"One person's meat is another's poison": Conflict Management in the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

One of the basic theories commonly believed in the secular world today is that one person's meat is another person's poison which means that individuals and groups have needs, interests, dislikes, likes, partnerships, values and preferences which are often not compatible. The purpose of this paper is to argue that in Christian circles there is need to deliberately develop a theology of conflict that reflect conflict as a positive force that generates both growth, peace, justice and development of the church to counter the conventional view in the majority of churches that conflict is devilish or a sign of the existence of Satan. In the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe, intra-church conflicts have negative impact on personal and group well-being (the church) given that conflict breeds competition, animosity, divisions, hatred, breakaways amongst others. This is so because a highly adversarial approach towards conflict of all kinds is embodied in the church's approach to conflict and some staff and pastors in particular, have responded with legal action against the church's disciplinary actions. Yet the This study recommends that the AFM in Zimbabwe must appreciate the importance of conflict for positive growth and development and subscribes to the mantra: one person's meat is another's poison as a good number of Christians today are still pessimistic about conflict.

Keywords: *conflict management, church, Apostolic Faith Mission, Zimbabwe*

INTRODUCTION

Considering that Zimbabwe boasts of having more than 80 percent of the total population claiming to be Christians, the church in Zimbabwe needs to come up with a theology of conflict that embrace conflict as normal and necessary in the life of the church. One of the biggest challenges for modern churches today is to admit that conflict is part and parcel of Christian life, growth and development. The majority of churches still feel that pastors are men and women of the cloth who should not be found conflicting with any ordinary church member or amongst themselves. However, conflict is vital, if the church is to extricate itself out of stagnation, docility, inefficiency and ineffectiveness. The primary question that this study seeks to answer is how best can the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) in Zimbabwe make use of conflict management strategies to promote unity and growth in the church instead of divisions, animosities and break-away groups by aggrieved pastors? This study is structured as follows; the second section reviews the conceptual framework of the study. The third describes the methods of collecting data. The fourth examined the most typical conflict and frameworks for handling these

conflicts appended by structures responsible for managing conflict in the church under review. The fifth section examines the mantra 'one person's meat is one person's poison' andconflict management in the AFM. The sixth section reviews African traditional restorative approaches, right/interest-based approaches. The last section concludes the study with subsequent recommendations.

CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK

Conflict is part and parcel of the life of human life and the church is not spared either (McKay, 2016). As such, conflict dynamics has to be understood if the church is to make the best out of conflict situations. Although defining conflict is difficult because of a variety of definitions in circulation, this paper is closely aligned to the definition of conflict by Adler and Towne (1990) who understand conflict as "an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals" (ibid: 355). There are two important points here to note about conflict. In the first place, conflict is an expressed struggle suggesting that it is an open confrontation. In

that sense, conflict can be said to exist when all the parties involved become aware of the disagreement that is to say in one way or the other; each party involved must know that there is friction, tension or disagreement between them. In the second place, conflict comprise of interdependent parties. Adler and Towne (1990:357) put their weight behind this notion when they said: "Every relationship...no matter how close, how understanding, how compatible there will be times when ideas, actions, needs or goals won't match those of others around." It is crystal clear that conflict occurs within an interaction. Thus, the parties experiencing a disagreement or misunderstandings interact in various spheres of life as relatives, friends, workmates, church mates or neighbours.

Conflict management as Assefa (2001:337) understands it: focuses more on mitigating or controlling the destructive consequences that emanate from a given conflict than on finding solutions to the underlying issues causing it.

Assefa suggests that conflict management is a mere stop gap measure. It only serves to stop the warring parties or reduce the level of fighting between the parties to a conflict without necessarily dealing with the underlying causes of a conflict. There is need for the AFM in Zimbabwe church to manage as well as resolving conflict paying close attention to the needs of both parties to a conflict. This can only be achieved if an environment to reach a mutually agreed solution to a conflict is created.

Since this paper is interested in conflict situations in a church organization, it is important to note that church congregations are like family systems. They are made up of individuals that influence each other such as Sunday school teacher, usher, deacon, deaconess, elder, pastor, Overseer, church President to mention but a few. When these people interact the behavior of one member affects others thereby necessitating friction, misunderstandings or disagreements. Thus, conflict occurs within an interaction (Blackburn and Brubaker, 1999:168).

