyers 2010). Beyers (2010) further argues that mediation does not imply God's absence but is within their culture to respect the societal hierarchy that even elders and chiefs are not directly approached. Intermediaries are needed as a way of respecting their dignity and office, hence *Vadzimu* become the mediators between God and the people

2.6.2 *Vadzimu* (Ancestors)

These are the spirits of the dead family elders. These include the spirits of the dead father, mother or grandparent or aunts and uncles, those relatives in the nuclear family (Shoko 2007, Masaka and Makahamadze 2013). According to Stinton (2004), traditional African belief in ancestors is a central thought and essential pillar of religious practice. *Mudzimu* works through a *svikiro* (host or medium) among the family members. Ancestors are believed to be inferior to God but very superior to human beings, hence their role as mediators (Beyers 2010, Bucher 1980). *Vadzimu* is the ones that convey human prayers to God and channel all blessings or resources from God to the people (Shoko 2007). They are believed to be closer to God because they are in the spiritual realm.

These become guardian spirits that bring life blessings when one is in harmony with them but can also bring some curses if one fails to live in harmony with both the living parents and the dead (Taringa 2006, Moyo 1996). *Vadzimu* are perceived as the owners of the land, people, and are also involved in the fortunes and misfortunes, life and death and all daily life experiences of the living descendants (Bucher 1980). They have a personal relationship with their descendants to provide protection and guidance on personal and family issues and interests (Beyers 2010, Masaka and Makahamadze 2013). Among the Karanga, personal success, including childbirth, stability in marriage, good harvest and accumulation of wealth are attributed to the benevolence of the *vadzimu*.

Vadzimu can bestow gifts of good fortune as well and cause misfortune for those who are disobedient and neglect to acknowledge them (Beyers 2010). Thus, they both protect and withdraw their protection in case of disobedience and neglect. Kiernan (1995) asserts that *vadzimu* indirectly punish transgressions of their descendants. Thus, withdrawal of protection results in the “opening floodgates for evildoers to harm the offending family member(s)” (Masaka and Makahamadze 2013:140). *Vadzimu* are both feared and honoured for their authority over one’s life. For the Karanga, any kind of suffering is perceived to be either caused by withdrawal and punishment from *vadzimu* giving other alien spirits, witches and enemies access to cause harm to the person (Shoko 2007, Beyers 2010). To restore good relations with *vadzimu* rituals (*kupira vadzimu*) are to be performed under the guidance of a *n’anga*. The missionaries have mistakenly perceived the Karanga *kupira*⁸ (consultation of *Vadzimu* or ancestral veneration) as ancestral worship. According to Moyo (1996:6), *vadzimu* are not worshiped but their veneration is meant “to facilitate the worship of the Supreme Being”. They are only a channel towards God. Therefore, they are never worshipped but only venerated (honoured and remembered) because of their intermediary role in communicating with Mwari (Masaka and Makahamadze 2013, Munyai 2007). The Karanga belief and rites of ancestral veneration are sources of unity that bring both the family and community members together.

2.6.3 *N’anga* (Diviners and Healers)

Diviners and healers are the Karanga traditional practitioners commonly known as *n’anga*. Despite the umbrella term, they operate differently. One is either a diviner or herbalist or in exceptional cases be both. According to Chavunduka (1978), therapists, diviners, and herbalists are the three types of traditional healers found among the Shona people. The herbalist is meant to sufficiently address ailments from natural causes while the diviner-therapist is specialized in diseases that are supernatural (Nakah 2007). The *n’anga* are of different specialty that helps them to be able to holistically address human suffering. They are believed to be possessed by *vadzimu* (ancestral spirits) or *shavi rokushopera* (spirit of divination) and *shavi rokurapa* (spirit of healing) (Bourdillon 1987).

⁸ *Kupira* is a Karanga ritual whereby ancestors are venerated or there is a celebration to commit or ask something from God. This encompasses all rituals held by the Karanga, whether as rites of passage or petitions for individual or corporate blessings and protection.

The establishment of the Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers Association (ZINATHA) and its incorporation into the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare show that *n'anga* and traditional medicine have been well recognized in Zimbabwe (Simmons 2009). For that reason, *n'anga* and traditional medicine remain a common matter among the Karanga in Mberengwa. The Karanga maintains that only *n'anga* can address spiritual problems such as issues of *ngozi* and are consulted on matters of *kurova guva* and appeasing ancestral spirits (Nakah 2007, Shoko 2007). However, the primary function of a *n'anga* is healing (Shoko 2007). The *n'anga* begins by diagnosis, identifying the cause of illness, whether it is natural or spiritual/supernatural. After diagnosis, the *n'anga* “prescribes remedies that range from sacrifices to dances, to the restoration of social relationships” (Nakah 2007:194). While others may get revelation from the spirits, some also diagnose through dreams and omens, yet others use *kurova hakata* (throwing bones) for diagnosis and prescription (Shoko 2007, Morekwa 2004). Therefore, the methods used depend on the *n'anga* and nature of the illness.

Omens and dreams are taken seriously because they communicate life experiences hence the role of interpreters remains important among the Karanga. The Karanga people believe that *n'anga* has the power to prevent impending misfortune, illness, and death by putting on protective charms (Morekwa 2004). Since they can reveal the powers responsible for misfortune or death, they can also handle such (Bucher 1980). He further adds that other forms of dealing with the spirits responsible for misfortune and witchcraft are by counter attack, giving the client medicines that repeal the powers of the attacking spirit (Bucher 1980). If bad luck is caused by an evil spirit, it is also exorcised to set the victim free.

Natural diseases are treated using medicines and various surgical procedures. Morekwa (2004) asserts that the *n'anga* uses bones to locate poison in the body of the client and use knives or razor blade to perform surgical activities to treat the poison. According to Oosthuizen (1992), the *n'anga* uses herbs from tree leaves and roots mixed with seawater, vaseline, salt sulfur and ash as medicine for the treatment of different diseases. As I mentioned before, the *n'anga* are specialized professionals with unique multiple skills to address complex life challenges.

2.6 Karanga rituals

Rituals are rites performed in daily lives or major rights of passages (Hunter 2007). According to Mbiti (1975), a ritual is also a rite, meaning a prescribed way of conducting a religious ceremony in a social set up. Mbiti's definition helps us to understand that those rituals,

especially in Africa, carry religious undertones. Among other reasons, rituals are meant to unite people with others and their ancestors, hence they are an expression of family and community unity (Beyers 2010, Hunter 2007). The Karanga rituals involve brewing and drinking of millet beer, singing, dancing and spirit possession, and feasting on goat or ox meat (Daneel 1971, Shoko 2007). Amongst the Karanga, rituals are part of their indigenous knowledge and traditional values that are inherited from their fore bearers.

2.6.1 *Kuviga* (burial) and funeral ritual

When a Karanga person dies, the members of the families, far and near are quickly informed. The word is also spread to the neighbours and members of the community who in turn pass on the word to others. Burial usually takes place within twenty- four hours hence the people quickly turn up for the funeral and participate in the burial procedures (Kamwendo and Manyeruke 2017, Mwandayi 2011). This is a sign that death is both a family and community affair that everybody needs to respond accordingly showing sympathy. This also brings a sense of solidarity in the community since all family and community members are notified; come, and work. Everybody who hears the about death and funeral is obliged to attend. A cow is slaughtered to provide meat for those attending the funeral and accompanying the spirit of the deceased into the spiritual world (Kamwendo and Manyeruke 2017). Death is a point to show hospitality, solidarity, and consolation. The consolation is expressed with verbal and nonverbal cues like verbalizing sympathy through crying and talking and acknowledging the pain as well as assisting in the process of burial.

They journey together until the time of burial when all people will go the grave to throw soil as they bury their loved one as they bid him/her farewell. This is also done as a way of doing away with misfortune after burial (Mwandayi 2011). The way the body is prepared before burial, laid in the grave as well as the items put in the grave at burial show that the Karanga believe in life after death (Mhaka 2014). They put some cooking pots, plates, and mates, blankets and clothing. This is because the Karanga believe in the life after death or life in the world one goes after death. These items will be used in later life. Every family member and relative has a role to play in the process. During speeches before burial, every sector from children to grandparents, community and church groups are represented. The *vazukuru* (grandchildren), *varooro* (daughters-in-law) or *vakwasha* (sons-in-law), aunties and grandparents have different activities at the gravesite (Daneel 1971, Kamwendo and

Manyeruke 2017). The children and *varoora* are involved in singing and dancing. Usually, *vazukuru* and *vakwasha* are the ones who carry and lower the body into the grave (Mwandayi 2011). The aunties and grandmothers clean the gravesite putting the fine soil back to the grave; *kutsvaira ivhu* (sweeping the soil). Everything is done according to culture to avoid disappointing the spirit of the deceased and end up causing misfortune (Shoko 2008). The ritual of burial is both to unite and incorporate members of the family and community with the departed ones.

2.6.2 *Doro remvura* or *Mamvuramvura*⁹

Doro remvura (beer of waters) is commonly known as *mamvuramvura* in *Chikaranga* because it has to do with cleansing the people who buried the family's loved one (Mwandayi 2011). This is the initial ritual that comes soon after death and burial. It is usually done for adults, married or unmarried but passed the age of marriage. The family of the deceased brew beer to quench the thirsty of both the relatives who buried the deceased and that of the deceased as well as washing or cleansing of their tools used for the burial (Mwandayi 2011, Mhaka 2014). As soon as the family makes the beer ready, they will invite their relatives and neighbours to come and wash. This is the time when they take their tools like shovels used during the burial. The beer is meant to cleanse the people from defilement by the corpse during the burial (Mwandayi 2011, Shoko 2008). Among the people are those who dug the grave, carried stones for burial and those that carried the deceased into the grave. This done by washing (pouring beer) then later enjoy the rest of the beer. The ritual marks the end of the mourning period for the family. It brings together both the family and those that participated in the burial of their loved one.

2.6.3 *Kurova guva* (ritual of bringing back the deceased)

Kurova guva or *kugadzira* (settling the spirit) has to do with bringing back the spirit of the dead parent. This is done a year or two after burial, depending on the family preparations. It is on this occasion when the deceased is transformed, welcomed and announced as a member of the *vadzimu* of his/her family (Kamwendo and Manyeruke 2017, Togararei and Chitando 2005). The Karanga believe that unless the spirit of the deceased is brought back to guard his or her family it remains a *shavi* (wandering spirit) (Rutsate 2010, Masaka and Makahamadze 2013).

⁹ This is a cleansing ritual for those who participated in the burial ritual

Mhaka (2014) further argues that the Karanga believe that the spirit of the deceased embarks on a journey and will eventually return to the family after the necessary rituals are carried out. After the *kurova guva* ritual one assumes more authority over the living because is now honoured by the living family and relatives. The ritual opens the door for the family to offer sacrifices and prayers through him. The ceremony is done to benefit both the living and the dead. The ritual is concluded by celebration, “sharing food and drink with the ancestors” by eating as a community and pouring part of the beer on the ground (Rutsate 2010:91). The ritual is meant to foster family unity as people come together welcoming and bringing home the spirit of the deceased. Both the rituals and processes of *kuviga munhu* (burial) and *kurova guva* are signs of the Karanga belief in life after death. The processes unite the family, those of the extended family and the community that participates in the celebrations.

2.6.4 Rainmaking ceremony (*mutoro*)

This is one of the key communal ceremonies among the Karanga in Mberengwa. It is a ritual led by *madzishhe* (the chiefs). Chirikure et al. (2017) observe that the rainmaking known as *mutoro* in Mberengwa is also known as *mukwerera* or *kukumbira mvura* ceremony depending on the Shona dialect. Presided over by the *madzishhe* or *masadunhu* (chiefs) and *masabhuku* (village heads), *mutoro* is usually held once every year, during summer between August and January (Daneel 1971, Mukamuri 1995, Chirikure et al. 2017). But when drought occurs it is held more than once to plead with the ancestors and the rain god. Its main purpose is to send petitions for the rains through the ancestors. This ritual is accompanied by songs of rainmaking ceremony like; *Warivona dziva remvura*, (See the pool of water); and *Mhondoro dzinomwa kuna Runde* (lions drink from Runde river). During the *mutoro* ritual, the songs remind the ancestors of the community's need for rains to fill the rivers for people and animals' survival. Usually, the dances are done while people drink beer brewed of small grains (*rukweza*) that are believed to evoke the ancestral spirits (Shoko 2007). There is an interdependence of music, drumming, dancing and spirit possession (Manatsa 2006). *Mutoro* is dedicated to a specific Karanga rain god of rain named *Zame* or *mwari wokumabwe* (god of rocks), Matojeni in Matopo hills (Mukamuri 1995). The rainmaking ceremony is a communal gathering where every household would contribute toward the gift to the medium who performs the rituals. Currently household contributes with the grain (*zviyo*), beer (*doro reZame*), and cash (*mari yorusengwe*). But at local levels “the Karanga and Zezuru undertake the proceedings in the shade of sacred trees such as *muchechete*, *mukamba* or *muhakata*” (Chirikure et al. 2017:33).

There is communion between the people, the ancestors and God through the rainmaking ceremony.

The Karanga religious life which includes the rituals therein is the source of family and community unity. They have the power to bring people together and continue seeking to be united in life. Any kind of division is believed to be the seed of evil and may result in fighting and punishment from God and their ancestors. As discussed in this section rituals that bring them together continue to exist among them even after being converted to be members of different denominations. They may not take the form of beer and use of traditional methods but are done following Christian practices such as prayer, singing and dancing. Therefore, one may argue that since the Karanga culture and religious life encourage unity, they help in promoting local ecumenism among the Karanga people.

2.7 The ELCZ and other church groupings in Mberengwa

This section provides a geographical location, ethnic context and a brief historical outline of the ELCZ. This is meant to make the discussion of the ELCZ's local ecumenical engagement to make sense to the reader. It begins with an overview of the Church of Sweden Mission (CSM), the parent that gave birth to the ELCZ. It will then discuss the growth of the ELCZ and its contact with other churches. This gives the basis for discussion of the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement within the central diocese. Although many denominational groupings are represented in Mberengwa the ELCZ remains the dominant one. If one tours any part of Mberengwa district would hardly fail to hear and notice the ubiquitous presence of the ELCZ. It is known for its chapels, health care centres, and schools. It is the founder of most primary schools and all boarding high schools in Mberengwa. Many senior government officials and heads of private and public sectors including academics and cabinet ministers who come from Mberengwa have passed through the ELCZ schools. This is evidenced by membership in urban parishes. They are found in urban parishes and congregations, but their home congregations are in Mberengwa.

The Western Missionaries came to Southern Africa in the late 1800s (Shoko 2007). The Lutheran mission to Zimbabwe was provoked by the young man who came from Lake Nyasa and told pastor Frederick Ljungquist that the people in the north of Limpopo are capable of speaking Zulu, but no mission had started in the area (Söderström 1984). Lindquist wrote to Sweden requesting for Sweden mission expansion to Zimbabwe to be closer to the heart of

Africa. According to Söderström (1984: 16-17), the 1898 Swedish Missionary conference held at Ekutuleni had the following justification for the missionary work in Zimbabwe;

In Natal various missions were at work, sometimes competing with each other. The work of the CSM in Natal could hardly be extended to new areas in Natal. But north of the Limpopo, there was a virgin field for a Christian mission. After 1893 and 1896 wars the country was pacified. Tribal wars did not disturb the work. In 1897 a railway was built from Cape to Bulawayo, which made the country easily accessible from the south. The people of the north side of Limpopo spoke IsiNdebele, a Zulu dialect. Evangelists from Zululand and Zulu speaking Swedish missionaries could go without any delay for language studies.

After 25 years of operation in South Africa, the board of the CSM decided the expansion of missionary activities in Matabeleland in the North of Limpopo in Zimbabwe the then Rhodesia. The conference then sent Revs A. R Kempe and J.F. Ljungquist to explore the possibility of mission expansion northwards. When they visited the Hope Fountain, a London mission society missionary station near Bulawayo they were informed of the absence of any missionary society in the Mberengwa area (Söderström et al. 2003). In 1900 the decision to open a mission in Mberengwa was reached with the assumption that the people there are Ndebele speakers. Little did they know that the people of Mberengwa were Karanga- speaking (Söderström, et al. 2003). The first missionaries to come to Zimbabwe, the then Rhodesia were Alex Liljestränd, Adolf Hellden and Jeremiah Makubu the Zulu evangelist who happens to be the first African missionary to visit Zimbabwe (Söderström 1984). He was an evangelist while his white counterparts were pastors. It is said that Makubu died from Malaria in a few months after their arrival in Shurugwi. After the death of Makubu, the missionaries left for Natal but in 1903 they came back with their families. When they came back, they established temporary mission stations in both Shurungwi and Vugwi in the Karanga region of the Midlands province in Zimbabwe (Söderström et al. 2003). However, the wife of Hellden succumbed to Malaria and her funeral was conducted by a Methodist pastor in Shurugwi (King 1959). This was a form of ecumenical engagement between the CSM which is now the ELCZ and the other mainline church. When the Liljestränd family suffered from Malaria in South Africa, they went back to Sweden in 1904 (Söderström et al. 2003).

The pioneers saw the first mission centre established at Mnene in Mberengwa among the Karanga speaking people. Around 1920 the Ndebele joined the church when it began to expand westwards into Matabeleland South. Before Liljestrand returned to Sweden he purchased a 6000 acres farm at Mnene in Mberengwa North from the Matabele Mining Company. The two left for South Africa in February 1908 (Söderström et al. 2003). On 11 June Axel Liljestrand, Axel Hammar and Wilhelm Skold arrived at Mnene but Liljestrand died of Malaria on 7 October 1908 (Söderström et al. 2003). From that year missionaries came to strengthen the mission in Rhodesia. One missionary was sent after another until other centres were established in Mberengwa and Matabeleland South. By 1920 the second mission station South of Mberengwa was established at Masase (Bhebe1996). The ELCZ concentrated in Mberengwa for a long time before spreading to other parts of Zimbabwe. Söderström et al. (2003:17) have this to say,

Until 1928 the Lutheran Mission had worked only amongst the Karanga in Mberengwa district but in 1928 a significant extension of the work took place, which resulted in what is today called the Western Deanery. From 1920 the Dutch Reformed Mission at Morgenster had worked south of Gwanda at a place called Bethel. However, the distance between Morgenster and Gwanda is about 300 km and the DRC missionaries found it too difficult to cope with the work there. After discussions with the people in the Bethel area, it was decided that the Swedish missionaries should be asked to take charge of the mission work in the Gwanda area. The two groups of missionaries had learned to know each other because the Swedish missionaries used to take part in the courses in Karanga which were held at Morgenster.

Missionary activities spread into Gwanda and Beitbridge in Matabeleland South among the Sotho and Venda speaking people. The increase necessitated the need for training of African pastors and evangelists who would continue serving among their local people (King 1959). The CSM was under the Zululand administration until 1962 when Bishop Sundgren was tasked to run the church in Zimbabwe (Maposa and Chinyoka 2014). In 1975, the first African bishop took over the leadership of the church. Bishop Jonas Shiri was elected and consecrated to lead the ELCZ in June 1975 at Masase mission in Mberengwa (Shiri 1985). The missionary efforts have led Mberengwa to remain the ELCZ stronghold with the majority of membership than any other part of Zimbabwe.

The ELCZ has been identified as a rural church since the majority of its parishes and congregations are concentrated in rural Mberengwa, South of the Midlands and Gwanda and Beitbridge communal areas (Bhebe 1996). Its main mission centres were Mnene, Masase, Masvingo Bible School, Musume, Manama, and Beitbridge mission. These became highly developed community centers of modern education and health care in the rural context. According to Muzorewa (1991:1),

A “mission” was a pocket of western civilization in the heart of Africa and generally characterized by the following: a church building, a hospital or clinic (and sometimes, an orphanage, classroom buildings, Western-styled residential buildings, electricity and purified tap water (a good landmark at night!), a small multiracial community with tiny white minority who controlled everybody on campus, a fence surrounding the mission station, a cemetery designated “for Christians only”, a telephone, and a vehicle or more. This “new community” created an overall cultural impact within the larger traditional community.

Mission centres represented centre of transformation of culture and lifestyle that were regarded as evil. It had a religious and socio-economic impact on those who came into contact with it. This was a centre of spreading “church” and Christianity among the people who grew up within African Traditional religion (ATR). Both the church and school systems of the Lutheran missionaries were meant to transform the evil African culture and religion hence promoting the gospel and western culture at the same time (Söderström 1984). African culture was not only inferior to Western culture but was regarded as incompatible with the gospel. This was western mindset which is not the current perspective. There may be contradictions here and there but not all of the African culture is evil and incompatible with the gospel. For, example, promotion of love and communal living is closely related to the biblical principles.

The ELCZ later spread into towns and cities due to rural-urban migration. Since mission schools produced graduates, they moved to urban centres looking for industrial jobs. This rural-urban migration was fueled by the outbreak of war in rural areas, especially in Mberengwa. People would move to towns for refuge. By 1975 the ELCZ had some parishes and congregations in Zvishavane, Gweru, Kadoma, Bulawayo, and Harare (Bhebe 1996). In 1933 the ELCZ was divided into Eastern and Western deaneries for administrative purposes since congregations and parishes were expanding from Mberengwa into urban centres and other rural

areas (Moyo 2012). The western deanery was predominantly Ndebele speaking from Matabeleland South and North while the Eastern deanery was Shona speaking, from the Midlands to Mashonaland, Manicaland and Masvingo provinces. A Deanery had several parishes under a dean while parishes had five to fifteen congregations under the care of one pastor assisted by evangelists. In 2006 the ELCZ was further divided into three dioceses with two deaneries each. The former Western deanery became the Western diocese and the Eastern deanery was divided into Eastern and Central dioceses. The vision was to lower leadership and membership ratios to make ministry more effective. The central diocese became predominantly Karanga speaking since it covered the whole of Mberengwa and other Midlands and Masvingo districts. In Mberengwa the ELCZ mission centres enjoyed dominance since no other churches had mushroomed until the late 1920s when African Independent churches began (Daneel 1973, Shoko 2007). Later, the Pentecostal movements came in the late 1970s. This was the beginning of the interaction between different denominational traditions in Mberengwa.

2.7.1 Gospel Ministry

The CSM mission work involved care for the spirit, soul, and body hence the establishment of a church, school, and hospital. The medical and educational services were part of the full Gospel (King 1959). These three mission branches needed skilled laborers. The ministry of the word continued to expand due to missionary efforts and training of local pastors and evangelists. The ELCZ pastors attended a four-year training course at a Lutheran College called Maphumulo (Umphumulo) Lutheran College in Natal (currently known as Kwazulu-Natal), South Africa. From 2003 they were trained at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and resided at the defunct Lutheran Theological Institute (LTI). The first evangelists were Cleopas Hungwe, Petros Kgobe, Jeremias Shumba and Samson Sibanda. While African evangelists were trained at Masvingo Bible School in Mberengwa, pastors attended a four-year training course at a Lutheran College in Natal South Africa. Only those who had Junior Certificate and Teacher training certificates were enrolled for pastoral training (King 1959). From 1912 to 1919 the number of evangelists rose from 5 to 22 (Zvobgo 1996:131). But by 1975 the church had more than 30 parishes, 218 congregations, 33 pastors, 107 evangelists and a membership of more than 30 600 (Bhebe 1996). When the first African bishop Jonas Shiri was consecrated on 29 June 1975, the ELCZ was divided into two deaneries under deans with parishes under pastors and congregations under evangelists (Shiri 1985). Church membership grew and new congregations were found within the specific mission areas due to missionary efforts and

evangelists. African evangelists/teachers had a dual function of serving schools and churches. Bhebe (1996) notes that they taught children Bible knowledge, reading, writing, arithmetic and singing and catechumen classes on Wednesdays and Sundays.

They specialized in catechumen class, home visits and preaching in the local congregations. Baptism was done after three years and after the recommendations by the elders from the candidate's local congregations. People could easily accept the message from their African evangelists (Zvobgo 1996). Conditions were through baptism, church attendance and monogamy for adult males. Those who broke church rules were put under church discipline by the pastor in charge. Sins that bring the member under church discipline include public sin such as brewing beer, taking an intoxicating drink, adultery and polygamy and error in doctrine (Mathe 2002, Zvobgo 1996). "All churches also laid down grounds for discipline to deal with those who broke church rules and regulations" (Zvobgo 1996:322). Church discipline included suspension from posts of responsibilities, voting rights, preaching and suspension from Holy Communion (ELCZ 2012, Zvobgo 1996).

2.7.2 Education

Like other missionary churches in Zimbabwe, the ELCZ is known for its religious growth and membership, but more important for its schools, hospitals and development schemes (Bhebe and Ranger 1996). The CSM regarded the school as the main gate into the church (Zvobgo 1996). Missionary education began by focusing on religious or Christian education then later on included academic education. Mathe (2002:8) argues that "The curriculum at ELCZ schools emphasized reading and writing and had a religious education bias". Therefore, education was meant to enable converts to read the bible and religious instructions. Through the education system members were Christianized (Mathe 2002). Missionaries wanted to persuade the African into the new life by combining literacy education and religious instructions (Mungazi 1992). The nature of missionary education inculcated new Christian religious values, social values, and literacy in the African child. Boarding establishment was a deliberate move to alienate the indigenous people from their own people's culture and religion and learn the new religion and Western culture and civilization (Mathe 2002). Both teachers and students were supposed to be members of the ELCZ and adhere to Christian and western culture. Unfortunately, teachers would easily revert to their culture, drinking beer and practicing

polygamy (Mathe 2002). Despite these challenges, the ELCZ mobilized funds through the CSM and continued to develop and provide this crucial service to the community

In 1956 the ELCZ established its teacher training college at Musume mission which they used until the establishment of the United College of Education in 1967 (Shiri 1985). The ELCZ and other eight denominations including the Roman Catholic and Salvation Army pulled resources together for the establishment of the United College of Education in Bulawayo (de Waal 1990). This was an ecumenical teacher training institution to meet the demand of teachers in schools. Ecumenical teacher training got support from the government of the day.

The education system had teacher training and industrial education programs. The ELCZ did not only focus on academic education. It introduced vocational subjects to bring diversity in education. Industrial training was started at Masase by Tore Bergman. Students were taught basic building, carpentry, and tool-making skills, home management for women (Zvobgo 1996, King 1959). The quality of education became more appealing as Africans were trying to escape from manual labour.

Missionaries could not agree to interdenominational schools citing cost factors. The other reason was the religious difficulties due to different creeds and confessions (Zvobgo 1996:265). That would affect both staff and students and ruin harmony in the school. For that reason, they continued developing denominational schools while enrolling students from the communities despite their denominational backgrounds. Many boarding schools and village primary schools with thousands of pupils were opened (Bhebe 1988). Between 1924 and 1939 missionaries expanded both boarding school and teacher training education (Zvobgo 1996). This continued in postcolonial Zimbabwe though the provision of teachers was now provided by the state system (Weiss 1994). Teachers and supervision of schools were provided by the government. Since independence, all staff members in mission schools are paid by the government except the non-teaching staff (Shiri 1985, Weiss 1994). To date, the ELCZ runs four High schools, one primary school and one centre for the blind in Mberengwa where students are admitted from across denominations. Those admitted in these schools are no longer required to be members of the ELCZ but for the period of their studies, they participate in the ELCZ worship. They must adhere to the principles of the church while at the school and attend their various denominations when they go back home.

2.7.3 Health

The church's concentration on health was its theological underpinning on health and healing. For missionary churches, "the care of the soul was coupled with that of the body and it was hard to distinguish which was the more persuasive" (Weiss 1994:103). Christ of the gospels provided both preaching and healing to further salvation here and now hence the church established a chapel and a hospital at the same time. However, instead of taking the indigenous understanding of health linked to the socio-spiritual problems, missionaries had a western understanding of the medical system. Christ was concerned with health and well-being hence the missionaries took the challenge of health by building mission hospitals (Ngada and Mofokeng 2000). "The influence of the healing mission of the church was demonstrated by the vast numbers of people who received medical treatment in its clinics and hospitals" (Bhebe 1988:164). This is a Eurocentric approach to health that is different from local African views. In African worldview sickness and diseases are connected to communal physical and spiritual life relationships. People experience wholeness and abundant life through spiritual, psychological and physical health. "Specifically, lack of spiritual, emotional or moral health; it is physically and spiritually harmful to the society and the individuals concerned" (Magesa 2004:84).

Given the health situation in Zimbabwe, missionaries did not only expand mission hospitals but built more mission clinics and nurses training centres (Zvobgo 1996). "Access to medical services was limited, particularly in the rural areas, where distances from mission hospitals were often a constraint" (Weiss 1994:120). This resulted in local people consulting traditional healers for medical attention. The medical missions gave grants which aided in the training of medical staff hence expanded manpower for rural mission centres. This came as a relief to these areas which had little or no access to medical facilities (Zvobgo 1996). By 1915 Mnene became a hospital while clinics that were later turned into hospitals were opened at Masase, Musume and Manama caring for more than 600 patients annually (Bhebe 1996). Masase mission hospital was built in 1930 then Manama hospital in 1938 manned by Sweden missionary nurses. Mnene and Masase hospitals attended to all diseases but mostly venereal diseases prevalent in Mberengwa between 1930 and 1937.

The ELCZ remains the major provider of health services in Mberengwa. Currently, it has three major hospitals; one nurse's training centre, one Utano centre at Mnene and one HIV and AIDS

home-based care centre at Musume in Mberengwa. These provide health care to all without considering denominational affiliation. “The church is taking care of the HIV infected and affected people and rehabilitates them at its orphanages. Among the most affected are the children, pregnant women, orphans, and vulnerable children” (Maposa and Chinyoka 2014:5). Both the pastors in charge and the chaplains provide pastoral care services to all who are treated at these centres.

2.7.3 ELCZ national ecumenism in brief

The ELCZ was involved in the struggle for independence in Zimbabwe both as a church and as a member of the ecumenical body. “Individual Christians and particular missions did exercise a profound influence on guerrillas” (de Waal 1990:74). The outstanding work of the ZCC was supporting the struggle for independence and its participation in the Lancaster house negotiation that led to the independence of Zimbabwe. The ZCC paved a friendly relationship between the church and government by its participation in the armed struggle. From supporting fighting for freedom and justice the church supported the government in the provision of education and health facilities. Through Christian Care, the ZCC contributed immensely to the education of refugees and rehabilitation of war victims soon after independence (de Waal 1990:126). Amongst other things, the ZCC issued statements against the conscription of young black men and women to fight against their brothers in the armed struggle (Shiri 1985:244). These endeavours were led by Bishop J.C Shiri, the first African bishop of the ELCZ. He was elected the President of the ZCC in 1978 (Bhebe 1996). Bishop Shiri was also the head of the ZCC Political Reconciliation Committee which facilitated political settlement at the Lancaster House Conference (Bhebe 1996). This was done as denomination and through the ZCC.

Soon after independence, in the early 1980s, the church worked in solidarity with the state through ecumenical bodies such as the Lutheran World Federation and the Zimbabwe Christian Council (Muzorewa 1991). Zimbabwe is a special case because the government, as the church, is concerned about the poor of the land. The ecumenical movement in Zimbabwe was not only concerned with the development of Christian faith but cared for the welfare of the people by providing humanizing conditions. Bishop Shiri of the ELCZ once served as the chairman of Christian care responsible for social support for the communities. It was the social development wing of the ZCC. It also provided food for drought relief and seeds to the poor in the local communities. During the 1982/3 and 1991/92 draught Christian care sent aid to Beitbridge,

Gwanda, Mberengwa, Mwenezi, and Zvishavane where the ELCZ operated (Shiri 1985). But the aid was meant to serve the needy despite their denominational affiliations. Through Christian care, the church paid fees for the children of the poor and those displaced by the war (Shiri 1985). Post-independence, Christian Care continued to serve the communities by providing Blair toilets, drilling boreholes and constructing small dams for irrigation and gardening projects (Weiss 1994).

Human and national development should be concerned with socio-spiritual and infrastructural/material development that promotes the life of a total person (Moyo 1987). In the early 1980s, the ZCC in collaboration with the CSM and the WCC worked towards the reconstruction of the schools and church properties in Zimbabwe. "For their part, the mission-descended churches have sought to collaborate with the government in nation-building and development and have played down their prophetic and spiritual role" (Bhebe and Ranger 1996:30). For that reason, the ELCZ is known for its ecumenical participation in development projects. Through the CSM and LWF, the ELCZ cooperated in raising funds for the upkeep and education of Zimbabwean refugees in Zambia and Mozambique (Bhebe 1996, Shiri 1985).

The question of reconciliation was difficult. It was difficult for the church to talk of reconciliation when it was not reconciled even within the same denomination. Although missionaries evangelized blacks, in towns black and white communities had difficulties in fellowshiping together (Weiss 1994). The ZCC had an obligation to deal with reconciliation so that racial communities live together peaceably. However, it should be noted that through the Heads of Christian denominations (HCD), the ELCZ participated in consulting the then President Canaan Banana to mediate peace and reconciliation during the era of Gukurahundi (de Waal 1990). The efforts of the HOCD resulted in the signing of the Peace Accord of 1987 between ZANU PF and PF ZAPU. As a signatory of the ZCC and the HOCD, the ELCZ had to be found speaking with one voice with other denominations when political violence became the order of the day in Zimbabwe. As the culture of political intolerance worsened the churches made an alliance and crafted a working document, *The Zimbabwe We Want*, signed on 26 October 2006. Heads of Christian Churches signed it under the umbrella of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, the Roman Catholic Church in Zimbabwe and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (Maposa and Chinyoka 2014).

These are the signs of cooperation to meet the socio-political needs of the people of Zimbabwe and seeking justice for all. The church was also involved in another reconciliation and unity which was an initiative of the ZCC through HOCD was the Government of National Unity (GNU) which saw the MDC and ZANU PF working together after the disputed elections of 2008 (Chitando and Togarasei 2010, Manyonganise 2016). There is continuous engagement with other churches at the national level to address the socio-economic issues. This basic cooperation or ad hoc ecumenicity is necessary for attending community needs together. Through such engagements, the church promotes the building of the kingdom of God on earth by speaking with one voice and working together at various levels (Bellagamba 1992).

2.7.4 Theological education and training

Although the mainline denominations had difficulties in establishing ecumenical boarding schools or universities they managed to unite in the area of theological education and training. This became a form of national cooperation of mainline churches establishing the United Theological College formerly the Epworth Theological College (Matikiti 2009). The UTC was found in 1956 by the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe (Wesleyan Methodist) (Matikiti 2009). When the ELCZ joined other Protestants in this ecumenical institution, the institution changed name replacing Epworth with United as a way of expressing the ecumenical spirit among the denominations (Gondongwe 2011, Matikiti 2009, and Zwana 2009). The college was an institution of six united mainline churches namely, the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, United Methodist Church, and United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe, United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, Uniting Presbyterian Church and African Methodist Episcopal Church (Matikiti 2009, Zwana 2006). But this has remained a national mainline training institution. It promoted ecumenical engagement among these mainline denominations.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the context of the Karanga and the ELCZ where the research takes place. It began by discussing the Karanga origins, cultural and religious life. It has argued that the Karanga in Mberengwa belongs to the larger dialect of the Shona people in Zimbabwe. The chapter posits that the Karanga cultural and religious life unites them. The communal lifestyle is key to Karanga people in Mberengwa. The chapter discussed the background of the ELCZ beginning with the work Swedish missionaries from South Africa and their role in the

establishment and growth of the ELCZ in Mberengwa. The ELCZ's participation in ecumenism began during its embryonic stage when it became part of missionary conferences of 1903 and 1934. Amongst other issues, the chapter argued that the ELCZ was involved in ecumenical movement programs during the armed struggle and the government programs of education and health; and engagement in national socio-political matters. Furthermore, it continues to work with other mainline denominations in the training of pastors at the United Theological College. The chapter observed that the ecumenical movement recorded at the national level than the grassroots hence the need to study ecumenism at local congregations. The next chapter will discuss the literature review for the study.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature that deals with ecumenism and ELCZ engagement in ecumenism in Zimbabwe. The literature reviewed is in line with the key concepts and research questions to inform the gap which this study seeks to address. The literature survey focuses on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe and its ecumenical engagement in Zimbabwe. It also explores ecumenism and its different expressions. The review considers ecumenism and mission and the cultural factors that may influence the ELCZ local church engagement in ecumenism. The review will help in making an informed argument on the area under study. Finally, the literature informs the gap of local ecumenism which is key to this phenomenological study of the ELCZ practice in Mberengwa.

3.2 Ecumenism defined

The word ecumenism comes from the Greek word *–oikoumene* meaning the whole world and household. Ecumenism means searching for visible church unity and unity of faith (LWF 2010:28). The vision for ecumenism is to mend historical broken relationships and healing the divisions and hostilities among churches that were imported from the West into Africa and Zimbabwe in particular (Kobia 2001, Onwubiko 2001, Hendricks 2014, Werner 2013, See also Zwana 2009, Goosen 2001). Kessler and Kinnamon (2000) argue that ecumenism deals with the healing of relationships among humanity connected to spirituality that is meant to heal the human relationship with God through Christ. It seeks to promote unity or cooperation between distinct Christian denominations and faith movement striving for “greater mutual respect, toleration, and cooperation among various Christian denominations” (Matikiti 2009:2). Matikiti (2009) further argues that ecumenism does not seek to create reconciled uniformity of Christians of various denominational origins but to stimulate better relations (Matikiti 2009). According to Koopman (2013), ecumenism calls for members from diverse Christian traditions to worship, witness and work together in serving the world. One may conclude that ecumenism is a search for unity among churches and other religious movements to serve God and the community. It is both a gift and nature of the church hence fragmentation and divisions are a betrayal of God’s will.

Ecumenism takes place at different levels, international, regional, national and local (grassroots) levels (Goosen 2001, LWF 2010). On the one hand, Goosen (2001:1) notes that traditional ecumenical engagement refers to church councils led by theologians and clergy that sit and produce statements, pastoral letters, and reports about the church and state issues while ordinary members are not in the picture. On the other hand, Koopman (2013) notes that there is grassroots or progressive ecumenism that involves both clergy and laity interacting with each other formally or informally in worship, evangelism and serving the community together in local congregations. Huliselan (2008:218) avers that “Contemporary ecumenism is not just a bundle of ecumenical documents, sacraments or liturgy. On the contrary, contemporary ecumenism is ecumenism in action seeking to encourage the fullness of humankind”. The fullness of humankind is found in inclusivity and discouraging discrimination and marginalization make progressive ecumenism of the grassroots (Koopman 2013). He further advances that ecumenism should embrace the humanity of every culture and religious background, generation and geographical locations (2013). Embracing ecumenism is the one that is inclusive and taking care of diversity among people and religious groupings or church denominations.

As argued earlier in this chapter, ecumenism is provoked by divisions that are so pronounced in the Christian tradition. Worldwide, churches are divided into Roman Catholics, Orthodox and Protestant churches (Goosen 2001). Werner (2013) highlights that the Western church divisions were transplanted into the African church which was largely born out of Western missionary projects. He notes that;

In the African mission, history rivalry and conflicts were most severe and bitterly distorted by mistrust, hatred and open aggression between Protestants and Catholics in many places. Catholic evangelization saw paganism, slavery, human sacrifice, Protestantism and Islam as root evils to be uprooted. Protestant mission, on the other hand, considered Catholicism or what they called “Popism” at that period as worse than Muslims (Werner 2013:81).

The above description shows that the church needs to move out of the engulfing historical divisions and hatred that have been sown globally over decades and centuries. When the discussion on ecumenism began it was meant to unify Protestants but further went on to engage Roman Catholics and Orthodox churches (Hart 2008, Amanze 2013). Protestants include the Calvinist, Lutheran, Moravian, and Zwinglian who rebelled against the Pope and Roman

Catholic traditions emphasizing the authority of the scripture (the word of God) (Onwubiko 2001). But Amanze (2013) also argues that 21st-century church continued to be divided hence the need to engage with those other churches like AICs, Evangelicals, Pentecostals and Charismatic movement. Besides doctrinal, theological and ecclesial divisions these churches are divided by the political landscape in Zimbabwe (Mukonyora 2008). The inter-party violence has left the society and the church divided along partisan lines (Machingura 2010, Manyonganise 2014, and Mukonyora 2008).

Churches continue to segregate each other through the formation of ecumenical bodies in Zimbabwe. While there are many religious and ecumenical movements, the most viable ecumenical movements remain that of the mainline churches (ZCC), the Roman Catholic one and the Evangelical churches (EFZ) (Chitando and Togarasei 2010). These sometimes work closely on national issues, especially when calling for peace and justice in Zimbabwe (Munemo and Nciizah 2014). The other churches are excluded by their own choice or by default. Unfortunately, these churches have formed their groupings independent from each other, for example, Fambidzano, a purely AICs movement (Daneel 1999). Initially, they were looked at as problem churches to be avoided but their existence, growth, and visibility cannot be ignored nor avoided (Amanze 2013). Matikiti (2009) argues that the church's ability to accept diversity, to welcome pluralism and to show true tolerance towards those with identities very different from its own is the hallmark of ecumenism. Matikiti (2009) conjectures that ecumenism is only achieved when diversity is observed and celebrated by seeking to walk together without the exclusion of others.

As such the church seeks to have “visible unity for the sake of Christ’s mission on earth, we recognize that there are other religious communities that constitute part of the world that God so loved” (LWF 2010:27). Given the context of multi-religious and multi-cultural realities, there is a need for embracing ecumenism that goes beyond Christian denominations but also people of other faith and culture. Goosen (2001) also argues that in real-life there is contact with other religions through formal and informal communication. While formal dialogues take place at leadership national meetings, informal dialogues take place at local levels as people of different faith meet at school, sports, work and local cultural events (Goosen 2001). These dialogues may be classified as national (dialogue of discourse and religious experience) and local (dialogue of life and social action) (Goosen 2001). While the church leadership is concerned with meetings and discussions the laity focus on doing activities together in their

local locations. For Njoroge (2013), inter-faith dialogues remove the dividing wall, the hostility between humanity and create one humanity in peaceful existence with people of other faiths. Ecumenism leads to the removal of barriers and other religious obstacles that impede unity among churches, religious movements, and creation as implied by oikoumene. Literature in this section reveals the realities of division among denominations and even religious movements which need to be united. These realities at the national level may also be part of local realities needing investigation through this phenomenological study of the ELCZ's local ecumenical engagement in Mberengwa.

3.3.1 Biblically theological basis of ecumenism

According to Gassmann (2002:1170), Christian confession of the church as one, holy catholic in both the Nicene and Apostles Creeds denotes that while church unity is a vision to be realized, "it is also already-given and should be manifested to make it visible and effective". For Koopman (2013) the unity of the church presupposes the inclusive love of the triune God who created and cares, liberates and renews all of the creation hence it involves searching for unity among human beings and creation. To be catholic is to be united in the family of creation under the one creator who brings all things together (Eph. 1:10, 1 Cor.8:6b).

Christian unity is both imperative and biblically grounded. It is based on the symbol of Trinity, one God, one Lord (Jesus Christ) and one Holy Spirit (1 Cor.8:6) (Gassmann 2002). All Christians belong together for "there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Eph. 4:4-6). From Paul's call to church unity, Njoroge (2013:65) says;

"In Eph. 3: 1-6, we learn that the breaking down of the wall that divided the Jew and Gentile is the mystery of Christ and was only revealed to the apostles and prophets by the Holy Spirit. Hence both Jew and Gentile who heard and believed in this message narrated in the four gospels became the new holy nation".

The spirit that calls for peace between Jews and Gentiles (Gal. 3:28) is the same ecumenical spirit that can unite the 21st-century church. Ecumenism is expressed by the church through sharing one Gospel, one baptism and the Eucharist (Gassmann 2002). This is *koinonia*

communion among the churches in their both local and wider global location. According to Best (2002:1174) “*Koinonia* is not in itself a model of unity but a biblical term evoking the special quality of relationship meant to obtain among Christians and the churches and pointing to intimate, mutually sustaining and challenging bonds- both spiritual and material – linking them within, and to, the one body of Christ”. Tillard (2002) avers that *koinonia* has a biblical basis where disciples gathered sharing all things in a practical sense- prayer, breaking bread and fellowship in word and holding everything in common (Acts 2:42). Amanze (2013) argues that ecumenism in different communities brings together people of different ethnic groups through tolerance and dialogue. Tillard (2002) asserts that when people come together in *koinonia* communion, they do not only share internal unity but engage in communal sharing material goods as a sign of spiritual unanimity. Therefore, *koinonia* communion involves sharing and meeting the needs of the other and carrying each other’s burdens.

Ecumenism is based on the vision and prayer of Christ. Njoroge (2013:66) argues that “Jesus prayed that his followers, the people of God, the church, may know the true God, and “maybe one” so that the world may believe in him (John 17:21)”. He wanted to have one flock with one shepherd (John 10:16). Christ died to gather together the scattered children of God throughout the world (John 11:52). According to Gassmann (2002), Christian unity is God’s will that the churches confess Christ as the Lord who brought them into communion through the work of the Holy Spirit. Through the vision of Christ, churches seek unity so that they become one, sharing love under the Lordship of Christ. “Therefore, the ecumenical community’s goal is not only the unity of the church but the transformation of the human race into a human family” (LWF 2010:27). There is no obedience to God other than striving for visible unity. Unity is a gift of the Spirit (Eph.4:3) that needs to be embraced and expressed visibly among churches. Njoroge (2013) maintains that since the church is visible its unity should be visible as a sign of obedience to Christ. The quest for church unity is a desire to maintain the nature of Christ and his love.

The church is the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-14, Ep. 4) with many united parts. Kessler and Kinnamon (2000:7) argue that, “Our relationship to other parts of the body of Christ is so intense that their joys and suffering are to become our own”. Since Christ’s body neither divided nor dismembered, the church cannot be divided. Ecumenism is Christocentric hence the scandal of division and separatism could not be tolerated among Christians (Meyer 1999,

Onwubiko 2001). The image of the body emphasizes unity and interdependence as opposed to hostility and division. Matikiti (2009:7) asserts that:

At the root of the ecumenical movement is the sharp contrast between the divided state of the church in actuality and the affirmation of all Christians that the church is in some sense “one”. St Paul speaks of the church as the one body of Christ, and the gospel of John records Christ’s prayer that his followers “may all be one” (John 17:11).

Kessler and Kinnamon (2000) also maintain that unity and oneness of the church are in welcoming one another as Christ has accepted and welcomes us all. Inasmuch as churches are united with Christ, they should strive to be united with each other as members of one body.

In ecumenism the church embodies this oneness as true one church, “the one people of God, the one Body of Christ, the one temple of the Spirit” (Gassmann 2002:1170). In this communion, there is acceptance of diversity as members of the one body with different functions (Kessler and Kinnamon 2000, Meyer 1999). Njoroge (2013) argues that diversity is as a result of gifts that make each member of the church unique and different from others. Similarly, different denominations have different gifts to offer in building the body of Christ. Njoroge (2013) posits that all gifts (charismata) according to Romans 12: 3-8, 1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4:7-16 are from the same Spirit, to serve the needs of the members of the one body of Christ in their respective contexts. These gifts are given to equip the members for the common good and give room for responsibility and mutual accountability on every individual and the Church as a whole at every level of its life and the world (Njoroge 2013, WCC 2013). Strengthened by the Spirit, and through these spiritual gifts, Christians are called to live out their discipleship in a variety of forms of service (WCC 2013). The most important thing is seeing the church as the body of Christ is “to discover the wealth and beauty of the church in all its diversity as God’s work” (LWF 2010:130). The spirit of diversity entails accepting that things may be done differently and affirmatively (Matikiti 2009). Matikiti (2009) argues that this is building a spirit of interdependence among the members of the body of Christ. Ecumenism is rooted in the belief in the one united body of Christ who gave birth to the church.

Ecumenism presupposes reconciliation among churches and people in communities. As highlighted earlier, ecumenism involves the healing of the past wounds of schism and restoration of fellowship in Christ (Goosen 2001). Reconciliation is biblically rooted when God

reconciled the world with himself through Christ (Rom 5, 2 Corinthians 5:18–20; Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20–21). Pobee (2002:961) avers that Christ “is our reconciliation, and humanity is called to be reconciled to God”. Amanze (2013) also notes that reconciliation to God leads to reconciliation to one another – Jews and gentiles have become one. Both Amanze (2013) and Pobee (2002) agree that reconciliation among churches is needed since churches seem to have worked to divide than to unite people. Christian reconciliation both a plan and a sign of God’s grand reconciling purpose for all creation (Kessler and Kinnamon 2000). According to Njoroge (2013:66) the church witnesses to “the kingdom of God i.e. for justice, truth, love, peace, reconciliation and righteousness is a fulltime responsibility whatever what we do for a living”. Therefore, churches work to bring about forgiveness, healing, and reconciliation of all people, nations, and tribes (Pobee 2002). Machingura (2010) observes that the ZCC and other ecumenical organizations in Zimbabwe have a mandate to call for justice, peace and reconciliation in the polarised society. To fulfill this mandate, the church should begin by walking the talk of reconciliation – as a reconciled community of believers in communion (Moyo 2002). It within the ELCZ tradition to be more aligned to biblical principles including ecumenical engagement, a gift, and a biblical command. It is the nature of the church and Christ to be embodied by the church in its life and ministry. Literature in this section spells out the reality of divisions and the call to unity as the desire of God. It informs the study about theological factors that influence local ecumenism, and ecumenism beyond local congregations.

3.3.2 Conciliar ecumenism

Conciliar ecumenism refers to church unity that is led and determined by church leadership at international, regional and national levels (Kinnamon 2013). According to Au (2008), conciliar fellowship is the church’s official and visible institutional unity. Whelan (2010) posits that this form of ecumenism is usually directed by the bishops, pastors, and theologians who do formal council and assembly meetings and conferences. He suggests conciliar fellowship is necessary because today’s community challenges require “churches to develop among themselves an attitude of co-dependency, co-operation, and mutual support” (Whelan 2010:258). For him, such goals can be achieved through conciliarity.

Oden (2007) traces the history of conciliar fellowship back to biblical history, of the council in Jerusalem recorded by Luke in Acts 15 when the church sought to resolve differences arose

due to the growth of the church. According to Plaatjies van Huffel (2017), conciliar ecumenism became more pronounced when the Roman Catholic established its reform movement in the 14th and 15th centuries. It was the conciliar fellowship during Vatican II that declared division a scandal for the Christian church and the world and called for church unity (Plaatjies van Huffel 2017:10). One may argue that when church leaders come together to seek unity and form a national or regional church representative body it becomes termed “conciliarity” or “synodality”. The word synod comes from the Greek terms “*syn* (with) and *odos* (way) suggesting a “walking together”. (WCC 2013:35). “Both synodality and conciliarity signify that each member of the Body of Christ, by virtue of baptism, has his or her place and proper responsibility” in the communion of the church (WCC 2013:35). According to Plaatjies van Huffel (2017) conciliarity involves gathering and assembling making decisions in unity, and consensus through the church councils, assemblies, and synods. WCC (2013) posits that conciliar fellowship is meant to affirm human commonality and church unity in the discerning apostolic faith. WCC (2012:19) further notes that conciliarity may also include inter-religious partnerships and organizations to meet specific challenges facing humanity. These various ecumenical bodies become conciliar instruments (WCC 2012). It is one of many ways of ecumenical expressions.

However, commentators disagree as to whether conciliar fellowship necessarily requires organic union to manifest the visible unity of the Church. According to Thomas Best (2002:1174), conciliar fellowship “is not itself a model but a vision of how organic unity might be realized among the various local united churches”. On the other hand, Meyer (1999) suggests that conciliarity is compatible with other forms of visible unity. This suggests that conciliar fellowship becomes a form of ecumenism. This is further supported by Au (2008) suggesting that conciliar ecumenism allows interaction between the council and the local churches thereby uniting the institutional church and the grassroots congregations. Au (2008:268) argues that through conciliar fellowship “each local church shares the catholicity of this united church and in communion with others”. The purpose of conciliar ecumenism is to create space to address ecclesiological and governance issues and finding common ground on action to take on socio-political matters (Au 2008).

In Zimbabwe, assertions of ecumenism are often limited to conciliar fellowships at national levels through interdenominational co-operation in areas like joint worship services and associations such as ZCC, EFZ, and Heads of Christian Denominations (HOCD) (Zwana

2009). Conciliar fellowships enjoy church leadership participation promoting visible essential unity of the church among churches at various levels (Chapman 2015, WCC 2013). Churches will periodically express their unity through these council of churches, enjoying unity as they recognize their shared faith, a common witness and community service through conciliar fellowship (Best 2002).

Conciliar fellowship involves dialogue of theological, doctrinal and many other matters that concerns ecumenical service to the world (WCC 2013). Through conciliar fellowship churches “are communion in the fullness of apostolic faith; in sacramental life; in a truly one and mutually recognized ministry; in structures of conciliar relations and decision-making; and in common witness and service in the world” (WCC 2013:26). Chapman (2015:366) argues that “As the name suggests, a structured form of unity in reconciled diversity involves common structures of oversight, which nevertheless safeguard the autonomy of churches”. This conciliar unity does not dismantle the individual institutional structures nor disregard the autonomy and statutes of members of the fellowship (Chapman 2015). WCC (2013) affirms that in conciliar fellowship diversity is always acknowledged and celebrated by appreciating differences when it comes to resolutions during councils and assemblies. Appreciation of church unity and diversity is the affirmation of what the church is to be in the Trinity (Chapman 2015).

According to the WCC (2013:22), the notable convergence during conciliar fellowship on “the writing and reception of Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, has already registered significant progress in convergence about these essential elements of communion, though less on ministry than on the other two”. The LWF (2010) highlights that historical differences, theological conflicts led to suffering and Anabaptists persecution that led to a painful historical division between Lutherans and Anabaptist-Mennonites. The Lutherans suffer the guilt and regrets of the history of persecution of the Anabaptists, while the Anabaptists suffer pain and bitterness of loss during historical persecution (LWF 2010). However, these differences could only be handled through conciliar ecumenical dialogues since 2002 (LWF 2010). Conciliar ecumenism has also enabled the churches in Zimbabwe and throughout the world to work together for peace and justice (WCC 2013).

Besides the noted strengths of conciliar fellowship, the fellowship has its challenges. Kobia (2001) argues that generally, these national Christian councils play very little role in promoting church unity. Zwana (2009:293) observes that “although the churches are subject to

constitutional obligations to the ecumenical venture, the relationship does not run deep”. Zwana (2009:301) observes that “Where there is an ecumenical co-operation issue of denominational identity has been guarded jealously”. Chapman (2015) also asserts that conciliar agreement on apostolic faith and the use of the bible remain vague and promotion of maintenance of self-regulated boundaries keeps on impeding ecumenism. According to Werner (2013) maintenance of denominational identity is as a result of the missionary legacy. Werner (2013) posits that although the church leaders are members of the ecumenical movement, they tend to pursue denominational interests, traditions, and objectives at the expense of the ecumenical endeavors. For him, that is caused by suspicion among leaders hence discouraging ecumenical engagement notes (Werner 2013). To support that Zwana (2009) argues that a semblance of tolerance is expressed through inter-denominational meetings, but division and denominationalism remain guarded.

Secondly, close connection with mother churches has disturbed national ecumenism in Africa and particularly Zimbabwe (Zwana 2009). Zwana (2013:301) argues that “Many churches as the patronage of their Western counterparts persist such that their dependence in some cases has become a hindrance to local co-operation”. In support of Zwana (2009), Kobia (2001:303) also posits that “The more a national church became a development agent, the more it justified its reasons for seeking ties with a particular donor starting with the "mother" church in Europe or North America”. Zwana (2009) observes that the Western “mother” churches continue to fund programs of Zimbabwean sister churches forming a strong system of patronage. With the foreign support churches feel uncomfortable working with others in different programs hence develop their own denominational based programs and projects proposals funded mother or sister church in Europe or America (Zwana 2009). Both conciliar ecumenism and attachment to the sister of the so-called mother church limit local ecumenical engagement that would require the sharing of physical and spiritual resources.

Thirdly, the spirit of completion is rising among denominations. According to Kobia (2001:303) “Competition is favoured over cooperation and promotion of the denomination overbuilding unity”. African churches and Zimbabwean have seen more competition by establishing denominational institutions thereby undermining the ecumenical spirit (Zwana 2009, Kobia 2001). The competition also involves establishing many congregations and parishes throughout the country and competing for membership. Zwana (2009) observes that this positive competition for numerical growth led to retarded institutional ecumenism in

Zimbabwe. Amanze (2013) also note that through denominational competition, the AICs, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches tend to draw more members from mainline churches that believe in the saving power of Christ and seeking miracles and faith healing impeding ecumenism. Amanze (2013) further argues that the spirit of church competition has compromised the experience of the church as one extended family in one way or the other. Competition and scramble for membership have become a major barrier to local and national ecumenism in Zimbabwe.

Finally, principles of conciliar ecumenism are exclusive because they prescribe who should be in and who should not belong (Baxter and Burke 1970). The postcolonial theory unmasks power imbalance in conciliar ecumenism since it has been informed by Eurocentric views detaching ELCZ from local ecumenical participation among the Karanga. For the ZCC the ecumenical principles were drawn by former missionary and current mainline churches. This makes it difficult when new AICs and the Pentecostal churches rise from the old ones and also desire to be part of the movement (Werner 2013, Amanze 2013). These AICs and Pentecostal denominations are sometimes blamed for syncretism, sheep-stealing and are not regarded as true churches due to their beliefs in demons, exorcism, witchcraft and faith healing (Tswaedi 2000, Mukonyora 2008). These changes in denominational terrain make it difficult for the ecumenical movement in Zimbabwe to be more inclusive at the conciliar level than at the local level. Although the literature focuses on national and regional or international church unity, it resonates with the challenges that may be faced by local ecumenism which are generated from conciliar structures or institutional denominational structures where the local congregations belong. The literature discusses the nature of conciliar ecumenism and challenges found in this approach. It helps this study in realizing that much has been written on the phenomenon of national councils but there is a gap in local ecumenism. Therefore, the need to further explore the phenomenon of local ecumenism in Mberengwa.

3.3.3 Receptive ecumenism

Instead of discussing local ecumenism other scholars have chosen to emphasize what is known as receptive ecumenism. Receptive ecumenism is closely linked to expressions of local ecumenical engagement. According to Avis (2012:224), receptive ecumenism is a Roman Catholic Church idea seeking “to challenge the church’s attitudes and official stances on ecumenism”. Receptive ecumenism is neither a matter of letting go of what churches do not

agree on nor seeking everything that denominations agree on, but it is accepting to be different and accepting to learn from one another (Hendricks 2014). In as much as ecumenical dialogue involve some degree of reception, the dynamic of receptive ecumenicity has not been taken seriously in ecumenical engagements (Avis 2012). At conciliar level lack of the genuine spirit of reception has caused some frustration and fatigue in the ecumenical movement and inter-church dialogues of our time (Avis 2012). When denominations approach each other, there should be an acknowledgment that every denomination has something to learn from the other (Avis 2012, Hendricks 2014). From one another, churches may learn styles of worship; Christian tradition, music, and dress code (Hendricks 2014). Hendricks (2014:4) further avers that;

Looking only at what we would regard as the positive aspect of other churches' teachings may seem dishonest—as if we're pretending that we don't see any problem with other aspects of what they believe. But the point of receptive ecumenism isn't to come to a judgment about the other churches and what they believe. All we're concerned about here is what I can learn from them and integrate with my faith.

It is being humble enough to accept that through diversity churches can teach and learn from one another (Hendricks 2015). Humility, acknowledging the importance of diversity and the willingness to learn from one another may bring church unity. It is ideal for local congregations as they always seek to share spiritual and physical resources in their local community (Acts 2:45).

Ecumenism and learning do not mean losing one's ecclesial and liturgical heritage (Gibbons 2008:219). Hendricks (2014) posits that receptive ecumenism does not call, force or wait for others to change and do the same but focus on what can be done to learn for unity. Receptive ecumenism discourages the spirit of superiority complex between the ecumenical partners replacing it with self-criticism and desire to receive what the other has been blessed with (Avis 2012). Both Avis (2012) and Hendricks (2015) agree that receptive ecumenism is the ideal for ecumenical engagement since each one has something to offer and something to learn.

Gideon Goosen (2013) seeks to highlight the challenges and possibilities of receptive/local ecumenism that is ideal for local congregations. His first observation is that every church has something to offer for others to learn unless there is rigidity about the myth of holding the

“whole truth” or “correct doctrine” (Goosen 2013:14). From his contact with Pentecostals, Evangelicals, and Protestants, he learned how they used the bible and prayer effectively but differently (Goosen 2013). He observed that prayer could be used for conflict resolution during meetings, effects of spontaneous prayers by Pentecostals, as well as all-encompassing forms of praying by Protestants (Goosen 2013:14). Ecumenism requires taking a risk and being humble to accept learning from one another. It involves building bridges toward accepting the unfamiliar to bring about familiarity (Kessler and Kinnamon 2000). Ecumenism means taking a risk to affect and being affected by others’ faith. He argues that;

Churches are inclined to favor their own safe house. Have you noticed that dialogues between Christian churches often make some progress and then come to a halt because neither party is prepared to take a risk with the next step? Should we share ministers? Should we share the Eucharist? Should we recognize each other’s ministry? (Goosen 2013:16).

Unless churches are ready to risk their identity and accommodate one another, ecumenical engagement will not make significant progress (Zwana 2009).

Goosen (2013) observes that local ecumenism is affected by lack of confidence and dependence on the authority of church leadership especially on the side of Roman Catholics and some Protestants. Bakare (1997) observed that it is a common weakness of church leaders to avoid issues of church unity at local levels discouraging the laity ecumenical efforts. Lack of enthusiasm and commitment of the clergy into ecumenical work impede the growth and strength of local ecumenism (Goosen 2013, Zwana 2009). The language also hinders ecumenical progress. Goosen (2013) alludes that local ecumenical engagement can easily deal with exclusive denominational language which is not common to all hence adopt common language that suits the ecumenical forum to avoid division or exclusion.

Other challenges to church unity include issues of women ordination, homosexuality, a marriage of priests or pastors and dealing with conflicts among believers (Goosen 2013). While other churches like the Anglican are prepared to deal with controversial issues others are not open to doing so hence this becomes a problem even in ecumenical engagement with other churches. The solution will be to ignore or avoid contact with others since that may raise some challenging controversies on the way. There is a need for churches to learn and teach conflict

resolution skills (Goosen 2013). Ecumenical engagement creates a learning and sharing platform for the churches involved.

Finally, he notes that the question of authority remains a major challenge for receptive ecumenism. Bishops, priests/pastors are not ready to surrender their positions of leadership and thinking (Goosen 2013). Religious elite tends to emphasize on uniqueness of their religious traditions and institutions and their difference from others hence discourage local ecumenism (Huliselan 2013). Unless the powerful elite is endowed with humility ecumenism remains a challenge (Moyo 1999). Humility involves changing the mindset to accommodate others and being church together with others (Goosen 2013). Principles guiding receptive ecumenism informs the nature of local ecumenism and impediments that may be a result of doctrinal position, denominational identity and effects of church leadership on local ecumenism.

3.4 Ecumenism and church mission

Church unity is not an end in itself. Ecumenism is meant for mission in the world “so that they may believe that you sent me” (John 17: 21). To confront the 21st-century challenges in the world, the church needs to be united (Onwubiko 2001). According to Onwubiko (2001:196), the church recovered its unity through “catholicity, universality and one and the undivided church of Christ” for the mission. Amanze (2013:779) also notes that “The ecumenical movement does not derive simply from a passion for unity; it sprang from a passion for unity that is completely fused in mission”.

Christian mission means engagement into preaching the gospel and service to the people of God (Mark 16:16). It means bringing the gospel of both temporal and eternal life “life in its abundance” (John 10:10). According to Bosch (1991:3) “Christian mission is the total task of which God has sent the church for the salvation of the world”. Bosch (1991:391) further argues that “mission is God’s turning to the world in respect of creation, care, redemption, and consummation”. The triune God who calls and sends out his servants from the churches to discharge his work among his people throughout the world (Whelan 2010, Musasiwa 2002). The mission is God initiated and God owned hence God’s mission (*missio Dei*) to the world through the church. Musasiwa (2002:265) avers that “God is a missionary God, a God who crosses frontiers towards the world”. Kirk (2000) also avers that both the church and the world are privileged to be embraced and assigned as God’s messengers in his mission.

God's mission in the world begins with reconciliation hence the need for ecumenism (Purves 2004). Ecumenism is a form of reconciliation of divided churches. According to Avtzi (2013) churches need to be reconciled because visible disunity among the churches preaches conflict to the world. Christ came to die so that humanity can be reconciled with God the creator and savior. "Every human being, whether within or without the walls of the church, is a person for whom Christ died" (Purves 2004:102). The death of Christ was God's reconciliation mission. God did not only reconcile the world to himself but also gave the church the message of reconciliation as its mission to the world (2 Cor. 5:18). Matthey (2013) asserts that Christ came into the world healing and reconciling the people and communities fulfilling *missio-Dei*. Therefore, the mission of the church is to bring reconciliation between God and humanity and with one another (Balia and Kim 2010). Reconciliation brings people into communion (ecumenism) with one another as Disciples of Christ. To be reconciled means to die to self to be united in love and communion with the other following the footsteps of Christ.

The mission of the church seeks to transform the world by promoting justice. The desire for justice is a sign of the love of God for humanity and creation (Kim and Anderson 2011). Justice is solidarity with the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed (Kim and Anderson 2011). "When the church engages the world, she is called to act as salt and get dissolved in it (Coorilos 2014:77-78). Coorilos (2014:78) argues that the main mission of the church in the world should be centered on concern for "poverty, economic and social injustice, ecological violence and marginalization of indigenous peoples". The church's holistic mission in today's society takes the issues of dignity, social justice, and human rights not only as an option but a mandate for the church to bring social healing and abundant life for people and creation (Coorilos 2014, Whelan 2010). Coorilos (2014) further argues that the church cannot claim to worship God and follow Christ without being actively and visibly practising justice, sharing, equality, and mutuality in its ecclesial and social engineering. Coorilos (2014) argues that both passions for evangelism and justice should be held together to carry out the church's mission under the ecumenical umbrella that includes the civil society and people of other faiths. Engaging others is a true sign of humility and Christ's self-emptying communion that is needed for the mission.

The mission for justice involves learning from each other in mutual support, co-operation and interdependence with other players with similar goals (LWF 2010, Whelan 2010). This presupposes church unity for the sake of the world where it carries its mission mandate. LWF (2010:125) advances that, "Indeed, Lutherans do not see themselves as "the church," but as a

movement within the one church. We are aware that we need other Christians”. The LWF emphasizes church unity for the mission as it points towards a variety of mission work done by the Lutheran communion.

LWF member churches have acted together in reflecting theologically on their public role and in developing common strategies to respond to poverty and economic injustice, for Diakonia is not just about responding to the symptoms of human suffering, but about seeking prophetically to change what is causing or contributing to poverty and injustice (LWF 2010:25).

Besides issues of justice and human rights, the LWF joined hand with other ecumenical movements of climate justice, environmental degradation and food security; and the role of the church in responding to diseases such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic (LWF 2010). Njoroge (2013) posits that Christians are called to be partners with God and with one another to restore the reign of God in a world where evil forces rage from all directions. Njoroge (2013) further argues that churches should seek ways of living a faithful calling as the worshipping, witnessing and serving the church through the ministry of all believers as an ecumenical movement. Learning from Jesus’ ministries including preaching, teaching, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, caring for the grieving, the ecumenical movement should seek to respond to the challenges that people face in their various contexts (Njoroge 2013). Through the ecumenical movement, churches pool the tools and resources together for reaching out and serving people in the world (Njoroge 2013). However, there are some imperial domination traits that hampers ECLZ’s participation in local ecumenism, hence the need for exploring mission-cultural factors that can inform local ecumenical engagements from below in Mberengwa among the Karanga. The domination traits include marginalization of other denominations due to doctrinal and worship practices.

In Zimbabwe ecumenical bodies come together in many instances in advocating for human rights and against the use of violence in Zimbabwe. RCCE (2012:363) avers that “Issues of peace and justice are essential to God’s mission and, therefore, to the ecumenical movement which insists that Christians participate best in this mission of God when they do so together”. It is through these bodies that the Church has been involved in the Zimbabwean crisis, particularly against political violence and intolerance (Chitando and Togarasei 2010). Munemo and Nciizah (2014:65) assert that “God has met all needs of human beings in the suffering and

death of Christ, and every Christian should now share the victory of Christ over sin, sickness, and poverty”. Therefore, the holistic mission of the church should seek to fulfill and further the mission of God in the world. The literature on mission informs this study on the missional factors that bring churches together from national to the grassroots levels.

3.5 Local/grassroots ecumenism

One of the key works on local ecumenism is that of Au who wrote about ‘ecumenism In the Charismatic Renewal’ in the United Kingdom. He highlighted how the local denominations interact in worship and conferences. According to Au (2008), local ecumenism is unity generated by local congregation clergy and laity. He maintains that grassroots ecumenism may be formal, structured as well as informal meetings for fellowship with the divine and one another in local congregations (2008). He further argues that local ecumenism is unity from the grassroots by members of local congregations despite their different educational backgrounds or socio-economic statuses (Au 2008). For Au (2008:5) “Unity is for, and achieved by everybody belonging to the universal church, not just the ecumenical experts”. That means local ecumenism is more open and inclusive. Gibbons (2012) detects that when the priest or pastor of a local congregation shares life with the community, participating in funerals, meetings and marriage ceremonies where members of different denominations gather, he/she engages in local ecumenism. The local current forms of ecumenism are affected by locality and ethnicity that continue to influence the way of being a church in the community (Huliselan 2008).

Local ecumenism is different from the official ecumenism established by the elite of the church who are trained theologians and clergy, but a movement of local congregation walking together in faith (Huliselan 2008, Au 2008). Report on the Consultation on Conciliar Ecumenism (RCCE) (2012) also posits that instead of ecumenical initiatives being created by academics and theologians in councils, they should come from the local congregations. Churches in local congregations are more concerned with fellowship, worship, and evangelism (Au 2008, Verstraelen 1998). According to Au (2008), the motivation of local ecumenism is spiritual experiences within the local congregations that promote the unity of being church together in the local community. It does not depend on the authorities and the influence of church elite and renowned theologians (Au 2008:9). “Although these sorts of ecumenical activities at the grassroots level are not always recorded in church reports, they are significant for increasing

the sense of unity among local churches” (Au 2008:7). The literature suggests that local congregations allow convergence towards unity despite denominational differences.

The other factor that leads to local church unity is the desire for healing and community life (Au 2008). They are grieved when the member of the assembly is sick and suffering, but they also celebrate the healing and deliverance of each member because they belong together in the body of Christ (Au 2008). As Paul says, “If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it” (1 Cor. 12:26) because “the members may have the same care for one another” (1 Cor. 12:25) (Au 2008:194). According to Au (2008), the local people communally seek God’s healing and when one is healed, they praise God in thanksgiving together. Concern for each other’s life does not leave out others who belong to the same body of Christ. For that reason, prayer and intercession are done offered for all members to foster unity of the church (Au 2008). Au (2008:198) argues that “Intercession enables another sort of experience in the Spirit for both the intercessor and the one who receives prayer. The intercessor becomes the medium of God’s love which is transferred to the person prayed for” (Au 2008:198). According to Tswaedi (2000), the basis for sharing worship experiences between local denominations is the gospel of the cross. Physical expressions of love for one another through prayer, support, comfort, and forgiveness help to bring assurance of God’s love and a strong sense of security within the Body of Christ (Au 2008).

Local ecumenism acknowledges diversity through tolerance of differences in spiritual gifts. RCCE (2012) observes that oneness of the church never calls for uniformity. RCCE (2012:362) further asserts that “The church, in its pilgrimage towards unity, celebrates the dignity of difference and diversity”. Au (2008) advances that all Spiritual gifts toward members of the Body of Christ come from “the same Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:11) for the benefit of the whole community of believers. It is through these diverse gifts that the members of the Body need to be united to benefit from one another. Moyo (1991:219) avers that “each member brings unique gifts to share with other members of the koinonia, hence there should be equal recognition among members. Through the gifts God created diversity, removing monotony and dullness of uniformity (Au 2008). The gifts enable the local congregations to appreciate and depend on one another to share resources and experiences (Njoroge 2013)

According to Au (2008), local ecumenism does not concentrate on divisive matters, seeking harmony in doctrinal or denomination traditions. Instead they become part of their lived experiences without debating. Koopman (2013) argues that various denominational traditions are used as resources for the enrichment of ecumenical engagement among the local congregations hence are not discussed or investigated. While this is the strength of grassroots ecumenism, it also results in its weaknesses and failure to resolve historical denominational differences that continue to divide the church such as issues of Eucharist (Au 2008). The other problem is that local ecumenism is more concerned with church growth than the socio-political issues of the outside world (Verstraelen 1998). He argues that local congregations should not only focus on praying and worshipping together but also move towards fulfilling the church prophetic mission mandate and function as light and salt of the world (Matt 5:13-16) (Verstraelen 1998). Seeking salvation for all through word and sacraments should translate into the church's mission of promoting social justice and liberation of the poor and the oppressed (Verstraelen 1998, Söderström et al. 2003). Literature in this section has drawn some models from South Africa and Britain. Some of the issues raised remain perspectives other than living experiences of local ecumenism that involves the ELCZ in Zimbabwe. However, what is advocated for and the models of local ecumenical engagement helps in this study in understanding the dynamics of local ecumenism elsewhere that may also unfold during the field study. The focus of this phenomenological study seeks to find out how the local cultural and social context shapes ELCZ's engagement in local ecumenism in Mberengwa, hence the literature highlights some of the factors that bring local congregations together. It is more relevant to this study.

3.6 ELCZ and national ecumenical engagement

3.6.1 Literature on early missionary ecumenical initiatives in Zimbabwe

The ELCZ ecumenical engagement is dated back to as early as at its missionary inception in Zimbabwe. Amanze (2013) notes that due to challenges faced in the missionary field, the missionaries sought to come together. Consequently, in 1903 the first ecumenical conference was called by the Rev. C.D. Helm of the London Mission Society in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe (Baxter and Burke 1970). This was predominantly a meeting of missionaries and ministers of protestant churches operating in Zimbabwe, then Southern Rhodesia and this marked the

formation of the Southern Rhodesia Missionary Conference (SRMC) (Baxter and Burke 1970). Among other things the missionary conference was to:

Promote Christian mission in Southern Rhodesia, to encourage and promote co-operation among those involved in missionary work, to further the educational and general advancement of the native people, to collect statistics and papers concerning missionary work, to consider all questions bearing on religious and educational interests of the natives, and to secure as far as possible, uniformity in dealing with native customs and affairs (Baxter and Burke 1970:451).

The missionary conference brought together all missionaries including those of the ELCZ then operating under CSM. The missionary conference became a communication channel between the government of the day and the missionaries in Zimbabwe (Beaver 1962).

When missionary work grew, the missionaries were faced with scramble and competition for converts hence the second missionary conference was called in Bulawayo in 1934 (Söderström 1984). The missionary conference drew up the “Comte agreement” signed by missionary organizations to avoid competition and promote peaceful co-operation in mission (Söderström 1984, Söderström et al. 2003). “In the Comte agreement, the Mberengwa Masase-Gwanda territory was recognized as the mission field for the Lutheran Church” (Söderström 1984:60). Other denominations such as the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) handed over their mission areas in Gwanda and Beitbridge to the ELCZ since they were to concentrate on their allocated area in Masvingo province (Söderström 1984). According to Söderström (1984), each denomination anxiously guarded its boundaries by establishing schools and congregations at a 10km radius to avoid encroachment by others. Zwana (2009) argues that, while the missionaries solved their problem of competition, they fuelled church division under denominationalism and regionalism among Christians in Zimbabwe. Missionaries created a future problem in which denominations later experienced as internal regional migration took place. Establishing a congregation in another region would mean encroaching in another denomination’s area of influence resulting in denominational conflict and division.

3.6.2 Political involvement

Since then, ELCZ continued to work together with other churches, building ecumenical spirit among the churches in Zimbabwe. One of the aims of the ELCZ, as stated in her constitution,

is “to co-operate in mutual understanding with other churches for the extension of the kingdom of God so that the name of Christ may be glorified”¹⁰ (ELCZ 2012:9). This was expressed by the ELCZ participation in ecumenical engagement during Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle, towards independence and in post-colonial Zimbabwe (Bhebhe 1996, Shiri 1995).

The ELCZ became a member of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) formerly known as the Christian Council of Rhodesia formed in 1964. During colonial rule, the Christian Council became the voice of the voiceless in the political arena hence most missionary churches were represented except the Dutch Reformed church (Söderström 1984, Peaden 1979). Its formation was a response to the political crisis that came about by the white regime especially with the introduction of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence of 1965 and proactive to legislation and main current issues particularly those that divided people according to race (Dube 2006, Peaden 1979). Munemo and Nciizah (2014) suggest that during the UD the ZCC became more actively involved in the liberation struggle, denouncing racial segregation, human rights abuses and other excesses of the state. Shiri (1985) posits that the ZCC vehemently opposed to both the UDI and conscription of black fighters into the Rhodesian army. In 1969, the ZCC resisted the government’s new constitution that called for churches to be registered as charity organizations and unjust laws that discriminated blacks (Söderström et al. 2003, Moyo 2015). According to Munemo and Nciizah (2014:66), “In 1979, the Church took a major political initiative by pleading with all political groups involved in the Lancaster House negotiations calling for the termination of the war and reconciliation and national unity”. The ZCC led by the ELCZ bishop Shiri reasoned with both the ZANU and Muzorewa led parties to a ceasefire and come to negotiating table to end the war (Shiri 1985). Söderström et al. (1984) and Shiri (1985) agree that the church in its ecumenical movement has played a crucial role in the 1979 Lancaster House agreement that marked the end of the armed struggle.

In postcolonial Zimbabwe churches are mainly grouped in three major associations, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) for mainly the mainline churches, the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops’ Conference (ZCBC) for the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) for Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches (Chitando and Togarasei 2010). They act independently and sometimes united if need be. Mhandara et al. (2013) argue that

¹⁰ This is found on the general aims of the ELZC in the 2012 Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe

these church networks have shown the church's political participation in Zimbabwe through their political initiatives and pastoral letters. One of their outstanding cooperation was when they authored the "Zimbabwe We Want document" in 2006 (Dombo 2014). The document spelled out the church's position on issues of governance, economy, social fiber, justice, and reconciliation as well as justification of the church mandate to respond to these matters. It was the church response in one voice to the socio-economic and political situation in Zimbabwe. Muechechete (2009) also asserts that these networks observe and monitor elections, conduct voter education and civic education, advocacy against repressive legislation and any acts of conduct by the government that violate people's civil liberties. This shows that the church groupings consistently participate in the socio-economic and apolitical matters at national levels. Mhandara et al. (2013:109) demonstrate that these ecumenical bodies through their representatives also contributed immensely to the founding of the Government of National Unity in 2009. They also participated in the constitutional making processes in Zimbabwe (Dombo 2014). The ZCC continued to network with these and other ecumenical bodies to promote peace and democracy in Zimbabwe (Moyo 2012, Munemo and Nciizah 2014). Munemo and Nciizah (2014) highlight that the ZCC participation in political issues in Zimbabwe is guided by the mission, biblical and theological mandate to be prophetic, speaking on issues of justice, peace, and reconciliation and proclaim liberation of the poor and the oppressed so that the people of Zimbabwe would experience the fullness of life (John 10:10) (Munemo and Nciizah 2014). It is part of the church's apostolic calling and duty to be prophetic in the context of socio-political and economic challenges.

Political violence, torture and human abuses that took place during election periods such as between 2000 and 2008 led to the ZCC cooperation with ecumenical bodies to advocate for justice and peace. For that reason, Munemo and Nciizah (2014:65) argue that "The Church in Zimbabwe has fought for democratic space in every arena of public life". They recommend that the church should be both the moral campus and "the conscience of the society" (Munemo and Nciizah 2014:68). The ecumenical movement in Zimbabwe has tried to provide leadership in the political transformation of society. With its large membership in communities, it continues to shape both the social and political values of the Zimbabwean society. The work of Munemo and Nciizah (2014) takes cognizant of the church provision of national healing, leadership and guidance of the Zimbabwean society especially during the Government of National Unity (GNU) between 2009 and 2013 in which the church was side-lined by

politicians. Chitando and Togarasei (2010) demonstrate that the church's mandate is to be united, prophetic, provide moral leadership and resist being patronized by political parties.

However, Munemo and Nciizah (2014) posit that the church in its ecumenical bodies could not effectively do its mandate due to divisions among the leadership and denominations. When there are gross human rights violations, like during the Gukurahundi¹¹ massacre the ZCC sometimes lacks leadership, hence lose its prophetic voice (Dube 2006, Chitando and Togarasei 2010). Divisions and lack of church leadership lead to the failure of denominations to speak with one voice. These diverse responses to political issues are influenced by “denominational doctrines, socialization, educational orientation, religious affiliation, political affiliation, personal attributes among other factors” (Mhandara et al. 2013:106). Munemo and Nciizah (2014) argue that while others became critical toward the government, some Pentecostal church leaders such as Obadiah Musindo and some AICs leaders like Johane Marange apostolic church became court prophets promoting the ruling party ideology. Chitando and Togarasei (2010) also contend that the ZCC is affected by divisions among member denominations as some would want to avoid political matters and focus on preaching on the world to come (heaven). The divisions are also caused by the theological rigidity of the members hence finding it difficult to accommodate those of different theological views (Chitando and Togarasei 2010).

Political polarization has become endemic in Zimbabwe that every sector has been affected. Different political stances especially due to fear of victimization, different denominations tend to be divided. According to Munemo and Nciizah (2014), the ruling party used AIC church gatherings and services for a political campaign to canvass support, while ZCC member churches were demonized for undermining the ruling party. Munemo and Nciizah (2014) further argue that the church (ZCC) could not be accepted by the ruling party because of its close association with the opposition and civil society suspected to work with a foreign government for regime change. Machingura (2010) argues that politics has become the source of church divisions making it difficult for the church to become champion of peace and reconciliation. Chitando and Togarasei (2010:152) observe that “Thus we argue that the church has not been a sacred island that has been spared from the sharp polarisation characterizing Zimbabwean society up to this day”. Machingura (2010) traces the roots of violence from the

¹¹ Gukurahundi massacre occurred between 1982 to 1987, when over 20 000 people were brutally killed, and many were left wounded and homeless (see Dube 2006).

1980s when the people were brutally killed during the war of liberation and the Gukurahundi which resulted in Unity Accord. The events did not get any government intervention to bring healing, peace, and reconciliation (Machingura 2010). Machingura (2010) laments that despite the efforts and reports by the Catholic Peace and Justice Commission report and Chihambakwe Commission report, nothing was done to address the findings. He also notes violence during 2000, 2002 and 2008 elections which left many wounded, dead and others homeless (Machingura 2010). Moyo (2015:115) also adds that “the period was characterized by violence, racism, rape, torture and human rights abuse”, and political polarization fuelled by the media. Zimbabwe political violence has resulted in traumatic experiences, loss of wealth and property, leading to animosity even of close relatives and members of the church (Machingura 2010). Denominations and general church members chose to play it safe by assuming neutral positions or openly aligning with the ruling ZANU PF to avoid trouble. The result is compromising both church witness and unity.