There are three levels of interaction out of which conflict often emerges namely, interpersonal, intra or intercommunity interactions (Kent, 1993; Tillett, 1999). At an interpersonal level conflict involves disagreements between individuals. Conflicts at this level usually result from personality difference, attitudinal problems, communication breakdown, different perceptions, scarce resources and incompatible behaviors. These factors can also fuel intercommunity or intra-community conflict. An intra-community conflict involves disagreements between individuals or groups within a community which can also erupt due to personality differences, attitudes or scarce resources among other factors. A clash of interests or disagreements over scarce resources between a pastor and an Overseer could be a typical example of an intra-community conflict because both are members appropriating one voice within a particular church community (Chivasa, 2012). While an inter-community conflict involves disagreements between communities or representatives of communities for example, a clash of ideologies between Christians and Moslems (Tillett, 1999).

Most scholars concur that conflict is a complex phenomenon which can be either positive or negative (Schrock-Shenk et al., 1999; Tillett, 1999; Harris, 2007). Conflict becomes positive when contained, managed and resolved in a manner that prevents it from escalating into violence (harm by intention). On the contrary, when a conflict translate into hatred, bitterness, hatred, animosities and hostilities between conflict acts it is considered destructive and therefore negative (Bendeman, 2006). Conflict becomes negative only if disagreements or misunderstandings are not handled properly, only then can conflict transform into a crisis, which may potentially pose negative impact to human life (Cornelius and Faire, 1989). Mindful of the potential negativity or positivity of conflict, Bloomfield, Ghai and Reilly, 1998:32) postulated that:

Conflict is not necessarily a negative process. Indeed conflict is one of the most powerfully positive factors for change in society. It tells us that something is wrong; conflict is a generator of change and improvement. Without conflict, we should have stagnation.

These sentiments suggest that conflict is not necessarily a bad experience but it helps to uncover the interests, goals and positions of other people which can in turn promote growth and positive social relationships between individuals and groups. This paper is interested more in understanding intra-church conflicts.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

This study reviews conflict management strategies employed by the AFM in Zimbabwe with a view to recommending effective methods of handling conflict in the church under review.

"One person's meat is another's poison": Conflict Management in the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe

Since the church relies on its two primary documents: Constitution and the Policy Document, data for public consumption becomes very challenging to access. As such, grey literature which include but not limited to local Zimbabwean newspaper articles from Herald, Sunday Mail, Chronicles, Newsday, H-Metro among other newspapers were sources of data. Other works the specifically focused on conflicts in the church under review include Chivasa (2007; 2012) and another work on misconduct and discipline in the AFM in Zimbabwe, which was of help was Chivasa (2017a, 2017b, Forthcoming). The later examined the dispute handling procedures of the AFM in Zimbabwe. Literature on conflict in particular intra-church or group conflicts include Tillett (19999); Blackburn and Brubaker (1999); Schrock-Shenk et al. (1999); McKay (2016); The results that are going to be produced will helppropose appropriate measures to be taken on-board by the church under review.

THE NATURE OF CONFLICTS IN THE AFM IN ZIMBABWE

Over the years, conflict involving pastors has been a major characteristic feature in the AFM in Zimbabwe. Ever since the establishment of the AFM in Zimbabwe, formerly Rhodesian African Church in 1915, it was largely run under the supervision of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa but even then conflicts involving men and women of the cloth have been an integral part of the church's life. Self-autonomy by the AFM in Zimbabwe in 1989 ushered in a new era in which the church experienced a myriad of conflict situations head-on involving pastors and the majority of cases arising fromsexual immorality, violence tendencies,drunkenness, forced transfers, misappropriation of church funds, confiscation of church properties, squabbles over leadership positions and personality clashes (Chivasa, 2007; 2012).

Conflicts in the AFM in Zimbabwe involve everyone from church members, laypersons and high profile leadership such as pastors. This study focuses on conflicts involving pastors because they are the most typical conflicts that receive media coverage in local newspapers in Zimbabwe. To give an update information on some of the conflicts involving pastors over the past five years of so, the following newspaper headlines indicate the scale of the problem;