The political journey and divisions caused by inter-party violence leave the church divided and without a common voice (Machingura 2010). Machingura (2010) argues that political violence has made it difficult for families where others still find it difficult to forgive those who have destroyed their property or wounded and killed their relatives. “This division sown by electoral violence has not spared the church as members of the same political parties committing violence are possibly also members of the same church” (Machingura 2010:333). Machingura (2010) concludes that the church in Zimbabwe cannot achieve its call for peace and reconciliation without seeking truth and justice. Machingura (2010) laments that, unless the church’s call for peace involves the process of truth-telling it would remain irrelevant. Moyo (2002) also supports Machingura in calling peace without truth-telling, confession, and forgiveness a process which far from achieving national healing. RCCE (2012) alludes that God’s mission entails issues of peace and justice hence ecumenical movement should encourage churches to work together participating in God’s mission. Therefore, the church has a mandate for peace and reconciliation in the world and this can only be fulfilled in unity and one voice.

Another problem is the disconnection between the national ecumenical movement and the local congregations. Dube (2006) argues that the formation of ZCC weakened individual denomination responses to socio-political issues since the churches surrendered their local voices to the ZCC and other national ecumenical bodies. Furthermore, the ZCC could not

adequately respond to the socio-political needs because it did not have grassroots desks or members to connect with the national body sharing their local experiences. Dube (2006) further argues that despite the efforts of the ZCC engagement with the government on policy issues and human rights violations, the organization lack grassroots footing to holistically address the needs and fulfill the aspirations of the local people.

3.6.3 ELCZ ecumenical engagement in socio-economic issues

Since the church has a continuous history of political contribution, her mission should extend to the socio-economic needs of the local communities in Zimbabwe. The war of liberation left a trail of destruction of church institutions that needed restoration in 1980 (Bhebe and Ranger 1996). Bhebe (1996) argues that like many other missionary institutions in Zimbabwe, all ELCZ schools, hospitals, clinics, and chapels were partially and some were destroyed, while building material and furniture were lost during the war. The majority of these institutions are in Mberengwa district. The article presents how the ELCZ joined hands with other members of the ZCC in rebuilding the schools after independence. Bhebe and Ranger (1996) argue that the ELCZ and other missionary churches collaborated with the government to rebuild the nation at the expense of spiritual and prophetic roles. The government needed the church, particularly the ZCC to support the government development and economic reconstruction agenda (Moyo 2015, Zwana 2009). Bhebe (1996) further notes that the work of reconstruction was not only done with the government and the members of the ZCC but also in collaboration with the Church of Sweden Mission and the Lutheran World Federation. These were Lutheran organizations. Shiri (1985) highlights that this program of reconstruction of schools and hospitals was done through funding from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the CSM. The LWF further supported with construction engineers to assist with the programs (Shiri 1985). Shiri (198) further posits that besides the reconstruction of educational facilities, the LWF assisted the ELCZ in rebuilding the chapels for the spiritual and moral development of the community.

Regardless of many efforts made, the ecumenical bodies and individual denominations in Zimbabwe have not done well in addressing socio-political issues because of their emphasis on spiritual matters (Dube 2006, Söderström et al. 2003). According to Söderström et al. (2003:61), the church believes that its divine mission is evangelism and helping those under

difficulties as it fulfills its calling of carrying one another's burdens. Dube (2006:84) also avers that;

What is clear is that the church in Africa lacks a social and politically sensitive theology. The emphasis has long been on spiritual matters, but the African crisis has grown to the level of such magnitude that even while the church is thriving spiritually, the social and political struggles dwarf the progress made on the other fronts. The church has yet to make an impact on the social and political scene. It has yet to lead a credible voice to the social and political madness that is going on today.

However, this is contested by Shiri (1985) when he points out that the ZCC has responded to some social issues such as rehabilitation of the refugees, provision of food during drought and famine in Zimbabwe. In 1977 the ZCC formed the Christian Care, a wing for social issues (Shiri 1985). Aid was given to refugees and those who lost homes during the armed struggle. It continued to sponsor the education of those children whose parents had joined the armed struggle (Shiri 1985). Christian Care continued with its service delivery even during the 1982/3 and 1987/8 periods of drought in Zimbabwe. Its work went across the ELCZ mission areas in Mberengwa, Mwenezi, Beitbridge, Gwanda and Zvishavane districts (Shiri 1985). Shiri (1985) demonstrate that these social services were across denominations because it was a compassionate service of the church towards God's creation. Despite their different denominational backgrounds and traditions churches in Zimbabwe have attempted cooperation in addressing socio-economic and political matters. However, it remained a missionary founded, and popular denominations affiliated to national groupings leaving out others making their grouping and mission exclusive. The literature remains focused on national institutional ecumenical programs without mentioning the roles and ecumenical activities by local congregations which is the motivation of this study.

3.6.4 Theological and tertiary education

The other area of socio-economic intervention is education and training of ministers. The ELCZ has continued working with other missionary churches in the theological training of pastors and evangelists. Notwithstanding handing over its Bethel mission in Gwanda to the ELCZ, the DRC worked together in training Chikaranga (Karanga language) to Swedish missionaries and training of the ELCZ evangelists (Söderström 1984). Further ecumenical ties

were established by the establishment of the United Theological College where the ELCZ joined with other mainline churches to have their pastors trained together (Matikiti 2009). Matikiti (2009:1) avers that;

Since its inception in 1956, the college has grown to be the epicenter of inter-denominational theological education. The college is run by the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, the United Methodist Church, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe, the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe, the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, the Uniting Presbyterian Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The college recognizes and values the different traditions of worship and doctrines of the participating churches and believes that individuals and communities can be transformed through the witness of a united church of Jesus Christ.

Initially, the ELCZ pastors received training in South Africa, but when the apartheid government of South Africa made it impossible for the church to send her candidates to Natal they joined other mainline pastors at the UTC (Shiri 1985). That has continued to this day. However, it can be noted that Though post-graduate students of theology (pastors) continued beyond the end of apartheid to pursue their studies in South Africa at UKZN, where theology is done in an ecumenical context. The Dr. Kenneth Mtata the current General Ssecretary of the ZCC and and many other ELCZ pastors did their postgraduate studies at UKZN. Dr. Mtata also worked in Geneva for the LWF in both a Lutheran and an ecumenical (global) context. Söderström et al. (2003) highlight that candidates for ministry at UTC and their lecturers from different denominations expressed ecumenism through a shared vision for mission and worshipping together in the college. Matikiti (2009) and Zwana (2009) argue that leaders of these mainline churches embraced the positive spirit of ecumenism by exercising ecumenical tolerance when their denominations co-operate to hold combined worship services, fellowship meetings, conferences, worshipping God as different Christian denominations in Zimbabwe.

The idea of training ministers together assists churches in addressing many challenges. Werner (2013) argues that besides financial challenges, the African landscape of Christianity and contextual challenges need ecumenical cooperation of churches in Africa and particularly Zimbabwe. Amanze (2013) highlights the advantages and challenges of ecumenical and denominationally organized theological education. He observed that among other issues

ecumenical theological education enables churches to pool their financial, human and other resources together for quality training of pastors (Amanze 2013). Through ecumenical engagement in this area, the ELCZ tend to share some of the benefits of ecumenical theological education with other denominations. This approach to theological training empowers the clergy as well as reduces historical denominational fragmentation

However, Zwana (2009) observed that despite their cooperation in theological training, these denominations lacked unity in the areas of higher education in the form of building and running universities together. He further posits that churches have failed to meet their aim of enhancing “churches in society and development” by failing to cooperate in building church universities (2009:293). A tendency of denominational exclusion is expressed by the establishment of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, United Methodist, Roman Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, and Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA) church universities in Zimbabwe (Zwana 2009). In these institutions, there are departments of theology with an emphasis on the respective church’s tradition. Churches in Zimbabwe need to create “enduring partnerships in which the churches can pool their resources when implementing their mission ideals” (Zwana 2009:297). This failure shows the weaknesses of ecumenism in which the ELCZ strives to participate both at the grassroots and the national level in Zimbabwe. Although the literature in this section does not directly address issues of local ecumenism, it informs this study about the challenges that may also contribute to its failure.

3.7 Culture and ecumenism

Missio-cultural factors of ecumenism seek to explore how ecumenism and church mission is influenced by the local (Karanga) culture. According to Moyo (1996:1) “Culture has to do with people in all aspects of their existence- social, economic, political, religious and otherwise”. (Moyo 1996) argues that religion cannot be separated from the culture and wellbeing of the people. Schreiter (2015:13) defines culture as “the creed of the community identity”. Bediako (1995) argues that African culture was neutralized, discontinued and replaced by Western worldview because missionaries did not understand African culture. According to Bediako (1995), this was by the systematic exclusion of aspects of African religion and customs that made a crucial part of African life. Parratt (1997:4) further asserts that “Missionaries condemned local practices without proper evaluation of African religious beliefs and practices and authenticated them with their cultural and religious practices”. Muzorewa (2000) affirms

that the relegation of the African worldview by missionaries was as a result of their misunderstanding of the African society. For missionaries, a conversion meant African converts changing their life and becoming like missionaries in values, norms, and ethos (Mushayavanhu and Duncan 2014). It is also true that long after the missionaries have gone there are still among pastors trained by missionaries who do not understand African culture and not sympathetic to African culture. In the missio-cultural dialogue, there is the interfacing of church mission and local culture, bringing mission and culture together (Kirk 2000, Verstraelen 1995).

The church does not exist in a vacuum but within the cultural and contextual boundaries of a given community. Its mission and operation should tap on the local contextual culture. According to WCC (2013) “Culture, language and shared history all enter into the very fabric of the local church. At the same time, the Christian community in each place shares with all the other local communities all that is essential to the life of communion”. For that reason, scholars like Magesa, Ntamburi, and Chapman argue for inculturation to allow interaction of the gospel and the African culture. Magesa (2004:145) argues that inculturation involves a deep sense of searching for identity through “mutual engagement, correlation and continuous adjustment between gospel and culture”. Ntamburi (2000) argues that this process of inculturation should be led by church leaders and theologians. For Ntamburi (2000:29-30) inculturation has a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, it challenges Christian living based on African values while on the other hand, it challenges the African cultures and worldview based on the Christian gospel (Ntamburi 2000). The goal is to make the Christian gospel feel at home in Africa in its multifaceted pluralism (Magesa 2004).

In Africa, the church should identify with the culture and aspirations of the community (Ntamburi 2000). Besides enriching Christianity, African cultural values also provide the basis for reception and transmission of the gospel. Therefore, it is difficult to use “terms like sacred and profane” since religion occupies every facet of African life (Ntamburi 2000:40). There should be genuine communication and cooperation between the gospel and local culture to create a true incarnation of the gospel (Magesa 2004). Bediako (1995:110) understands that when the word became flesh in Jesus Christ means Christianity can easily incarnate in any given cultural context “subverting any cultural possessiveness of the faith in the process of its transmission”. Here, diversity is positively affirmed in relation to the cross-cultural transmission of the Gospel. Chapman 2015:359) posits that;

By analogy with the Incarnation, which occurred in a particular place, time and the cultural setting, local churches may legitimately contain certain characteristic features that reflect the inculturation of the Gospel in their context, though other local churches must be able to recognize in them the same apostolic faith, ministry, and sacraments.

The roots of inculturation are in the ability to contextualize the gospel. Contextualization should take into consideration the elements of the culture of the local community (Ntamburi 2000). In this case contextualization has to do with forming hybridity by way of adapting to African- Karanga culture. According to Amanze (2013), the church needed to study and understand the African Traditional Religions since they constitute a significant element of African cultural heritage. Kanyoro (2002:13-14) posits “that religion and culture cannot be separated because culture and religion express themselves through each other”. Moyo (1996:1) also advances that “Zimbabwean traditional thought cannot conceive of a human being without religion and without participating in the life, beliefs, and practices of the community”. Since human culture and religion are inseparable it means the gospel incarnates within the human culture in every context (Ntamburi 2000). According to Magesa (2004), inculturation is necessary to enable the gospel to feel at home with the local culture. It is a common phenomenon that Africans revert to ATR when their faith is challenged by a crisis (Moyo 2006, Ntamburi 2000). According to Magesa (2004), the mission of the church should be a correlation of the gospel values and local culture so that Africans achieve integrated spirituality. For Magesa (2004), missionaries did not allow Africans to discover the gospel message through their culture hence Christianity remained an alien religion and Christian faith eluded them. This resulted in Africans living with divided loyalty, on the one hand following their traditional religion and on the other hand following Christianity (Magesa 2004).

As part of incarnation and contextualization, the Christian gospel should also respond to contextual issues that resonate with both the culture and socio-economic environment of the people (Ntamburi 2000). The African church has been involved in ecumenism and social socio-political matters but the question of African approaches remains (Magesa 2004). Amanze (2013) argues that African communal life has over time played a role in ecumenism. He further posits that the African quest for peace; good relationships and social harmony enhance communal spirit which is key in ecumenical engagement and church unity (Amanze 2013). Amanze (2013:783) asserts that;

It is important to note that the African Church had a far higher dream of church unity than that held by their mother churches in Europe and America where Christians were still embroiled in the doctrinal differences created by the Reformation. In this context, it can be argued that Africa was far ahead of time on the issue of ecumenical relations.

The church that can link mission and culture and the use of cultural content in mission make strides in its endeavours (Magesa 2004). Magesa (2004) further posits that the organization and function of the church in Africa should consistently take into consideration the local cultural realities to fully meet the needs of the people.

Ntamburi (2000) observes that the absence of fanaticism, rivalry, and divisions in the ATR may help in dealing with divisions among churches and rivalry between Christianity and other living faiths. Religious tolerance within the ATR that may promote ecumenical spirit among Christian churches (Ntamburi 2000). Christian engagement with ATR may lead to the transformation of mind-set in dealing with different churches and religions. Hillman (1993:84) posits that “Real unity in faith and belief is best safeguarded not by rigid uniformity of practices, but by respectful pluralism”. He further alludes that incarnation and unity allow varied religious patterns without the imperialistic imposition (Hillman 1993). “Indeed, the very point of this radical incarnation is the full acceptance of the people where they are, in their own time and place, in everything except sin” (Hillman 1993:84). This is the unity that allows both the catholicity of the church and the catholicity of culture (Hillman 1993).

Before the advent of Christian churches, the Karanga like many other Africans believed in the Supreme Being (Mwari) (Moyo 1996). The Supreme Being is believed to be the creator, ruler, and preserver of the world and creation (Pobee 1992, Moyo 1996). He is the source of life and its sustenance and failure to obey him cause misfortune and disturbance of life (Morekwa 2004). His presence is invoked or realized when one is in danger when seeking salvation from threats of life (Moyo 1996). Life is regarded as both a mystery and sacred as it is given by the creator God. Obiefuna and Kanu (2013) argue that the sense of mystery and sacredness is a central part of African religious life and culture. For Moyo, to assume ancestral veneration meant worshipping lesser spirit beings is a missionary misunderstanding of African kinship (1996). Ancestors remain the immediate mediators between the living and the Supreme Being (Moyo 1996, Mushayavanhu and Duncan 2014). To be relevant and incarnate, “the church was

to be the symbol of expression of the African personality, acquiring characteristics of the African environment without losing the eternal principles of the Christian faith” (Pobee 1992:18). Religious beliefs are held communally hence the existence of God is never contested but is passed on from the ancestors to the future generation (Moyo 1996). The church faces ecumenical engagement difficulties due to misunderstanding of the local culture and failure to acknowledge the significance of other living faiths in the local communities (WCC 2012). Respectful approaches to other churches and religious groupings in local cultural settings create opportunities for wider ecumenism among the Karanga in Zimbabwe.

3.7.1 Communalism

The other source of ecumenism is African communalism. Pobee (1992:66) asserts that what symbolizes African life is “To be is to belong and live in the kinship group. A man’s individuality is affirmed and fulfilled only in relation to the good others in his kin-group”. Everybody finds his/her identity within the community that culturally nurtures him/her (Mugambi 1989). The Karanga live with Africans values as Mbiti avers in his popular saying, “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore, I am” (Mbiti, 1969: 104). Among the Karanga life rituals and events such as birth, marriage, and death will always involve the individual, friends, family, and significant others hence communal life experiences (Pobee 1992). Communalism remains the key feature of African life when it comes to religious rites (Pobee 1992). Moyo (1996) argues that the community or family life of African help them accommodate each other through extended family relationships. He observes that, in one way or another, Christians from different denominational backgrounds find themselves participating in traditional ceremonies in the family and community (Moyo 1996).

However, Bourdillon (1982) notes that some mainline denominations emphasized individualism and nuclear families in contrast to Karanga culture. According to Bourdillon (1982) Christian emphasis on personal rather than communal repentance cause breakdown of communal traditional ways of life among the Karanga people. However, Bourdillon (1982) posits that despite individual decision making in repentance, the family is brought together when sickness strikes in the family when healing rituals have to be performed. Bourdillon (1982) further notes that Christians of different denominations are blamed for the suffering of other family members due to their denial to participate in family ancestral veneration and family rituals. Although members are continuously divided by denominationalism Karanga

communal life tends to unite the family and community as people may consciously or unconsciously come together and interact in an informal social event.

3.7.2 Hospitality

Obiefuna and Kanu (2013) investigated and concluded that African values such as hospitality help build church unity in African communities. According to Derrida, (1999:16) hospitality is an act of welcoming, inviting and accommodating, “thus appropriating space for oneself, a space to welcome the other” to be at home. “Hospitality involves engaging in “friendship oriented toward the mutual flourishing of all and based upon dignity, solidarity, and a desire to learn from the other” (Little 2015:97). Africans and the Karanga, in particular, are known to be hospitable to family members and strangers in general because of the conviction that visitors are bearers of peace and blessings (Obiefuna and Kanu 2013); See also (Posselt 1978). Little (2015) also avers that welcoming a stranger is welcome to God. It is common among the Karanga that strangers are provided with food and accommodation without any special form of prior appointment and bookings (Posselt 1978). Hospitality is promoted by values of peace, cooperation, and recognition of the other.

Hospitality is based on relationships and friendships that are strengthened through the sharing of food (Chimuka 2001). This is emphasized by the Shona proverb “*Hukama igasva hunotozadziswa nekudya*” (No relationship is complete unless the parties end up dining together) (Chimuka 2001:35). Another common proverb under this theme is “Muenzi haapedzi dura” which can be translated as “no one can starve by showing hospitality to a stranger” (Mhaka 2010:26). According to Chimuka (2001) hospitality of sharing food signifies promoting the well-being of the other that strengthens community relations and promoting life together. As alluded to earlier, hospitality is valuable to the Karanga communities. According to Obiefuna and Kanu (2013), African hospitality that is expressed by inviting the visitor for food serves as a vehicle for ecumenical engagement. This is buttressed by Little (2015) who emphasizes the Eucharist hospitality that is a sacramental action toward loving God and loving one’s neighbour. that “In the Eucharist, all-powerful God invites us into a relationship, and we likewise are to do so with others” (Snyder 2015:49). It is through the Eucharist hospitality that Christians are shaped into Christlikeness mind and are sent out to share God’s hospitality and shine into the world (Matt. 5:16) (Snyder 2015). Through his grace and divine love, Christ invited his enemies to share the table in Eucharist hospitality to bring them in communion with

God and one another (Snyder 2015). Frederick (2015) also argues that Christian participation in the Eucharist celebration is a visible sign of church unity. Little (2015) contends that Eucharist hospitality is an expression of God bidding Christian to unity. According to Obiefuna and Kanu (2013), the foundations of ecumenism in the African context lies in the African cultural values. These may inform the basis for local ecumenical engagement. “Thus, particular beliefs in the religious, religio-social, religio-cultural and religio-moral spheres of African traditional belief system can serve as a common ground for ecumenical dialogue” (Obiefuna and Kanu 2013:9). The understanding of Karanga/African hospitality and the Eucharist hospitality affects the way Christians and individual denomination accommodates the other despite differences in traditions. Literature in this section is more relevant as it reveals the challenges posed by missionaries as opposed to the role of local culture that seeks to bring the church and people together. This study seeks to find out how the local cultural values shape ELCZ’s local engagement in local ecumenism in Mberengwa. The literature resonates well with the study.

3.6 Evaluation of the literature

Generally, the literature reviewed highlights ecumenism in general and the ELCZ ecumenical engagement, especially at official and conciliar levels. The literature on the ELCZ ecumenical engagement has traced the ELCZ involvement in ecumenism in Zimbabwe as back as 1903/1934 missionary conferences. This was only meant to solve missionary clashes in the field which saw the ELCZ allocated the Mberengwa area in the Midlands, Beitbridge, and Gwanda in Matabeleland South and Mwenezi in Masvingo province (Söderström et al. 2003). The works of Bhebhe (1996), Söderström (1984), Söderström et al. (2003), Shiri (1985) and Dube 2006 give a historical overview that describes the ELCZ work with other churches during pre- and post-colonial period. This national ecumenical engagement saw the ELCZ working with others through the ZCC during the liberation struggle, nation reconstruction program and addressing issues of political violence. The majority of the literature reviewed dwelt on national ecumenism and political involvement as highlighted by Moyo (2012), Moyo (2002), Chitando and Togarasei (2010) and Munemo and Nciizah (2014). Moyo (2012) rather investigated the ELCZ pastoral involvement in the Zimbabwean economic and political decline. His empirical findings show that the ELCZ engages in political issues through the national ecumenical bodies. Machingura (2010), Chitando and Togarasei (2010) and Dube (2006) all are concerned with challenges of national ecumenism including denominationalism and political polarization,

lack of national ecumenical leadership affecting the prophetic voice of the church in Zimbabwe. The literature in this section shows that although the ecumenical work is done involving Mberengwa and the Karanga people it comes from the national ecumenical movement. There is nothing written on grassroots ecumenism that is initiated by the ELCZ local congregations with their counterparts in Mberengwa. This research seeks to address that literature gap.

The ecumenical movement and social issues show that some denominations including the ELCZ have sometimes failed to come together to address the socio-economic matters due to emphasis on evangelism and spiritual matters (Dube 2006, Söderström et al. 2003). However, Shiri (1985), Bhebe (1996) have shown that despite problems due to denominationalism, through the ZCC's arm of welfare (Christian Care) the ELCZ has worked together to address issues of health, education, and agriculture. Another factor that came out so strongly in the literature is national ecumenical engagement in theological training that saw the mainline denomination establishing a theological college for pastors' training (Matikiti 2009). While this was an important sign of ecumenism, the college remained exclusively mainline institution. Zwana (2009), Werner (2013), Amanze (2013) and Kobia (2001) agree on the challenges of historical backgrounds and Western church interference in establishing national ecumenism. This problem was more pronounced in the establishment of church universities funded by mother churches. Churches in Zimbabwe could not work together and ended up having denominational based universities (Zwana 2009, Amanze 2013). The findings indicated that works on ecumenism concentrate on national ecumenism by particularly looking at mainline churches and their involvement in socio-economic challenges in Zimbabwe. Challenges noted are at the national level again. The literature does not reflect on the work done by the ELCZ in local congregation particularly ecumenical activities in Mberengwa. However, the literature in this section is helpful in identifying some of the challenges for ecumenism in Zimbabwe that may also affect local ecumenism which is the focus of this study.

The literature on ecumenism is helpful in highlighting the different aspects of ecumenical engagement. The findings indicated that some scholars see ecumenism as the unity of denomination. Most scholars begin with church unity and reflect on theological and biblical underpinnings of ecumenism. Current studies have however shown that ecumenism involves both church unity and unity among the living faiths or inter-faith dialogue (Goosen 2001, LWF (2010), WCC (2013) Koopman 2013). Furthermore, the literature has shown that there is local

or grassroots ecumenism which is closely related to receptive ecumenism in its approaches. On the other hand, there is official or conciliar ecumenism that is led by the clergy and theologians (Au 2008). Scholars like Au (2008), Koopman (2013) and Hulliselan (2008) have argued that the current situations require the church to concentrate on grassroots and informal ecumenism that easily accommodate people from different denominational traditions and those of other living faiths. This study is informed about the nature and different features of ecumenism. The work of Au (2008) was done in Europe focusing on charismatic grassroots ecumenism in the charismatic movement. This work is important as helps this study in understanding some of the dynamics found in local ecumenism and its interaction with conciliar ecumenism. It informs this study about the power of collaborative networks found in local ecumenism and some of the reasons that drive local ecumenism. The literature on ecumenism has broadened the understanding of different forms of ecumenism and their strengths and challenges as highlighted earlier in this chapter. While this is helpful it does not address the local context of this study. The current study seeks to address the contextual and literature gaps on what is happening with the ELCZ in Mberengwa.

The literature on culture and ecumenism have shown that missionaries ignored aspects of the local cultures that would promote church unity and mission in Africa. Moyo (2006), Magesa (2004), Nthamburi (2000) argue for inculturation, contextualization, and incarnation as the basis for the gospel and church building in an African context. It is the African religion and culture that may help in translating and interpreting the gospel while the culture is transformed by the gospel. Contextualization is linked to inculturation since its major concern is to find ways of communicating God in the respective context for the sake of relevance. Literature in this section informs the study about ecumenism and the role of culture in ecumenical engagement. The literature has shown some tenets of Karanga culture like communalism, hospitality, concern for health and healing resonate with principles of Christian love and unity. Scholars have emphasized the Eucharist hospitality as a vehicle for church unity and expression of its mission (Little 2016, Snyder 2015). These values discussed by the literature in this section are important as the study will be directly dealing with local ecumenism among the Karanga people. The study will explore how these cultural factors affect the ELCZ grassroots ecumenism in Mberengwa. Some of the literature remained theoretical and local people studies without empirical evidence which is another gap to be addressed by this study.

The literature on ecumenism and church mission reflects that most literature reviewed agree that church division is a historical scandal and betrayal of the gospel and church mission. Ecumenism itself fulfills the prayer and mission of Jesus Christ who wanted the disciples to remain united. So, the mission begins by seeking reconciliation and church unity so that the church may be able to reconcile people with one another and people with their God. Bosch (1991) argues that the church has no mission except the mission of God hence *missio Dei*. Emphasis is given on matters of justice, and service to the needs of the people. The church and other religious movements can serve people better by being united. The literature reinforces the idea of mission as one major factor for local ecumenism. Various mission activities cited in this literature may as well inform the current study that seeks to explore missio-cultural factors that influence the ELCZ local church ecumenical engagement in Mberengwa. The literature leaves both contextual and methodological gap which this study seeks to address. The study will also address the literature slot or gap particularly about the ELCZ participation in local ecumenism through the local congregations in Mberengwa.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the literature review on the concepts of the study. It first discussed the ELCZ ecumenical engagement in Zimbabwe that has shown that the majority of the literature focused on national, regional and international ecumenism than local or grassroots ecumenism. Most texts speak about institutional ecumenism based on national, regional and global ecumenism. Those who mentioned local ecumenism were advising on how the church can improve its conciliar ecumenism than focusing on local ecumenical engagement. A few who have researched it are from other countries outside Mberengwa hence nothing has been done in Zimbabwe and Mberengwa and the ELCZ in particular. The chapter has also discussed different forms of ecumenical engagement highlighting their strengths and weaknesses. The chapter discussed ecumenism and culture, ecumenism and mission showing how these are connected and can influence the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement. Finally, the chapter gave a summary of the findings and the gaps in the literature reviewed. There were some contextual and methodological gaps in the literature. The next chapter (chapter 4) focuses on the theoretical framework used in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

POSTCOLONIAL THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has discussed the literature reviewed by identifying and critically examining key concepts that are raised by various scholars. The idea was to identify the gap while seeking relevant information for the study from various scholars in the study of ecumenism and the ELCZ's ecumenical journey. This chapter presents an overview of the postcolonial theoretical framework used in the study. It begins by indicating the purpose of the postcolonial framework in this study and then focus on the definition and different aspects of postcolonial theory that is useful to the study by drawing linkages between the framework and the study. It ends by highlighting the weaknesses of the theory as an analytical lens to this study.

This study uses postcolonial theoretical framework as an analytical lens to understand the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement in Mberengwa. The framework helps in interrogating ecumenical dynamics among the Karanga people. Given that the ELCZ is different from most of the local denominations due to its being a missionary founded church, it is therefore imperative to explore its ecumenical engagement using a postcolonial framework that exposes colonial mindset and practices within the churches. The missionary background of the ELCZ has that foreignness that may continue to influence its ecumenical engagement. Postcolonial theory is a tool to unearth those colonial traits in the ELCZ ecumenical praxis.

Postcolonial theory is a historical and cultural discourse that resists the domination of any culture by the other (Kang 2010). This study helps to understand some of the cultural dynamics involved in the ELCZ ecumenical engagements. It helps to critique some colonial traits that may be found in the ways the ELCZ interacts with others in the Mberengwa-Karanga community. Postcolonial theory helps to investigate how inclusive or exclusive the ELCZ ecumenical activities are and how cultural factors may be used to prevent all forms of binarism and Othering in local ecumenism (Bhabha 1994). These colonial themes are found working in different sectors of society but especially in religious settings where identity is central. The desire to preserve denominational identity may result in a superiority complex that is common in colonial discourse. According to Rukundwa and van Aarde (2007:1174), "Postcolonial

theory formulates its critique around the social histories, cultural differences and political discrimination that are practiced and normalized by colonial and imperial mercenaries”. The emphasis of historical backgrounds, cultural and identity differences separate people than bring them together. Therefore, postcolonial theory finds ways of resisting this dominant postcolonial mindset and practices in social and religious settings.

Gondongwe (2011) is of the view that the Postcolonial theory seeks to give voice to former colonized so that they recover from colonial oppression hence be able to express themselves through their own culture. Recovery may mean hybridity that produces a new in-between cultural expression through the mixing of missionary culture and indigenous culture (Bhabha 1994). The theory will be used as a tool to assess the extent to which the ELCZ has considered local cultural expression in its local ecumenical engagement and its praxis as a church on mission among the Karanga in Mberengwa.

4.2 Postcolonial theory

To get to understand the key aspects of the postcolonial theory there is a need to clarify the differences between postcolonial and post-colonial. The word post-colonial refers to a historical dispensation after imperialism marked by independence from colonial rule (Shohat 2003, Kang 2010). It is a period beyond imperial domination and the advent of freedom and self-governance by former Western colonies (Ramone 2011). On the other hand, postcolonial without a hyphen refers to a discourse without being tied to a specific historical period (McLeod 2000, Sugitharajah 2003). It refers to postcolonial modes of discourse that is used as a viable means to challenge the West and colonial past (Quayson 2000). Therefore, it is trans-historical, transnational and transcultural. This postcolonialism gave birth to the postcolonial theory. Postcolonial theories emerge from literary studies where it has been regarded as the “Third World Literature” and “Third World thinking” (Sugitharajah 2003). The literature shows the distinction of colonial domination and tensions with imperial power not necessarily emphasizing the period (Ashcroft et al 1989). Postcolonial literature originated from the former colonized to give them a voice to refuse patronization and subjugation. Also, the postcolonial theory involves attempts to formulate non-Western governance without being necessarily under foreign domination. According to Gandhi (1998), the theory becomes a critical attempt to reform the intellectual and epistemological exclusion of the non-Western narrative and

express their knowledge and culture through literature. It has become a tool for cultural and political analysis on the Western legacies in the Third World experiences.

Amongst the proponents of postcolonialism are Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi and Edward Said. Some of the most notable thinkers and writers who have followed Said are Homi Bhabha (1990, 1994), Sara Suleri (1992), Chandra Mohanty (1997, 1991), Aijaz Ahmad (1992) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1987). They adopted different postcolonial approaches such as psychoanalysis (Bhabha), feminism (Suleri and Mohanty) and Marxism (Ahmad and Spivak) (Williams, Williams and Chrisman 1994:5). These built on the foundational works and analysis of former anti-colonialist activism and African –American cultural renaissance of W.E.B du Bois (1964, 1965), Leopold Senghor (1962, 1964) and Frantz Fanon (1963, 1986) (Hill 2005:140). However, postcolonialism was developed into a theory by Said (1985), Spivak (1988, 1990) and Homi Bhabha (1994) (Sugitharajah 2003). These theorists drew up the main features of postcolonial theory and its aims. Their works emphasize the evils and impact of colonialism and its hegemony as well as postcolonial forms of resistance to domination. These are works of resistance and self-affirmation by the formerly colonized people and culturally suppressed African and Indian American people. They propose a different way of seeing and doing things as opposed to superimposition by foreign cultural domination. This has formed a cultural activism discourse. Therefore, postcolonial discourse aims at rejecting of national and cultural imperialism.

Postcolonial theory transcends historical times but does “...not claim to broadcast a new historical context without the challenges of colonial past” (McLeod 2000:33). Through discourse, it brings the two contexts in dialogue by trying to understand the colonial past to provide the basis for resistance. Young (2003) argues that postcolonial theory provides different forms of non-Western produced culture and knowledge. During colonialism, the colonialists entrenched their identity, ideology, and worldview in all aspects of life including religious traditions and cultural practices. Even current forms of neo-colonialism seek to undermine others and impose one’s culture upon the other. These may be foreign or locally generated among the local community. Therefore, postcolonialism is an anti-colonial analysis hence a discourse of resistance and liberation (Kang 2010). This theory seeks to understand the colonial mindset of dominations in local ecumenical engagement and critique it. In this study, any forms of colonial representation within the ELCZ’s ecumenical engagement are analyzed and critiqued through a postcolonial theoretical lens.

The postcolonial theory did not originate and operate in a vacuum, but it incorporates works of other theories that resist colonial domination and cultural hegemony (Moore-Gilbert 1997). There is a borrowing of terms, language and insights from other critical theories such as liberation, feminism, postmodernism and post structuralism (Dirlik 2003, Sugitharajah 2003). These theories inform postcolonialism as they advocate for new ways of seeing the world by resisting and critiquing the established order of worldviews in various contexts. They are modes given for social emancipation and political decolonization. They are concerned with studying and defending “marginalized ‘Others’ within repressive structures of domination”, hence follow a similar trajectory of human liberation (Gandhi 1998). They seek recovery of the voice and freedom of the marginalized and postcolonial theory follows the same trend. Just like other critical theories mentioned above, issues of colonialism, domination, diaspora, globalization, oppression, justice and rights are key in postcolonial discourse (Young 2003, Dirlik 2003). Specifically, the postcolonial theory rejects Western values, ideas and the current colonial mentality that has always been regarded as the grand narratives and resists marginalization of native cultural values and worldviews (Bhabha 2003, Young 2003, Kang 2010). This is a refusal of cultural value imposition. Postcolonial theory helps in critical rethinking and analysis of life and culture in various contexts.

The postcolonial discourse was used in analyzing cultural encounters between the colonizers and the colonized. It then tries to gain more understanding of subjugation, domination and any forms of colonial legacy within former colonial societies (Moore-Gilbert 1997). Therefore, it involves the process of revisiting and interrogating the colonial condition and antagonism between the African and Asian against the Western powers (Gandhi 1998). It is a process of understanding the past and the present narrative forms and creating responses and reframing the pathway into the future. Postcolonialism examines the full range of colonial resistance, from absolute complicity to violent rebellion (Ashcroft 2001). It attempts to unpack the tensions and communion of cultures at the point of these cultural encounters.

Parry (1994) avers that postcolonial theory is meant for dislodging and deconstructing Eurocentric views to create new views for people it represents. It follows the center-periphery shift with the marginalized taking the centre and competing to be heard. “The postcolonial framework seeks to reinterpret events or texts in a quest to empower the previously colonized” (Gondongwe 2011:22, see also Young 2003:2). There is a process of undermining the power and authority of the colonizer and powerful (Parry 1994). The postcolonial theory focuses on

the local people being able to think and act in ways that are rooted in their cultures in defiance of forces that try to diminish it. Postcolonial theory is important in this study as it unmasks the domination and power imbalance that influence or inhibit the local ecumenical engagement in Mberengwa. It will help to explore the cultural and religious challenges that impede the ELCZ from engaging in life-giving forms of ecumenism.

4.3 Postcolonial theory and literature

The postcolonial theory attempts to show how Western literature has marginalized the voice of the non-Western people and even in the cultural studies. Lazarus spells out how Western language and culture were used to undermine and displace others. He argues that;

Politically dominant forces in Europe have rained violence and terror upon their neighbors, by way of subduing and subordinating them, a process involving the first deculturation and then enforced acculturation. It is not only in extra-European theatres that English, French, German, Italian, Russian have been imposed on speakers of other languages, by way of breaking their resistance and undermining their cultural integrity (Lazarus 2011:19).

Colonial domination gives the colonizer authority over the colonized and imposition of language and culture denying others their self-determination. Marginalization was hidden in the symbols and language or words used in the literature that described the subaltern or the colonized other (Ashcroft 2001). For that reason, colonial texts were treated with suspicion and seen as tools of repression (Gandhi 1998:154). Wa Thiong'o (1995:265) avers that "The bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. The language was the means of the spiritual subjugation". Western literature also used colonial language as a tool for Western domination. Language (English) becomes a vehicle and medium for the perpetuation of hierarchical power and conception of truth and reality (Ashcroft et al 1989, Wa Thiong'o 1995). The process of marginalization begins by making the language of the colonizer a canon for the society. As observed by Altbach (2006), English was used as an official language by the Third World elite and a means for national unification in non-Western contexts. He further notes that the English language was dominantly used as media of communication and scholarship at the expense of native languages (Altbach 2006). This results in colonial discourse completely relegating native language to the periphery introducing psychic violence and preventing non-Western natives from telling their stories in their language.

The only way the colonized would resist was by mimicry leading to absorption by the culture of the colonizer. In such cases, in the current context's emphasis should be given on production and support of indigenous knowledge system and native language as ways of striking intellectual and knowledge system balance (Altbach 2006). During colonialism, marginalization was also done at the production and exacerbated by the consumption where preference would be given to the Western literature telling the African story. The Western fought to marginalize through the incorporation of the voices of the periphery to prevent them from claiming the center (Ashcroft et al 1989). They would demand the postcolonial works to meet British standards so that they are recognized within the academy (Ashcroft et al 1989). These British and other Western publishers maintain and expand their branches in Third World expanding their market through African scholarship (Altbach 2006). As a result, these are more preferred by African intellectuals for their popularity and prestige. These arrangements in the process of production and consumption of knowledge show that colonialism continues in a different form.

The ELCZ has a variety of books and documents that include policy documents, constitutions, and pastors' handbooks that guide membership in their praxis. Postcolonial theory helps in analyzing how these documents promote local language, culture, and ecumenism in local congregations. The question of language goes beyond the use of English, but also the use of denominational language that may not be common to other denominations in the local community. It becomes foreign because it might have been inherited from Western missionary discourse and remained as an unfamiliar colonial religious discourse in Mberengwa. Besides, the postcolonial theory is used in the interview process where living human documents are engaged. Postcolonial theory becomes relevant in exposing these forms of colonialism and helps in resisting any form of colonial domination even in church literature. These can be noted in the way the documents and the interviewees describe their interaction with other local denominations.

4.4 Postcolonial theory and local culture

Postcolonialism emphasizes issues of decolonization. Colonialism brought about the colonization of states, people and cultures. Postcolonial theory is the defiance of colonialism and domination imposed upon the non-Western people. Moore-Gilbert (1997) argues that the process of decolonization includes formal relaxation of colonial policies and domination of

former colonies. He gave an example of the end of British rule in Canada around the 1960s. Decolonization also focuses on the commonwealth literature which is regarded as part of the neo-colonial project to assert Western culture in African communities and elsewhere outside Africa (Moore-Gilbert 1997). However, it can be argued that postcolonialism cannot be complete without decolonization of culture because the colonization of culture goes hand in glove with political and economic colonialism that needed defiance and liberation through postcolonial discourse. Spivak (1988) avers that any individual or group that attempts to demonstrate that their culture is purer or superior to the other is promoting western cultural imperialism. In Mberengwa like anywhere else in Africa, the culture of the indigenous people was undermined as primitive hence it was displaced with Western culture (Pui-lan 2005). Thus, for example, their marriage systems were then replaced with Western known as “Christian” marriage and white wedding and their religion completely demonized as ungodly. In some cases, these cultural issues become barriers for ecumenical engagement since different churches adapted Christianity and African culture differently. It depends on the extent to which the ELCZ and other denominations have adopted local cultural values and traditions. Therefore, postcolonial theory helps in tracing colonial representation within the church’s practices that symbolize the ubiquitous presence of the colonizer. Kang (2010) argues that postcolonialism promotes liberation from colonial mentality and appreciation of one’s culture. Therefore, decolonization goes beyond political liberation to the liberation of mind and ways of doing things. This involves the construction and use of non-Western but local concepts and narratives in addressing the local experiences as well as promoting life-giving local cultural practices.

Postcolonial discourse recognizes the perpetuation of neo-colonialism due to the domination of knowledge systems and the production of knowledge. For that reason, the other aim of postcolonialism is “provincializing Europe” (Gandhi 1998:42). Production of knowledge and knowledge systems including culture has been dominated by Western forms. The new approach is the recovery of the excluded and marginalized knowledge systems and culture (Gandhi 1998). An example of such a project of recovering the marginalized knowledge in the system is a women movement that defies domination and demands their voices to be heard in the creation of knowledge in both the community and academia. That led to challenging all gender-based knowledge biases that were regarded as normal in the colonial and male-dominated academy (Gandhi 1998). The postcolonial theory attempts to recover and “reassert the epistemological value and agency of the non-European world” (Gandhi 1998:43).

Postcolonialism and provincializing Europe are assigning the Western culture and local culture their proper place especially in the knowledge systems promoting liberation and equality of people systems despite differences in regional blocks. The Western grand discourses and grandstanding are defined as forms of domination (Kang 2010). It is resisted by bringing to the fore what has been formerly marginalized during colonial oppression and domination. Provincializing may not only refer to regional blocks and cultures. In the context of the ELCZ local ecumenism in Mberengwa, it means allowing denominations to have self-affirmation but also being able to share their identity by promoting unity and life together in the local community. Thus, ecumenism will not demand uniformity among local churches but promote the expression of diversity.

Western civilization and political progress are part of globalization and neo-colonializing that affects all sectors of human life. Powerful, Western and Asian and American market forces influence political, social and religious terrain. This includes manipulation of people and culture and their boundaries through popularly known as the development of the global village (Dirlik 2006). The powerful corporations systematically marginalize people and systems that do not positively respond to their market drive of production and consumption. Globalization changed local systems of production and social values (Pui-lan 2005). Indigenous people are forced to go out and look for work to buy from large corporations instead of concentrating on indigenous forms of subsistence production through farming (Pui-lan 2005). Their consumption culture has changed shifting towards expensive luxurious commodities. What is advocated for is “the domestication of the corporation into the local society to further mystify the location of power, which rests not in the locality but in the global headquarters of the company which coordinates the activities of its local branches...” (Dirlik 2006:466). These multinational companies benefit from the exploitation of local labour and natural resources without necessarily showing the faces of the owners. The obvious result is foreign domination using the local managers to perpetuate oppression. Postcolonial theory unmasks this kind of domination that displaces indigenous culture and means of production. On the one hand, globalization has also affected religious life by creating dependence on Western donors. The ELCZ is linked to international bodies dominated by outside forces such as the WCC, LWF, and LUCSA which draw some policies, programs and fund some projects.

On the other hand, globalization has promoted consumerist and profiteering ideology that led to prosperity theology. Many churches try to adapt to the economic order of the day by mixing

economic prosperity and God's blessings. The global economic capitalistic landscape has shaped the religious landscape (Marti 2012). Church and individual economic development become the centre of preaching in the contemporary church. In this study, the postcolonial theory is used to unpack the effects of globalization and outside influence on the way the ELCZ engage in local ecumenism and affect the local culture of communalism that may promote ecumenical engagement among the local congregations.

Imperialism and domination are associated with homogenization and stereotyping. This is the process of 'Othering' is used by colonialists showing binaries of superior other and inferior natives as a way of alienation (Plumwood 1995). It is a Western stereotyping that is used to define the colonized (Bhabha 1994). Similarly, Said's Orientalism has put the Orient and Occident side by side (Said 1978). He exposes how the colonizer, in this case, the West, manipulated Orient representation including boundary settings as a way of marginalization and oppression (Sambajee 2015). The boundaries make it difficult for mutual cultural interaction except keeping the Westerner and the Oriental separate (Said 1978). The idea was to keep the purity of Western racial and cultural identity. The Other issue, in this case, was the Orient who could contaminate the Western culture. According to Plumwood (1995:505) "The Other is not an individual, but a member of a class stereotyped as interchangeable, replaceable, all alike-that is, as homogenous". Stereotyping emphasizes identification as a way of differentiation of the colonizer from the colonized. Hill (2005:141) observes that;

Identity emerges as a key point of analysis for postcolonial studies, as a consequence of the importance of identity production to colonial rule. Within colonial ideology and discourse the production of the colonizers' and colonized's identities, along with the specific characteristics of these identities, was achieved by juxtaposing them against one another.

Stereotyping aims at the differentiation of the other undermining the inherent dignity and agency of the other while promoting the colonizer to a place of superiority. To colonize and dominate others, the colonizer dehumanized through hyper-separation which subordinated the identity of the Other (Plumwood 2006). Plumwood (2006:504) further asserts that "Colonizers exaggerate differences- for example through emphasizing exaggerated cleanliness, civilized, or refined manner, body covering, or alleged physiological differences between what is defined as separate races". Thus, Bhabha (1986) also supports that when he notes that the colonizer used stereotyping for both a false image and a scapegoat of discrimination. The act of defining

and telling the story of others according to one's understanding is in itself a way of exercising imperial domination.

The dramatic objectifying of the other would use colonial discourse to legitimize colonial domination and suppression (Bhabha 1985). Bhabha (1994:77-78) notes that;

The subjects of the discourse are constructed within an apparatus of power which contains, in both senses of the word, an 'other' knowledge, - a knowledge that is arrested and fetishistic and circulates through colonial discourse as that limited form of otherness that I have called the stereotype.

The discourse emphasizes ways that continue to undermine and subordinate the colonized through its racial fantasies and metaphoric masking which leads to disavowal (Bhabha 1994). The discourse applies some fixation on the outside appearance like skin colour to emphasize the difference from the other. It is used as common knowledge of the identity of stereotyping. Therefore, stereotyping results in communal injustices and prejudices. The task of postcolonial theory is dismantling the discourse that fuels stereotyping and cause marginalization of the colonized. The focus is on recovering the voice of the colonized within the contemporary environment.

Stereotyping is exacerbated by the language of postcolonial intellectuals. As Spivak (1988) argues that if one decides to speak for the oppressed the subaltern has lost individual voice. She further notes that the identification of subaltern as a group to be spoken on behalf of is a sign of colonial domination (Spivak 1988). Spivak's arguments go beyond Western categories to the Third World context where some people, religious, social and political organizations seem to want to rise and speak for the poor and the marginalized. It is only a perpetuation of imperialist domination. Thus, Thurfjell (2008:158) argues that "Subalterns can neither speak for themselves nor can anyone else speak for them without re-inscribing their marginalization". Therefore, if the subalterns should speak, they should do so through themselves and telling their own story the way they want without the interference of the intellectuals (Thurfjell 2008). Countering colonial homogenization, stereotyping and hegemonic dualism, and the colonized must find their voice and resist domination. Postcolonial theory observes the danger of stereotyping ignoring human diversity and dignity.

Furthermore, postcolonial theory pays special attention to the colonial process of ‘Othering’ to provide a counter-narrative that restores the dignity of the colonized. The binary was meant to undermine and marginalize the ‘Other’ to accept a lower position and became an object of imperialism (Gandhi 1998). The other’s difference, agency, and independence is not recognized (Plumwood 2006). Plumwood (2006) further argues that in the process of othering injustice is created because other is given more credit than due to them thereby creating a form of caste in society. To counter this community polarization, there is a need to acknowledge the uniqueness, diversity, and interdependence among people of different backgrounds. Those names ‘others’ should be regarded as subject actors in the world with everybody else (Plumwood 2006). The Western binary itself is a symbol of domination as it was used for social identification of the whole of Africa and non-Western worldview. Postcolonial discourse requires forms that do not disown one from the ‘Other’ (Bhabha 1994). Thus, Boehmer (1995) argues that self-legitimation in the third world “depended, and depends, not on a discursive play but a day to day lived resistance, a struggle for meanings which is in the world as well as on a paper”. Deconstruction of the binary is in the form of “literary resistance or resistance for national liberation” (Slemon 2006:104). The deconstructions of the colonial discourse are meant to resist colonial hegemony and assert equality and dignity of humanity in a shared world. Postcolonial discourse causes us to think about the world as a ‘community’ where all are respected without marginalization. Postcolonial theory helps in examining and critiquing these forms of culture of divisions, dominance, and inequalities in the church (Young 2003). In ecumenical engagement, the process of othering undermines the agency of other denominations as unimportant. Othering shows a colonial mindset producing superiority of identity (Kang 2010). The ELCZ is viewed in this study as one of the biggest denominations in Mberengwa with a rich history of health and educational institutions as well as educated clergy and membership. If she fails to accept diversity and appreciate other denominations as core-workers in ministry she may end up dictating and making rules for others to work together. Appreciation of diversity breeds tolerance and promote ecumenism without seeking uniformity or dominance. This allows the churches to flourish together and meet the needs of the people in the community they serve.

Furthermore, postcolonialism is a theory that argues against colonial and neo-colonial narratives. It is a critique and discursive analysis that undermine the colonial narrative of domination and confront current forms of domination seeking to attain the balance of power (Shohat 2003). However, Sugitharajah (2003) argues that the current form of postcolonial

discourse does not indiscriminately dismiss all Western values but tries to integrate profitable ingredients from both the West and the native. It promotes the respect of the rights and cultures of all beings (Young 2003). It involves boundary-crossing destabilizing colonial rigidity and fixity (Bhabha 2006, Ramone 2011). There is “refusal of cultural hierarchies and binary representation” that disempower the native people (Bhabha 1994:34). It removes the superiority of the colonizer and inferiority of the colonized without taking liberation binaries of oppressor/oppressed or superior/inferior (Heaney 2015). In ecumenical engagement, the question of binaries goes hand in hand with issues of inclusion and exclusion. Postcolonial ecumenical engagement is characterized by inclusivity and boundary-crossing. “Thus, Christian identity and its symbols, as well as the identity of a denomination, emerge in a dynamic and interacting-syncretistic process of ever-renewing meaning” (Jahnel 2008:417). Local ecumenical engagement allows the ELCZ to share her identity and allowing fusion with other traditions.

4.5 Postcolonial mode of resistance

The postcolonial theory itself is a discursive tool for colonial resistance. Discursive instability has two important implications. First, its focus is to transform the impossibility into possible conditions (Spivak1988). Second, it makes for agency and critic of colonial domination. Colonial resistance is built on ambivalence, hybridity, and mimicry. This is a discourse of resistance that remains continuous at work in the context of domination (Sambajee 2015). Bhabha (1994:72) sees discourse as both ‘incitement and interdiction’ because of its empowering effect. There are three forms of resistance that empower and strengthen the agency of the colonized to resist domination. These are ambivalence, hybridity, and mimicry.

4.5.1 Ambivalence

Ambivalence is an experience of mixed opposing emotions that lead to different responses as a way of coping with the environment. In the postcolonial discourse of resistance ambivalence is a space created by mimicry. According to Bhabha (1994), it is the third space where resistance is located. Usually, this space is unstable, contested and marks the site of the presence of colonial domination (Bhabha 1994, Ashcroft et al 1995). Sambajee (2015:391) asserts that “It is within this ambivalent space that the monolithic discourse of colonization is ruptured to reveal the cracks and fissures for potential resistance”. Resistance found in the third space makes it difficult for colonial domination to survive but it is passively resisted and

transformed into a new culture that enables the colonized to thrive. Like mimicry, ambivalence aims at weakening the dominant culture to empower the colonized (Sambajee 2015:392). It is within the ambivalence space that colonial discourse is disturbed and confused by mimicry.

Bhabha (1994) also argues that hybridity is also developed in the ambivalence space by holding both cultures and rejecting domination of one by another. He further argues that “The ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority enables a form of subversion, founded on the undecidability that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention” (Bhabha1994: 112). Colonial authority is coated with other cultures hence turns into a hybrid and invisible. In ambivalence, colonial culture becomes both oppressive and emancipatory (Sambajee 2015). Through ambivalence, the discursive discourse creates “psychological guerrilla warfare” (Moore-Gilbert, 1997). It is some hidden force that gradually changes the colonial discourse and situation. This marks the transformation or conversion of colonial culture by the colonized for resistance purposes. Therefore, ambivalence is closely connected to mimicry and this ambivalence creates hybridity that neutralizes the authority of colonial culture. The creativity by the laity in the ELCZ by way of engaging in local ecumenism and freely accommodate other denominations during events such as funerals creates ambivalence. It creates a slow shift from the venerated conciliar ecumenism to bottom up ecumenical enegement. This also forms hybridity in ecumenical engagement.

4.5.2 Hybridity

Postcolonialism seeks the transformation of contemporary society, changing mind-sets (Dirlik 2003). This is done by forming cultural hybridity (Bhabha 2006:42). In a way, hybridity is a form of cultural resistance through multiple cultural identities by the native people (Shohat 2003, Ramone 2011). Hybridity “is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal, bringing with it a revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity effects” through the displacement of sites of domination (Bhabha, 1994: 112). This is a form of discourse reversal by creating values of resistance (Moore-Gilbert 1997). It is a form of postcolonial cultural reformation to resist colonialism. This kind of resistance is generated by the oppressed to withstand their cultural extinction. Rukundwa and van Aarde (2007) argue that hybridity is a mixture of concepts from the old native culture and its colonial counterpart to form a new socio-political identity. Hybridity produces a combination of cultures that confuses the colonial authority. Therefore, postcolonial theory, unfortunately, does not

reproduce the old native culture, nor does it bring a new culture, but it produces a mixture of worlds – a “fragmented and hybrid theoretical language” within a “conflictual cultural interaction” (Young 2001:69).

Hybridity is a cultural ‘negotiating’ discourse in search of an ‘authentic’ identity or out of ‘nostalgia for lost origins’ (Spivak 1988: 291). Sambajee (2015) also avers that hybridity comes from ambivalence that results in the transformation of both the colonized and the colonizer and helps the colonized get a voice without seeking cultural supremacy. It makes colonial discourse unstable and interrupts the presence of colonial authority and prevents the diminishing of the native culture. However, this may result in more cultural challenges since the hybrid culture does not reproduce any of the common or known cultures (Bauhn and Tepe 2016). Ashcroft et al, (2007: 109) also note that “Bhabha’s conception of hybridity has been criticized for suggesting an idea of ‘cultural exchange’ that seems to imply ‘negating and neglecting the imbalance and inequality of the power relations it references’”. It’s a rejection of typical known as Western culture and discourse that want to settle and dominate others. According to Bhabha (1994:114);

Hybridity reverses the formal process of disavowal so that the violent dislocation of the act of colonization becomes the conditionality of colonial discourse. The presence of colonial authority is no longer immediately visible; its discriminatory identifications no longer have their authoritative references to this culture’s cannibalism or that people’s perfidy.

Bauhn and Tepe (2016:350) also assert that “the value of hybridity will depend on whether it expands or diminishes persons’ capacity for the agency; emancipating and anti-authoritarian potentials of hybridity”. It involves contamination, of colonial discourse, and recalling displaced culture, and at some point, alterations of, leading to the overall effect of subverting authority (Kapoor 2002). Jahnel (2008:413) gives an example of a phenomenon of multiple religious interactions that may result in an “un-regulated character of the formation of Christian identity”. There is neither stability in one nor the other tradition, but a hybrid tradition is formed.

It is argued that a person’s hybridity may be positive or negative depending on how it expands or diminishes one’s capacity for the agency (Bauhn and Tepe 2016). They further argue that “at least sometimes, can make it more difficult for persons to realize their goals of action, as it

makes them less confident about how to relate to other people” (Bauhn and Tepe 2016:353). Gandhi (1998) observes, hybridity results in cultural contamination and dislocation that leaves one lost between home and diaspora. This is caused by the reinvented culture that does not purely represent what is known. The new culture or discourse remains in between without definite identity except being a ‘hybrid’. Despite the above-stated weaknesses, hybridity remains a powerful tool for asserting oneself and resisting domination and imperialism. It is a powerful postcolonial tool that results in the reconfiguration of colonial identity and minimizes its authority and presence (Gandhi 1998). Cultural hybridity focuses on decolonizing and resisting the cultural practices that are pushing to eliminate local values and imposing Western cultural uniformity and superiority. Hybridity helps to accommodate and integrate the western ideas with ELCZ’s local forms of ecumenism relevant to the Karanga context and denominational diversity. The ELCZ is found in Mberengwa among the Karanga people who belong to different denominations. To engage in life-giving local ecumenism, hybridity becomes important. It enables the church to accommodate both the local culture and other denominational traditions which will promote unity among local denominations. Although hybridity is a tool of resistance of domination, it can be used as a tool for tolerance in local ecumenism.

4.5.3 Mimicry

It is a form of postcolonial discourse of resistance born out of the demand for one’s lost identity as a result of colonialism. Initially, it is used by the colonizer as a way of enforcing domination but later it adopted as a tool for colonial resistance by the colonized (Sambajee 2015:390). It is an ironic compromise by the colonized and distorted imitation of the oppressor as a means of defiance and resistance (Bhabha 1994, Gandhi 1998). For Sambajee (2015:390), “the colonized repeats rather than represents and colonial authority has partial presence, both incomplete and virtual”. The discourse is constructed around ambivalence through “its slippage, its excess, its difference” for it to have an impact (Bhabha 1994). It aims to bring colonial oppression to a point of rupture and powerlessness. Gandhi (1998:149) also argues that “But ‘mimicry’ is also the sly weapon of anti-colonial civility, an ambivalent mixture of deference and disobedience”. This results in producing an ambivalent language different from that of the colonial discourse as a way of undermining the authority of colonial discourse.

Mimicry does not only displace colonial discourse but minimizes its presence. Here the colonized tries to imitate the colonizer as a way of asserting self or making self at par with the colonizer confusing the presence of colonial authority. Bhabha (1994) observes that the danger of mimicry is the disclosure of ambivalence of colonial discourse and disruption of colonial authority. It is meant to resist and return the colonial gaze. Mimicry is a means to close the gap of differences projected by the colonizer. Bhabha (1994:86) further asserts that “Mimicry is, thus the sign of double articulation, a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriate’ the other as it visualizes power”. It is a postcolonial emancipatory tool. In postcolonial literature mimicry, Western literature is indigenized by “mixing Western genres with local content” thereby producing an anti-colonial counter text (Gandhi 1998:150). It emphasizes self-differentiation through the creation of new knowledge and language that confuses the colonial standards and meanings (Gandhi 1998). It is a shift from the colonial paradigm toward native discourse to subvert colonial authority. While it may result in so much culture of indifference, mimicry destabilizes and dismantles colonial domination and cultural hegemony. It empowers the colonized and leads to the recovery of voice and identity. In ecumenical engagement mimicking conflates identity and promotes unity despite denominational backgrounds. It can be used as a tool for boundary-crossing entering another’s world of Christian experience.

Through hybridity and boundary-crossing, the postcolonial approach helps to produce a rich cultural diversity in the local ecumenism. This leads to the celebration of diversity and deviation from the Western canonical forms of thinking (Wisker 2007). Plurality and diversity call for unity that transcends doctrinal barriers that formerly excluded other churches from the national and regional ecumenical bodies. The availability of different denominations in Zimbabwe and Mberengwa, in particular, means the church must use postcolonial approaches in its ecumenical engagements. Ambivalence and hybridity are needed for the ELCZ to share its identity without losing it. The ELCZ should find ways of accommodating churches so that it will integrate the western ideas with its local forms of ecumenism that are relevant to the Karanga context. Postcolonial ecumenism involves boundary-crossing whereby churches come together despite their denominational differences. Crossing the set boundaries is seeking to be more inclusive local ecumenical engagement.

Overall, postcolonial theory dismantles the colonial mentality of the marginalization of local culture and experiences. This validates its use as a theoretical framework of analyzing the

ELCZ ecumenical engagement in post-colonial Zimbabwe. In the context of ecumenism, postcolonial theory helps in uncovering the western approaches and forms of domination that influence the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement. Since the ELCZ has a Eurocentric origin, it may mean that some western views may have been transplanted into Zimbabwean amongst the ELCZ family. These western values and ideas on ecumenism include their views on other denominations of different polity and confessional backgrounds. Postcolonialism provides a lens to look at issues to provide a basis for life-giving ecumenical engagement. Life-giving forms of ecumenism provide a sense of justice and resist any forms of oppression that undermine other people and their denominations. It encourages inclusion rather than exclusion. This discursive tool is meant to analyze the inherence of missionary legacy and denominationalism that may influence or impede the ELCZ congregations' participation in local ecumenism in Mberengwa. This study shall use postcolonial as an analytic tool in the phenomenon of the ELCZ participation in local ecumenism. The postcolonial theory becomes a plausible tool to analyze the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement.

4.6 Weaknesses of postcolonial theory.

Despite its admired critical literary approach, the postcolonial theory remains faced with the current changing environment. Its focus is engaging with colonial hegemony that is the North and South tensions. "Such studies overgeneralize, fail to distinguish between different kinds of colonialism – settler and non-settler – and subscribe to an 'oddly monolithic and surprisingly unexamined notion of colonialism'" (Bush 2006:58). Concurring with Bush, one may argue that, traditional North/South colonial domination is fading, and new challenges come into play. These are the challenges of the new era of globalization, neo-colonialism and the new Eastern empires. China and the Islamic movement continue to develop their influence in the international socio-economic and political order (Bianchi 2015:18). When compared to the Western influence they are now taking the center-periphery model. The North is now displaced from the centre by the Eastern Empire. The Eastern new colonialists determine the political and economic pace and religious tone around the world and Africa in particular. While we may think of postcolonialism around denominational unity, we are faced with the growth of the Jewish Voice movement and the Islamic movement in Mberengwa. The theory is put to test how these can be used in such a context. This issue is going to be addressed by delimiting the study on local Christian denominations and the other aspect is left for further research.

Postcolonial theory and postcolonial writers seem to ignore the benefits of the interaction between the colonizers and the colonized. While there are pointing towards the negative effects, they have completely ignored the positive outcome of this contact either through literary or political engagement. Cultural interaction would result in both cultural destruction and development. On the one hand, another culture may be dissolved on the other hand it may be developed and transformed. It is this cultural interaction that may help to understand issues of mutuality and issues of injustices and oppression. The postcolonial theory does not take note of the positive dynamics of the colonizer and colonized making history together. In the case of denominational contact, there is a learning process despite the differences and the desire to dominate and patronize others. The negative effects should not be overemphasized to overshadow the benefits therein. These can as well be capitalized for the development of individual denominations and enhance the need for ecumenical engagement.

The call for hybridity may be a big challenge when a variety of culture comes into play. The postcolonial approach of hybridity will become difficult to employ by putting together African culture, Western and Eastern cultures. In some cases, postcolonial hybridity seems to overlook the questions of individual cultural identity. Similarly, in a church context, the issue of identity is important. Each denomination or groups of denominations work towards the building and maintenance of identity. The theory seems to advocate for universalism in approaching every context. Despite efforts by the African churches to become independent, they are still failing to completely eradicate the global North domination especially with some the establishment of the so-called partnerships in which former missionary churches continue to get some financial support. This continues to influence the form and ways of ecumenical engagement, especially at regional and national levels maintaining a certain identity related to the Western form. It could be argued that ecumenical movements in the global South are still colonial projects heavily funded not by local resources but resources from the global North that support their projects and programs.

4.7 Justification of the theory

Given the context of the former missionary background of the ELCZ in Mberengwa among the Karanga people and continuously linked to the CSM and other ecumenical bodies, there is justification for a postcolonial critic on her interaction with other local congregations. The background and its national and international ecumenical engagements may influence its local

engagements with other churches in the grassroots. The question of local ecumenical engagement involves the interaction of denominations of different backgrounds within the Karanga people hence dynamics may mean inclusion and exclusion and marginalization for different reasons. It is within that context that postcolonial theory is used to examine the mission-cultural factors that influence the ELCZ's local ecumenism. It exposes the aspects of denominational and cultural dominations that need resistance to promote a postcolonial local ecumenical engagement in Mberengwa. Therefore, postcolonial critique must also dare to postulate what constitutes a postcolonial ecumenical engagement by the ELCZ's local congregations. In this study, postcolonial theory is important as it is going to be used as the hermeneutical critical tool to critique the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement in Mberengwa, Zimbabwe.

4.8 Conclusion

The chapter presents the postcolonial theoretical framework. It begins by highlighting the difference between post-colonialism as a historical period and time indicator as opposed to postcolonial theory or discourse that is a discursive discourse that transcends historical periods. The theory has been developed as a tool of colonial resistance to the discourse of colonial domination that was used by the Western colonizers. The chapter has identified three postcolonial modes of resistance that helped the colonized to cope with the conditions and subvert colonial authority.

Finally, it highlights some of the weaknesses of the theory, especially the problem of trying to ignore history and only focusing on literature. The other weakness related to this is the question of globalization and neo-colonialism that continues to haunt the third world. There is no disappearance of colonialism since there are new global colonial influences. The forces also affect religious fraternity by way of financial support to the local churches, especially in Zimbabwe. The challenge of hybridity as a form of resistance causes problems in religious identity hence cannot be overemphasized. The other weakness noted is that the postcolonial thinkers emphasized emancipation and failed to recognize the positive side of cultural interaction in the colonial context and within the colonial discourse. Despite these weaknesses, the study utilizes postcolonial theory as a critical lens to examine the dynamics involved in ecumenism and the mission-cultural factors that influence the ELCZ ecumenism in local congregations in Mberengwa. The next chapter offers methodological approaches to the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the postcolonial theoretical framework that is used in this study. The chapter explored the two forms of postcolonialism. Postcolonial can be viewed and defined as a period in history as well as one of the analytic lenses used in critiquing a specific life phenomenon. In this case, postcolonial theory is used as a lens to analyze the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement. The objective of the present chapter is to describe the research design and methodology to be used in this postcolonial critique of the ELCZ local ecumenism as a phenomenon. According to Kothari (2004) research design suggests a systematic process that is used for collecting data, sampling and analyzing that data. Christensen (2007) also notes that research designs are the constructed plans and strategies that are constructed seeking to discover answers for the research questions. Therefore, the research design section shows the research type, the tools of research and steps to be taken. The research methodology is a term that refers to steps or procedures adopted when one is conducting research (Oliver 2004:29). According to Creswell (2009), a research method is a means of outlining the data collection strategies used by the researcher. Santhakumaran and Sagunamary (2008) define research methodology as a plan of action carried out in connection with proposed research work. The methodology also includes research methods. It may be an either a qualitative or quantitative method (Kothari 2004, Wilson 2010).

This chapter describes research philosophy, methodology and research design, some sampling methods, data collection processes and data analysis procedures, the limitations involved, suggested solutions to the limitations and ethical considerations. It gives a justification for every procedure to be taken in this study. This qualitative research utilize both purposive and snowballing sampling methods. The thirty minutes to one hour in-depth interviews were be conducted using WhatsApp audio calling. Additionally, where further clarity was needed the participants used WhatsApp text messages. Therefore, the limitation was be network challenge and lack of the observations of non-verbal cues and the expressions of feelings.

5.2 Research philosophy

According to Creswell (2006), a research philosophy is a belief about the way of gathering and analyzing data for a given phenomenon. There are two main research philosophies namely, positivist and interpretive philosophies. On the one hand, positivism is a scientific approach where numerical data is used to obtain objective truth about a phenomenon (Nyaruwata 2013). Interpretivists are of the view that scientific methods are inappropriate to study human beings since human beings always change and think differently at every given time (Creswell 2006). According to Finlayson (2004:131), “an interpretive approach moves back and forth between aggregate concepts and the beliefs of particular individuals”. The movement is meant to seek clarification and understanding of such concepts and beliefs involved. While seeking to understand individual people’s meaning, there is the recognition that such understanding is subject to interpretation (Denicolo et al 2016). Finlayson (2004) further argue that the understanding and interpretation of an individual’s world or beliefs and tradition leads to understanding the community in context because beliefs are held and influenced within a social context. Therefore, the interpretive method goes deeper into the individual’s life and experiences. Interpretive research is associated with qualitative research since it is field-based using observational methodologies (Nyaruwata 2013). The interpretive approach is holistic and designed to study cultures, societies and institutions hence this is more appropriate for studying the local ecumenical engagement of the ELCZ. This study follows the interpretive philosophy delving into the feelings, meanings, and reasons which cause people to engage or not to engage in local ecumenism.

5.3 Qualitative inquiry

This study is a qualitative investigation based on interpretive philosophy. It, in turn, uses a phenomenological approach, primary and secondary data collection, and the textual critique method. Qualitative research paradigm uses “multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive naturalistic approach to its subject matter” (Denzin and Lincoln 1994:2). It uses multiple methods of inquiry including interviews and observations to study specific social phenomenon (Marshall and Rossman 2016:2). Qualitative research also aims to produce rounded understandings based on rich, contextual and detailed data (Mason 2000). In the current study, interpretive phenomenology is used to help in formulating rich descriptions and explanations of the human phenomenon in qualitative research (Durrheim 2006). Creswell (2003) defines

qualitative research as a process of inquiry into the human phenomenon or social problem based on building a complex holistic picture using detailed views and words of the informants from conducting a study in a natural human social setting. Nyaruwata (2013) also adds that this involves description and analysis of individual and collective action, beliefs and perceptions. Thus, qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretive and grounded in people's lived experiences (Marshall and Rossman 2016). This qualitative inductive approach is going to be used in this study since it is done in a natural church social setting in Mberengwa among the participating church members within a particular culture. It involves listening and analysis of the individual description of the personal ecumenical journey.

The study uses a qualitative research method because of its "relaxed, formal and informal ways of data collection" that may result in getting to the depth of issues than those on paper (Nyaruwata 2013:109). It allows the interviewer to ask further questions for explanations and clarity. Durrheim (2006) avers that it allows the researchers to study selected issues in-depth and detail as they attempt to understand the types of information that emerge from the collected data. It is more flexible to accommodate more information on the research questions. However, the major limitation of qualitative research is that data collected from the limited sample cannot be easily generalized to the larger population since people have different tastes on different matters and change at any given time (Nyaruwata 2013). In the current study, one would expect to encounter different views on the ELCZ ecumenical experiences since different age groups and church organs participate in the data collection processes. But it will not be fully representative of the views of all ELCZ experiencing local ecumenism. This qualitative approach helps in identifying and assessing meanings within the phenomenon of the ELCZ local ecumenism in Mberengwa.

Sampling was determined by the qualitative nature of the research design. Purposive sampling will be used to choose informants who are knowledgeable about the local ecumenical engagement among the Karanga people. Through snowballing sampling, the clergy and the lay leaders who will participate will be asked to suggest others who are in the parish leadership teams and accessible through WhatsApp. The study focused on Mberengwa for three reasons. Firstly, there is no similar study has that been conducted among the Karanga in Mberengwa. Secondly, the chosen geographical area is inhabited largely by the Karanga people and also the hub of the ELCZ. Thirdly, I grew up in Mberengwa, have a good rapport with members of the ELCZ and the clergy who are my co-workers and will have little difficulty in identifying and

accessing participants of this study. The study uses in-depth interviews. The selected twenty-five (25) participants are as a result of purposive sampling and snowball sampling. A sampling of representative participants is used due to limited financial resources to reach out to the majority of people of interest about this study (Tshuma and Mafa 2013). The kind representative sampling is met in terms of departments, age groups, gender, and geographical locations of the population under study so that it covers the experiences of the various sectors of the church. Representation of groups helps to identify the diversity of opinions on experiences. These will be contacted and informed of their rights to accept or deny participation. They will be informed of the confidentiality of their names and information gathered in the process. This will help them to be open in their giving out information during interviews.

5.4 Phenomenological method

This is a postcolonial critique of the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement, a social phenomenon hence the use of a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology as an approach to research aims to understand human experience in context (Terre Blanche et al. 2005) hence it is used to explore the experiences of local ecumenism by ELCZ members in Mberengwa. The study uses phenomenology to understand their personal experiences. In the study of religion, the exponent of the phenomenological method is Edward Husserl (1859-1938) who introduced it at the beginning of the 20th century (Groenewald 2004:2, Moran 2000). Tuohy et al. (2013) advance that phenomenology can be understood as “philosophy or a research method”. A philosophy digs deeper into people’s lived experiences (Willing 2005, Moran 2000). It is a way of describing the phenomenon as it appears in one’s consciousness as he or she engages with the world around (Tuohy et al. 2013, Willing 2005). According to Willing (2005), phenomenology is concerned with understanding the world as it is experienced by people in a given context and time. It is referred to as a study of the 'life-world' or 'lived experience' and explores what an experience is like 'pre-reflectively' (Dowling 2007). Therefore, the theory of phenomenology is aimed at understanding the respondents’ reality, meaning, and perspective. Eatough and Smith (2008) add that, phenomenology is concerned with the reality of the lived experiences through engaging with things and other people. One may argue that this does not depend on abstract statements about experiences in general but particular direct human experiences. It is their belief, tradition, cultural and social experiences. Moran (2000) further asserts that phenomenology avoids the imposition of individual experiences drawn from science, religious

and cultural experiences. It is designed to allow the respondents to communicate their meaning in their ways (Denicolo et al. 2016). Therefore, a phenomenological study attempts to understand individual perceptions and perspectives in a particular situation or life experience (Denicolo et al. 2016, Leedy and Ormrod 2001). This allows the researcher to get to understand the experiences of the people involved in the ecumenical situation. It attempts to get access to the lived experiences of other people and how they understand it themselves (Eatough and Smith 2008:179, Patton 1990, Mapuranga 2010). Willing (2005) avers that this does not mean the researcher does not know the context but would like to get a better understanding of the situation through inquiry of others' experiencing the same situation. The social nature of this study justifies the use of phenomenological approach. The study is conducted in the church which is a social setting with members of the church as participants. The members are the ones who are involved in the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement.

5.4.1 Phenomenological approach

According to Tuohy et al. (2013) phenomenology is in two strands, namely, descriptive and interpretive as illustrated by the figure below.

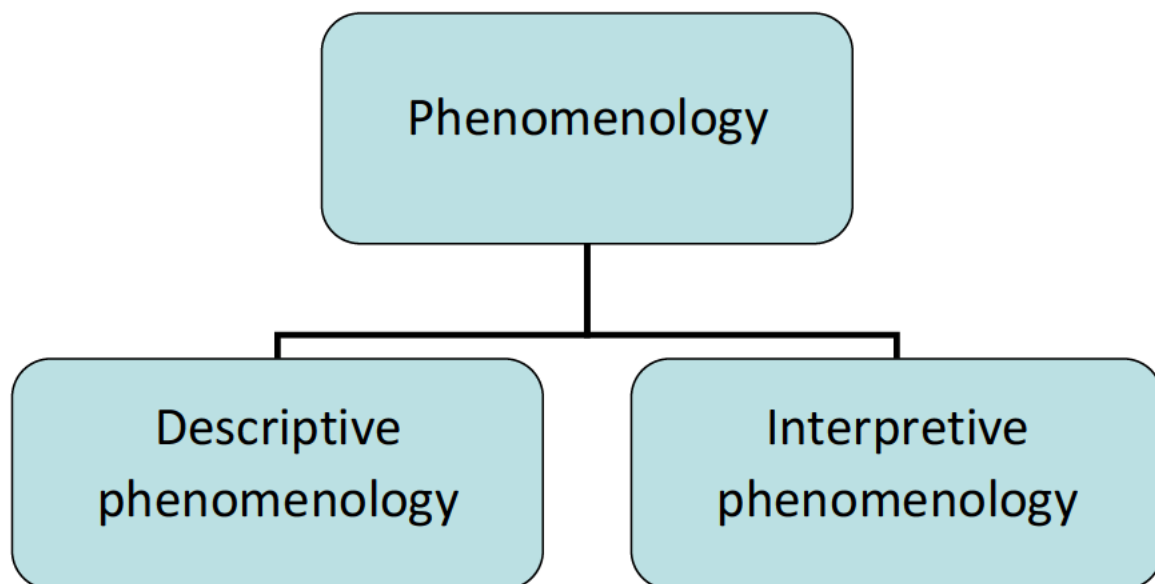


Figure 1. Branches of phenomenology by Tuohy et al. 2013.

On the one hand, descriptive phenomenology describes events of the phenomenon as they appear to consciousness (Moran 2000). It gives a general overview of human experiences of the situation than giving particular individual experiences (Tuohy et al. 2013). In this study, it is used to describe the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement without specific individual experience. Descriptive phenomenology aims to set aside the researcher's preconceived assumptions to get back to the pre-reflective state of local ecumenical engagement without being corrupted by attitudes and personal prejudices (Tuohy et al. 2013).

Descriptive phenomenology gave birth to the development of interpretive phenomenology (Tuohy et al. 2013). Interpretive phenomenology wishes to capture the quality and texture of individual experience (Willing 2005). It comes closer to reality as it engages directly with the individual specific situation of the respondents. Tuohy et al. (2013:18) advance that;

The aim of 'interpretive phenomenology' also referred to as 'hermeneutics' is to describe, understand and interpret participants' experiences. There are a number of concepts in interpretive phenomenology: 'being-in-the-world' (dasein), 'fore-structures', 'life-world existential themes' and the 'hermeneutic circle'.

The 'interpretive phenomenology' does not only focus on the description of experiences but interprets the meaning of the experiences as expressed by the respondents. It is this situation and human experiences that help to understand humanity. In this study, interpretive phenomenology is concerned with the detailed ecumenical experiences and meanings of the respondents' realities. It attends to all aspects of lived experiences including feelings, desires, motivations, and belief systems through which these manifest themselves or not in actions (Eatough and Smith 2008). Interpretive phenomenology enters the world of the respondents to reflect on individual feelings towards one's experience of the situation. Therefore, an interpretive phenomenological approach is more suitable for the current study which is aimed at understanding the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement in Mberengwa.

The challenge of phenomenological research is that it requires the researcher to suspend his/her personal experiences and gain access to the personal experiences of the respondents (Leedy and Ormrod 2001, Willing 2005). Tuohy et al. (2013:18) contend that the "core element of phenomenology' is that extraneous factors, such as religious or cultural thoughts and beliefs that can influence how phenomena are understood, should be put aside before they can be

understood in their purest sense”. The researcher needs to be aware and find ways of mitigating with such interferences during the data collection processes. The best way to deal with this challenge is through “bracketing off preconceptions and prior assumptions”, “bracketing out”, 'epoche' or 'reduction', to allow objectivity in understanding the phenomenon (Brewer 2003). Bracketing is needed to avoid these pre-conceived notions from interfering with participants' narratives. Instead of listening to the participants one may record his/her personal experiences and hence leads to data contamination and interference (Hird 2003). Bracketing occurs when researchers go beyond their natural attitude by suspending or bracketing out their pre-suppositions. This involves the researcher's desire to be in a certain mode of wonder and openness to the world while at the same time deliberately restraining personal pre-suppositions (Finlay 2008). Finlay (2008) further argues that this can only be achieved when researchers are aware of their biases and try to set them aside as much as possible (bracketing out). Local ecumenical experiences form the basis for community building and strengthen socio-religious ties within the community. The people within these community structures that experience ecumenism becomes the source of information for this study. By using the experiences of others, the researcher will get unbiased information (Mapuranga 2010).

Given that ecumenism is a phenomenon, justifies the use of the phenomenological method to investigate how the ELCZ engages in local ecumenism in Mberengwa. In this study, the phenomenological method is needed to investigate the missio-cultural factors which influence the ELCZ local or grassroots ecumenical engagements in Mberengwa. The phenomenological method emphasizes the believer as the primary source of data (Cox 2000). The interviews are carried across the ELCZ structures from the Bishop of the Diocese, the deans, the pastors in charge of the parishes, men and women and youth. Amongst the members of the clergy, I interviewed male and female. Lay leaders included male and female from 18 to 80 years of those who have various posts of responsibilities in their parishes. These have also been active in the church for more than five years. Therefore, they could share their ecumenical opinions and experiences from an experiential point of view. In this process, their divergent beliefs and value judgments on their personal ecumenical experiences are respected. The researcher does not impose his pre-suppositions and judgments upon the respondents. This engagement becomes a hermeneutic cycle through the interaction between the researcher and participants to identify the meaning and essence of participants' realities (Tuohy et al. 2013). The dialogue leads to more understanding of the reality of the situation. The phenomenological approach is

suitable for the current study as it opens up other ways of arriving at knowledge like intuition and emotion (Paton 2013).

As alluded earlier on, the greatest challenge of the phenomenological approach is 'bracketing out', suspension of one's ideas and pre-knowledge (Cox 2000:31). The question of bracketing remains idealistic than practical until one grasps the meaning and consciously engages in the exercise (Cox 2000). The problem requires the researcher to take a conscious and deliberate exercise of personal discipline. This involves one's focus on the experiences of the respondents than one's previous philosophical beliefs and previous religious experiences. These experiences are found through sampling some respondents from the ELCZ members in Mberengwa district.

5.5 Sampling procedure

This qualitative study applies the sampling method. Sampling involves a selection of a section of the population from a larger group known as the target population so that conclusions can be drawn from such people (May 2011, Hesse-Biber 2010, Berndt and Petzer 2013). The total number of people where the sample comes from is the population or target group (Bertram and Christiansen 2014). And a sample is a group or set of elements from the majority population (target population) (Scofield 2006, Stangor 2015). This is a set of people who are possible respondents in a population studied (Tshuma and Mafa 2013). Identification and definition of the population are important to justify the sample (Stangor 2015). However, the sample size is determined by the purpose of the study, "data collection method and style of research" (Bertram and Christiansen 2014:63). Since this is qualitative research following the interpretive paradigm, the sampling does not concern a lot with a representative of the target population. Rather it is more concerned with details and description of the phenomenon (Bertram and Christiansen 2014). Selection is done on the targeted population of the ELCZ leadership and membership in Mberengwa among the Karanga people. The target population is the clergy, lay leaders in different parishes of the ELCZ among the Karanga in Mberengwa district. Although they are in different parishes, they belong to the same culture and same denomination, diocese and in the same district.