- Just who is Emmanuel Makandiwa? Herald, 11 February 2011
- AFM should go back to the drawing board, Newsday, 21 April 2012
- AFM Church members in demo against overseer, H-Metro, 18 January 2013
- AFM Church Overseer accused of being used by the devil, H-Metro, 16 January 2013
- AFM Church pastors bribe overseers to be transferred to 'profitable' assemblies, H-Metro, 15 January 2013
- Nemukuyu B, Lawsuits lead to AFM Pastor's suspension, Herald, 13 August 2013
- Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe and other vs Murefu
- Nemukuyu B, AFM top brass sued over 'looting spree', Herald, 31 December 2015
- Zimbabwe riot police beat up Waterfalls members in Church
- Jachi F, AFM pastor fined for ungodly behavior, Herald, 18 February 2015
- Laiton C, AFM Pastor screams at the High Court, Newsday, 28 February 2015
- Mbanje P, Fierce leadership row rocks AFM, Newsday, 14 April 2015
- AM Pastor, congregants clash, Manica post, 17 March 2016
- Kadirire H, AFM members want defrocked pastor reinstated, Daily News, 06 January 2016
- Mhlanga B, AFM fires senior pastor, closes Assembly, The Standard, 03 January 2016

In the first case, for example, the headline was a respond following the clergyman's decision to leave the church unceremoniously against the background of allegations of conflict of interests. Case of interests is number six, which reports the pastor taking a lawsuit against the church's decision following misunderstandings. His decision resulted in him being suspended indefinitely. Another case of interests is number 15which reported ostracization of a pastor which came about following misunderstandings between the parties to the conflict.From these cases, one can conclude that the church under review is more inclined towards adversarial position taking in which case the majority of pastors respond by going through the courts of law as they fight for their rights (we discussed in

detail on the needs and rights based approaches below).

THE FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGING CONFLICT IN THE AFM IN ZIMBABWE

The reality to the existence of conflict hascontributed immensely to the creation of an internal conflict handling mechanisms called the code of conduct and grievance handling procedure (CCGHP) (Chivasa, 2012). Put simply, the AFM in Zimbabwe acknowledged that conflict in itself was not necessarily a vice, but a challenge, which when carefully handled may benefit the church and society at large.

The AFM in Zimbabwe CCGHP was designed to serve as; "a guideline of rules and standards of conduct and procedures aimed at promoting harmony and discipline, within the church" (Policy Document, p26). In order to evaluate the grievance handling system within AFM in Zimbabwe it is appropriate to reflect on the objectives of its CCGHP. Tillett (1999) points out that groups and communities have institutionalized methods of dealing with conflict. The CCGHP in the AFM in Zimbabwe church is an institutionalized framework for dealing with conflict. It contains procedures, disciplinary actions, and decisions to be taken and identifies leaders with the responsibility of addressing conflict. A reflection of the objectives of the CCGHP provides us with the aspirations of the church under review in relation to conflict, peace and justice issues. The objectives of the code are:

- To establish uniform standards of code of conduct and maintain discipline within the church;

- To enable church leadership, full time, lay workers and general staff settle disputes among themselves;

- To outline acts which constitutes misconduct liable for disciplinary action;

- To state the disciplinary action which may be taken when the code is not adhered to;

- To take disciplinary action in the event of unacceptable conduct or behavior;

- To establish consistent, fair and prompt disciplinary procedures that seek to correct unacceptable behavior rather than punish it;

- To provide a vehicle or process for resolving grievances within the church.

The aim of the CCGHP was to resolve conflict in order to achieve peace, justice andharmony within the church as a desired outcome. Harmony is another aspect of a peaceful church. Structures that employ the CCGHP the AFM in Zimbabwe are aimed at achieving harmony in the church. However, what is peculiar about AFM in Zimbabwe is that the church largely employ church discipline as its primary response mechanism to conflict in which the offender was given a period of censure ranging from three months to 12 months depending on the nature of the offence (see church Constitution, Chapter 13).

STRUCTURES THAT HANDLE CONFLICTS IN THE AFM IN ZIMBABWE

Despite efforts by some individual Christians to demonize and suppress conflict, there have been positive efforts by church leadership to address conflict constructively. The setting up of the local board of elders, provincial committee and Apostolic Council to mediate conflict at the different levels the church may also be interpreted as a positive development for constructive conflict resolution. Procedures for the election of local board of elders, provincial committee and Apostolic Council are beyond the scope of this paper, however, it is important to highlight that these structures are elected through a ballot system using the winner takes all and majoritarianism electoral systems. Only the office of a pastor in not voted into office but being a member of a committee is by election. The criteria for one to qualify into the office of a pastor in the AFM in Zimbabwe is to undergo a three-year theological training at a denominational college and completion of a probation period (internship) which has a minimum of one year. The pastor once recruited to work at an assembly automatically becomes the chairperson of the board of elders which comprise of seven adults. The board members are selected on merit. One of the major merits is that such an individual must faithfully pay tithes after which s/he can be promoted from deaconship to eldership which is the highest rank before one becomes a pastor. The local board of elders comprise of six lay workers (mostly elders and in some cases deacons) and the local pastor as chairperson. The local board of elders is responsible for the affairs of the local congregation and this includes resolving conflict at that level. The local board of elders is accountable to the provincial committee (Constitution of the AFM

in Zimbabwe; Policy Document of the AFM in Zimbabwe).