The study uses purposive, cluster and convenient sampling (Hesse-Biber 2005). The sample should be representative of the population to ensure that the data is not biased (Hesse-Biber 2010, May 2011). The study uses sampling because of a lack of resources and since it is a

qualitative study (Flick 2002). The purposive sample is directed towards those with posts of responsibility in the church. The study gets responses from the bishop, 2 deans, 7 pastors and 15 lay leaders of the ELCZ including 5 Youths (girls and boys), 5 Vashandiri (members of the women's league) and 5 Zvapupu (men) from the selected rural parishes in Mberengwa in the Central Diocese. The total number of interviews will be 25 representatives of every organ of the church membership. Since this is qualitative research it does not depend on the numbers but the detailed information generated from the interview questions (Anderson 2010). I chose 25 participants because of the repetition of responses expected that were anticipated from respondents. Although there may be variations, respondents tend to use different words to describe the same phenomenon but carrying the same meaning. Data are obtained from individuals responding to each question asked. The other reason is that the smaller number will help in the process of data analysis than volumes of repetitive information. According to Anderson (2010), one of the biggest challenges in qualitative research is that the large volume of data that may be generated from a larger sample population makes interpretation and analysis of data more time-consuming. Therefore, I chose to avoid a big number that results in volumes of data that would be difficult to handle. I deliberately chose to get more clergy since they are the ones spearheading the ministry of the church. This may be representative enough of the target population and their respective organs and geographical locations. In each selected parish interviews are done with both the pastor in Charge and members of the parish to check variations of the data and information given in the same parish. The sample is a fair representation of the target population to give an overview of the ecumenical experiences of each ELCZ organ and the general local ecumenical experiences in Mberengwa. It will help in the investigation of the missio-cultural factors that influence the formation of local and national organizations in Zimbabwe.

5.5.1 Purposive sampling

The current study will utilize purposive sampling by identifying the clergy and lay leaders as respondents to in-depth interview questions. According to (Etikan et al. 2016:2), purposive or “judgment sampling technique” is whereby the researcher makes a deliberate choice of specific people of particular characteristics to be a participant in a study. Participants are chosen because they meet or assumed to be meeting the desired criteria (Bertram and Christiansen 2014:61). The researcher becomes the judge as to who is suitable and who is not. That is why it is called judgment technique. “Simply put, the researcher decides what needs to be known

and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience” (Etikan et al. 2016:2). Purposive sampling is relevant for interpretive and critical research paradigm. Therefore, only or only those who meet the purpose or criteria are included in the sample, means that the researcher makes specific choices about which people, groups or objects to include in the sample (Bertram and Christiansen 2014, Etikan et al. 2016). The purpose may be a representation of the population or being knowledgeable of the data needed for the research (Etikan et al. 2016).

In this study, the purpose is to understand the ecumenical experience guided by the understanding and praxis of the ELCZ clergy and lay leadership. The other reason is to check the variations in the ecumenical understanding and experiences among the different organs of the church (Devers and Frankel 2000:264, Anderson 2010). In this case, participants are selected according to their positions in the church, gender and to some age. Since the clergy have gone through theological training it is assumed that they may form the most informative group in the sample. Similarly, since the lay leaders are part of the decision-making bodies in their respective parishes, they are more knowledgeable about the ELCZ local ecumenical praxis and the conditions and reasons thereof. To reach the decision there was a consideration of the availability and willingness to participate and articulate issues in response to the interview questions. It may not be perfect because it leaves out those without leadership positions in the church who may have the relevant data due to their own experiences. However, it is assumed that those in leadership are actively involved by organizing and participating in local ecumenical activities. For that reason, they are the most relevant for the study.

5.5.2 Snowball sampling

This study also used snowball¹² non-probability sampling to access members of different parishes (May 2011, Watters 2014). Although it is usually appropriate in accessing participants on sensitive research matters, this study does not contain any sensitive issue. It is not random but relies on referrals from one participant to the other as required by the researcher. It is used in general as it begins by identifying informants who would, in turn, identify others who would as well identify others who qualify for inclusion (Cohen and Manion 1994). This is adopted to access such members in the population cluster (lay leadership) who have cell phones and

¹² Although it is mostly used to access members of a special population, in the current study is an additional form to access the same common people but not easily accessed hence the use of cell phones on WhatsApp.

especially on WhatsApp. The pastors in charge of the selected parish assist by locating some of those in leadership teams or organs then they also help me to locate others who communicate on cell phones and WhatsApp. These are usually friends and colleagues in their phone contacts. These participants are also known for their membership, positions in church structures and active participation in church activities. One outstanding problem of snowball sampling is the distortion of information since participants will usually refer to their friends who may be like-minded people with similar interests, likes, and dislikes (Watters 2014). The disadvantage of a snowball in this study is that the participants given by the pastors and other leaders may not necessarily be the ones who could articulate the phenomenon of local ecumenism. The other problem is that this may leave out some of the participants who could have made a valuable contribution to the study because they have no cell phones or not identified and preferred by their colleagues. The advantage is that trust is built on the fact that the researcher got their numbers from their pastor in charge and trusted friends. Emphasis is given on the confidentiality of their information so that they give their consent freely. However, this study does not involve confidential information except identifying those members with cell phones that are reachable on WhatsApp. Usually, a few members who are actively involved in the church use cell phones since they belong to rural setup. Some of them may have problems with data or have their network affected by electricity and the rains. Some cannot easily access a powerful internet network but have to walk to a particular place.

5.5.3 Convenience sampling

Convenience samples are sometimes regarded as ‘accidental samples’ because elements may be selected in the sample simply as they just happen to be situated, near them or in the vicinity where the data is collected (Anderson 2010). In the process, the study utilizes convenience¹³ sampling by way of identifying the lay leaders of the church in a certain category but using cell phones on WhatsApp. In some cases, both the group as well as their ability to use cell phones makes them a preferred category of participants. They become a more convenient and accessible population (Bertram and Christiansen 2014). Because the sample is chosen for its convenience it is no longer random. The convenience of the participants of this study is their willingness to participate, sparing their time and also their availability online (Marshall and

¹³ The use of cell phones on WhatsApp becomes the convenience needed from the participants. It will be cheaper than travelling to reach out to the people especially during the year of fuel crisis in Zimbabwe or using conventional calls that are more expensive.

Rossman 2016, Etikan et al. 2016). The problem is convenience sample can easily be biased and unrepresentative since it only depends on accessibility (Anderson 2010, Etikan et al. 2016). It may be time-saving at the expense of the information that may be solicited from other members of the church. However, in this study, there will be minimal representation though not so much because it is a qualitative study of the phenomenon of local ecumenism. The second factor is that all groups are generally and accidentally represented by the clergy, and lay leaders from Zvapupu, Vashandiri, and Youth. As long as the participants meet practical criteria of accessibility the study can archive its purpose.

5.6 Data collection procedures

This section discusses data collection from primary and secondary sources and research instruments used.

5.6.1 Semi-structured Interviews

For this study, in-depth semi-structured interviews are conducted with the Central Diocese bishop, the two deans of the central diocese, seven selected pastors, and fifteen lay leaders or elders. The study uses semi-structured open-ended interview questions to gather data. The open-ended questions enable the researcher to establish the respondents' knowledge, thoughts, beliefs, likes and dislikes about ecumenical engagement. They are more flexible to allow respondents to give express answers on the issues under investigation with more room for elaboration (Cohan and Manion 1994, see also Chivore 1991). Payne and Payne (2004) argue that open-ended questions enable the researcher to gain access to data which is sometimes buried deep in the minds, attitudes, and feelings of respondents. Since there is the use of flexible open-ended questions there is a possibility of gathering more data for this study regarding local ecumenical engagement. Open-ended questions also "encourage co-operation, establishing rapport and allow the interviewer to assess what the respondent believes" (Cohan and Manion 1994:277). However, this does not mean there are no restraints. Cohan and Manion (1994) argue that the nature of questions will always constraint the respondents' freedom to fully express themselves in answering questions. In this case, interview questions focus on specific issues in relation to ecumenism.

This study uses semi-structured face to face interviews. Creswell (2007) and Borg and Gall (1996) concur that semi-structured interviews are flexible, adaptable and provide direct human

interaction that enables the researcher to probe and clarify answers from respondents. This form of interview gives space for the interviewee to give a verbal and non-verbal expression on personal experiences (May 2011). May (2011) further argues that interviews generate information that is rich in the form of people's experiences, opinions, feelings, and attitudes towards ecumenical engagement. In a way, interviews give the researcher access to more honest responses since there are contact and creation of rapport between the researcher and the respondent (Stanger 2015). Through interviews, the researcher gets an opportunity to seek clarity and elaboration on information provided by the respondent. Due to its flexibility, a semi-structured interview allows participants to deliver more information on their terms (May 2011, Leonard 2003). The semi-structured interview does not only provide verbal information but also gestures and facial expressions add to information hence the researcher needs to pay more attention (Leonard 2003, May 2011). The advantage of interviews is that they can be conducted at any convenient place agreed by the interviewee (May 2011). Therefore, appointments are made for a place and time that does not disturb the flow of the interview session. Other advantages include rapport building, flexibility, probes, and confirmation (Leonard 2003). This gives the researcher open access to information under investigation. The major challenge of interviews is the cost involved, time, interruptions during the process and appointment with officials especially the bishop and the pastors who have busy schedules (Stanger 2015, Leonard 2003). Since the study uses WhatsApp conversations, in form of audio calls, and text messages due to the cost involved will be of data bundles and the agreed modes by the interviewees. No video calls were used. The audio calls were recorded on the device and notes were then typed verbatim for safe storage. In the majority of cases the questions were given both in English and Shona and the interviewees were free to answer in both languages for expression and clarity purposes. The challenge was the fact that non-verbal cues became limited since there no video call. However, the interviewer was carefully checking on the change of voice, and sometimes the mood expressed and the desire to share more on the question asked. There were no much disruptions on the side of the interviewer since he will be using a Wi-Fi connection at home during the day when members of the family are away. The participants took advantage of the common network in Mberengwa (Net One) cellular data bundle promotions that makes the data cheaper hence help in the interview schedules. Since they were consulted for convenient schedules, they were also be ready in terms of network data for WhatsApp calls. For the bishops and pastors, these were contacted in time so that they diarize the interview schedules in their plans. To minimize disruptions of interviews, the interviewer liaised with participants on the

best time and place where they are free from many disturbances. The interviews were be voice recorded while additional notes were taken by pen and paper. Taking down notes help in the process of summarizing the interview reports when producing the scripts for data presentation in chapter six.

5.6.2 Secondary data

Secondary data refers to the information from previously published works including relevant books, journal articles from the University of KwaZulu-Natal library and online search engines and databases such as Google Scholar, Ebscohost, Research Space, and Peer-Reviewed Journals. Information will also be gathered from the ELCZ's church handbooks and worship books, minutes and reports from the ELCZ archives. The reports, minutes, books and journal articles are documents that portray realities of life (Tshuma and Mafa 2013, May 2011). To understand the context of research and phenomenon, this study will consult the relevant documents including church minutes and reports related to ELCZ ecumenical engagement. Church minutes and reports are found in the diocesan and parish offices. The secondary data will help in doing a literature review, discussing methodology, theoretical framework, and the ELCZ participation in local ecumenism and complimenting empirical evidence throughout the study. Tshuma and Mafa (2013) emphasize that document analysis compliments interview and hence fill the gap left out by other methods of data collection. Document analysis may also be used to validate information gathered from interview respondents (Creswell 2003). With the permission of the ELCZ gatekeepers, this study will make use of church minutes and reports of the ELCZ and published reports of other ecumenical bodies to extract the data on ecumenical engagement. It will also use reports and minutes from the parish to get information for local ecumenical engagement. Reports, constitutions and minutes would reflect the actual activities on the ELCZ ecumenical engagement hence they will be more helpful in this study.

The major problem with documents is that they are written for different purposes hence they do not directly respond to research questions or meant for particular research. Hofstee (2006) argues that the problem of secondary data is its broad use and applicability. They are not always written for research. Creswell (2003) also observes that documents may leave out important information due to socio-political convictions and the environment of the authors. For that reason, documents need to be analyzed with their social construction making it more difficult for the researcher who needs to do document analysis (Tshuma and Mafa 2013).

5.7 Data analysis

Data analysis involves, “patterns, themes, and categories that come out of data” collected (Patton 1990:169). Terre Blanche et al. (2006) identify and describe two basic patterns for doing qualitative data analysis, one based on the interpretive assumptions and the other on social constructionism. They further argue that the key to good interpretive data analysis is to stay close to the data and to interpret it from a position of empathetic understanding (Terre Blanche et al. 2006). Data analysis has to do with re-reading of transcripts several times and making of notes creating an immersion of the researcher into the data (Smith and Eatough 2007, Willing 2005). Reading transcripts several times will prevent the loss of data. Walliman also emphasizes the importance of data analysis in research as he says;

Data analysis must be carried out in relation to the research problem. You are wasting your time, and that of the eventual readers of your work, if you carry out analysis irrelevant to the aims of the study. You are probably also wasting your time if you amass data you are unable to analyze, either because you have too much, or because you have insufficient or inappropriate analytic skills or methods to make the analysis (Walliman 2005:301).

The purpose of data analysis is to transform the collected data to help and answer the research question (Moyo 2015). This is the process of converting raw data to be helpful in the study. Hence, the data collected is analyzed in connection to the question of mission-cultural factors that influence the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement. I will read through the data repeatedly to familiarize myself with it and allow themes to surface through. In the process, there is “separation of relevant from irrelevant information in the interviews” (Leedy and Ormrod 2001:154). This is a stage of theme identification and labeling through coding of statements that will be used as themes drawn from the data. Similar statements or statements with the same meaning will be drawn into the same themes.

The final state involves “production of the table for the structure, themes together with quotations that illustrate each theme” (Willing 2005:55). Common themes were drawn from individual semi-structured interviews looking at the research questions and recurring answers, words and phrases in answering the questions. I used the inductive approach to data analysis. In this approach, a researcher with little insight into the outcome of a sample population collects the appropriate and proper amount of data about a topic of interest. I also employed content

analysis to help determine the intent of the impact on target audiences. The different ecumenical experiences form the content analyzed accordingly. Before moving on to findings the data is described in its details. Data from the clergy will be analyzed for theological identity that influences ecumenical engagement while data from the laity will mostly be analyzed as local ecumenical expressions and experiences. The analysis will end by discussing and drawing a positive conclusion from the findings (Stanger 2015). The various forms of interviews employed will provide the data on the local ecumenical phenomenon in Mberengwa district that is analyzed in line with the missio-cultural factors that influence ecumenism.

5.8 Anticipated problems and limitations of study.

Since the research is more focused on the Central Diocese, and Mberengwa parishes, in particular, it may not represent the experiences of other Lutheran members in the other two ELCZ Dioceses, the Eastern and Western Dioceses. The researcher has, however, chosen this sample based on a particular rural Karanga people of the ELCZ. They are the ones located in the area dominated by the ELCZ and are the majority in the numbers of the ELCZ membership. I have chosen to delimit the area by choosing the Central diocese because it is where the majority of the ELCZ congregations are made of the Karanga people. Lastly, there is a problem of bias to personal experiences since I am a member of the ELCZ. While this may be a problem in some cases, it may also be an advantage to both the researcher and the participants. Mberengwa is both my home area and workplace and the research was done among the people of my culture (Karanga). According to Rooney (2005), interviewees may feel more comfortable to talk openly to a familiar person than a stranger who is asking about their life and experience in their institution. More so, rapport was easily built since some of the participants we have met and worked with the researcher. But in this case, the researcher had to listen more to the experiences of the participants than previous personal experiences. This was done by bracketing off and assuming the role of the researcher and outsider, following the principles of research methodology and focusing on gathering the necessary data needed for this study.

5.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are critical since they bring to mind the rules of academic research. Ethical considerations consider that the researcher has a moral obligation to consider the possibility of directly or indirectly causing harm as a result of his or her research (Beauchamp

and Childress 2009). Therefore, ethical considerations ensure the protection of the welfare and rights of human subjects and guarantee the confidentiality of the information they supply for the research (Magda 2013). This involves assuring that the research will not cause psychological, physical or spiritual harm in their lives and their participation is voluntary and free (Silverman 2006). Audio recordings are used whenever the participants have agreed. Considering that this study is a Doctoral research project conducted for academic purposes, this needs clarity so that the participants know in advance. This is done by attaching a confirmation letter to that effect and also a request for participants to complete a consent form before the interviews. Informed consent as a written agreement that explains aspects of a study to participants and asks for their voluntary agreement to participate before the study begins (Neuman 2006). This is meant to safeguard and confirm their willingness and strict confidence of the information gathered through the research instrument and procedure. The researcher uses pseudo names for the participants unless where consent was granted, the real names are used (Mapuranga 2010). This helps to maintain the unanimity of the participants to suit their will. During the process, the researcher will make sure that the procedures and confidentiality are explained and affirmed to give the participants' confidence to participate freely in the research project.

5.10 Conclusion

This chapter discussed research philosophy, methodology and research methods, data collection, data analysis, anticipated problems, and ethical considerations during the research project. I began by discussing the interpretive philosophical approach used in the study. I highlighted its relevance to this qualitative study on the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement. I deliberately explained this to be a qualitative study where interviews are used in the field research gathering data from the selected members of the ELCZ in Mberengwa district.

The chapter also emphasized the use of a phenomenological approach. I discussed the difference between descriptive and interpretive phenomenology that is used in the study. Although the study uses both it emphasizes the use of interpretive type that links well with the philosophy and qualitative study. While descriptive phenomenology is used to describe local ecumenical experiences in general, interpretive phenomenology is used in articulating specific individual opinions and experiences of the participants of the current study.

The study uses sampling namely, convenience and snowball sampling. These are used to meet the needs of the study which is done on a larger community with a wider geographical area. I preferred sampling due to limited time and financial resources. I further expounded on the method used for data collection such as semi-structured interviews. I defined and explained how these methods are applied in the study points to the people who were interviewed. I discussed the strengths and weaknesses of these methods and the justification of using them. Besides the use of primary information from interviews, the chapter further points to the use of secondary material from church documents such as minutes and reports, library books and journals and various university search engines for gathering data to complement the interviews.

The chapter then elaborated on the process of data analysis beginning by explaining what it entails. Data analysis involves familiarization with data by transcribing, rereading for immersion. This helps in drawing out themes and subthemes from the data collected and interpreting it in relation to mission-cultural factors influencing ELCZ local ecumenical engagement.

Finally, I discussed the importance of ethics as a moral obligation for the researcher to protect the dignity and confidentiality of the participants. The role of the researcher includes an explanation of the purpose of the study, the rights of the participants and consent forms. Throughout the research, the names of the participants are used with their full consent otherwise pseudo names are used. The data gathered through the discussed methodology will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS DATA PRESENTATION

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the methodology and methods of data collection. The philosophy and research instruments, phenomenological approach and purposive and snowball sampling methods were discussed. In addition, the chapter also explored ethical considerations. This chapter presents the findings from a series of in-depth interviews conducted between 12 February 2019 and 20 March 2019 in line with the general principles of a phenomenological approach using the purposive and snowball sampling methods as discussed in chapter five of this study. The in-depth interviews were carried out among the clergy and lay leadership in the ELCZ rural parishes in Mberengwa. In both cases the study used interview schedules, one specifically for the clergy and the other for the laity. The data presentation is a summary of the responses given by the participants to the interviews and follows up questions during the conversations. It will begin by narrating responses from the ELCZ clergy and then to the responses by the lay leaders. The in-depth interviews were conducted at appointed times. In-depth interview sessions took between half an hour to one hour depending on the network, participant concentration, and participation. Some of the participants would take time to explain and give details per question while others were giving very brief answers assuming that the interviewer knows what they are talking about. It is where the interviewer poses some follow up questions for clarity and further explanations to be on the same page with the participant. Six of the clergy had chosen to be interviewed on Monday, their day off, while two chose Friday their office day and the other two chose Sunday which they thought would be freer after services. Nonetheless, three pastors were affected by funerals and the bishop was disturbed by his trip to Germany and ended up rescheduling for a different date altogether. I ended up having two interviews on Mondays, one on Tuesday, one on Wednesday, two on Friday, three on Saturdays, and one on Sunday due to the reschedules. This did not affect the proposed interviews because the participants attended to all the questions asked when they availed themselves.

The objective of this chapter is to discuss the mission-cultural factors influencing ecumenism in Mberengwa. The objective is achieved by the presentation of the in-depth interviews carried

out among the members of the clergy and lay leaders of the ELCZ central diocese in Mberengwa district. The data will be analyzed in chapter seven of this study.

6.2 Clergy responses.

This section presents responses from the clergy from the in-depth interview questions.

6.2.1 Question: What is your understanding of ecumenism? *Mukuhwisisa kwako kudyidzana kwemakereke zvinobvireyi?*

All the clergy respondents answered this question. Two out of the ten members of the clergy defined ecumenism as church unity while the other two emphasized fellowship among churches and seven of them described ecumenism as a phenomenon of coming and working together of churches in their specific areas. According to LM, ecumenism is about the fellowship of those who are in Christ sharing their common faith (Interview 24 February 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). This definition is supported and emphasized by MM. She (Showing confidence) explained that;

Ecumenism (*mubatanidzwa wemakereke*¹⁴) is an effort by churches to be closer to each other in their faith in the whole world. In rural parishes, it is working together of denominations, sharing the word and doing other programs like home group fellowships without discrimination and domination with a sense of superiority of one denomination over the other (Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation).

MC averred that local ecumenical engagement is a call for local denominations to work together regardless of their differences of denominational backgrounds (AK, Interview 05 March 2019- Chabwira: WhatsApp conversation).

For others like CB and GC, ecumenism in local congregations has to do with attending community problems together. “Ecumenism means coming together of the denomination for a

¹⁴ The participant gave the Shona interpretation in brackets

purpose like funeral and praying for the rains. Sometimes it is well structured with committees and involves pulpit exchange” (CB, Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). GC defines ecumenism as a structured movement, but she quickly pointed to different problems encountered in this structured ecumenical movement in her area. (With much excitement but seemingly disappointed) She was worried that local ecumenism in the rural congregations lacked structures and leadership unlike those in urban areas. Although she acknowledged that ecumenism meant church unity, she was quick to point out that in her parish other churches do not need this unity because the ELCZ is led by a female pastor which was against the Bible.

According to MT, “ecumenism is working together in unity and diversity like sharing the word during funerals and memorial services. We work together but maintain fundamentals of denominational identity including our liturgical practices” (Interview 23 March 2019- Mutuvi: WhatsApp conversation). This point is supported by DB who (Confidentially) defined ecumenism as a form of unity in diversity among the churches, expressed through sharing physical and spiritual resources while striving to maintain their denominational tradition and doctrinal identity (DB, Interview 20 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). GT and GC also concur with the above definition of ecumenism as unity among denominations (GT, Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation, GC, Interview 08 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation).

6.2.2 Question: What are the ecumenical activities taking place in your local parishes/congregations? *Ndaapi mabasa emibatanzwa ekereke anoitwa muzvipoka/mumapoka menyu?*

Ten members of the clergy interviewed generally agreed that ecumenism is taking place in their local parishes and congregations in one way or the other. Three of the respondents identified Zion and other mainline denominations involved and those that do not work with others or those that the ELCZ does not involve in its ecumenical engagement. Seven respondents shared that the ELCZ closely works together with other mainline denominations like the Methodist

and Church of Christ but facing challenges with the SDA, Madzibaba, and Mapostora (Masowe and Marange). However, DB, JZ, and LM indicated that there was some fellowship across denominations including the Roman Catholic, AICs like Zion and Pentecostal churches such as AFM, and ZAOGA.

This was summarized by DB when he said;

There is very little taking place, but we work together with the Roman Catholic, ZAOGA a Pentecostal church, Zion and other apostolic sects during funerals, praying for rains, and workshops for HIV and AIDS. We also work together through Betseranai¹⁵ and Lutheran Development Service¹⁶ livelihoods gardening and community support groups (Interview 20 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation).

The HIV and AIDS church leaders and community workshops organized by Betseranai bring together people of different denominational backgrounds (DB, Interview 20 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). In these workshops, leaders are led to deliberate on best practices that prevent the spread of HIV including discussions around different church teaching and practices that may promote the spread of HIV (DB, Interview 20 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation).

LM (with excitement) also argued that “We have good working relationships different Zion groups, Assemblies of God, Church of Christ, AFM, and Victory Fellowship. But the SDA, Guta raMwari do not want to work hand in hand with others” (Interview 24 February 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer- What form of working together or activities do you do with other local denominations?** LM said their cooperation range from fundraising for uniforms and fees for the disadvantaged pupils in the local schools to holding prayers for rains and peace in their communities (Interview 24 February 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). Furthermore, JZ (with confidence) posits that “In our parish, we have churches such as Methodist, Roman Catholic church, Zion, Johane Marange, Word of Fire and

¹⁵ Betseranai is an ELCZ HIV and AIDs Home based care centre operating from Musume Mission centre.

¹⁶ Lutheran Development Service is the ELCZ diakonia and community development wing that is operating in the Midlands, Matabeleland South and Masvingo provinces.

the SDA. We all meet at funerals sharing responsibilities like prayers and songs” (Interview 02 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer- Any other areas of cooperation, if you may want to add?** “We sometimes meet to discuss community problems such as visiting the sick and sometimes hold pastors’ meetings discussing health and safety in places of worship and hospitalization of members” (JZ, Interview 02 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: How often do you have such meetings?** “It depends on the need, but we meet if there is a matter for discussion, like we met sometime in 2017 to discuss issues of toilets especially for those worshipping under trees” (Interview 02 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: Who called the meeting since there are different denominations?** “That was called by the ward councilor but that is where we agreed to meet whenever we have issues concerning our churches” (Interview 02 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation).

Four clergy participants agreed that denominations partially work together during conferences of the ELCZ local parishes and congregations when speakers and other helpers are invited from other denominations. “When we have revivals in the local parish, speakers are invited from other local denominations to help in teaching and preaching. Vashandiri invites members from other churches to officiate in the adjudication of their handwork and music competitions” (MM, Interview 4 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). MT agrees with MM’s observation on issues of conferences. He states that beside invitations of speakers they also invite other denominations for fundraising programs (MT, Interview 23 March 2019- Mutuvi: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer -Are the invitations sent out to all denominations around or to individual people?** “Invitations are not extended to the membership of the denominations but to the specific individuals in those denominations for a specific duty at a given time; which means is not bound to stay for the whole conference period or being involved in other conference activities” (MT, Interview 23 March 2019- Mutuvi: WhatsApp conversation). In most cases, the invited guests would come and do their activity or topic and leave as soon as they finish (MT, Interview 23 March 2019- Mutuvi: WhatsApp conversation).

The clergy indicate that “Vashandiri have some mubatanidzwa (ecumenical fellowship meetings¹⁷) in Bvumbura and Matabo congregations” (MM, Interview 4 March 2019- Zvisavane: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer- What kind of activities do they do in**

¹⁷Translations from Shona to English in brackets is from the researcher

those *mibatanzwa*? “I heard that they do some prayer meetings, fundraising and congregational exchange visit programs on Saturdays or Vashandiri midweek meetings” (MM, Interview 4 March 2019-Zvisavane: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer- Do you know any other parishes having such meetings in the deanery or diocese?** (She responded doubtfully) “So far they are the only one I have heard in this deanery, I do not know in the Eastern deanery” (MM, Interview 4 March 2019-Zvisavane: WhatsApp conversation). Vashandiri ecumenical engagement is supported by GC stating that; “Our Vashandiri invite other local denominations for the World Day of Prayers and have fellowship together as women of different denominations in the ELCZ chapel” (GC, Interview 08 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation).

While appreciating different ecumenical activities in the parishes, GT was quick to point at the challenges faced in the process. He argues that (Raising his voice showing much interest on the issue):

There is, however, a problem of cessation. There is a belief among the ELCZ membership that revelatory and miraculous charismata passed away with the apostolic age hence no recognition of healing and prophecy. Pentecostals will push speaking in tongues, healing, spiritual deliverance and prophecy but the ELCZ membership is not comfortable with that hence they fail to fellowship together more often. The ELCZ members would want to stick to the written liturgical prayers sometimes very cold and far from personal experiences of the worshippers while Pentecostals and AICs would want open prayers that are contextual (GT, Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation).

On the one hand, GT highlighted that problems emanate both from the ELCZ and other denominations, but on the other hand, MC complained that other denominations’ views and praxis are causing problems for local ecumenical engagement. She said that, while they were able to work together with local Zion churches, they had challenges of long prayers, dancing, and singing. They could not work well with Pentecostals such as ZAOGA because of their controversial alter calls and unending sermons (AK, Interview 05 March 2019- Chabwira: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer- To what extent does this affect the ELCZ local engagement in your parish?** (Confidently, raising her voice) She argued that they disturbed

but cannot completely stop some from the activities they do together like working together during funeral programs (AK, Interview 05 March 2019- Chabwira: WhatsApp conversation).

6.2.3 Question: In what circumstances do local denominations hold formal church worship services together? *Pane nhambo here pamunombonamata kana kuti kuita mupiro mumwe wekereke pamwe chete samakereke ari munharaunda?*

The ten members of the clergy answered the question by giving excuses for not holding formal services together. Among the reasons raised are the differences in doctrines and traditions which are said to be a disturbance to local ecumenical formal services together. PP said, “So far, no services have been held together by denominations” (Interview 02 March 2019: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: Do you have any reasons for not having formal church services together?** “Mmmm, I cannot give any reason, but we have never thought about it” (Interview 02 March 2019: WhatsApp conversation). MT claimed that holding a combined service would have a negative financial impact on ELCZ. He argued that “this will affect our Sunday offertory” (MT, Interview 23 March 2019- Mutuvi: WhatsApp conversation). Three respondents agreed that the only time they had services with people from other denominations is when they have guests and visitors invited to the ELCZ during Ruwadzano¹⁸, Easter, Pentecost or any other revivals and visitors who voluntarily come to the ELCZ during these conferences or Sunday services at local congregations.

6.2.4 Question: Do you think there any Karanga cultural values that influence ecumenism in local congregations? *Munofunga kuti pangawo nezvetsitka namagariro evaKaranga zvingakurudzira mubatanizwa wemakereke munharaunda?*

¹⁸ *Ruwadzano* refers to Vashandiri conferences held annually between August and September at parish level and once in two years in December at deanery, diocesan and national levels.

While CB did not see any contribution of the cultural values to local ecumenism, nine other members of the clergy participants agreed that the Karanga culture plays a role in ELCZ's involvement in local ecumenism. For CB, the majority of the Karanga cultural practices pull Christians back to where they came from when they became Christians because they are linked with sacrifices and ancestral worship (Interview 15 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). However, the other nine participants identified aspects of family and community life, marriage, *unhu*, hospitality, solidarity, *humwe*, and religious rituals as key issues that influence ELCZ local engagement in Mberengwa. GC and DB pointed out that the Karanga life revolves around the family, extended family, and community. According to GC (With much confidence):

The Karanga have the idea of extended family whereby all people are family and accepted and accommodated. They need one another at different times. This may also help the ELCZ needs other denominations no matter how equipped or powerful it is in terms of human power, membership, and infrastructure such as schools and hospitals (Interview 08 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation).

The ELCZ relations with other local denominations can also be guided by Karanga communal life that is accommodative (GC, Interview 08 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation). For DB, if the institutions accommodate everyone despite the differences, and that is helpful for the church and members of the community to be able to work together and help one another in areas of need (Interview 20 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). GC and DB identified the roles of the family, extended family and community life as sources of energy that enhances local ecumenism among the churches.

PP and JZ identified marriage as a uniting force in Karanga culture. The processes of marriage beginning with payment *roora* to the wedding unite families and people from different denominations (PP, Interview 02 March 2019- Makuva: WhatsApp conversation).

Interviewer- How does this happen; can you say more? “The Karanga marriages are usually from the same local communities hence people from different denominations tend to be united by the marriages taking place between them” (PP, Interview 02 March 2019- Makuva: WhatsApp conversation). She further maintained that these marriages promote understanding,

tolerance and create new relationships both for the families and their denominations (Interview 02 March 2019- Makuva: WhatsApp conversation).

According to GT, “Local ecumenism can be easily fostered by the African ethic of *unhu* in Chikaranga and Ubuntu in Zulu/Ndebele. That is a social matrix promoting African people’s relationships in general and the Karanga in particular” (Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). This was buttressed by LM who argued that “*unhu* a central aspect of Karanga community that presupposes, people are one united entity hence they ought to be related and united” (Interview 24 February 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation).

Interviewer - In what ways can this be attained since we always see division among people? “The Karanga value for human life is expressed by the way they respond and attend each other’s problems including care for the sick and funeral attendance” (LM, Interview 24 February 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). Karanga ethic of *unhu* has influences human responses to the other’s needs thereby uniting them despite their respective religious, social and political differences including (Interview 24 February 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). Another valuable contribution came from GC and MC. They maintained that the Karanga value for human life and dignity is due to their understanding that human beings are created by God hence they have inherent dignity to be respected. Consequently, respect for human dignity influences union between the ELCZ and other churches as it creates the spirit of love and tolerance among local denominations (GC, Interview 08 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation, AK, Interview 05 March 2009- Chabwira: WhatsApp conversation).

JZ argued that “One of the Karanga moral values is hospitality that accommodates all people despite religious or social differences” (JZ, Interview 02 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: So, how can this help in bringing about ecumenism?** “I am saying hospitality has to do with the ability to accommodate the other and if churches are hospitable like the Karanga people do, they can easily accommodate one another helping each other as they work together” (JZ, Interview 02 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). He further argued that hospitality is closely linked with *diakonia* by the local churches, when they are serving the poor and the needy, particularly, the elderly, widows and orphans (JZ, Interview 02 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: Can you please elaborate on this matter?** For JZ, hospitality like works *diakonia* programs that mobilize resources to help the poor and churches in the spirit of hospitality can come together to achieve more by pooling their resources together to help the poor. This is done without the

marginalization of denominations, but they seek to work together hospitably (Interview 02 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation).

DB, MM, and LM identified *humwe* as a unifying cultural activity among the rural Karanga people that may promote local ecumenism in Mberengwa. *Humwe* is a general cultural phenomenon of cooperation among the Karanga people in Mberengwa (MM, Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). According to LM, *humwe* is about working together, assisting one another in ploughing or harvesting and mourning together is meant to help and increase productivity that will sustain both the family and community. This culture helps bring churches together by working together as neighbours in the local community (Interview 24 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). This was further explained by MM (warmly and calmly) saying that *humwe* works like *mapira* (occasions of ancestral veneration or rituals¹⁹) whereby family, relatives, and neighbours are invited to attend and collectively work together. This culture of working together during work in the fields and religious rituals is entrenched in Karanga's lifestyle in such a way that it promotes the spirit of local ecumenism (MM, Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). With this communal spirit of working together, churches invite one another for revival or events such as weddings at their local congregations (MM, Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation).

There were some unhelpful responses from LM and MT that the two participants failed to link with the cultural influence on the ecumenical engagement. I could not take them because they were detailed discussions emphasizing cultural lifestyle. Further interrogations could not help and make them explain the connection between cultural values and local ecumenical engagement.

6.2.5 Question: What are the missional factors that influence the ELCZ to participate in local ecumenism? *Ndeipi mibato yekereke kana kuti zvinofanigwa kereke zvingakurudzira kereke yamaLutera kupinda mumubatanidzwa namamwe makereke munharaunda?*

¹⁹ English interpretation of *mapira* from the researcher.

GT, DB, PP and CB's responses to this question centered on the definition of mission, Diakonia and specific missional focus of the ELCZ like education, preaching the gospel and healing. For GT, mission refers to "the missio Dei. The mission of God knows no boundaries and it calls the whole church meaning the ELCZ and other local denominations to be involved" (Interview 15 March 2019: WhatsApp conversation). He was then quick to point to one of the articles in the ELCZ constitution of 2012. The aim is "to cooperate and have mutual understanding with other churches (denominations) for the extension of the kingdom of God" (Article 4:2) (ELCZ 2012). Interviewer: Can you say more about the ELCZ's article you quoted. "I mean that the extension of God's kingdom includes preaching the gospel through evangelism and work of Diakonia we do as the ELCZ" (GT, Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). According to DB, The ELCZ has a three-pronged approach to mission, namely, evangelism, education and health (Interview 20 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). From its inception in 1903, the ELCZ built schools, hospitals and the chapels in Mberengwa. Through the provision of schools and hospitals, the ELCZ provides education to the communities in Mberengwa, and its health care facilities are free to all members of the community including none-ELCZ members (DB, Interview 20 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). Members of other denominations particularly those who go to the ELCZ mission schools or hospitals have opportunities to attend the ELCZ church services as well as receiving pastoral ministry from the ELCZ chaplains at Mnene, Masase and Musume hospitals (CB, Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: May you please explain on pastoral ministry?** "I mean, chaplains at our institutions such as hospitals pray and offer counseling services to the sick and grieved who visit these hospitals. Sometimes they hold church services in the hospital chapel with those who accompany their relatives" (CB, Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). According to CB, medical attention and pastoral contact mean that those who attend these institutions identify with the ELCZ thereby promoting local ecumenism in Mberengwa (CB, Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation).

PP asserts that the local churches work together in making disciples through evangelism and soul-winning which is the core mission of the church (Interview 02 March 2019- Makuva: WhatsApp conversation). MC also supports PP's idea of mission involving spreading the gospel. For AK the invitation of speakers to present different topics during Vashandiri

Ruwadzano and Easter revivals and involvement of other denominations in outreach programs are part of the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement (Interview 05 March 2019- Chabwira: WhatsApp conversation). MM also argued that the preaching of the gospels calls for serious planning with denominational leaders meeting and plan together for such events (Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). Besides, the ELCZ fulfills this missional goal by coordinating and facilitating Bible study workshops through the ELCZ Masvingo Bible School in Mberengwa. These workshops are attended by the ELCZ and Zion church leaders and preachers (DB, Interview 20 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation).

JZ and GC suggested that the mission of the church involves diaconal work through pastoral care and social care for the community needs. The mission through Diakonia means “the provision of goods and services to help the poor, elderly, widows and orphans care for the sick” (JZ, Interview 02 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: But can the ELCZ fail to do it alone?** “Even though the ELCZ plays a big role in this area others are also doing the same. If we can do it together, we can do more” (JZ, Interview 02 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). “The ELCZ is strong in Diakonia projects coordinated by the LDS, such as irrigation gardens involving members from different denominations and non-Christians hence push denominations towards working together” (GC, Interview 08 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation). She further demonstrated that the ELCZ and other local denominations in her area mobilize food, clothing, and linen from members of different denominations and are distributed to the needy and prisoners across denominations. Therefore, the churches come together for the diaconal mission by joining hands in addressing the needs of the poor (GC, Interview 08 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation).

In support of the above argument, GC argued that the mission that brings churches together has more to do with serving human lives. She had this to say;

The mission of the church includes addressing issues that are a threat to life like social problems such as a funeral, health issues, and domestic violence. For example, in 2016 when an accident occurred along Mberengwa turn off-Zvishavane road, school children from Mberengwa offices lost their lives, we were all together united as churches and community. All the coffins came to the ELCZ chapel and all denominations and affected families gathered there for a memorial church service before burial. This was part of a mission to

comfort and bring healing to the grieving families in times of crisis (GC, Interview 08 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation).

Her response is closely related to MT's observation that pastors from the local denominations bring healing to the families through sharing responsibilities during funerals (MT, Interview 23 March 2019- Mutuvi: WhatsApp conversation).

However, the respondents like MM and LM bemoaned challenges that impede mission and ecumenism in Mberengwa. According to MM, ecumenical engagement lacks pastoral leadership to make local initiatives and have an organized and systematic form of ecumenism in their local parishes and congregations. She further argues that "with leadership, there could be pastoral meetings, and outings making programs such as pulpit exchange for the revival of local congregations" (MM, Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). According to LM, Churches tend to sideline each other for their background. Some are not accommodated in outreach and funeral programs because they are AICs or Pentecostals (LM, Interview 24 February 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation).

6.2.6 Question: What are the theological underpinnings for ELCZ ecumenical engagement? *Ndezvipi zviru muhwaro hwedzidziso yamaLutera zvinoita kereke yamaLutera ipinde mumubatanidzwa?*

Although MM, PP, and LM were unable to articulate a theological justification for ELCZ ecumenical engagement, the other seven participants identified the Lutheran ecclesiology, the body of Christ and theology of mission as key theological presuppositions for the ELCZ engaging in local ecumenism. Lutheran ecclesiology is partly based on the confession of the Apostles creed which brings all believers into the whole family of believers (AK, Interview 05 March 2019- Chabwira: WhatsApp conversation, GT, Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). GT extensively described how the Lutheran ecclesiology is central in ecumenical engagement. He (Putting more emphasis and showing seriousness) had this to say;

Lutheran ecclesiology is based on Article 3 of the Apostles Creed. The ELCZ belongs to the universal church and household of believers including Christians from all denominations in the world. There is no way it can avoid unity with other churches because they belong together. Secondly, the above excerpts that I have excerpted from the ELCZ Book of worship (Liturgia) oblige every confessing Lutheran to embrace ecumenism or cease to be one. This is plausible so be because they confess every Sunday (GT, Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation).

GT further argued that the confession of belief in the holy catholic and apostolic church brings the ELCZ believers into communion with other denominations confessing faith in Christ, making them members of the catholic and apostolic community (GT, Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation).

The holy catholic church is apostolic meaning that the church is united and sent out for a mission (GT, Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: Please can you help by explaining the above statement?** “The catholic church is the one that Jesus prayed for in John 17:20-23 to remain united and carry out its apostolic mission of preaching the love of God through Christ” (JZ, Interview 02 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation, GT, Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). For CB, churches need to work together to reach out to all people in the local communities. Therefore, the ELCZ seeks to unite with others for evangelism (CB, Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation).

According to CB and LM Christ is the foundation of the church because he called it into existence through their common faith in his name. CB emphasized that the Church (meaning all denominations confessing Christ²⁰) is called by Christ, into one baptism, therefore, every denomination belongs together through their faith in Christ (CB, Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: How does this help the ELCZ ecumenical engagement?** “It will promote ecumenism, the ELCZ pastors need to encourage ELCZ members to work with those of the similar faith in Christ” (CB, Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). Since all people are saved through Christ alone,

²⁰ Emphasis in brackets was made by the participant (CB)

therefore, they share common brotherhood and sisterhood in Christ (GC, Interview 08 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation). LM asserts that “Christ not a denomination or personality but the savior of all who believes in him. Our faith in Christ is the basis of our unity as the church” (Interview 24 February 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation).