The provincial committee comprise of seven individuals. The chairperson is the provincial overseer. An overseer is an administrative position which is assumed only by a pastor who wins an election after every three years. The major criterion is that such a pastor must have attained 40 years of age and served in the church for more than ten years in ministry. Thus, the provincial committee comprise of pastors, elders and deacons who assume these positions on merits. The provincial committee runs the affairs of a province and they report to the Apostolic Council. A province in the AFM in Zimbabwe does not fall squarely with political and administrative provincial demarcations in Zimbabwe. Provinces in the AFM are thrice more the ten provinces in Zimbabwe. The Apostolic Council comprise of ten office bearers. The chairperson is the President of the church who is elected triennially from amongst the ranks of the provincial overseers. The Apostolic Council is the custodian of the church and responsible for addressing conflict among other responsibilities (Constitution of the AFM in Zimbabwe; Policy Document of the AFM in Zimbabwe).

It is crystal clear that structures in the AFM in Zimbabwe are created on the basis of experience not necessarily skills in the area of conflict resolution. Experience here is taken to mean the number of years that one has served in the leadership structure of the church. Qualities such as faithfulness, ability to lead, charismatic abilities and good reputation by peers are some of the qualities taken from some biblical texts such as 1Timothy 3:1–13 and Titus 1:1–9. In terms of skills, an individual who is selected into any of these positions should be a dynamic preacher or teacher. Conflict resolution skills are often not put into consideration when selecting people into leadership in the AFM in Zimbabwe church. A closer analysis of the state of affairs in the AFM in Zimbabwe indicates that the creation of the CCGHP may be regarded as an attempt to achieving sustainable outcomes out of conflict situations. However, these structures (local board of elders, provincial and Apostolic Council) have been queried for not being able to address conflict constructively as the majority of conflict situations have tended to take adversarial outcomes where certain persons considered being a threat to the powers that be are labeled as 'black shepherds' or dangerous

wolves in sheep's skin. In most cases it will be very difficult for them to rise in Church. In some cases the boards have tended to be used for settling of scores and generation of personal vendettas. In the AFM in Zimbabwe these structures are known for placing offending pastors under censure, suspended and in some cases ostracizing them for good. In the 1990s, former three senior pastors were placed under censor indefinitely after allegations of sexual immorality were leveled against them. Around the same period, in the Midlands province, more than 10 pastors left the church unceremoniously following allegations of insubordination As from 2008 to 2015, AFM in Zimbabwe has birthed and witnessed a number of new Pentecostal Churches founded by their former pastors who also left AFM in Zimbabwe two prominent pastors from Harare province and another from Chitungwiza East province. These and other cases that followed are classic examples that the provincial committees and Apostolic Council have tendered to promote adversarial approaches to conflict instead of embracing reconciliatory approaches. Driving a pastor out of the church is an example of adversarial approach. Blackburn and Brubaker (1999) classify adversarial approaches as unilateral decisions. Unilateral decisions in the case of Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe usually take place at the provincial level where the overseer can be a domineering touring figure when it comes to decision making processes and procedures. The national executive normally rubber stamps provincial disciplinary decisions. Dissatisfaction arising from conflict resolutions has resulted in several court cases being lodged against the Church and executive of the AFM in Zimbabwe.

Unilateral decisions do not often resolve a conflict but serve to solidify factionalism, which may be more severe because those parties with decision making powers may seek to force another party to bend to their will, which may often be disputed against thereby creating more bitter feelings between the leadership and the pastor (Chivasa, 2012).

CONTEXTUALIZING THE POPULAR MANTRA: 'ONE PERSON'S MEAT IS ANOTHER PERSON'S POISON'

The title of this paper is derived from the mantra 'one person's meat is another's poison', which point to the need to accept conflict as a reality in human societies. As mentioned above, by

creating a CCGHP, the AFM in Zimbabwe seems to have accepted the reality which finds expression in the mantra: one person's meat is another's poison. In the current study, this mantra is taken to mean that something that one person likes very much can be something that another person does not like at all or what is good for or enjoyed by one is not necessarily so for someone else. There are a number of critical points that the mantra brings to the fore. The mantra calls for the attention of two individuals to understand that what meat on one hand is poison on the other. The term 'meat' is used here to mean those things that are of interests to individuals while 'poison' prefigures not only dislikes but things that individuals cannot live with. The mantra appeals to individuals and groups to stop fighting over their differences as this would never change existing differences. In this way, individuals are urged to accept the realities of life that people differ in terms of interests, perceptions, needs and preferences.