The other clergy such as GT and DB kept on referring to the church as the body of Christ. The church that was called by Christ to be one through one faith and baptism forms the body of Christ. It is one united church with different members and gifts for its functions (GT, Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). The church can profess and identify with the body of Christ by being united. In all its diversity it represents the different members in a body, with specific parts for specific purposes and function. By working together, the church proclaims the unity of the body of Christ (DB, Interview 20 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). The various denominations are the parts of the body of Christ meant to different needs of the church and local community (GT, Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation).

Another theological underpinning for ecumenical engagement is based on the authority and centrality of scripture in the ELCZ as argued by MT and GC. They both agree that local churches can easily unite because a majority of local denominations preach from the same Bible addressing the same community except Madzibaba and Johane Masowe (GC, Interview 08 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation). MT argued that: Our theological foundation is on sola scriptura (by the scripture alone). We believe that human beings are saved by hearing the preached word of God from the Bible. Since local churches are preaching from the same Bible, we cannot segregate one another (Interview 23 March 2019- Mutuvi: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: What do you do with those who do not use the Bible?** MT (Laughing loudly) “*Iwe ungavadini kana vasingatendi bhaibheri nokuti kwandiri haisi church*” (What can you do with such people who do not believe in the Bible for me they are not a church²¹). **Interviewer: Do you mean, you do not involve them or consider working together with them?** MT (Doubtful) “We meet with them, but we do not involve them in our programs because they mislead people because they do not use the Bible” (Interview 23 March 2019- Mutuvi: WhatsApp conversation).

²¹ English translation in brackets from the interviewer.

6.2.7 Question: As a leader, in what ways do you encourage your members to participate in local ecumenism? *Iwe somutungamiri weboka izhira dzipi dzaunokurudzira vatendi kuti vabate pamwe chete navamwe mumubatanizwa wemakereke munharaunda?*

This question required the member of the clergy to relate the ways he/she encourages the ELCZ membership under his/her leadership to be actively involved in the local ecumenical movement. MM claimed that without closely working together with others the ELCZ growth will be hampered. By inviting speakers from other denominations gives the ELCZ a chance to benefit from different gifts from other Christians in the local denominations thereby promoting growth. For that reason, she encourages the various ELCZ to invite speakers from outside their denominations and promote local ecumenical engagement (MM, Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). PP also argued that besides the invitation of preachers to the ELCZ parish conferences he encourages his parishioners to be more involved in ecumenical activities with other local denominations (Interview 02 March 2019- Makuva: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: Which other activities are done together?** “We are always together when we pray for our children during the examination period, visit the sick in the villages and attending funerals together” (PP, Interview 02 March 2019- Makuva: WhatsApp conversation). GT quickly pointed that, he only “invite speakers from other denominations in consultation with the episcopal” because of the 2016 episcopal letter which was circulated to all pastors to desist extending invitation of non-ELCZ speakers to their parish revivals and conferences (Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: Do you always get a go-ahead or sometimes your request is denied?** “So far the bishop has never turned down my request” (GT, Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: How often do you invite none ELCZ speakers?** (The voice sounds uncomfortable) “I try to use what I have and sometimes opt to invite ELCZ members and pastors outside my parish to avoid complicating matters. So, I do sparingly invite speakers outside the ELCZ” (GT, Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation).

According to CB, another way of encouraging the ELCZ members' participation in local ecumenism is by having clergy free fellowship with leaders from other denominations. These local church leaders' fellowships help members of the respective local denominations to be united (CB, Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). JZ and MC argue that they discourage disunity by encouraging members to be actively involved in local ecumenical activities and also walk together with their members in activities such as local denominational fellowships, prayers for the rain and home visits (JZ, Interview 02 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation, AK, Interview 05 March 2019- Chabwira: WhatsApp conversation).

LM and GC emphasized that they encourage members by teaching them their mandate of being the light of the world through their participation in attending each other's needs. They do that through participation in meeting the social and spiritual needs across denominations. Bearing with others in their problems is a way of showing their light fulfilling their Christian calling (Matthew 5:16) (LM, Interview 24 February 2019-Mataga: WhatsApp conversation).

DB was quick to point out that, despite their efforts to impress and encourage the clergy to be more active in ecumenical engagement some of the members of the clergy resist the call and it discourages the members of the local congregations (Interview 20 March 2019: WhatsApp conversation). DB (Worriedly) further maintains that the ELCZ clergy work well with other mainline pastors like those from the Methodist church but openly despise AICs and Pentecostal denominations (Interview 20 March 2019: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: How then do you encourage them?** "We do that in our pastors' meetings, showing them the need to unite with others as core workers in the vineyard" (DB, Interview 20 March 2019: WhatsApp conversation). While he appreciated local ecumenical engagement, MT argued that there is a need to guard to protect Lutheran identity and doctrine because it may be diluted or lost. This is done to prevent the members from being misled by teachings such as spectacular miracles and prophecies that destroy unity among family members (MT, Interview 23 March 2019- Mutuvi: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: Can one do that without discouraging ecumenism?** (With confidence) "We teach them to learn what is good and in line with our doctrine and discourage what is out of line. *Chokwadi hachiputsi vukama*" (Truth does not

harm human relationships²²) (MT, Interview 23 March 2019- Mutuvi: WhatsApp conversation).

6.2.8 Question: What are the benefits of the local ecumenical engagement? (Both in the church and community at large). *Imi munofunga kuti mubatanidzwa wamakereke unobatsireyi mukereke nomunharaunda?*

GT commented that in his view the tensions that are brought out by religious and political differences in society can only be addressed through ecumenical engagement to promote peace among the people (Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). His view is supported by MT advancing that, local ecumenism creates peaceful coexistence and harmonious living among members of different denominations (Interview 23 March 2019- Mutuvi: WhatsApp conversation). The question of unity is summed up by DB when he says, local ecumenism “promotes the unity of the body of Christ and increases tolerance and unity in diversity. It increases the chances of networking and working together in harmony” (Interview 20 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). Local ecumenical engagement helps members from different denominations to understand denominational similarities and differences thereby reducing suspicion, hatred, competition, and transfer of members from one denomination to the other (MM, Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: What form of suspicion can be found among denominations?** MM (With Amazement) “Don’t you know that these days there is Satanism? When Christians do not understand other churches, they tend to suspect them of Satanism, and evil deeds”

On the one hand, GT argues that Church unity enables churches to speak with one voice addressing challenges faced by the communities. “Churches become a strong prophetic voice always ignored in the current political sphere in Zimbabwe” (GT, Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). On the other hand, BD held that local ecumenism

²² Translation to English from the Interviewer

increases the chances of Christians working together for community development (Interview 20 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). For JZ and DB, local denominations cease competition and pool their resources together and promote socio-economic development in the community (JZ, Interview 02 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation, DB, Interview 20 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: It seems that is an ELCZ program, in what ways are other denominations involved?** “Although the programs are an initiative of the ELCZ through the LDS, they are directed to the community including members of other denominations. Food gardens are given to the community and are owned and run by members of the community giving it ecumenical participation” (DB, Interview 20 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). Another unique contribution came from LM when he argues that: “We are also able to contribute and meet the needs of the poor like orphans, through Child Care Protection²³ led by a pastor of another church hence churches mobilized resources to help vulnerable children with school fees, stationery and uniforms” (Interview 24 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). GT concurs with LM as he avers that charitable programs can only thrive through ecumenical movement. Christians will feel free to participate in resource mobilization as their denominations are represented (GT, Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation).

Also, local ecumenism is described as a source of unity that draws churches into cooperation giving each other different support systems (LM, Interview 24 February 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). In his parish, the ELCZ was assisted in construction projects. They received human and material resources for the construction of the parish chapel from the Zion church (LM, Interview 24 February 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). LM further argued that “Iron sharpens iron, hence members from different denominations will help and challenge one another in the word”. He added the ELCZ visibility during ecumenical evangelism activities leads to numerical growth because church unity attracts backsliders and new members (LM, Interview 24 February 2019-Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). Besides denominational differences churches help one another in social and spiritual aspects. GC has this to say on spiritual support; “Local ecumenism provides spiritual and emotional support among believers and the community. They can come together comforting one another during

²³ Child Care Protection is a local community organization in Mberengwa West, meant to assist the less fortunate children identified from the local communities. Churches do some fundraising to raise funds for this organization. It pays fees and buy stationery for those children.

times of sorrow like sickness and death. They comfort one another across their denominations” (Interview 08 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation).

Local ecumenism provides a platform for economic empowerment through community and church-based organizations (GC, Interview 08 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation). She insisted that;

There is economic empowerment through economic groups of local financial investment known as Fushai established by Oxfam, an NGO for community empowerment. People from the community including members of different denominations come together monthly and put money together and give out short loans to members of the group and get some little interest. There is also another interdenominational women organization known as Women of Valor where women contribute money every month taking turns to go out to make some orders for their businesses or buy building materials and household goods. This has helped women to have some small businesses to make their families survive in these hard times in Zimbabwe. Some women have used the money for building houses at Mataga growth point and Mberengwa and Jeka business centers in Mberengwa (GC, Interview 08 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation).

The programs enable Christians to come together and boost women's economic growth by generating financial resources to support their families and their churches (GC, Interview 08 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation).

6.2.9 Question: Do you think the ELCZ members are interested in local ecumenical engagement? *Sokuvona kwako unofunga here kuti nhengo dzekereke yamaLutera dzinofarira mubatanidzwa womunharaunda?*

Eight out of ten members of the clergy agreed that the ELCZ membership are interested to work with other denominations and when they have an opportunity they actively participate in

ecumenical activities. Their general participation is witnessed by their attendance at funerals, and local ecumenical prayer meetings (GT, Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). However, the worrisome fact is that some of them are prepared to work with other mainline denominations only and avoid those of AIC and Pentecostal backgrounds (DB, Interview 20 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation, MM, Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). For DB, the ELCZ members need to be taught the basics and dynamics of ecumenism for them to be able to accommodate those of non-mainline traditions (Interview 20 March 2019-Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). But PP thought that the reasons for the ELCZ members to shun AICs and Pentecostal churches is their emphasis on miracles and prophecies. Prophets always find the enemy and one who causes misfortune within the family resulting in conflicts and division among the family members (PP, Interview 02 March 2019- Makuva: WhatsApp conversation). In some instances, they are interested to attend and actively participate because of their relationships. “They have their aunties and uncles in those other denominations” (CB, Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). According to MT, they are interested but they tend to dominate others and override decisions undermining those in charge (MT, Interview 23 March 2019: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: Why do you think that they do not observe the leadership of the event?** “They always feel special because a majority of them are educated and they always feel they can run the programs better than leaders from other denominations” (MT, Interview 23 March 2019: WhatsApp conversation).

Among other programs, Vashandiri is singled out as one of the ELCZ organs that is always engaged in local ecumenism (GC, Interview 08 March 2019: WhatsApp conversation, MM, Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). They take initiative by inviting members of other denominations to help them during their revivals (GC, Interview 08 March 2019: WhatsApp conversation). According to GT;

Vashandiri has no problem with local ecumenism, but men are reserved and rigid to accommodate others from different denominations. They do fundraising projects with other denominations. If they are invited for fellowship with other denominations in their numbers while men resent attending gathering outside the ELCZ (Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation).

Finally, MM maintained that: “I can rate participation below 60% especially of the old people who are hesitant. They fear the challenge of other denominations and hold on to the superiority mindset of thinking that they belong to a better denomination with educated pastors, church property like chapels and schools” (Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). She further observes that there is a general sense of pride and superiority complex that impedes ecumenical engagement between the ELCZ and other local denominations (MM, Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation).

6.3. ELCZ laity responses.

This section relates the responses of the ELCZ lay leadership which were interviewed. These were selected among those who are in the organ committees hence responses came from Vashandiri, Zvapupu, and Youth leaders. Their names are represented by pseudo names in the form of initials.

<p>6.3.1 What is your understanding of local denominations working together? <i>Mukuhwisisa kwako mubatanidzwa wemakereke zvinobvireyi?</i></p>
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According to AM, “ecumenism is mubatanidzwa yamakereke²⁴ - meaning the union of churches in a given local area” (Interview 12 February 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). Amongst the popular responses was the aspect of a fellowship of denominations. JM defined ecumenism as “a fellowship of denominations with similar denominational practices like mainline churches or Pentecostals sharing the word and ideas of carrying out ministry” (Interview 12 February 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). RM added that “ecumenism is sharing common Christian views such as day of worship and pastoral services” (Interview 13 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: May you please clarify that point?** “I mean that as Christians we believe in Christ and use the same Bible, the word of God and our pastors can serve or preach to all believers” (RM, Interview 13 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). SS also argued that “ecumenism is different

²⁴ Shona emphasis by the participant

denominational fellowships. Denominations come together encouraging each other in ministry including supporting one another without looking down at each other's differences" (Interview 19 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). HM adds the aspect of fellowship and "working together" of different denominations (Interview 04 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: In view what is the difference between church fellowship and working together?** HM, "Fellowship involves worship and sharing word and prayers while working together has to do with churches coming together doing community projects" (HM, Interview 04 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation).

6.3.2 On what occasions does the ELCZ work together with other local denominations? Which churches and if not why? *Ndaapi makereke anoita mubatanidzwa nekereke yamaLutera munharaunda?*

Seventy-five percent of the participants maintained that denominations work together across denominational groupings such as AICs, Mainline, and Pentecostal churches. One other key observation made by these respondents is that the End Time Message and the SDA do not usually take part in ecumenical activities taking place among the local denominations. JB of Bvumbura parish averred that the ELCZ works together with the Baptist and Zion during Christmas parties, the celebration of the birth of a child, funerals, nyaradzo and tombstone unveiling. He further stated that these denominations come together when going out on evangelism campaigns in their local communities (Interview 18 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). According to AM, meetings such as wedding and birthday parties, field days, school development, political and ward community meetings are opportunities for local ecumenical engagement. Thus, during these meetings, one of the church leaders from across the denominational divide are requested to give opening and closing devotions (Interview 12 February 2019-Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). RM noted that pastors share responsibilities and their members coordinate each other designating duties as groups and individuals during such social events. (Interview 13 March 2019-Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). RR added that;

Although it is weak, Vashandiri has a union fellowship with apostolic church, Zion, and Baptist. Visiting other churches like Zion during their functions. Meeting teaching each other about living together and household care. Others like SDA, End Time Message, Habakkuk resent the ELCZ practices of women leadership and the ELCZ infant baptism by sprinkling hence do not want to join our local fellowships (Interview 27 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation).

In some parishes, local denominations work together when mobilizing food and clothing to meet the needs of the poor and orphans (HM, Interview 04 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). The same argument was brought forward by four other participants who argued that the social ecumenical meetings during funerals and memorial services are accidental, there is a need for churches to organize their meetings. “Even the prayers for rain are coordinated by the local chief and the village headmen who invite denominations to come together for the event” (RM, Interview 10 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). MC (Confidently) cited problems of jealousy among church members and lack of good social relations and communication among church leaders as causes for lack of organized ecumenical movement (Interview 10 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation). But for MD, the failure to have planned meetings in his parish and others around maybe as a result of doctrinal differences (Interview 22 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation).

RM emphasized the discouragement of what he thought was the ELCZ leadership failure to open space for local ecumenical engagement. He argued that;

When the youths make some efforts to invite other youths and preachers from other denominations especially from Pentecostal churches like ZAOGA and AFM for all-night revivals, the pastor and local church leadership discourage it. They do not want us to fellowship with Christians of different doctrinal backgrounds. Our pastor is against prophecy, healing, and deliverance (RM, Interview 10 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation).

Interviewer: Besides the pastor who do you mean as local church leadership? RM (raising her voice) “Members of the parish council especially the elders who work closely with the pastor” (Interview 10 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation).

Another respondent, RS, a leader of Zvapupu confirmed that they are only allowed to invite speakers and work together with none other than mainline denominations such as the Baptist, Church of Christ and the Roman Catholic churches (Interview 20 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation).

Another youth leader, WM also confessed that ecumenical engagement is disturbed by the ELCZ emphasis on the differences between the mainline denominations and the local Pentecostals churches such as AFM and ZAOGA. She was also disappointed that the differences were not biblical but based on church traditions (WM, Interview 10 March 2019- Chabwira: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: Which differences do you think are not biblical?** “I mean things such as mass prayer and order of service” (WM, Interview 10 March 2019-Chabwira: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: In your view, do you think denominational practices do not divide local denominations?** “Yes, since we believe in the Bible which is used by many Christians. We should not allow ourselves to fight for the things that come from human beings while God’s word is calling us to be united” (WM, Interview 10 March 2019-Chabwira: WhatsApp conversation).

For JM, unless local denominations have organized and have diarized events like the urban churches do, there is no ecumenism taking place. She further argued that “ecumenism only happens in towns and not in the rural areas” (Interview 12 February 2019-Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: But you said when churches meet and work together is a form of ecumenism?** HM, “Yes, but I think ecumenism needs to be orderly with formal meetings. I have seen that in towns where churches organize interdenominational gatherings led by pastors. Locally, we have never had such an event” (Interview 12 February 2019-Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). According to WM, “effective ecumenism should be well organized like meetings organized by Dr. Mtata²⁵ and the ZCC in urban areas but here we meet in homes for family matters” (WM, Interview 10 March 2019-Chabwira: WhatsApp conversation). However, MC pointed out that they held a combined revival with the local Baptist church at the congregational level, but it was once and long ago (Interview 10 March 2019-Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation). RR noted that one of their congregations have annual service exchange programs whereby the ELCZ visit and attend a Zion Sunday service and the Zion

²⁵ Rev Dr Kenneth Mtata is the General Secretary of the Zimbabwe Council of churches. He is an ordained minister from the ELCZ.

congregation also visit this sister congregation for service (Interview 27 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). Similarly, OD said, their congregation has fellowship with other mainline churches and local Pentecostals churches during the World day of prayer (Interview 04 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation).

6.3.3 Are there occasions when local churches hold formal church services together?

Imi samakereke ari munharunda pane nguva dzamunishumira pamwe chete kana rimwe zuva paunovungana makereke samakereke ari munharaunda here?

Five participants have concurred that only individual visitors participate in the ELCZ formal services and the ELCZ members will as well do so after visiting another local denomination. According to SS, the ELCZ members attend other local denominations' formal services when other congregation members have gone for a conference outside the parish and no local services are held (Interview 19 March 2019-Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). In addition, RM argued that "only those invited to give lessons during a conferences would also attend our Sunday worship services" (Interview 10 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation).

While AM and MD would say no services are held in their parishes without further explanations or giving reasons, TM had this to say; "Pastor, are you a Lutheran?, we do not need to do that because we follow our liturgy and they have their services and liturgy" (Interview 10 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation). One unique contribution to this question came from RR who maintained that in their parish only one congregation is involved in exchange service programs. She said, "We do not have such fellowships at the parish level. But one of our congregations does service exchange with Zion. Once in a year, they visit Zion and the Zion visit the ELCZ (Interview 27 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: How come the congregation manages to do it and not the parish?** RR (relaxed but confidently) "This is because of their close relationship at home as family and neighbours, and some members have come out of the same ELCZ congregation because they had polygamy" (Interview 27 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation).

Similarly, OD observed that in one of their congregations, local denominations have fellowship on only one event a year. He argued that;

On *Munyengerero wepasi rose* (World Day of Prayer²⁶) both the local mainline and Pentecostal churches come together for prayers in the ELCZ chapel. They only assemble for the word and prayers during these services. They do not follow the ELCZ or other denomination's liturgical prayers and proceedings (Interview 04 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation).

6.3.4 What do you think are the reasons for the ELCZ participation in working together with local denominations? *Unofunga kuti zvingava zvikonzero zvipi zvinoita kuti kereke yamaLutera ide kupinda mumubatanidzwa nemamwe makereke?*

MD suggested that ecumenism is an expression of church unity that testifies Christian faith in one God whom they all worship. The ELCZ strives for church unity because it is found in the same faith with other local denominations (Interview 22 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). MD further argued that the ELCZ seeks to build relationships with other denominations to be a true witness of God's love (Interview 22 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). This was buttressed by OD who argued that churches desire to work together as a testimony of fighting one common enemy and one common vision of building God's kingdom by "seeking righteousness because before God there is only one holy catholic church without blemish" (OD, Interview 04 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation).

For JM, the ELCZ is involved in local ecumenism to fulfill its mission and promote revival amongst Christian denominations. The mission of the church is to spread the Gospel (Interview 12 February 2019-Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). Therefore, "the ELCZ needs others in its work of preaching the gospel to the whole world" (JM, Interview 12 February 2019-Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). HM argued that;

²⁶ English translation from the researcher

To fulfill the mission of the church like spreading the gospel there is a need for church unity. There is a need to work together in community development like contributing to the building of clinics in the local community. Peaceful co-existence can only be experienced when churches work together in the local community (Interview 04 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation).

These tend to be unifying factors for local churches promoting good working relationships (HM, Interview 04 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation).

Christians revive and strengthen one another through ecumenical engagement and sharing ideas on leadership, infrastructural development and styles of worship (MC, Interview 10 March 2019-Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation, RS, Interview 20 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation). From the other mainline denominations, the ELCZ will learn the ideas about leadership, and infrastructure development while other churches will learn the same from the ELCZ churches (RS, Interview 20 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation). Furthermore, the ELCZ would learn new ways of teachings on stewardship, giving, cell group fellowship and different approaches to home visits (JB, Interview 18 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). RR believed that the ELCZ has a lot to offer in local ecumenical engagement because of its resources. In a nutshell, she argued that;

Among the ELCZ members are teachers and nurses and well-trained pastors with degrees. Local ecumenism allows these ELCZ members to share their leadership and teaching skills with other denominations. The ELCZ has a strong teaching background that can help other churches like the AICs to spend more time on preaching and teaching instead of singing and dancing (RR, Interview 27 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation).

SS maintained that ecumenism helps the ELCZ to learn how to improve or reinvent its ways of doing a thing to retain its youths who migrate to other newly found denominations. Among other issues were mass praying and fasting, all-night prayers and pastors laying hands when praying for their congregants (Interview 19 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation).

For MC, the ELCZ is there to share ideas and skills in ministry with other local denominations. Some of the ideas include ways of bringing back the backsliders and keeping members active within the church. Furthermore, there is a sharing of skills in preaching, teaching and Christian

leadership (MC, Interview 10 March 2019-Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation). On the whole, churches will be networked and continue learning from one another different ways of running their various programs and projects (AM, Interview 12 February 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: Would you please give examples of such programs?** AM, “Some denominations are good in organizing and decorating conference venues and running wedding programs. As you can see how we now decorate our churches, the ELCZ has learned a lot from ZAOGA when it comes to the decoration of venues” (AM, Interview 12 February 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation).

6.3.5 In your view are there any Karanga cultural factors that may influence or impede ELCZ local ecumenism in Mberengwa? *Semaonero pane zvine chokuita netsika namagariro evaKaranga zvinokurudzira kana kukonesa kuti kereke yamaLutera ide kudyidzana nedzimwe kereke munharaunda muMberengwa?*

Fourteen out of fifteen interviewed leaders agreed that the Karanga culture had significant input towards the ELCZ ecumenical engagement in Mberengwa. JM believed that the various Karanga cultural values are not far from the biblical and Christian values that draw people closer to one another and these also have an influence on local ecumenism (Interview 12 February 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). She argued that “the Karanga encourage a love for one another and visiting one another and care for the sick bring about unity in the family and community. This kind of love also is central in the Christian life” (Interview 12 February 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation).

JB shared that the ELCZ’s participation in local ecumenism could be influenced by Karanga communal life. He argued that the Karanga culture emphasizes love among relatives and people in general despite their socio-economic and religious differences (Interview 18 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). The point was supported by MD who asserted that ecumenism may be based on family and community unity that involves living together, interdependence and helping one another (Interview 22 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). MD made a quick comment that this communal lifestyle helps in ecumenical

engagement is disturbed by church leadership that does not promote it because of being conservative and lack of good public relations (MD, Interview 22 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: May you please clarify who are you referring to as church leaders?** MD, “It is you, pastors who always tell us not to be like Zionists and Pentecostals. Do you know that sometimes you confuse us by your comments about other denominations?” (Interview 22 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: How do you think the pastors should do in your view?** MD, “Pastors are the torchbearers should show us light as church family leaders who promote love for one another”. According to RR, it is within the Karanga culture that the community is responsible to nurture the children that are born or living in the local community. “*Tinoziva kuti mwana ndewe munhu wose*” meaning a child born in the community belongs to everybody and therefore children are a community’s responsibility²⁷ (Interview 27 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: Help me to understand how this may help local ecumenism?** RR (with much emphasis);

Mufundisi, churches can contribute in shaping young people to grow up in the fear of God and respecting elders. Traditionally, it was known that if a child does not listen to his/her parents someone respected in the family or community was called and the intervention would be helpful. In this case, pastors across local denominations can be called to help teach and advise our children in all these local churches. This is only possible when denominations are free to work together (Interview 27 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation).

AM, RR, and MD posit that the Karanga value of hospitality; welcoming and accommodating one another is also important when it comes to local ecumenical engagement in Mberengwa. AM asserts that “through their popular sayings like “*Muenzi haapedzi dura*”²⁸ - encourage hospitality among the Karanga and promote unconditional loving and supportive of the other” (Interview 12 February 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: How does this help the ELCZ ecumenical engagement?** AM, “I am thinking of hospitality is humanely spirit of accommodating one another as children of God from different denominations”. On the

²⁷ English translation from the researcher.

²⁸ Muenzi haapedzi dura means a passer-by cannot cause depletion of family resources and neither can he/ she disturb the family lifestyle through the single visit.

same aspect of hospitality among the Karanga, RR argued that the Karanga lifestyle is full of hospitality since people visit one another and borrow and share their resources as a way of helping one another. For her churches among the Karanga still benefit the spirit of hospitality to enable them to work together hospitably through welcoming and sharing of resources (Interview 27 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation).

According to JB, the Karanga communal life promotes the spirit of solidarity and cooperation (Interview 18 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). These are signaled by *humwe* (community cooperation) working together as a community. “Humwe are cooperatives meant to help one another with labour and human power that will always unite families and community” (JB, Interview 18 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). He further attested that the communal solidarity and cooperation of the Karanga saw them helping the sick among them; and “help one another during weddings and marriage ceremonies where they bring their resources together for service” (JB, Interview 18 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). TV echoed the same point by pointing out that, *humwe* was done not only in the fields but also in other social gatherings like weddings that would see people working together (Interview 19 March 2019- Chabwira: WhatsApp conversation). SS points out that the desire for cooperation and life together makes it imperative to help one another in good and bad times. Therefore, the Karanga *humwe* fosters the spirit of working together between the ELCZ and other local denominations (SS, Interview 19 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation).

Four of the interviewed church leaders expressed the critical role of Karanga rituals in bringing people together and their valuable contribution towards local ecumenism in Mberengwa. Rituals and programs such as “*mapira* or *kurova guva* (rituals such as ancestral veneration ceremonies) and *zunde ramambo* (working for grain production²⁹) meant to help the poor or the community in general during drought always bring people together” (JB, Interview 18 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). RS quickly pointed out that the ELCZ has borrowed and converted some of the Karanga rituals such as *mamvuramvura*³⁰ and *kurova guva* converting them into memorial services and the unveiling of the tombstone are borrowed ceremonies which came after the burial (Interview 20 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp

²⁹ Translation from the participant.

³⁰ Karanga ritual carried out soon after burial meant to wash those who participated in the burial and their tools.

conversation). He further argued that these ceremonies continue to bring together and unite the Karanga people thereby contributing towards local ecumenical engagement as members of different denominations participate in them. The other two participants identified mutoro (the rainmaking ceremonies³¹) as one of the key rituals in Karanga culture that bring the community together with a desire to see themselves receiving good rains for a good harvest. AM summed it up by saying, “The Karanga tradition of asking for the rains used to be done by the community through mutoro held under a big tree in the locality has been borrowed by churches as they gather together and pray for the rains” (Interview 12 February 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). The point was supported by TM who maintained that the mutoro ritual has been converted into *munamoto wemvura* in which the local denominations like the Zion, ELCZ, and Methodist in Mberengwa gather together asking for rains from God (Interview 10 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation).

RM, MC, and RS pointed towards the role of health and healing in creating a platform for ecumenical engagement. RM argued that issues of health among the Karanga require communal attention (Interview 13 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). Like death, the family and community come together seeking solutions when one becomes ill (MC, Interview 10 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation). RM averred that “when sickness strikes the Karanga people may choose to go to the hospital or visit traditional healers or prophets. The moves are influenced by the family, church and community one belongs” (RM, Interview 13 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). This is a moment of convergence among the people in the community showing love and care for the sick despite denominational differences (RS, Interview 20 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation).

The Karanga people are cultured towards continuous learning and development. Their learning is promoted by the whole community through the elders and siblings (Interview 27 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). This culture and desire for learning are encouraged through many Karanga sayings like, “*Njere moto dzinogokwa kunavamwe*’ (ideas are like a fire which is borrowed from others). ‘*Kugara nhaka huvona dzavamwe*’ (whatever we do we learn from others around us³²)” (HM, Interview 04 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation).

³¹ English translation from the participant

³² English translation in the quotation from the participant.

The Karanga sayings mean that skills, knowledge, and wisdom are acquired from others³³. For HM, there are no denominations that have something to learn or give for effective ministry in the community (Interview 04 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation).

According to MC, the Karanga community leadership is obeyed and highly respected by everyone in the community as they are believed to be given by God and the ancestors (MC, Interview 10 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation). The culture of respecting elders and community leaders promotes ecumenism because local Christians accept and work with church leaders across the local denominations (MC, Interview 10 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation). She further argued that “the Karanga emphasis on love and respect without discrimination” is vital for bringing local churches together (Interview 10 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation).

6.3.6 What are the benefits of the ELCZ working together with other local denominations? *Ko mubatanidzwa wemakereke munharaunda unobatsireyi kukereke yaMalutera nokunharaunda?*

Among the benefits to the church are unity, spiritual growth, support, and cooperation. Local ecumenism brings together churches and communities to work as a unity (JM, Interview 12 February 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). OD averred that ecumenism is the building of the church into one family of God that encourages good relationships among and reducing hatred among Christians of different denominational backgrounds (Interview 04 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation).

The harmony created among local denominations acts as a motivation for people to turn to God leading to numerical growth in the church. “New converts will lead to church growth as ELCZ engage in evangelism programs with others in the local community” (HM, Interview 04 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). Spiritual growth is cultivated through fellowships when churches meet and share the word. In the process, others learn new ways of being the

³³ Summary interpretation by the interviewer.

church in terms of worship, service delivery and unity (RM, Interview 10 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). TV suggested that;

‘Zvikomo zvivakidzani zvinotambidzana mhute’ directly translated, mountains close by share mist is a Karanga saying to mean that we are always sharing experiences and influencing each other in one way or the other³⁴. The ELCZ can learn different teaching approaches and giving and tithing from other local denominations (Interview 19 March 2019- Chabwira: WhatsApp conversation).

However, Learning goes beyond issues of worship to include administration, organization of functions such as weddings and workshops (RM, Interview 13 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). TH summarized the various benefits of ecumenism when he said;

Local denominations become united and have good working relationships. Some churches without trained pastors will get professional services from those that are trained. Members of the ELCZ would be openly assisted through prayers than secretly visiting prophets by night. Denominations complement each other in ministry. It gives some checks and balances on how the work of God is done in the community (Interview 20 March 2019- Chabwira: WhatsApp conversation).

Interviewer: What are the forms of checks and balances? TH, “Remember, some denominations go to extremes especially on healing. Some Mapostora will not send their members to the hospital claiming that they can be healed through holy water. This is dangerous because some infections need antibiotics from hospitals” (Interview 20 March 2019- Chabwira: WhatsApp conversation).

According to MC, local ecumenism allows Christians and local denominations to carry each other’s burdens in love and makes it easier to preach the love of God in the community. For her, local ecumenism helps Christians to support and help one another especially in times of suffering and need (MC, Interview 10 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation). JB gave an example of the support the ELCZ got from the Baptist and Zion when their parish had development projects. It was through the local ecumenical engagement that they got builders

³⁴ Translation was given by the participant

for free and some bags of cement during the construction of a toilet at their centre (Interview 02 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). TM also maintained that local ecumenism creates opportunities for community support of church development projects and general church programs (Interview 10 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation). This point was supported by WM who argued that through church unity the church gains recognition from the community and political leadership (Interview 10 March 2019- Chabwira: WhatsApp conversation).

6.3.7 Do you think your local pastor encourages local ecumenism? *Ko unofunga kuti mufundisi wako anokurudzira mubatanizwa wamakereke ari munharaunda here?*

Only one participant failed to comment on whether the local pastor is encouraging local ecumenism or not because she felt the pastor was neutral (TV, Interview 19 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation).

The other participant lamented;

There are no organized denominational meetings except by accident. He does not promote because if youths invite a non-Lutheran speaker for a revival meeting, the pastor calls the youth to redraw the program and remove all speakers from outside ELCZ. She bans outsiders from preaching in the ELCZ or from visiting other local denominations. She uses caricature and backbiting on other denominations when preaching (WM, Interview 10 March 2019- Chabwira: WhatsApp conversation).

For WM, the only way to have successful ecumenical engagement needed their pastors to be actively involved. According to SS, while the ELCZ members are interested in local ecumenical engagement they get demoralized by their pastor who discourages them from visiting other denominations. The pastors do not want to involve speakers from other denominations on the ELCZ revival programs; emphasizing differences between the ELCZ and other denominations like the Pentecostals and the AICs (Interview 19 March 2019- Mataga:

WhatsApp conversation). In support of this point, SS said, “Our pastor makes fun of what other denomination practices like falling shouting when praying” (SS, Interview 19 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). RR also maintained that their pastor does not allow them to have fellowship with other denominations and neither does he participate in the burial of none-ELCZ member members (Interview 27 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation).

Three participants suggested that pastors encourage local ecumenism since they are the ones who stamp invitation letters sent out to other denominations authorizing their presence. They also contended that their pastor’s encouragement to accommodate children from other denominations for Sunday school and catechumen classes, participation in local ecumenical outreaches and sharing duties with other denominational leaders at funerals and *nyaradzo* are signs supporting the ecumenical movement. However, TH emphasized that there was never an organized ecumenical program in their area (Interview 20 March 2019- Chabwira: WhatsApp conversation). Similarly, RS argued that;

Our pastor is fully behind ecumenism especially with local Pentecostal churches and those that do prophetic ministries. She has no problem with mass prayer. She makes visits and participate in Pentecostal meetings and is interested in healing and deliverance sessions which are introduced during our revivals (Interview 20 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation).

Interviewer: What are prophetic ministries? “I mean those movements like that of Makandiwa and Magaya” (RS, Interview 20 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation). **Interviewer: Are these movements established in Mberengwa?** “Makandiwa has a church group in Chingezi area and some people following him from our parish and our pastor is known for visiting Magaya services in Bulawayo” (RS, Interview 20 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation). OD indicated that their pastor in charge could only accommodate all mainline churches and Pentecostals but excluded Madzibaba and Johane Masowe (Interview 04 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). MD also said his pastor works closely with the Roman Catholic church, Church of Christ and Methodist church leaving out the Pentecostals and the AICs (Interview 22 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation).

HM observed that the ELCZ engages in selective ecumenical participation because of differences in doctrines and traditions between the ELCZ and Pentecostals and AICs. Secondly, AICs such as Madzibaba and Johane Masowe do not use the Bible but use prophecies and in some instances “the use stones for prayers” which our pastor considers as idolatry (HM, Interview 13 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). Thirdly, the Majority of AICs like Mapositora and Zion worship under trees hence “the pastor considered these places a health hazard” and does not want to associate with them nor visit them (HM, Interview 13 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation).

6.4 Conclusion

The chapter was meant to discuss the mission-cultural factors influencing ecumenism in Mberengwa. The objective is achieved by the presentation of the in-depth interviews carried out among the members of the clergy and lay leaders of the ELCZ central diocese in Mberengwa district. This chapter presented a summary of responses from the in-depth interviews conducted with the clergy and lay leaders of the ELCZ through WhatsApp conversations. It began with a narration of responses by the clergy and then those that were given by the lay leaders from the various parishes selected. Similar responses with different wording were clustered and summarized to make one response to the interview question to avoid repetition and ignoring answers from the different participants. Some follow up questions and the responses given were quoted verbatim. The Interviews were conducted at appointed times. Interviews took between half an hour to one hour depending on the network, participant concentration, and participation. The next chapter is on data analysis where the responses will be discussed and analyzed the following data analysis and procedures discussed in chapter five of this study.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ANALYSIS OF DATA

7.1 Introduction

Chapter six was dedicated to the presentation of data. The qualitative data presented was from the in-depth interviews carried out among the clergy and lay leadership of the ELCZ in Mberengwa. In this chapter, I give an analysis of the findings that answer specific research questions of the study from the in-depth interview responses presented in chapter six. The themes and sub-themes were developed from the research questions and the responses given by the participants. The voices of the scholars on specific themes and sub-themes are brought into dialogue and integrated with the responses from the participants. Scholars such as Kamwendo and Manyeruke (2017), Shoko (2008), Nhemachena (2013), and Gundani (1994) also discuss the different Karanga social and religious aspects that bring the family and community together and the different dynamics that take place when different denominations meet at the events such as funeral and post burial ceremonies. Participants' voices feature as a basis for the discussion or as a justification and evidence from the findings. The objective of this chapter is to discuss the major three factors that influence the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement and the socio-economic benefits of such local ecumenism in Mberengwa. The analysis is concretized by bringing the findings into dialogue with the existing ecumenical perspectives using a postcolonial theoretical framework. This chapter is contributing to creating new knowledge by drawing local ecumenical experiences and knowledge from the ELCZ, other local denominations and the Karanga people in Mberengwa that have not been carefully studied. The key to this knowledge is discussion on the influence of the Karanga culture in local ecumenical engagement.

7.2 Summary table of themes and sub-themes

Theme	Sub-themes
1. Forms of ecumenical activities in Mberengwa among the Karanga that involve the ELCZ.	1. Social events 2. Religious and Post-burial rituals

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Diaconal work 4. Revival and evangelism 5. Exchange visits 6. Home visits 7. Economic empowerment 8. World day of prayer service
2. The cultural factors that influence the ELCZ's ecumenical engagements in Mberengwa.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communitarianism 2. Marriage 3. <i>Humwe</i> 4. Hospitality 5. <i>Unhu</i> 6. Solidarity 7. Rituals
2. The missional factors that influence ecumenism in local ELCZ congregations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evangelism 2. Diaconal work
4. The ELCZ theological perspectives that shape its local ecumenical praxis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Article three of the Apostles creed 2. The body of Christ
5. Socio-political benefits of ecumenical activities involving the ELCZ local congregations in Mberengwa.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revival and learning (social and ecclesial benefit)

	2. Promotion of unity 3. Community development
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7.3 Theme 1. Forms of ecumenical activities in Mberengwa among the Karanga that involve the ELCZ.

Responses from both the clergy and the lay leaders suggest that various ecumenical activities are taking place but varying from one parish to the other and sometimes differ from one local congregation to the other in one parish. These activities range from community meetings church meetings, diaconal work, home visits, and church exchange services. The majority of meetings are unplanned activities without standing ecumenical leadership and written rules to guide them. The findings on forms of ecumenical activities in this study show that local ecumenical engagement takes a variety of forms that needs consideration and support from the church leadership at various levels. Otherwise, other participants do not take these forms of local ecumenism seriously or recognize them as ecumenism at all. But these are signs of visible church unity and cooperation that need to be promoted and giving insights on the diversity of ecumenicity to researchers.

7.3.1 Sub-theme 1. Social gatherings

Among the social gatherings identified are community meetings, school meetings, weddings and funerals where members of different denominations converge as a result of community events. These meetings have different dynamics since some of them like community, school meetings and funerals do not exclude anybody from the community. But it is at these meetings where denominations share their faith experiences through prayers and word. Commonly, church leaders from any of the local denominations are invited to conduct a devotional prayer during any of the above meetings. This forms a platform of sharing common faith despite that it is informal and accidental. The fact that this is generally accepted across the denominations and members of the local community become part of communion and cooperation in the form of social gatherings.

The outcome of the responses has shown that some meetings have different dynamics, in particular, the funeral meetings. There are specific forms of interactions during funerals. Congregants participate by reading the word, singing hymns and songs together while ministers take part in the procession, reading the word, preaching, praying and pronouncing blessings. While there is a general view that denominations sing together as indicated by eleven respondents. It is where the clergy and some members of denominations such as Madzibaba, SDA, and Mapostora do not take part in burial processes. However, JZ argued that during funerals all the local mainline, Pentecostal, AIC and denominations such as the SDA share responsibilities across denominational boundaries despite the differences (Interview 02 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). Four clergy respondents indicated that despite being able to work with other mainline and Pentecostal denominations they had problems in working with the End Time Message, Guta raMwari, Mapostora (Johane Masowe and Johane Marange), Madzibaba and the SDA. They may be present together but fail to sing the same songs or share responsibilities due to the above mentioned differences in traditions. Due to these religious intolerances, others are forced to step back and become observers and while the ELCZ or another church is taking an active role or leave the SDA doing everything in case it is a member of the SDA. Kamwendo and Manyeruke (2017) observed that the SDA lacks religious tolerance and do not accept other religious hymns other than theirs at funerals. The other unique tradition disturbing the ELCZ local ecumenism is that of Madzibaba's refusal of slaughtering beast and the use of musical instruments during funerals (Kamwendo and Manyeruke 2017). They further argue that;

Instead of slaughtering an animal, cabbage, beans, dried fish and chunks (soya mince) are consumed until burial day, since shedding blood is unacceptable during funerals. And also, the church sometimes has uncontrolled power, and influence at the expense of the family, and the community (especially given the ecumenical flair) (Kamwendo and Manyeruke 2017:159).