The mantra appeals for individual responsibility to respect the likes and dislikes of other people. Theindividuals and groups needto understand the dynamics of conflict that it takes two to tango. The mantra is informative and valuable in that it provides people with information that conflict is very basic. It challenges the belief that conflict comes from the devil by highlighting individual responsibilities in choosing personal interests, needs and preferences over those of others. Thus, to say one person's meat is another's poison is to say people will always experience a clash of views, friction or disagree in life. It is also to say that people experience conflict over what they perceive as threats to their personal interests, needs or preferences. When individuals or groups fight over their interests, needs or preferences;the end result is that peace is ruptured. To consciously appreciate that conflict result from personal or groupinterests, needs or preferences is to accept that conflict is inevitable and IS part of everyday life. Conflict does not come from the devil: it emanates from individual or groupdesires to pursue personal interests, needs and preferences with no regard for other people's interests. The mantra then reminds us all, of our role in creating conflict in our day to day lives as we interact at church with fellow members and elsewhere. Conflict occurs when each church member in their various capacities whether as deacons, elders, committee leaders,deaconesses, pastors or bishops attempts to undermine the interests of other church members. To a large extent, this mantra therefore is a reminder to all AFM in Zimbabwe church members and the whole Christian community that individuals are central to creating interpersonal conflicts.

Finally, the mantra acknowledges the role of the 'other' in creating conflict. In fact, there may be no interpersonal conflict if only one person was involved and a one-person conflict is popularly understood as intra-personal. One person's meat... echoes loudly to one party to the conflict that it takes another person for an interpersonal conflict to be created. The mantra makes a deliberate attempt to create the: us and them dichotomy, thus suggesting that conflict occurs when other individuals makes the attempt to embrace sectarianism. This mantra confirms that the entire Christian community is involved in creating conflict in the church. In that sense, the mantra puts responsibility to every member of the church to take responsibility in addressing conflict amicably.

RETHINKING METHODS OF ADDRESSING CONFLICT IN THE AFM IN ZIMBABWE

It appears, the current internal mechanisms are under heavy strain due to conflict situations such as dismissal of pastors, insubordination, pastors alleged of sexual immorality, misappropriation of funds, fabrications based on personal vendettas, extra-marital affairs or divorce cases among others. Drastic actions taken against some pastorsowing to the perceived conflicts of interests between pastors who were engaged in independent ministries activities as from 2010 onwards led them to leave the church unceremoniously. Such actions constitute destructive conflict patterns which normally do not resolve the conflict but serves to blow it out of proportion (Schrock-Shenk et al., 1999). The move resulted in the accused pastors attracting a number of former AFM in Zimbabwe members. As for those pastors who choose to remain in AFM in Zimbabwe members resort to secular courts for solutions. Critiques then accuse them for going against the biblical position of Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 that:

When one of you has a grievance against a brother, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? 2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, matters pertaining to this life! 4 If then

you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who are least esteemed by the church? 5 I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no man among you wise enough to decide between members of the brotherhood, 6 but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? 7To have lawsuits at all with one another is defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? 8 But you yourselves wrong and defraud, and that even your own brethren.

Paul had the understanding that Christians would never be motivated by self-interests when resolving conflicts in Church because of Christ in them. If Paul had lived longer, he would have realized that, Christians can be so selfish and biased against brethren resorting to secular or traditional courts. Also, incidences of case overloads in dealing with conflicts in the church suggest that a large percentage of staff, pastors in particular, have no or little training in conflict resolution. Further to that, the fact that the CCGHP was created to deal with conflicts without necessarily going through the courts yet there are still some conflicts that go through courts brings to mind a myriad of questions as to whether the CCGHP is really achieving its objectives or not. In view of this, one can assume that the capacity of the CCGHP is not as effective as it was hoped given that some conflicts, particularly conflicts that continue for an extended period, end up in courts of law thereby creating instability in the church. There are several cases of conflicts involving pastors which went through the courts of law include among others, two Overseers one from Masvingoprovince another from Harare province, one provincial youth leader from Harare province, one pastor from Midlands north province, another from Masvingo, and Harare east province to not provide an exhaustive list.

According to the CCGHP, conflicts in the AFM in Zimbabwe are addressed by the local board of elders, provincial committee or Apostolic Council (AFM in Zimbabwe Policy document, section). Thus, addressing conflicts through the court of law when there are already laid down procedures and strategies suggests that internal structures have either been exhausted or that particular conflict could be beyond the capacity of the internal conflict handling committee. In the same vein, it can be assumed that going through the route of the courts of law is an indication that internal structures of the AFM in Zimbabwe are either not used properly or they

are not fully understood. It should be noted that conflicts that go through the court are costly and that route is not a sensible investment (Bendman, 2006; Harris, 2007) for the AFM in Zimbabwe church to undertake.

THE TRADITIONAL AFRICAN RESTORATIVE APPROACH

Conflict is a fact of life and to cope with it every community comes up with mechanisms of addressing conflict. Africans, in particular, Shona and Ndebele people use structural courts such as household, village and the chief's courts. Household courts comprise of the auntie, grandparents, and other elderly people with good reputation. The role of this household court is to address conflicts in the home and to sustain peace. Village and the chief's courts address conflicts of various proportions most of which are beyond the capacity of the household and village courts. These could include arson, witchcraft accusation, taking another person's spouse, fighting at beer parties or stock theft (Gombe, 2006). What is important to note here is that African communities, Zimbabwe in particular, have arbitrators and mediators who are members of the community subscribing to similar values and social norms that sustain the life of the host community. As such, when a conflict occurs, these arbitrators and mediators appeal to values and customs that every member of the community is accustomed to and that way peace and justice issues are sustained.

However, in the AFM in Zimbabwe, although there are some commonalities with traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in that there are internal arbitrators and mediators such as elders, pastors or overseers, there is evidence that CCGHP is more biased towards the criminal law model than the usual Traditional African restorative approach to resolving conflicts. The criminal law model is the one that underpin modern courts. Modern courts of law were imported into the country now called Zimbabwe on 30 June 1891 following the entrance of European settlers. Thus African ways of addressing conflicts relates to methods that were and are still in use by indigenous people before the introduction of the Roman Dutch law which finds expression in the criminal law model. The CCGHP of the AFM in Zimbabwe is based on the criminal law model.

There are critical elements to note about the CCGHP. The CCGHP is premised on the fact that conflict is a reality of life. It appears,

conflict is regarded as a social ill that always negates development and a source of all distressed relationships that militates against harmony sustenance (Chivasa, 2012). In fact, phrases used such as 'offences, investigations, judges, discipline, dismissal, charges, judgment, appeal committee, warning, breach' (AFM Constitution, Cap.14) are negative overtones derived from the criminal law model. It is not surprising to realize that, there are people and even leaders wishing to see those under discipline being in pain or their lives not going well. The criminal law model basically comes from the assumption that criminals or offenders must be made to suffer (Kotze, 2008). In that case, when a conflict occurs or an offence is committed this model creates adversarial relationships (that is winners and losers) because "the common response is to find a scapegoat who is seen as the cause of problems" (Schrock-Shenk et al., 1999:17) and to ensure that the culprit is shunned or brought to book. This paper therefore argues that there is need to integrate principles that underpin the criminal law model with indigenous mechanisms since both models are basically aimed at coping with conflict. Furthermore, the paper argues that ignoring or fighting conflict as satanic is not the way forward because conflict is a fact of life. Thus, blending together elements from the criminal law model and indigenous mechanisms should be considered as one way of coping with conflict in the AFM in Zimbabwe church.

CCGHP: POWER AND RIGHTS BASED PRINCIPLES

The CCGHP is based on power and rights based principles. In the power-based, responsibility to deal with conflict as is often the case in AFM is given to a senior person such as the pastor, overseer or church President. Attributing conflict resolution with seniority is typical of African approach to conflict. As mentioned above, in the traditional communities, it is assumed that a senior person has developed skills of dealing with conflict through the process of time. Besides, seniority is associated with wisdom to deal with each emerging conflict (Gombe, 2006). This seems to be the case with the AFM in Zimbabwe in which senior pastors or overseers are given the responsibility to preside over certain conflicts especially those involving pastors. The difference is that African approach to conflict is relationship oriented- that is the process is guided by the desire to improve relationships or

reconciling the contending groups as opposed to an approach that seeks to establishwho is right or wrong as is the case with the rights based. Although, the rights-based approach differs significantly with traditional conflict resolution mechanism there are some commonalities. Under the rights-based, power to make decision is lodged in the hands of a senior person which means power to decide the outcome of conflict is based on rank or status. In this case, the most powerful party typically wins while the less powerful loses. In a real world, this kind of approach to conflict normally breeds winners and losers which means that the conflict may re-appear because it remains unresolved (Harris, 2007). Only a mutually satisfying outcome of a conflict guarantees resolution of a conflict.