These denominational difference approaches to religious and social issues affect church relations and impede local ecumenical engagement. This does not only divide the church but family members who belong to these local churches which call for different practices on funerals.

Denominational traditions creates marginalization against local denominations. This becomes a process of othering, that is exclusivist (Punt 2016). Van Breda (2012:181) argues that “Othering effectively increases the distance between groups of people”. There is a need to find ways of resisting othering and promote unity among local denominations. The ELCZ needs to deliberately engage with these other denominations to understand their denominational stances that may be helpful or unhelpful for ecumenical engagement. The problems of non-participation of these denominations should not be accepted as normal. This can be discussed at a local denominational leadership level to find ways of coming together particularly during funerals where families need to experience the warmth of the presence of other community members from different denominations. In parishes where they can work together and crossing denominational barriers, there is inclusive ecumenical engagement. There is a need for parishes and ELCZ local leadership to learn from one another on how to accommodate churches such as SDA and End Time Message in local ecumenism during social gatherings instead of demonization of each other’s tradition that leads to inferiorization and marginalization. Crossing denominational boundaries and seek to unite and work together form part of postcolonial approaches to local ecumenism. It challenges the labeling of each other as a way of relegating as unimportant. When pastors and the laity across denominations fully participate in local social activity celebrating, singing or crying together, they become truly engaged in Christian unity at the local level. Postcolonial boundary-crossing promotes solidarity among Christians and people in the local community (Kang 2010). In Mberengwa, social gatherings shape how the local denomination express their unity and being church together. Waweru (2008) avers that Christian identity in the triune God as Christians and denominations today is marked by local unity and cooperation. She further asserts that this identity bears testimony to the world that watches the church in its ministry and mission. In this unity, different churches have found identity to others (Waweru 2008). During social gatherings, churches are voluntarily and involuntarily brought together and begin to cooperate in attending to social needs in the community thereby marking their Christian love and unity.

7.3.2 Sub-theme 2. Religious and post-burial rituals

Besides funerals social gatherings, religious rituals such as nyaradzo, tombstone unveiling are sites of local ecumenical engagement. In Mberengwa these are common religious rituals that bring the ELCZ and other denominations together. Religious rituals have become both the basis and result of ecumenical engagement. Prayers for rain are both religio-cultural and church

events since they are organized by local leaders who bring churches together. This is a conversion of mutoro the Karanga traditional rainmaking ceremony which used to involve Mhondoro, the ancestors and beer brewing as discussed in chapter two of this study. Since Christians no longer want to be associated with mutoro where beer is brewed, and the involvement of spirit mediums, the community has opted for prayers for rains in places designed for such ceremonies (Nhemachena 2013). As a result, local denominations collaborate as they participate in prayer for rain.

In chapter six, RM argued that nyaradzo (consolation service) and *dombo* (tombstone unveiling) were adopted by the ELCZ as a replacement of the Karanga rituals of mamvuramvura and kurova guva discussed in chapter two of this study (Interview 10 March 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). Local churches have different views hence not all of them participate in these post burial rituals. Particularly, on nyaradzo and tombstone unveiling the outcome demonstrate that both the clergy and the laity from Zion, Baptist, Church of Christ and Roman catholic churches actively work together with the ELCZ sharing responsibilities in form of preaching, reading the Word and praying. But the Methodists, Pentecostal churches, SDA and Mapostora do not want to be associated with nyaradzo or memorial service and the unveiling of the tombstone since they are a replica of the Karanga traditional religion or ATR (Gundani 1994, Dodo 2016). Togarasei and Chitando (2005) argue that these churches have taken a confrontational stance against the Karanga traditional religion and the ancestors hence they do not want to be associated with any of the post-burial rituals. Their stance is different from that of the ELCZ, the Roman Catholic and Zion which have negotiated their way and integrated their Christianity with the Karanga cultural context. On the one hand, post burial religious rituals have proved to be the foundation for the ELCZ ecumenical engagement with those churches that have contextualized their Christianity in terms of consolation services and the unveiling of the tombstone. On the other hand, the rituals have proved to be divisive since other denominations hold different views in such a way that the ritual fails to promote an all-inclusive local ecumenical engagement. Those who do not participate in these rituals are either viewed as outsiders or they view the ELCZ and those which actively take part in these rituals as outsiders who are ‘not true Christians’. Although these activities are divisive there is an extent to which the ELCZ has become involved in some postcolonial hybridity by accommodating both Karanga traditional rituals and other local denomination traditions on post-burial rituals. There is a shift from the western mindset and culture toward local culture to allow the local Karanga people to experience their faith according to their cultural lenses.

Post-burial rituals allow the ELCZ to be involved in boundary-crossing that promotes local ecumenism in Mberengwa.

7.3.3 Sub-theme 3. Diaconal work

The ELCZ runs diaconal projects through the LDS. In these community projects such as the livelihood gardens and chicken projects, all denominations participate as discussed in chapter six. LDS provides dams, boreholes, fencing and materials for toilet construction (LDS 2006, Dube 2006). It also provides some basic training on how to plant and harvest other vegetable species and leave the community to have ownership and run the projects. By serving the community through projects Christians are brought together and have the opportunity to share their life, their faith as they pray and work together.

Besides the LDS -ELCZ initiated diaconal projects, there are locally initiated diaconal projects by local denominations. Three respondents described various diaconal initiatives by local churches like mobilizing resources for disadvantaged children in schools, prisoners and those who are sick and poor. Waweru (2008:236) has this to say on such diaconal work among local denominations:

Service to humanity can bring together members of the mainline churches, Pentecostals, and Evangelicals, as well as the Roman Catholic church. Churches can work together to transform the lives of the people in the society. People are touched by churches in their hour of need, will understand the message of Christian love better.

This is part of a successful postcolonial ecumenical engagement whereby the ELCZ collaborates with churches across the denominational divide in serving communities through diaconal ministry. There is more embracing than marginalization due to denominational backgrounds. Through this local ecumenism, the church is fulfilling the mission of Christ as outlined in his manifesto at Nazareth; “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed”. (Luke 4:17–19). It does not only unite but it is the reason why churches must work together especially in local communities.

7.3.4 Sub-theme 4. Revivals and evangelism

Four clergy participants and two lay leaders agree that some of the ELCZ parishes invite speakers from outside the ELCZ to teach and preach particularly at Vashandiri revivals. However, these are said to come from the mainline and Pentecostal denominations. None of them come from AICs and sectarian denominations like the SDA. The AICs are marginalized for their lack of theological training and prophecies while the SDA is left out for its religious intolerance and rigidity especially on Saturday as its day of worship (DB, Interview 20 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). Those that are selected are regarded as well qualified and gifted to teach because of their theological education and denominational traditions. So, there is a systematic marginalization when it comes to the invitation of speakers. Although the attendance by such members might have been sanctioned by their respective denominations, it remains a partial form of ecumenism. It is only meant to tap the skills of certain individuals from other denominations rather than seeking to give and receive as a collective of these congregations or denominations at large. The major challenge is that different clergy determine who to invite. It leaves the laity with little or no room to accommodate other denominations because their decisions will be overridden by the clergy. They sometimes have either open- or closed-door policies. While some would be more tolerant to accept the invitation of speakers from other denominations other members of the clergy completely reject the idea of non-ELCZ preachers as a way of guarding the ELCZ identity. “Where there are ecumenical co-operation issues of denominational identity have been guarded jealously” (Zwana 2009:301). Those who want to guard denominational identity ban or remove none-ELCZ preachers to an extent of removing them from their organs’ programs when invited (WM, Interview 10 March 2019- Chabwira: WhatsApp conversation). Such challenges are fueled by those church officials emphasizing church identity over church unity (Jahnel 2008). It is detrimental to local ecumenism. The episcopal ban of the invitation of none- ELCZ has contributed to impeding local ecumenism in Mberengwa. Some members of the clergy are avoiding such an invitation to obey church leadership hence the rejection of outside speakers on the organ programs. On one hand, the clergy and Zvapupu have exhibited intolerance by not accommodating the none-ELCZ preachers. On the other hand, the youths and Vashandiri are more open to learning from other traditions as expressed by their fellowship with other local denominations and desire to invite speakers and preachers from the mainline and Pentecostal denominations and accepting invitations from these denominations.

As stated earlier in this chapter, the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement is either promoted or discouraged by the clergy by accommodating or excluding other denominations for different reasons. The question remains that these activities leave a lot to be desired to see the ELCZ engaging in an inclusive postcolonial ecumenical engagement. Instead, there is a problem of othering, “creating outsiders in different ways” (Punt 2016:37). As argued earlier, the question of othering is based on the desire to preserve denominational identity by sidelining other denominations as outsiders who disturb denominational identity and stability. The process of othering leads to the binary order of separating “the other” as unworthy and not representing the desired form of being the same with self (Punt 2016:49). In the case of denominations, the other becomes unauthentic and impure seeking to contaminate the self as indicated by statements such as “diluting doctrines and traditions”. Othering is designed to find reasons and justification of segregation and marginalization in for their denominational beliefs and affiliation, resulting in suspicion and mistrust among local Christian denominations. Instead, concepts of identity and the other should be seen and used to build interdependence in the phenomenon of local ecumenism.

Three clergy respondents have argued that evangelism is one of the three mission areas of the ELCZ hence it remains focused on evangelism. This is done through sharing the gospel with those who attend its mission centers as well as cooperating with other denominations in local evangelism outreaches that lead to membership growth. Two lay leaders also confirmed that the ELCZ gets new members through actively participating in local ecumenical evangelism programs in Mberengwa. This is ecumenism for the mission of preaching the gospel through outreach evangelism. This is one activity that brings the local congregations together. But again, it is localized in a few parishes with a limited number of denominations particularly mainline, Pentecostal and AICs such as Zion. The significance is that it is not a fellowship of denominations from common traditions, but it involves crossing denominational traditional boundaries across church groupings.

7.3.5 Sub-theme 5. Exchange visits

One of the ecumenical activities in ELCZ local congregations is exchange programs. These are done for different purposes. The one is a women fellowship between the ELCZ Vashandiri and women from other local denominations such as Baptist and Zion. This is done when they hold prayer meetings, fundraising programs. Ngada and Mofokeng (2000) observed that through

prayer meetings and music women are always open to local ecumenism while men remain rigid to their denominational affiliations. Vashandiri plays an outstanding role in ecumenical initiatives and participation in Mberengwa. But only two parishes are involved in women fellowship and exchange programs whereby they rotate fellowships in their local congregations. The ELCZ Vashandiri programs are examples of local ecumenical engagement even though it does not include other church organs.

Throughout Mberengwa, only one congregation does have an annual exchange service program when the ELCZ visits a Zion congregation and vice versa. Although this is limited it is commendable that there are such local ecumenical activities that bring churches into fellowship and participating in the other's liturgy. With clergy leadership, these fellowships can also be developed into parish programs that involve other congregations throughout the parish. The clergy are keen to protect denominational identity at the expense of ecumenical engagement. This is against the nature of their confession of in the Apostles Creed and popular Lutheran saying that states "To be Lutheran is to be ecumenical" (Shava 2017). Among the lay leaders, one respondent argued that the ELCZ cannot have such exchange programs since each denomination has its liturgical practices that are different from others. But participating in other's liturgy promotes learning from one another in the areas of worship and gospel preaching. As shown by the exchange program between Zion and ELCZ congregations, liturgical practices, doctrinal and traditional differences may not separate local people and denominations but contribute towards understanding and promoting Christian witness. This is one way of progressive phenomenon of local ecumenism involving two denominations and the whole congregational membership. It has a postcolonial approach because members from the two denominations seek to learn from one another than converting or changing their traditions for the other.

Pizzey (2016:237) argues that "In ecumenical practice, we do not meet denominations; we meet people. Spiritual ecumenism is about recognizing where one tradition may have a gift others can benefit from". When Christians and congregations are meeting during the exchange visits, they are engaging in a postcolonial and progressive local ecumenism because of their cooperation in worship. There is mutual recognition and respect of each other's tradition with congregations participate in the other's liturgy. The result is both mutual enrichment and hybridity through the sharing of values and Christian witness (Pizzey 2016). Duncan (2007) maintains that progressive ecumenical engagement and partnership will require repentance

(*metanoia*) as a turning from independence in relationship towards the interdependent community (*koinonia*) so that those involved can listen to each other as sisters and brothers in the Lord. This kind of hybridity involves respect for the autonomy and separate identity of these congregations as the hallmarks of interdependence in local ecumenism. Terfassa (2016) argues that an inclusive church goes beyond sharing buildings but also willing to share with others in worship and leadership. Elsewhere, this is common among the mainline denominations when they hold interdenominational worship services together (Zwana 2009). Zwana (2009) further argues that local ecumenism can only be seen to be progressive when denominations celebrate tolerance through co-operation holding fellowship meetings and revival conferences together. Sharing in worship and services is enriching to the host and the visitor as they share their understanding of God from denominational backgrounds and celebrating diversity and building blocks towards hybridity in worship. Sharing worship is part of sharing one's identity but does not mean being neutralized or neutralize the other's identity. But it allows the denominations to develop some hybrid form of worship through their songs and prayers and style of dancing. The outcome of congregational service exchange relates well with the concept of ecumenism that is common in literature on ecumenism. But it remains unique in that it involves AIC and a mainline denomination.

7.3.6 Sub-theme 6. Home visits

Some of the findings from three parishes illustrate that the ELCZ journeys with Zion, Baptist, Roman Catholic church and AFM in-home visits and home group fellowships. These involve pastoral care toward the sick and the bereaved. This is a common phenomenon of local ecumenism in Mberengwa. When one falls sick or faces life challenges such as loss of a loved, he/she is cared for by family, friends, neighbours and members of different denominations are welcome to do pastoral care. Such pastoral care constitutes the basic apostolic mission of the church allowing Christians to put their faith in practice (Avis 2005). The fact that it is done by local churches together, forms part of the ecumenical engagement. This form of local ecumenism is affirmed by Waweru. She observed that in local ecumenical engagement the churches work together to touch the outcasts, the sick oppressed and marginalized in the local communities (Mk 5:21-43) (Waweru 2008). The quest to heal the sick through pastoral care local denominations find themselves working together attending their members and neighbours. Although not sanctioned by the leadership the sick and their families sometimes visit the AIC prophets for spiritual and faith healing thereby bringing the ELCZ members into

interaction with such denominations. This is as a result of the recognition of the position of healers among the Karanga people as discussed in chapter two and six. These situations bring about religious tolerance and accommodation of one another and promote visible unity among local denominations. It results in some form of hybridity Christian worship as different denominations would share their traditions through preaching, praying and singing. On such occasions, there is convergence and divergence with learning from each other's traditions in local ecumenical engagement.

7.3.7 Sub-theme 7. Economic empowerment

Due to unemployment and economic challenges in Zimbabwe, churches have found it worth engaging in ecumenical activities to meet the household needs, particularly among women. The findings have shown that the ELCZ Vashandiri and women from the Baptist, ZAOGA, and Zion in Mberengwa have various fundraising and financial savings activities together. These initiatives include those led by women fellowships and those by NGOs such as Oxfam. Besides, MT indicated that they also hold parish fundraising programs where they invite local denominations to boost their budget (Interview 23 March 2019- Mutuvi: WhatsApp conversation). Their fundraising has nothing to do with individual budget but strive to sustain church programs. Above all, the above mentioned responses express that the local ecumenical fundraising programs are meant to benefit individuals, families and local congregations and parishes in Mberengwa. There are also the ELCZ's LDS run irrigation garden projects that involve community members across all denominations in the local community. They are initiated but are owned by the community members who run them. They contribute to food production and economic empowerment through the selling of garden products. In the process, members develop and strengthen their ecumenical relations. The three forms of economic empowerment do reflect on the issues that bring churches together. However, the other form is specifically for women hence leaves out other church members from local congregations.

7.3.8 Sub-theme 8. World day of prayer service

The ELZ has another opportunity for local ecumenical engagement during the world day of prayer as local denominations and congregations come together for fellowship. The responses came from two different parishes. It shows the ELCZ's commitment to local ecumenism by sharing its chapels for this annual event. However, the denominations organize a common liturgy to follow for that event other than following any of the denomination's liturgy. This

remains an ecumenical engagement of women from the mainline and Pentecostal denominations. That is so, because AICs in the area especially Mapostora are against this ecumenical engagement because they are against female leadership and preachers promoted by the mainline and Pentecostal denominations (GC, Interview 08 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation). The participating denominations are free to come because the service follows an agreed neutral liturgy to accommodate all denominations present. While this event does not encompass all members of the congregations but focuses on women, it remains a significant form of local ecumenism that is not found in other parishes.

Different local ecumenical activities in Mberengwa pull local denominations together as they attend to different aspects of Christian, family and community life. Therefore, there is both exclusive and inclusive local ecumenical engagement depending on the parish. On the one hand, exclusive local ecumenical engagement is expressed by selective invitation and participation during occasions such as congregational or parish revivals. “The assumption that is anti-ecumenical or simply exclusive is that those persons or churches that are not invited are beyond the pale, not ‘true’ Christians” (2018:217). It where there is marginalization other local denominations while others are given preference. On the other hand, inclusive ecumenism involves tolerance, sharing and mutuality that is ideal for Christian unity and the body of Christ. This is expressed during times crises such as funerals where each denomination presence is allowed to express its faith and participate in the proceedings. “Given the stress on inclusiveness in this situation, everyone present is treated equally; all are in spiritual co-operation; grassroots ecumenism prevails” (2018:217). In this instance denominational boundaries are temporarily suspended and all are accommodated hence inclusive local ecumenical engagement takes place.

Ecumenical activities vary from one parish to the other particularly depending on clergy leadership interests, community needs, and activities. What stood out is that besides doctrinal challenges there is a lack of initiative and leadership from the local clergy. Sometimes difficulties come from other denominations which are also rigid on their doctrines and traditions. The issue of denominational identity is also a sticking point when it comes to local ecumenical activities. Despite these challenges, this study has shown that different ELCZ parishes and congregations have found some ways of working together with other local denominations at the grassroots level especially during fellowships, conferences, diaconal programs and social gatherings such as funerals where the laity and the clergy share

responsibilities. From a postcolonial point of view, there is an interplay of othering through marginalization of other local denominations as well as hybridity whereby the ELCZ shares its identity by working together with denominations of different traditions despite all their marked different identities. It requires repentance, honesty and openness to allow the other to influence ways of worship and ways of doing mission in the local community. This creative way of interaction among local denominations leads to visible church unity that Jesus prayed for in John 17:21ff. Different local ecumenical activities are opportunities to foster a spirit of love and solidarity among local Christians so that they offer a unique unity and enlightening witness to the community.

7.4 The cultural factors that influence the ELCZ's local ecumenical engagements in Mberengwa.

In this study, culture refers to the way of life including the customs and beliefs of the Karanga people in Mberengwa. There was a general view that there are cultural factors that influence local ecumenism in Mberengwa. These factors include communitarian organization among the Karanga, marriages, the *unhu* ethic, hospitality, cooperation, solidarity, and religious rituals among others. Both the clergy and the lay leaders identified above aspects of the Karanga culture as key drivers of local ecumenism as they contribute to bringing people together. Since the members of the ELCZ in Mberengwa are of the Karanga background there is the interaction between their culture and ecumenical engagement.

7.4.1 Sub-theme 1. Communitarianism

Like other African societies, the Karanga people strive to live as a community. Nearly 80% of the responses expressed that family and community form the basis of unity among the Karanga that also play an important role in uniting Christians and local denominations. This is echoed by Magezi emphasizing that African communities strive to maintain relationships “starting with the nuclear family, moving outwards to the extended family, the clan, the tribe, gods, and spirits” (Magezi 2007:663). As discussed in chapters two and six of this study, Karanga's life of love and unity are built on a social web of *ukama*, relatedness and neighbourliness beginning with family, neighbours, and community at large. Community shapes one's identity, personhood, and existence (Mwandayi 2011, Mhaka 2010, Kamwendo and Manyeruke 2017). Unity cannot be separated from *ukama*, connectedness and living in harmony (Gelfand 1973). The role of the extended family and interdependence cannot be overemphasized since it has a

bearing in all stages of one's life among the Karanga. Since members strive to nourish their relationships by visiting and meeting as family, friends, and neighbours, this could easily be translated into denominational fellowships. Their convergence during times of joy, sorrows and attending to one another's problems gives them the ability to live in unity as family and community. Therefore it becomes easier to share the same communal love and experiences in the realm of local ecumenism. These are the people who belong to different local denominations with different traditions. But their response to each other's programs and challenges are guided by the bond of ukama and communal lifestyle. Christians across denominations converge during social events like funerals and caring for the sick as community members and denominational representatives.

The Karanga takes communal responsibility for their children through acceptance of all adults and communal leadership. This is motivated by the communal lifestyle through Karanga sayings like *Mwana ndewe munhu wose*, which means a child's life is a responsibility of every adult in the community (RR, (Interview 27 February 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). Every adult in the community is responsible for nurturing children of the community through teaching, encouraging good behavior and discouraging undesired behaviour (Mawere and van Stam 2016). Such involves active interaction with children, whether they are part of one's family or not (Mawere and van Stam 2016). Through local ecumenism, pastors assume community leadership that guides the young people. For that reason, pastoral ministry cuts across all denominations in the contexts of care for the sick and the bereaved as well as teaching the youths during revivals. Since Lutheran congregations provide opportunities for cooperation during weddings and funerals, they can expressly share other responsibilities with other ministers like community shepherding young people (youths) (Doe 2012). Pastoral care is closely related to the Karanga communal care that involves the parents, elders and community leaders who shepherd people across their family boundaries. The ELCZ youths and Vashandiri find it easier to invite pastors from other denominations to help them during revivals. By the same token, the ELCZ Sunday school teachers accommodate children from the community including those from non-Lutheran members.

Karanga communal life reflects on Christian unity in Christ. van Breda (2012:188) argues that "In Christ, there is but one group, living in perfect unity and harmony with God and the world. God's ultimate vision is for a community reconciled under Christ in which all divisions cease to be". Although denominations bring in different traditions dividing people, the Karanga

people are always united by their social web hence they can invite each other as individuals, families, and denominations for functions such as weddings as discussed earlier in this chapter. Communalism has biblical Christian roots. The early church grew to be a caring community learning to share their goods, learning the word together and living in harmony (Abraham 1998). Ecumenism entails a transformation of attitude of members from a different denomination that can be easily achieved through family and community relationships (Uzochukwu 2009). Karanga communal life is helpful to enhance postcolonial ecumenical engagement that allows different denominations to cross boundaries to meet each other's needs and promoting 'Christian love' (agape).

7.4.2 Sub-theme 2. Marriage

Among the Karanga marriage is one of the most important rituals taking place not only between the husband and wife but between the families. Family members including those of the extended families participate in the marriage process receiving and giving gifts to the new couple (Weinrich 1982). As it usually takes place between different families, marriage becomes a community event and involving diverse people. It is where people of different backgrounds become bonded in ukama (new web of relationship) based on marriage (Gelfand 1973). Among the Karanga, there is no restriction when it comes to marriage except encouraging marriage among the Karanga which is no longer adhered to by many due to urbanization, mobility, and modernity. Similarly, the ELCZ encourages marriage among its members but it does not restrict them from marrying non-ELCZ members. Consequently, when the ELCZ member gets married to a non-Lutheran member, local ecumenism begins with the marriage itself as the couple brings the different denominational traditions into interaction. Raedel (2016:178) avers that "marriage partners from different church traditions open up towards each other a shared space where their practical, even though only partial, participation in the life of the spouse's church becomes possible". He further argues that marriage and other social and business encounters have a bearing on local and global ecumenical engagements. Uzochukwu (2009:78) has this to say about the strength of marriage in ecumenism:

Such a richly endowed natural institution that makes African culture a citadel of human interdependence and solidarity deserves pride of place in local ecumenical directives. Since it can make members cherish and develop one another in their legitimate and enriching differences, the family institution,

therefore, deserves a vital role in inculcating ecumenical principles into the individual members of the churches.

His argument relates to the two respondents in this study who argued that marriage procedures and institutions influence local ecumenism in Mberengwa. Raedel (2016:178) also avers that these personal and family “encounters and the confidence growing from them remain a crucial part of ecumenical relation-building”. Uzochukwu (2009) argues that in the African context promotion of Christian families through mixed marriages remains a beacon for ecumenical development. This study suggests that marriage and marriage procedures promote local ecumenism between the ELCZ and other churches in Mberengwa as local people continue to journey together in marriage despite their denominational differences. From the findings, supported by existing literature, local ecumenism is shaped and supported by local inter-denominational marriages. Both the Karanga people and the ELCZ do not restrict marriages towards the same family or denomination thereby promoting intermarriages that involve the family and local community.

7.4.3 Sub-theme 3. *Humwe*

Among the Karanga, cooperation is through *humwe* whereby people come together at home and in the fields. This is a communal process whereby people pooling together tools, animal and human resources to help the other to achieve greater production output (Muyambo 2017). According to Mandova and Chingombe (2013: 101), “The traditional Shona society celebrates co-operation and discourages individualism”. *Humwe* promotes the desired collaboration in the Karanga community. *Humwe* extends to other functions such as *kupira* (ancestral veneration), and weddings whereby people work together (MM, Interview 04 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). This point is supported by Tenson who observed that gatherings such as funerals and other community projects by churches and NGOs are also perceived as *humwe* (Muyambo 2017). This emphasized by the Karanga saying; *Gumwe rimwe haritswanyi inda* (A single thump does not kill a louse) (Mhaka 2010, Mandova and Chingombe 2013). This shows the challenge of individualism as opposed to communal collaboration.

Besides bringing people together these gatherings afford people opportunities to rebuke and counsel wrongdoers through songs and informal discussions (Tavuyanago et al. 2010, Komanisi 2014). According to Tenson (2017:180), *humwe* brings “*unhu* (humanness) and the spirit of togetherness in the community; as people work together and help each other”. *Humwe*

creates space for unity, economic production, and social educational production. The spirit of working together continue to influence the way people relate and work together both at a home and at church. Despite the event of *humwe* bringing together different denominations the cultural process involving participation and reciprocation comes into effect when the ELCZ congregations and organs invite members from local denominations to assist them during revivals and memorial services. Local Christians can easily come together for ecumenical engagement because they already have this social and economic connection in their community.

7.4.4 Sub-theme 4. Hospitality

Hospitality is a spirit of being accommodative and helpful to the other. For the Karanga, it includes caring for one's family, neighbours, and strangers by supporting them with resources for production, labour, and food (see Obiefuna and Kanu 2013, Weinrich 1982, Chimuka 2001). "In traditional African communities, hospitality had no limit of function" (Mandova and Chingombe 2013:103). The African spirit of communality is maintained through the extension of hospitality to others. Strangers, visitors from far and neighbouring villages are fed and assisted with generosity whenever they need a hand (Mhaka 2010, Gelfand 1973, Kiarie 2015, Mandova and Chingombe 2013). It is believed that generous hospitality that assists the kin, the need and the stranger bring blessings from God and the ancestors (Obiefuna and Kanu 2013). For that reason, the Karanga people strive to treat each other hospitably. AM asserts that this humane spirit of hospitality speaks in the inner being of the Karanga people to be able to accommodate and assist one another despite their denominational differences (Interview 12 February 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). This is one of the cultural stepping stones towards an inclusive ELCZ local ecumenical engagement in Mberengwa. It makes it easier for ELCZ members from the Karanga community to share their spiritual and infrastructural resources and acknowledging the presence of other denominations with different traditions and practices from them. Mutual hospitality allows the ELCZ to respect and care for other denominations in the local community. This creates more opportunities for denominational collaboration.

7.4.5 Sub-theme 5. *Unhu*

Unhu is the sense of humanness that informs the Karanga lifestyle. It is the Karanga ethic that promotes the unconditional acceptance of others and cares for those around us. *Unhu* ethos

qualifies the Shona person to be *munhu* because it embodies the much-celebrated virtues among the Shona people (Mandova and Chingombe 2013, Mawere and van Stam 2016). These virtues include among others “mutual social responsibility, mutual assistance, trust, sharing, unselfishness, self-reliance, caring and respect for others” (Mandova and Chingome 2013: 100). The ethic of unhu brings people closer to one another discouraging disharmony. It is expressed through love and unity among the Karanga where people care for the sick and console those who are grieved and suffering (LM, Interview 24 February 2019- Mataga: WhatsApp conversation). *Unhu* governs, informs and guides and determines the Karanga life, responses to challenges and their relationships. Therefore, it shapes their religious life including their local ecumenical engagement. Members from the local denominations find it difficult to be divided by denominational boundaries hence they easily journey together guided by their cultural ethic of unhu. The Karanga ethic of unhu influences the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement by promoting mutual caring, sharing and interdependence among people and local denominations. Respect for human dignity and choices is within the Christian ecumenical tradition that calls for acceptance of each other’s uniqueness as children of God and celebration of diversity. *Unhu* underscores discouragement of disharmony and promoting unity for the well-being of the community. *Unhu* has a role to play in shaping the ELCZ postcolonial approach to ecumenism. This is an ecumenism that celebrates diversity and respect for the other despite differences in denominations or religions.

7.4.6 Sub-theme 6. Solidarity

Solidarity is the promotion of harmonious living in support of one another. The Karanga sense of solidarity means living together in the sense of community of brothers and sisters, which is the basis of, and the expression of the extended family system in Africa. This is based on mutual relationships in issues about the welfare of the community and life in general. This study posits that local ecumenism is strengthened from a life of solidarity among the Karanga people in Mberengwa. The Karanga have traditional tools to reinforce the spirit of solidarity within the family and community. The tools include their belief system, social system and wisdom sayings. The role of Mwari, *vadzimu*, and *n’anga* include that of punishing those who cause socio-religious disharmony as well as promoting the spirit of solidarity (Taringa 2006, Gelfand 1973, Kiernan 1995). Some of the misfortunes that people face in life is believed to be caused by causing disunity in their communities (Kiriswa 2002, Gelfand 1973). Therefore, the Karanga strive to avoid such behaviour that provokes quarrels, and hatred leading to

disharmony (Gelfand 1973). Solidarity promotes unity in addressing common issues that are life-threatening like diseases, poverty, and violence. This is also motivated by Karanga wisdom sayings like “*Kugara hunzwana*” (peace is only found through solidarity) or “living together calls for peaceful co-existence” (Mandova and Chingombe 2013:104). It is common among the Karanga to cherish the behavior that always promotes solidarity and discourage any behavior and relationship that brings about disharmony.

Shaped by religious beliefs and social system the sense of solidarity is so strong that it keeps Karanga people together. Bujo (1992) notes that during funerals, relatives, friends, and neighbours collaborate and bring along whatever they can afford, to help in the feeding of mourners. Solidarity does not allow discrimination and marginalization that would set other people particularly members of a particular denomination above others (MC, Interview 10 March 2019- Mberengwa: WhatsApp conversation). Denominational divisions cannot be tolerated since it destroys the spirit of solidarity. The culture of solidarity leads to rejection of domination and discrimination and then promotes a postcolonial mindset and ecumenical engagement among the local ELCZ congregations. It is unavoidable to suggest that the Karanga cultural value of solidarity has a bearing in the promotion of local ecumenism in Mberengwa since it is one of the key Karanga cultural values emphasized by one of the respondents in this study while the other six used solidarity and cooperation interchangeably. The Karanga spirit of solidarity promotes denominational cooperation attending to each other’s needs and the needs of the community in general.

7.4.7 Sub-theme 7 Religious rituals

The findings suggest that traditional religious rituals have always been a force of unity among the Karanga people. Rituals are religious rites performed in a prescribed way in any given social set up (Mbiti 1970). These include rites of passage, counselling, healing and those that are done for the welfare of the community at large like the rainmaking ceremonies (Kiriswa 2002, Hunter 2007). Besides bringing together the people, they are also believed to unite both the living and the dead (Beyers 2010, Hunter 2007, Daneel 1987). Among other rituals are the death and post burial rituals which are now performed in cultural or Christian ways. Rituals, particularly death, funerals, and post-burial rituals are not a private affair but affect the whole community as people stop working to attend to pay condolences and come back after burial to console the bereaved (Kamwendo and Manyeruke 2017). Rituals and sacrifices form part of

the counselling process whereby the community journeys with the affected individuals or family (Magezi 2007). Both the local churches and the community, in general, would interact during these various rituals to restore balance in people's lives. Scholars like Mwandayi (2011), Zwana (2004), and Kamwendo and Manyeruke (2016) have indicated that mainline churches and the Roman Catholic churches have Christianized the post burial rituals such as mamvuramvura and kurova guva among the Karanga people. The post burial rituals continue to carry their cultural values hence continue to pull and unite people in the community even though their denominational recognition of such rituals may be different.

This study suggests that rituals are a force to reckon with when it comes to local ecumenical engagement. Both the clergy and the lay indicated that the ELCZ has been involved with other denominations during burial and post burial rituals. Even though there may be controversies from other denominations as discussed earlier on in this chapter, others stick to rituals using their Christian perspectives but being influenced by the local culture. Their relationships make it difficult for one to be absent from family and community rituals which implies disharmony that is believed to cause misfortune in one's life. For that reason, families come together and participate in these rituals thereby bringing their denominations into collaboration. Rituals promote the spirit of social acceptance and belonging that even the sick and those who have lost their loved ones will realize that they are not alone in their suffering and loss since they get support and encouragement with those around them during the rituals (Magezi 2007, Hunter 2007). Since these rituals are now done through the Christian liturgy, they now appeal to local denominations such that they are invited by the family, community leaders or the ELCZ or other hosting denominations. Rituals are also important and easily unite local denominations because they involve the family and community despite their religious and denominational affiliations. Postcolonial ecumenical engagement begins by affirming one another's culture, and religious faith and allowing each other to explore and experience the meaning of faith in God. When the ELCZ and other denominations like Zion and the Baptist adapt to Karanga rituals and accommodate one another during these ceremonies, it becomes an expression of the influence of cultural influence on local ecumenism through rituals.

While Christian identity and ecumenical drive is generally derived from denominational tradition, doctrinal and confessional background, Karanga culture has a role to play on local ecumenism. At the local level, Christians are highly connected with their social and community relationships and cultural traditions that always bring them together and continue to influence

the way they work together despite their denominational differences. The role of Karanga culture on local ecumenism has never been explored hence it is central in this study to contribute towards new knowledge in ecumenical studies. Postcolonial theory helps to unveil the cultural values and activities that enable the church be involved in boundary crossing when it comes to ecumenism from below. The value of *unhu*, *humwe*, marriages, hospitality and religious rituals do not allow any form of marginalization among local Karanga people in the local denominations.

7.5 The missional factors that influence ecumenism in local ELCZ congregations.

7.5.1 Sub-theme 1. Evangelism

From the findings, there are three levels where the ELCZ collaborate in preaching the gospel in Mberengwa. The respondents did not give propositions of factors but the expressions of these factors in Mberengwa. Firstly, collaboration is found in evangelism or outreach and secondly, on interchurch meetings. Preaching the gospel is one of the founding pillars of the ELCZ since its establishment. It is enshrined in its constitution as argued earlier on by GT in chapter 6. The ELCZ admits that preaching the gospel needs collaboration (ELCZ 2012). This is part of the broader mission of God which cuts across denominational boundaries. Meyer (1999) asserts that mission and common witness remain key determinants of church unity. The ELCZ maintains the vision of unity to promote God's mission. Historically this collaboration was done through making boundaries for missionary areas to avoid clashes. This led to the ELCZ's establishment and preaching the gospel in Mberengwa, Gwanda and Beitbridge areas (Söderström 1984). The noninterference approaches brought understanding amongst the early missionaries and promoted denominational understanding. The current trend in local ecumenism does not follow none-interference but both competition and collaboration. Competition in the sense that they evangelize and compete for converts in Mberengwa. In some instances, there is collaboration during evangelism campaigns and home visits (JZ, Interview 02 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). This some form of 'embracing ecumenism' where denominations are committed to evangelize and witness Christ to the world together (Koopman 2013). Collaboration promotes church unity and church growth using various gifts and evangelism approaches from across local denominations. Competition is whereby different denominations hold evangelism programs separately in the same community. This may lead to competition for converts or converting members of other

denominations. This is unhelpful and causes divisions. The twenty-first-century local ecumenism should enrich the Christian family by bringing together diverse traditions to worship, witness and work together in the local community (Koopman 2013). This kind of collaboration preaches visible church unity which is the center and vision of ecumenism.

Interchurch meetings are limited both to specific parishes and organs of the ELCZ. As discussed in chapter six, only one congregation throughout the rural parishes of the central diocese is involved in the exchange of formal services where the gospel is preached between the ELCZ and Zion congregations. The other important collaboration is the invitation of speakers to teach and preach during the conferences. The challenge is that these are limited to specific individuals than the congregation or parish at large. Therefore, ecumenical relations are formed with a few individuals than the congregation per se. This kind of collaboration is limited to the youth and Vashandiri organs which invite preachers and hold fellowship meetings with other local denominations such as the Baptist, Zion, ZAOGA, and Church of Christ. While this is commendable, in some parishes, other members of the clergy resist such collaboration. This leaves local ecumenical engagement less open and inclusive. The findings have shown that five respondents explained that the church mission is gospel-centered and this needs local churches working together as expressed by the ELCZ collaboration with others. This is believed to influence the ELCZ mission approach. However, this is not universal since most parishes did not have such combined outreach programs and they neither have exchange service programs nor invitation of outside preachers. When it comes to the mission of the gospel, ecumenism varies from one parish to another depending on the ELCZ relations with other denominations in the area.

7.5.2 Sub-theme 2. Diakonia

The mission of the church involves serving the needs of the people. Diakonia is both a foundation and vision for local ecumenism. “Christian Diakonia is truly goal-directed only with the help of that same Divine love, without which their service cannot (rightly) glorify God” (Delkeskamp-Hayes 2009:184). Service to the people involves mobilization of resources, pastoral care and provision of services to improve the lives of the people. The ELCZ is aiming at providing pastoral care for the sick and suffering as well as provide education to liberate people from superstition (ELCZ 2012). Although this may be national vision the same vision is translated into both local and national initiatives. The church’s diaconal work includes the

provision of formal health and education services as well as various kinds of community services (Morekwa 2004, Delkeskamp-Hayes 2009). Among other issues, education and health constitute key mission areas of the ELCZ because they form part of community development services.

Diakonia becomes the foundation in that it creates an opportunity for ecumenism. Diakonia links secular moral ethics with the “biblical motif” of social justice and with Christian works of charity (Delkeskamp-Hayes 2009:177). Therefore, Diakonia remains key in local church life. Since it does not only focus inside the church but throughout the community, it becomes more effective through local ecumenical engagement. To meet community needs involves socio-economic empowerment through education and health. The findings in chapter 6 show that since its inception the ELCZ established schools and hospitals in Mberengwa to meet the needs of the community irrespective of religious or denominational backgrounds. Three respondents have argued that the ELCZ mission schools and hospitals play a role as foundations of ecumenism. People from various denominational backgrounds receive their education and interact with the ELCZ tradition as they participate in church services and morning devotions. Similarly, those who visit the ELCZ hospitals in Mberengwa have the opportunity of being served as well as having fellowship with the ELCZ through chaplaincy ministry. Medical facilities and pastoral care and counselling provided in these institutions promote collaboration and understanding between the ELCZ and local denominations through service to their membership. Although this may seem to be one way, currently, there are nurses, teachers and other workers from the various local denominations serving in the local mission centres in Mberengwa. These share their services and their faith with the ELCZ thereby promoting local ecumenism. Through the LDS the ELCZ promotes local ecumenism with the provision of irrigation programs. These programs are initiated by the ELCZ but owned by local communities and serve the local community across local denominations. In the process, there is not only the sharing of resources and skills but also cross-pollination of faith and denomination traditions as people pray and work together.

The other forms of *Diakonia* shape the vision for local church unity. The understanding that pastoral care and service to the people can be more effective when provided by local clergy and the laity. The involvement of the ELCZ and others help in mobilization of more resources and unite churches to work together. These services need a united effort of local churches otherwise there will be competition and duplicating of aid to the need from different

denominations (Hove 2013). As indicated in chapter six one of the parishes churches was able to help the inmates while in one of the parishes they managed to fundraise and help the orphans in local schools. This was done across the ELCZ, AICs and Pentecostal denominations. The focus was on fulfilling the mission of Christ (Matt. 25:36-41). However, this is done in about three parishes. Others are either working independently or have difficulties in coming together to engage in diaconal work. Non ecumenical approaches lead to denominational competitions making it difficult for Christian witness (Garba 2014). Above local ecumenical diaconal work emphasizes on charity work than other issues concerning human dignity like human rights and gender issues.

Waweru (2008) avers that Christian identity in the triune God today is marked by unity and cooperation among denominations. This identity bears testimony to the world that watches the church in its ministry and mission. The grassroots denominations become closer to each other as Christians meet more often in social settings where the community meet such as the moment of pastoral care for the sick and suffering. These gatherings allow them to recognize each other's presence and share responsibilities among the clergy and the laity. The mission of *Diakonia* becomes a key factor in influencing local ecumenism. Ecumenism and mission relate to a variety of literature on ecumenism and postcolonial framework where churches collaborate for service to the community revisiting marginalization of each other but bring together their diversity for the service of community across denominational divide. These activities promote postcolonial mindset when it comes to local ecumenical engagement among the Karanga in Mberengwa.

7.6 The ELCZ theological perspectives that shape its local ecumenical praxis.

From the ten clergy members, two issues came up as the ELCZ theological perspectives shaping its participation in local ecumenism. Firstly, ecclesiology based on article three of the Apostles Creed and secondly, the church as the body of Christ.