In the rights-based approach, the management (which in this case is the provincial committee or the Apostolic Council) relies heavily on policies, rules and regulations in determining the outcome of a conflict. Under this model, the management ensures that rules are observed and if not adhered to penalties are enforced. In the process of enforcing penalties the offender is often not consulted and at this level the ultimate goal in most cases is to defeat the perceived enemy or offender thereby creating a winner-loser contest. In some sense the conflict might seem to have disappeared but because there is a winner and loser it may come again but at a higher cost (Harris, 2007). The rights based approach does not really promote reconciliation between the offender and the offended.

It should be understood that conflict resolution is based on dialogue between the conflicting parties. It takes the parties (offender and victim, in this case the pastor and the aggrieved assembly or vice versa) to cooperatively work together, by listeningto each other, not with the intention of winning a debate but to understand each other's position, interests and needs. Dialogue requires skills such as empathy that is "...to listen with the ears of your opponent, see with the eyes of your opponent and feel with the heart of your opponent." Lack of empathy causes the parties to a conflict to get caught up and lost in the "dog-eat-dog competition..." (Snyman, 2002:43). Another indispensable skill that sustains dialogue is open communication as someone said: "people don't get along because they fear each other. People fear each other because they don't know each other. They don't know each other because they have not properly communicated with each other (Snyman,

2002:43).Thus, dialogue between the parties (offender and victim) can potentially yield win-win outcomes as a central feature in conflict resolution.

To this end, both leadership and followership in the AFM in Zimbabwe church may need to admit that the current internal conflict handling mechanisms do not always produce win-win outcomes and possible reasons for this are that they are neitherderived from the criminal law model nor the African Ubuntu Restoration Model. The CCGHP appears to use power and rights –based approaches to conflict which result in win/lose outcomes.

DEVELOPING A THEOLOGY OF CONFLICT

The Old and New Testaments have several cases that illustrate frameworks for dealing with conflict at different levels of interaction, as exemplified in both. One Old Testament example is a case that occurred between two blood brothers, Esau and Jacob over birthright privileges (Genesis 27:41 "Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, 'The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob.'"). The former antagonists made a conscious choice to confront the problem as they moved towards resolving their differences and this was done with an eye view to restore a broken relationship in Genesis 33 (Chivasa, 2012). Genesis 33 narrates how the two brothers reconciled by saying that:

And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two maids. 2 And he put the maids with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all. 3 He himself went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.4 But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. 5 And when Esau raised his eyes and saw the women and children, he said, "Who are these with you?" Jacob said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant." 6 Then the maids drew near, they and their children, and bowed down; 7 Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down; and last Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down. 8 Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company which I met?" Jacob answered, "To find favor in

the sight of my lord." 9 But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself." 10 Jacob said, "No, I pray you, if I have found favor in your sight, then accept my present from my hand; for truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God, with such favor have you received me. 11 Accept, I pray you, my gift that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough." Thus he urged him, and he took it."

Another classical example from the Old Testament, which helps to set the stage for reconciliation as a desired outcome is a dispute that occurred between Joseph and his brothers. In moving towards a solution to the conflict Joseph's brothers asked for forgiveness at a time when Joseph was in a position of authority, as an Egyptian prime minister. And Joseph chose to act differently by not taking revenge rather he chose to grant them forgiveness and pledged to deal with his brothers kindly (Genesis 46:17) (Chivasa, 2012). In the New Testament there are some models of dealing with conflict in the book of Matthew:

And if your brother wrongs you go and point out the fault, between you and him alone if he listens you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you take one or two along with you. And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the arbitrators (Matthew 18:15-16).

There are three conflict resolution strategies suggested in this biblical passage namely negotiation, arbitration and mediation. What is clear in this passage is that whenever a conflict occurs the parties must come together for purposes of engaging in a dialogue. It is crystal clear that the texts is here lobbying for negotiation, arbitration and mediation as methods of addressing conflict. Building on this passage, the AFM in Zimbabwe should develop a theology of conflict.

Mayer (2000:142) views negotiation as "an interaction in which people try to meet their needs by reaching an agreement with others who are trying to get their own needs met". Negotiation involves dialogue between the parties to a conflict aimed at reaching an agreed solution. Arbitration is defined by Tillett (1999:97) as the "the use of a neutral third party to make a decision regarding a conflict". In other words, arbitration involves third party making a decision regarding the matter under dispute. Brand-Jacobsen and Jacobsen (2000:52) view mediation a process involving "third party

bringing the parties together and working with them to find a solution acceptable to all". In that sense, mediation involves third party facilitating dialogue between the parties to a conflict to reach an agreed solution. The AFM in Zimbabwe church should embrace these non-violent strategies of addressing conflict because they help to improve relationships. For instance, as Brand-Jacobsen and Jacobsen (2000:52) demonstrated:

The process of mediation work is to reframe the context of the conflict, to move actors away from positions of incompatibility and opposition towards dialogue focusing on interests, similarities and goals.

These sentiments confirm that the actual resolution of conflict rests with the parties' active participation. This view seems appropriate since Harris (2007:4-5) also suggests that: "conflict resolution is ideally handled by the parties themselves."

In view of the foregoing discussion, the AFM in Zimbabwe church should develop a theology of conflict along these three conflict resolution strategies which are negotiation, arbitration and mediation due to their potentiality to improve relationships. Embracing these strategies bring to the fore a perspective that conflict is a positive force with that potential to drive growth in the church especially in the area of relationships and how conflicts should be addressed in future. On this basis, the ideal theology proposed in this paper is that that conflict requires constructive engagements by the parties to a conflict in order to produce a mutually satisfying solution.

However, for the past decades, especially the better part of the 1990s and early 2000s, efforts to achieve sustainable solutions to conflict in the AFM in Zimbabwe have not been forthcoming. This could be attributed to the theology of conflict prevalent in the AFM in Zimbabwe church. One of the huddles to achieving mutually satisfying solutions is the negative view of conflict by the generality of church members (Chivasa, 2012). However, in order to move towards basic assumptions that conflict is beneficial and valuable, the church at large must accept responsibility for any conflict experienced in the past and those that will occur in future and strategically develop a perception that conflict involving groups is unavoidable because one person's meat is another's poison. The major challenge of late has been that, conflict has always been perceived as satanic

and a force that militates against harmony sustenance and the presence of God. This perception portrays conflict as not humanly. One wonders whether this is really true because there is nothing satanic about conflict. Conflict is humanly and neutral in that -the direction it takes is determined by the responses of the parties to a conflict.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The question that this study sought to answer is how best can the AFM in Zimbabwe manage conflict effectively help to promote unity and growth instead of fanning divisions, animosities and factionaries among the aggrieved pastors? In the foregoing discussion we have identified the frameworks for managing conflict in the church under review and the structures responsible for managing conflict especially those involving pastors. It was also pointed out that the church under review makes use of adversarial strategies that is ostracization against those whom church leadership is in disagreement with. The tendency to ostracize the other party to a conflict by the stronger party does not help to promote unity and growth rather it fans factionalism as it yields win/lose outcomes thus creating animosities especially for those pastors against whom lose is incurred. Literature on conflict in the church does not recommend ostracization of the person or group against which church leadership is in conflict with. The overriding principle that helps to manage conflict constructively is dialogue between the parties to a conflict, the theory being that if the parties participate in shaping the outcome of conflict, there is greater likelihood for improved relationships. In order to more towards a relationship oriented outcome, this study recommended that the church should embrace a theology of conflict that it is natural and health for the life and growth of the church.

Dealing with conflict involving groups requires the entire church to take it seriously and developing basic assumptions that there is nothing satanic about conflict. Pastors, local board of elders, the provincial committee and Apostolic Council must develop positive assumptions about conflict based on selected biblical texts, which promotes dialogue than ostracization. In view of this, we propose that the church under review can conduct conflict resolution training workshops, seminars or Bible study sessions in order to deepen their appreciation of conflict as a positive force. AFM

in Zimbabwe affiliate institutions that train pastors must include Conflict or Peace Studies subjects or courses in their curricula so as to empower student pastors on issues to do with conflict. In other quarters, it has been argued that training in conflict resolution is not the core of Christianity. This paper contends that training in conflict resolution is a worthwhile investment for church and must be promoted if the church it to help create unity and growth.

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