7.6.1 Sub-theme 1. Article three of the Apostles creed

The article says, "I believe in the Holy Spirit, The holy Catholic Church, The communion of saints, The forgiveness of sins, The resurrection of the body, And the life everlasting". Creedal marks of the church in this article are foundational to the ELCZ ecumenical engagement. By the confession of the 3rd article of the Apostle's creed, the ELCZ affirms the theological

position of its involvement in local ecumenism (GT, Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). The confession of a belief in one, holy catholic and apostolic church invites believers to condemn historical divisions and embrace the unity that Jesus prayed for in John 17:21-23. “The confession of the church as a universal body is a call for her to work for real unity” (Garba 2014:62). The church is one because of one God, faith and baptism (Ephesians 4:4-5). Common faith in the triune God challenges the ELCZ towards local ecumenical engagement since it is against the exclusive approach to church unity. Church divisions and Christians contradict the nature of the church of Christ (WCC 2013). Catholicity advocates for the unity of the church that resists what divides and separates it. The unity of the church possesses the temporal universality dimension and should be expressed through both church councils and local congregational ecumenical engagements (Meyer 1999). He further argues that catholicity is both a gift and a call to the church to be committed to unity (Meyer 1999). An ecumenism that is based on catholicity is committed to being embracing than exclusivism based on denominationalism and confessional lines. “The essential catholicity of the Church is undermined when cultural and other differences are allowed to develop into division”. (WCC 2013:14). The cultural differences should be accepted as the diversity that enriches the church in its life and mission. The oneness is not only spiritual but also in visible unity seeking to proclaim the gospel in word and deed. This is against divisions that are usually witnessed among local denominations. The church is called to be one and universal. The ELCZ and other local denominations should demonstrate unity and express the unity of the church universal (catholic).

Pastoral care is inherent in the apostolic nature of the church (Avis 2005). It should be done as collegial and communal activity of the church ecumenical. Through the third article of the Apostolic Creed Christians admit that God calls and gathers his people (the church) to be one in Christ. The Holy Spirit does not only gather the believers into a reconciled community but also enables them to share peace (Munikwa 2011). The one Holy Catholic church is inclusive crossing denominational boundaries. From the invisible church to a visible church that expresses visible church in its mission (apostolicity) or its sentness. This article of the creed presupposes that the church in its ecumenical movement has an apostolic ministry from Christ (WCC 2013, Munikwa 2011). The confession of the Apostles creed makes the basis for the ELCZ participation in local ecumenism for the apostolic mission. The apostolic mission is fully expressed communally through local ecumenism as expressed in some ELCZ parishes than others.

Though local ecumenical engagement the ELCZ and local denominations assume the true nature of the church in the Apostles' creed confessed every Sunday, the one "undivided" holy "called and chosen" catholic "universal and inclusive" and apostolic "sent out or missional" church. This is inclusive, calling out the church to be united for its mission. This expressed by being united in confession as well as visible unity in mission according to its apostolic calling. Apostolicity calls for decolonizing *oikoumene* and promoting indigenous articulations of ecumenical expressions everywhere and particularly outside the confines of an ecumenism defined and practiced in Western context. Therefore, apostolicity promotes postcolonial ecumenical discourse and praxis in the local context of Mberengwa.

7.6.2 Sub-theme 2. The body of Christ

The other theological presupposition emphasized is the body of Christ. Like the other six clergy respondents, DB emphasized that the ELCZ continues to strive for local ecumenism due to its understanding that denominational diversity symbolizes the diversity in the body of Christ (Interview 20 March 2019- Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). Church unity is imperative through acceptance of differences as diversity created by God. The metaphor of the body of Christ in the New Testament implies the notion that the church has a corporate identity made up of diverse individuals, but it is only one body (Young-Gi: 2001). Churches need one another just as the members of the body can neither compete nor ignore one another (1 Corinthians 12:21-27). For Paul, the metaphor of the body and its members in the church is a theology of being-in-relation and theology of communion. The theology of the body of Christ promotes all-inclusive ecumenical engagement and guarding against being exclusive (Thesnaar 2010). All-inclusive local ecumenism means obedience to Christ the only head of the church (Colossians 1:18) who called the church to unity the founding principle of the faith community "a purely gratuitous gift from the Spirit" (Thesnaar 2010:269). Garba (2014:5) avers that "the church is expected to live together in mutual recognition and reconciliation of members and ministries". The church is the one community, one people and one "undivided" body of Christ. This unity of "one body" is shaped by God, consisting of Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, male and female, all of whom are accepted by God through faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:28). Any division leads to the broken body of Christ which affects the mission of the church that is preaching unity and reconciliation. Rather than calling for uniformity, local denominations need to celebrate diversity appreciating different gifts that promote the mission of the body of Christ. "God has blessed all peoples, all cultures, all religions, and God's

blessings translate into giftedness, into charisma of beauty and spiritual wealth” (Bellagamba 1992:39).

Human, as well as denominational diversity, are God-given gifts for his mission and church growth. The one body under one Lord has a single mission and service to the world (Garba 2014:5). Different thoughts and traditions have jeopardized and compromised church unity and cooperation and the basic teaching of the church of one baptism, one God, one Lord, one Spirit and one hope (Garba 2014). Both believers and denominations are called to promote unity, growth and seek to fulfill the common good using the different gifts which God provided for his household and the body of Christ. “There we are one with the other baptized, one in Christ. We live in a relationship with God and other Christians” (Haspelmath-Finatti 2009:378). This kind of unity calls for mutual co-existence and cooperation and discouraging mutual condemnation and hostility against local denominations. Different charisms expressed by different denominations are an expression of diversity in gifts of prophets, pastors, teachers meant to edify the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16). There are “no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household” (Ephesians 2:19). No Christian and no denomination should be excluded or marginalized from the body of Christ and local ecumenism where Christians would have shared experiences of sisterhood and brotherhood in mission.

The theological perspectives embodied by the ELCZ was discussed by seven out of the ten members of the clergy. The findings from the study have shown that the praxis of local ecumenism is not uniform as some congregations are more open to ecumenism than others. Out of seven, two do not have parishes since one is the bishop and the other one a dean. One may argue that the differences in local ecumenism from one parish to the other may be influenced by the way the clergy understand ELCZ theological perspectives when it comes to ecumenical engagement. The two items on theological perspectives are the tools used throughout the decades to enhance ecumenism in different places at every level. This is linked to literature and principles and concepts of ecumenism. Both confessions of the 3rd article of the creeds and theology of the body of Christ seeks to demonstrate that Christian and church division are not options, but churches are to work towards unity by emphasizing issues that unite them than those that divide. We are church together with others, the body of Christ. The marginalization of the other denominations for differences in traditions and doctrinal reason is against the theology of the body of Christ and communion of saints. In fact, through local

ecumenical expressions, Christians strive to confess and embody the catholicity of the church, the apostolicity of the church, and the unity of the church (Koopman 2013). This is a call to unity without domination or patronizing others based on differences of traditions and doctrines or practices. They also presuppose that diversity needs celebration than used as a divisive tool among local denominations. The ELCZ perspectives allow it to share its identity with others through ecumenical engagement but allowing the other to remain different and unique so that churches benefit and learn from one another.

7.7 The benefits of ecumenical activities involving the ELCZ local congregations in Mberengwa.

What stands out as key to the benefits of local ecumenism in Mberengwa is a promotion of church unity, revival, learning, and participation in community development.

7.7.1 Sub-theme 1. Promotion of unity

Throughout church history, church unity has been central on the agenda of church councils beginning with the Jerusalem council (Acts 15). Jesus knew that people will be divided, and the church will be divided for different reasons hence in his priestly prayer he focused on the unity of the disciples (John 17). This is Jesus' call for unity amid diversity. Unity in diversity calls the church to develop ecumenism promoting unity than uniformity (Koopman 2013). Local ecumenism is disturbed by competition for adherents, but when there is ecumenical engagement the competition is decreased, and local churches work for unity (Garba 2014). The spirit of denominational competition and rivalry and the temptation to proselytize members of other Christian traditions will be minimized (Garba 2014, MM, Interview 04 March 2019-Zvishavane: WhatsApp conversation). Competition and desire to evangelize the converted to change denominations is common but where churches work together this problem is minimized because they always meet and work together.

There is a sense of unity when churches work together during weddings and other social gatherings. The other sign of unity is expressed by worship exchange visits and women fellowships found in some of the parishes. Unity in worship is always difficult given doctrinal differences and differences in traditions. However, when Christians in local congregations do have exchange visits, show tolerance and boundary-crossing relevant for a postcolonial approach to ecumenism. It means acceptance of the other on his/her terms than focusing on

personal traditions. These ecumenical experiences bring a wealth of worship from a different tradition, word of God from different hands and share the hope of a church living together as the body of Christ (Haspelmath-Finatti 2009). Although these remain limited in some parishes at least there are positive steps towards church unity. Unity is one of the key features of the church. It marks its identity in the world. Local ecumenism helps in building trust and promoting denominational understanding of one another and create church unity. Those who have exchange fellowships and services are less and less suspicious of one another. There will be little or no competition among denominations but seeking to work together on socio-economic and worship matters. The church unity promotes unity in the local community because the same people who meet in the denominations come from the same families, community and converge during local ecumenism.

7.7.2 Sub-theme 2. Revival and learning

One of the key benefits of local ecumenical engagement is learning from one another as local denominations. Wherever people and institutions meet, there is sharing of skills, knowledge, and ideas, and experiences hence teaching and learning taking place. Local ecumenism promotes church revival and learning amongst local Christian denominations.

As indicated in chapter six of this study learning is a continuous process hence the ELCZ continues to learn from the local culture and other denominations. Learning means adapting to the local culture and in this case the Karanga culture, the roots of the church members. Local culture forms the means of conveying the gospel and lenses of seeing salvation and being the church. Failure to appreciate the Karanga culture leads to the superimposition of western cultural understanding and understanding of the gospel among the Karanga people. This is an imprint of the colonial mindset. From ecumenical engagement, African culture is learned and promoted through the understanding of healing from Karanga perspectives, music and dancing and drumming which denominations share when they meet at various ecumenical activities.

Learning and revival among denominations help in developing skills in church leadership, evangelism, and growth. Under church leadership, are skills in shepherding, stewardship and fundraising. Furthermore, there is also learning in preaching, teaching, skills to run congregational committees, and organizing the church and social functions due to the diversity of professionals across denominations. This result in denominations empowering one another for worship, church leadership, and development. It fulfills the scripture that says many gifts

are given for the building of the body of Christ than for competition (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Learning and revivals mean local denominations sharing their spiritual gifts and experiences. There is collegiality and supporting one another in ministry. Local ecumenism allows members from different denominations to sit together listening to the preaching and teaching of the gospel nourishing one spiritually. The church is revived and awakened by the context as it interacts with others and become open to learning from others during the ecumenical engagement.

7.7.3 Sub-theme 3. Community development

Through local ecumenism, the ELCZ had more chances of Christians working together in areas of community development. These denominations are engaged in Diakonia in one way or another. They would gather resources to serve the community particularly the needs of the poor and vulnerable. JZ argues that through local ecumenism the ELCZ found itself bringing together and sharing resources for community development with other local denominations (Interview 02 March 2019- Chingezi: WhatsApp conversation). Resources include personnel, facilities, leadership skills, and network connections among Christian (Kretzmann et al. 2005). Through local ecumenism churches and people in the local community learn to live a life of connection sharing resources and skills that others do not have. Whenever there is a need for the social or economic resources or skills needed, they would know where to find them within the local denominations. Other community projects which need resource mobilization for the disadvantaged children are critical areas the churches need to work together to avoid duplication of aid and programs in the same community (Hove 2013). The sharing of resources in local ecumenical encounters leads to increased church unity and ecumenical work (Garba 2014).

Other responses have suggested that various ecumenical projects are meant to empower women through their fundraising fellowships and other groupings promoting small businesses and house construction projects. The church becomes contextually relevant as it strives to empower women during the time of economic and social crises in Zimbabwe and Mberengwa in particular. These projects do not only help individuals but further help and strengthen family budgets and congregational financial stability. Local denominations depend on the offertory hence if the women who are the majority in congregations strengthen congregational budgets. These ecumenical projects are an expression of the importance of local ecumenism.

7.8 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the various forms of local ecumenical engagement where the ELCZ collaborates with other local denominations in Mberengwa. Ecumenical engagements vary from congregation to congregation. This is due to clergy leadership which either follows an open-door policy including the various denominational groupings or closed-door policy whereby other groupings are marginalized because of their doctrinal and traditional stances on events and issues that bring local denominations together. The other key issues discussed are the influence of the Karanga culture on the ELCZ participation in local ecumenism. Among other issues are post burial rituals that separate the ELCZ and other denominations such as the Pentecostals and Mapostora which do not want to be associated with rituals of cultural roots. The two theological themes namely the body of Christ and article three of the Apostles Creed seem to be applied differently in parishes since they have different approaches. Generally, the chapter has explored the factors that impact influence local ecumenism. While there are diverse factors, the challenge remains with the understanding of the clergy, other denominations, and local cultural relationships. The youth and women movements of the ELCZ promote inclusive ecumenical engagement than the clergy and men's movement. Above all Karanga, culture plays a pivotal role in uniting Christians from different denominations in Mberengwa with emphasis on their social ties and rituals. The conclusion of this chapter leads to the general conclusion of this study. Chapter eight will discuss the summary of the study with general conclusions, contribution to new knowledge and proposed further research.

CHAPTER EIGHT

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS, SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

Chapter seven focused on data analysis bringing together the findings from chapter six into dialogue with the existing literature on ecumenism and the postcolonial theoretical framework. This current chapter is a concluding section of this study. It begins with general conclusions, then gives a summary of the findings building from the conclusions. It discusses the contribution to new knowledge and insights in terms of ecumenical literature and discussions. The chapter concludes by giving recommendations for further research in the area of local ecumenism.

8.2 General conclusions

This critique of the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement concludes that there are several ecumenical activities that are mostly driven by socio-cultural influences than doctrinal teachings. Generally, the finding expresses that there are differences in the way the parishes and congregations participate in local ecumenism. The dynamics depend both on the laity and the clergy participation.

There are multiple forms of ecumenical engagements in Mberengwa. Majority of them are accidental since they are all guided by socio-economic challenges. These include funeral and memorial services and churches attending to community development meetings and prayers for rain. Very few instances where local congregations consistently organize themselves and meet for ecumenical engagement. However, these need to be supported as a basis for local ecumenism that can be consistently developed. The role of both the clergy and the laity is crucial in developing these forms of ecumenism.

Ecumenism in Mberengwa is more culturally based than theologically based. In as much as the church is a theological institution, it is also a source for cultural manifestations hence culturally-based ecumenical drives. Churches in Mberengwa are mutually differentiated because of cultural connections of church members. Among other issues ukama runs deeper than doctrinal differences. Ukama coupled with Karanga hospitality bind both family and

community members together. Although the pastors indicated that denominations are connected by the theology of the Body of Christ and the Third Article of the Apostle's Creed, the initiatives by the laity are based on their connectedness as families, relatives, and neighbours living in the same community. In some instances, the clergy that proposes the theological basis of ecumenism are found contradicting themselves when they fail to accommodate other denominations because of their denominational backgrounds yet the laity could easily accommodate others.

The concept of communalism is more entrenched into people more than theological denominational differences. Besides the economic communal activities such as *humwe* where family, friends, neighbours, and relatives cooperate in doing production work, denominations are caused to come together during marriage and weddings, post-burial social gatherings that have their roots in the Karanga culture. The researchers have shown that denominations work together in doing consolation and unveiling of the tombstone services. So, the meeting of people from different churches on ecumenical like activities does not depend on the participation of pastors. Pastors come and go but community members are always there. So, the lack of participation of pastors in local ecumenism is overshadowed by communalism which does not require any preaching. However, the role of the clergy cannot be undermined because of their failure to participate in impeding local ecumenical engagement in various ways. On one hand, they openly deny the invitation of other denominations for the ELCZ gatherings yet on the other hand, some members would be discouraged by the absence or non-participation of their pastors hence fail to actively participate. The role of communalism is bringing together people from all walks of life including the community leaders like the clergy.

The missional factors do play a role in local ecumenism as the ELCZ finds itself sharing the podium with other denominations in evangelism and participates in diaconal work. This is guided both by the theological basis and the ELCZ triad approaches to the ministry. Nevertheless, these depend on the clergy participation hence some parishes are found to be actively involved in such activities than others.

The key benefits of local ecumenism include unity among denominations and the community in general. The results being local denominations contributing to the development of each other and their participation in community development. This has increased the church's capacity for resource mobilization for the support of the needy in the local communities. It also allows

denominations to share human resources for skills development such as leadership skills. It may not only reduce suspicion and competition among denominations but may also lessen conflicts among people particularly in times of elections which are usually marked by political differences that escalate into violence.

8.3 Summary of findings.

8.3.1 Cultural impact on local ecumenical engagement

Chapters two, six and seven of this study have put to the fore the aspects of the African and local Karanga culture that are critical in promoting local ecumenism. Among other issues are the values of *ukama* and communal lifestyle and hospitality. These are found to bring people together and unite the community and local churches. Since they are key among the Karanga their role in influencing local ecumenism cannot be minimized.

In chapter two of this study, I have discussed the value of community as the foundation of Karanga's lifestyle. Since members of the community get their social and religious nurturing within their communities their cultural value system informs their Christian faith and participation in local ecumenism. One's value system and socio-economic support come from the community (Chimuka 2001, Shoko 2007). Therefore, a communal lifestyle becomes the support system of the members of the community. Despite denominational differences in denominational traditions and doctrines, the Karanga found themselves crossing boundaries when it comes to their participation in local ecumenism due to their kinship ties. These need to be respected for the sake of denominational identity, but not as a tool to divide the local Christians. Such divisions are unchristian and against the African communal value system. What is common among the Karanga is that harmony is built, cherished and promoted while disharmony is a discouraged curse that is punishable by the family and the community. The quest for communalism brings local churches together bridging denominational divisions.

Among the key values of the Karanga culture, is *ukama* which forms the basis of communitarianism. In the family and community, individuals have something to give and receive hence the interdependence cannot be ignored when it comes to church life. Mhaka (2010) observes that *ukama* is one of the key local resources to bring people and communities together. It emphasizes brotherhood and sisterhood that bring peaceful core-existence through a life of loving and supporting one another. In chapters two and six of this study, both the

authors about the Karanga culture and the respondents emphasized the effects of *ukama* on ecumenism and life in general where there is accommodation of one another. While the Karanga are united by their *ukama* ethic they are divided by denominationalism (whereby emphasis is given on the differences from the other). This is the Karanga central value that builds community relationships thereby advancing local ecumenism in Mberengwa. In this case, denominations live like small families guided by different denominational traditions on their worshipping practices, but they live in community with others, hence a communion of believers and denominations. It is within the Karanga lifestyle that *hama* (kins) or members of the family strive to live together in harmony as a community, hence the local denominations seek to work together at local levels.

Ukama is expressed through hospitality that ties together many African values and Karanga in particular. Hospitality presupposes unconditional inclusiveness whereby people can help one another, and journey together in good and bad times. African hospitality entails genuine friendship, kindness, warm-hearted receptivity, and generosity that enables human beings to take care of one another despite individual differences (Kiriswa 2002). Given denominational differences that divide local people, progressive ecumenical engagement can only be successful if it embraces the Karanga value of hospitality that promote fellowship.

This study shows that hospitality and interpersonal relations among the Karanga people, are united by rituals and social gatherings. These bring the family and community together and provide opportunities for interaction and unity. The rituals and social gatherings such as marriage ceremonies, death, post burial ceremonies and prayers for rains are opportunities for local community and church unity. Since religious rites have to do with existential issues, they always have this pulling factor. Unfortunately, sometimes other denominations shun those rites as discussed in chapters six and seven of this study hence become both sources of unity and division at the same time. In some, the clergy and the laity from across the denominational divide have an opportunity to celebrate their life and faith together. These social gatherings act as an opportunities for learning and promotion of unity. It is where churches are exposed to learning each other's traditions through interaction and participation. Since these gatherings usually take place outside individual denominational premises, they are places for inclusion rather than exclusion. These are safe spaces for participation and involvement in each other's singing, dancing, preaching and praying; bound in fellowship in a "no man's land". In the process, local denominations should rather emphasize unity than division. This space is life-

giving to people because people encounter one another with communal unconditional love (Thesnaar 2010). Where there seem to be differences, understanding, and practices both from the cultural side and denominational side, emphasis should be given to those issues that unite the church than those that divide the church.

Pulling together the central value of hospitality is the sharing of resources particularly food. Therefore, the use of the Karanga saying, “*Ukama igaswa hunozadziswa nekudya*” meaning unless people can eat or dine together, their relationship remains partial (Mhaka 2010, Chimuka 2001). Chimuka (2001) further argues that food symbolizes life because it sustains the hungry hence the sharing of food is giving life to one another. In Karanga culture, if one cannot give or eat from the same plate with another it spells enmity, but if one accepts to share the table with the other is an expression of good relationships, love, and unity. Hospitality coupled with solidarity, rituals, and humwe among the Karanga has continued to work as a basis for the ELCZ local ecumenical engagement. The ELCZ members belong together with members of other denominations and keep on working together both at family, community and denominational levels. They do not only work but also eat together, sharing resources, the word, singing and dancing at funerals. Unfortunately, their participants did not pick the issue of sharing of the Lord’s Table (Eucharist) among local denominations. Since the Eucharist is the gift of God and the means of grace that have unconditionally accepted us all, it needs to be shared beyond denominational lines. God provided Eucharist to enable believers to dine with him so that they receive the forgiveness of sin and eternal salvation. When believers proclaim love and unity, they should not deny one another those things that give life. Denying Eucharist to those who believe in Christ and participate in local ecumenism is refusing others life in Christ. Basing on cultural hospitality, the ELCZ can translate it into Eucharistic hospitality strengthening their unity with God and one another. These social and religious ecumenical engagements coupled with sharing the Lord’s Table could strengthen the Christian bond. All this can only be achieved through *ukama* that enforces humility and tolerance that promotes local ecumenical engagement. Therefore, local ecumenism in Mberengwa is found to be influenced by the Karanga cultural values than the theological principles of ecumenism. This enables the ELCZ local congregations to engage in local ecumenism with denominations of different backgrounds within their communal areas.

8.3.2 Missional focus

I have argued earlier in chapter seven that unity is part of God and the church's mission. Central to the mission is the unity of the church which Jesus, called to be one. With its multiform it remains united in one Lord, one hope and one baptism (Ephesians 4:4-5). Since the unity of the church is God's gift the local churches need to embrace it as their core mission (Meyer 1999). Therefore, church unity is the will of God. For the ELCZ and other mainline denominations, it is part of their confession; believing in one holy Catholic Church (Koopman 2013, Meyer 1999). The confession of church unity should be translated into church life in local ecumenicity. For the sake of testifying the one Lord, Christ prayed that the disciples ought to be united as one (John 17:21). Their testimony to the world is validated by their oneness. This is the model of ecumenism that will help the ELCZ and other denominations to proclaim Christ and Christianity in Mberengwa. The key missional focus is evangelism and Diakonia. As has been argued earlier in chapter six, mission entails the church's action toward evangelism and Diakonia (GS, Interview 15 March 2019- Bvumbura: WhatsApp conversation). Both the ministry of evangelism and serving the needs of the community require a united front. Through this common vision, local denominations are found working together in local outreaches. The spreading of the gospel entails evangelism, witnessing and nurturing in Christian faith. Diakonia and Christian service do not only mean mobilization of goods for the poor, but also advocacy, calling for freedom, justice, and human dignity and safeguarding creation (Meyer 1999). Consequently, the church's mission has to do with the transformation of society with people being reconciled with God and with one another. Koopman (2013) argues that the mission involves Christian witnessing together, serving life together and seeking the dignity and justice of creation. Both the mission of the Christian witness of the gospel and all forms of advocacy are directed toward community transformation to give abundant life to all (John 10:10). Holistic mission attends to spiritual as well as the individual's physical needs as espoused by witness and Diakonia. Given the political polarization in Zimbabwe and some recurrent droughts, the effects of the HIV that have left widows and orphans in the communities, the local denominations are found to be united to meet the needs of the vulnerable social groups. They also meet their spiritual needs through revivals, evangelism outreaches, and pastoral care during times of funerals as well as home visits discussed in chapter six and seven of this study. The ELCZ and other local denominations strive to meet the local community's socio-economic needs through resource mobilization done by the clergy and their local congregations especially helping orphans and the inmates.

The missional focus of the church is also connected to theological perspectives discussed by the clergy participants in chapter six of this study. The study argues that if denominations cannot work together in unity the ELCZ contradicts its confession of the third article of the Apostles' Creed that affirms its unity with others in Christ. The differences in the denominational traditions and practices should be considered as diversity among the members of the body of Christ and the communion of saints confessed in the third article of the Apostle's creed. "The body of Christ is a healing community where everybody will experience *koinonia* in the form of unconditional love" (Thesnaar 2010:270). Different denominations are members of the same community and members of the body of Christ with unique and specific duties and functions. By working together in evangelism and diaconal activities, the local denominations in Mberengwa express their communion in Christ translated in visible unity. Their participation in wider local ecumenical engagement is a fulfillment of the love of God in Christ that propels one's love to the neighbour (Thesnaar 2010). With such love expressed by local congregations, diversity is celebrated and accepted. There is more inclusion than exclusion in the body of Christ by accommodating denominations with traditions different from others.

The ecclesial- confessional diversity can be reconciled diversity where the church would continue to serve its purpose with its distinct features as represented by different local denominations (Meyer 1999). The inherited traditions may not be undermined but have their place in the life of the church life and should be respected in the process of common witness and service to the community. Visible unity is expressed by various forms of collaborations among the denominations in the local community. This includes moments of coming together, gathering around the gospel (local church fellowships) and going out to live the gospel through daily living and evangelism. Instead of generating the spirit of independence and competition, through working together the local denominations cultivate the spirit of unity and regard one another as core workers in the vineyard. Diversity means the core workers have different gifts to attend to the plentiful harvest, which Jesus called for many workers. Missional focus helps local denominations to put more emphasis on a church mission rather than differences in denominational traditions and practices hence help in creating space for collaboration. Instead of emphasizing its identity, the ELCZ local congregations view other local denominations as core workers in the mission of God seeking to fulfill the apostolic calling. The self-understanding of their apostolic missional calling encourages the ELCZ and other local denominations in Mberengwa to collaborate in various missional activities.

8.3.3 Benefits of local ecumenism

In Mberengwa, churches have different resources, giving them the capacity to share these God-given provisions. From the responses given in chapter six of this study, we have found out that the ELCZ has a large infrastructure such as schools and chapels, and also human resources in the form of educated clergy and laity with tools and capabilities for teaching, training and leadership development. Other denominations have chapels and such human resources and other natural gifts and charismata. Local ecumenism enables these resources to be shared among the local churches as a way of witnessing the gospel and expanding the kingdom of God through loving and serving one another and members of the local community. Local denominations grow through sharing spiritual, physical and human resources. Some of the local congregations have received human, financial and material resources for their church development projects from their neighbours. On the same vain local ecumenism has seen local congregations working together in mobilizing resources to serve the needs of the poor in their communities.

In the Zimbabwean context churches make a significant contribution in the “health delivery system” since issues of health are connected to religious beliefs (Gunda 2007:229). The role of prophets and faith healers particularly among the Karanga remains indispensable. Although spiritual matters such as prophecy and faith healing are found to be divisive, members across denominations visit those with such gifts thereby sharing these gifts and promoting local ecumenical engagement. This is some kind of postcolonial ecumenical relations of mutual sharing that enhances a bond of love and unity dispelling marginalization of one another. Instead of dividing the local denominations, these physical and spiritual resources are used as centres and resources of unity that promote mutuality in local ecumenical engagement in Mberengwa. This is achieved through full humility, acknowledging that they all depend on one another as parts of the body of Christ. By acknowledging their limitations and appreciate the strengths of others, denominations develop a spirit of interdependence and reduce suspicion and jealousy thereby promoting unity among local denominations. As argued earlier on in this chapter local denominations cooperation promotes unity beyond religious ties to social and political unity thereby reducing the incidence of political violence that is prevalent in Mberengwa especially during elections.

8.4 Contribution to new knowledge

In as much as I have read before and during this study, this is the ground-breaking work on the ELCZ participation in local ecumenism among the Karanga in Mberengwa, Zimbabwe. From the literature review in chapter three of this study, most scholars discussed ecumenism at the national level. The works of Bhebe (1996), Shiri (1985), Chitando and Togarasei (2010) and Moyo (2012) have highlighted the ELCZ participation in national ecumenical activities under the banner of ZCC and ZHOCD. These are influenced by the desire to attend to national socio-economic and political challenges. The works of researchers such as Zwana (2009) and Matikiti (2009) have shown that the mainline churches were united in the training of pastors but failed to unite when it comes to the establishment of other institutions of higher learning like universities. If there is any mention of the ELCZ ecumenical engagement it is at the national level and or international level in which the ELCZ is an affiliate in the bodies to carry out ecumenical activities. Thus, this study analyzed the ELCZ's local ecumenical engagement in the local congregations and parishes in Mberengwa.

Firstly, the study unveils that the Karanga cultural values drive local ecumenism more than the doctrinal underpinning. This is expressed by the social and religious activities that bring the local denominations together.

Secondly, through this study, I discovered that in some parishes the ELCZ is more accommodative and embracing in local ecumenism than others which are selectively accommodating other mainline churches. The approaches depend on the clergy in the parish. The local ecumenical expressions show that there is no link between national and local ecumenism hence there is a disconnection between what is happening at the national level and local levels. Instead of the national ecumenism being informed by local ecumenism, it seems there is nobody who cares. Whatever is happening at the local level is like something foreign not recognized as genuine because of limited clergy participation. This study affirms that the ecumenical activities in local congregations should be acknowledged as part of the broader national and international ecumenical engagement which need to be fully supported by the church leadership, particularly the clergy.

Thirdly, the study has explored the impact of the Karanga or local culture in local ecumenism. This is the central contribution whereby the local culture needs to be appreciated for the values that unite the local people which can, in turn, be used to unite the church. I have argued that if

the church needs to engage in local ecumenism progressively, it needs to take the local culture seriously. The church is found in a specific local culture that will contest with the praxis of the church if it is not well integrated. The study remains focused on the acceptance of the local Karanga cultural values that promote local ecumenism. Affirming the local culture is a postcolonial mindset that resists the marginalization of local cultures in Christian ecumenical movement. It allows the local people to do and to be the church in their respective cultural contexts.

Fourthly, the data was gathered from the laity and the clergy from their experiential knowledge. It is not from the records of some high offices and elite discussions hence more reliable information about what is happening at the local congregations. The data are useful in understanding local ecumenical experiences and the factors that influence such ecumenical engagement and activities.

Fifthly, in-depth interviews among the clergy and laity leadership show that the western empirical ideas, values, domination, both past and present – continue to hamper ELCZ's participation in local ecumenism. The colonial ideas expressed by the ELCZ include domination and undermining other local denominations and the clergy reluctance to fully initiate and participate in local ecumenism. Postcolonial theory helped to unmask these colonial traits in the ELCZ's participation in local ecumenism among the Karanga in Mberengwa.

Finally, since the study is within ministerial studies or practical theology, it has emphasized the phenomenon of ecumenical engagement than seeking to dwell much on the theological discourse. It emphasized how the ELCZ members at the local congregations participate in local ecumenism and seek to find out other reasons beyond theological factors.

8.5 Recommendations

As much as I have consulted sources about local ecumenism, this study is the first one to get to empirical study with interviews in local congregations to get the ecumenical experiences of the ELCZ Christians. Among the Karanga within the ELCZ, no study has been done before in this area of seeking to understand the phenomenon of local ecumenism in Mberengwa. However, this study was limited in rural parishes in Mberengwa, leaving out the urban and mission centres. The interviews were conducted with 10 clergy members and 15 lay leaders. Since it was qualitative research the concern was to get the responses to the questions across

the local ELCZ leadership, including the Diocesan Bishop, the two deans in the dioceses and female and male pastors in the rural parishes. These form half of the ELCZ rural parishes chosen from their clusters with those which did not participate. I also got some responses from the lay leaders, including the youths, *Zvapupu* and *Vashandiri* organs. Therefore, there was a balance of women, men, and youths from the selected parishes. Unfortunately, their voices came from specific parishes that had different dynamics due to membership and leadership. There are different approaches to local ecumenism from one parish to the other. The study is limited and cannot be generalized as the views and understanding of the whole of the ELCZ and neither the Central diocese itself at its entirety.

Given the above-mentioned limitations, further research projects can be pursued. These are:

- i. Further research on local ecumenism with interviews conducted among the ELCZ across the three diocese and members of other local denominations.
- ii. Since this was a qualitative inquiry, there is a need to take a quantitative approach, bringing on board both the clergy and the laity across the rural parishes.
- iii. Local ecumenism and the role of pastors focusing on the pastors' understanding and their local ecumenical initiatives.
- iv. An investigation may be done on the challenges facing local ecumenism in Mberengwa to establish impediments that do not promote ecumenical engagement and how they can be addressed.
- v. Further research can be done on broader local ecumenism including the engagement with other religions such as ATR and the Jewish Voice (Judaism in Mberengwa).
- vi. Research may be done to reflect on the impact of the national ecumenism on the grassroots ecumenism.

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Appendix 1 Gate keeper application



UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

University of KwaZulu-Natal
School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics
P/B X01, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
South Africa.

Mobile: [REDACTED]

Email: rabsonhove@gmail.com

10 April 2018

The Bishop

ELCZ Central Diocese

RE: APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO HAVE ACCESS TO THE CHURCH DOCUMENTS AND PERSONEL

I Rabson Hove a PhD candidate with the UKZN will be doing research in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe. I hereby write to seek permission to have access to church documents on ecumenical work, and permission to cite these documents and others referring to the ELCZ ministry in Zimbabwe. I also request that I have access to the bishop, deans, pastors and members of the laity in your diocese for the sake of interviews. My research topic is: **A CRITIQUE OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE'S (ELCZ) ENGAGEMENT IN LOCAL ECUMENISM AMONG THE KARANGA OF MBERENGWA IN ZIMBABWE.**

Yours Sincerely

Rabson Hove (UKZN PHD CANDIDATE)

Appendix 2: Gate keeper permission



**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE
CENTRAL DIOCESE**

581 Prince Street
Zvishavane
0775 298 158
0712 564 218

1894 Zvishavane
0392355173
Bishop direct line: 0392355174
Email: elczcentraldiocese@yahoo.com



16 April 2018

Rev Rabson Hove
University of Kwazulu Natal
School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics
P/B X01, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
South Africa

RE: Permission to have access to the church documents and personnel.

Dear Rev Rabson Hove {209503655} PHD Candidate

Your letter dated 13 April 2018 refers. This letter serves to inform you that your application for permission to have access to the church documents and personnel is granted. You are welcome to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe, Central Diocese for your research studies leading to PHD.

Thank you

Yours faithfully



Kenneth Sibanda
Bishop

THE BISHOP
CENTRAL DIOCESE
E.L.C.Z
DATE 16/04/18
581 PRINCE STREET,
ZVISHAVANE
CELL: 0714 400 042/0775 306 512

Appendix 3: Letter of informed consent

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
(HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

For research with human participants

INFORMED CONSENT

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date: 30 October 2018

Dear sir/ madam.

My name is RABSON HOVE from the University of KwaZulu- Natal, School of Religion Philosophy and Classics; P/B X01, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg, 3201. Department of Theology and Ethics. My contact details: Cell number +2772 961 3031 and email address is rabsonhove@gmail.com

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research the research topic: A CRITIQUE OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE'S (ELCZ) ENGAGEMENT IN LOCAL ECUMENISM AMONG THE KARANGA OF MBERENGWA IN ZIMBABWE. This has to do with discussion on the ELCZ working together with other denominations at local parishes in Mberengwa in the central Diocese of the ELCZ. The aim and purpose of this research is to explore perspectives of ecumenism as expressed through the understanding and practice of the ELCZ through selective parishes in the Central Diocese of the ELCZ. This is done by asking questions relating to activities done by the ELCZ with other denominations. The study is expected to enroll 25 participants from the clergy and laity (male, female and youth). It will involve interviews that will take an hour or less depending on the details given by the participant. The interviews will take place between February and April 2019.

There are no risks and discomforts in this study. The study will provide no direct benefits to participants. The study will be carried out telephonically and WhatsApp Conversations.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at the above contact numbers and email, or Prof. Herbert Moyo School of Religion Philosophy and Classics, Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, email Moyoh@ukzn.ac.za and Telephone number: +27 33260 5574 and the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Participation in this research is voluntary. You are free to refuse or withdraw at any point. In the event of refusal/withdrawal of you will not incur penalty.

There are no financial benefits for participating in this research.

Anonymous because your names will not be released but pseudo-initials in the presentation of the information gathered from the interviews. The data and stored samples will be secured and locked in the supervisor's office.

CONSENT

Ihave been informed about the study entitled, A CRITIQUE OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE'S (ELCZ) ENGAGEMENT IN LOCAL ECUMENISM AMONG THE KARANGA OF MBERENGWA IN ZIMBABWE by RABSON HOVE.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study towards PhD at the University of KwaZulu- Natal.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without incurring any penalty.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher as stated above.

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

There are no additional consent details:

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix 4: In-depth interviews for the clergy

1. Question: What is your understanding of ecumenism? *Mukuhwisisa kwako kudyidzana kana mubatanidzwa wemakereke zvinobvireyi?*
2. Question: What are the ecumenical activities taking place in your local parishes/congregations? *Ndaapi mabasa emibatanidzwa ekereke anoitwa muzvipoka/mumapoka menyu?*
3. Question: In what circumstances do local denominations hold formal church worship services together? *Pane nhambo here pamunombonamata kana kuti kuita mupiriro mumwe wekereke pamwe chete samakereke ari munharaunda?*
4. Question: Do you think there any Karanga cultural values that influence ecumenism in local congregations? *Munofunga kuti pangavawo nezvetsitka namagariro evaKaranga zvingakurudzira mubatanidzwa wemakereke munharaunda?*
5. Question: What are the missional factors that influence the ELCZ to participate in local ecumenism? *Ndeipi mibato yekereke kana kuti zvinofanigwa kereke zvingakurudzira kereke yamaLutera kupinda mumubatanidzwa namamwe makereke munharaunda?*
6. Question: What are the theological underpinnings for ELCZ ecumenical engagement? *Ndezvipi zviru muhwaro hwedzidziso yamaLutera zvinoita kereke yamaLutera ipinde mumubatanidzwa?*
7. Question: As a leader, in what ways do you encourage your members to participate in local ecumenism? *Iwe somutungamiri weboka izhira dzipi dzaunokurudzira vatendi kuti vabate pamwe chete navamwe mumubatanidzwa wemakereke munharaunda?*
8. Question: What are the benefits of the local ecumenical engagement? (Both in the church and community at large). *Imi munofunga kuti mubatanidzwa wamakereke unobatsireyi mukereke nomunharaunda?*
9. Question: Do you think the ELCZ members are interested in local ecumenical engagement? *Sokuvona kwako unofunga here kuti nhengo dzekereke yamaLutera dzinofarira mubatanidzwa womunharaunda?*

Appendix 5: In-depth interviews for the laity

1. What is your understanding of local denominations working together? *Mukuhwisisa kwako kudyidzana kana kuti mubatanidzwa wemakereke zvinobvireyi?*
2. On what occasions does the ELCZ work together with other local denominations? Which churches and if not why? *Ndaapi makereke anoita mubatanidzwa nekereke yamaLutera munharaunda?*
3. Are there occasions when local churches hold formal church services together? *Imi samakereke ari munharunda pane nguva dzamunishumira pamwe chete kana rimwe zuva paunovungana makereke samakereke ari munharaunda here?*
4. What do you think are the reasons for the ELCZ participation in working together with local denominations? *Unofunga kuti zvingava zvikonzero zvipi zvinoita kuti kereke yamaLutera ide kupinda mumubatanidzwa nemamwe makereke?*
5. In your view are there any Karanga cultural factors that may influence or impede ELCZ local ecumenism in Mberengwa? *Semaonero pane zvine chokuita netsika namagariro evaKaranga zvinokurudzira kana kukonesa kuti kereke yamaLutera ide kudyidzana nedzimwe kereke munharaunda muMberengwa?*
6. What are the benefits of the ELCZ working together with other local denominations? *Ko mubatanidzwa wemakereke munharaunda unobatsireyi kukereke yaMalutera nokunharaunda?*
7. Do you think your local pastor encourages local ecumenism? *Ko unofunga kuti mufundisi wako anokurudzira mubatanidzwa wamakereke ari munharaunda here?*

Appendix 6: Ethical clearance



Mr Rabson Hove (209503655)
School of Rel Phil & Classics
Pietermaritzburg

Dear Mr Rabson Hove,

Protocol reference number: 00010759
Project title:

Exemption from Ethics Review

In response to your application received on _____, your school has indicated that the protocol has been granted EXEMPTION FROM ETHICS REVIEW.

Any alteration/s to the exempted research protocol, e.g., Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment/modification prior to its implementation. The original exemption number must be cited.

For any changes that could result in potential risk, an ethics application including the proposed amendments must be submitted to the relevant UKZN Research Ethics Committee. The original exemption number must be cited.

In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE:

Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours sincerely,



Prof Philippe Marie Berthe Raoul Denis
Academic Leader Research
School Of Rel Phil & Classics

UKZN Research Ethics Office
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS









Appendix 7: Turnitin report

A CRITIQUE OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE'S (ELCZ) ENGAGEMENT IN LOCAL ECUMENISM AMONG THE KARANGA OF MBERENGWA IN ZIMBABWE

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