

The Role of the Church in National Healing and Reconciliation: The Case of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe from 1999 to 2009

Joseph Muwanzi

Abstract

This chapter unpacks how the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe (MCZ) has promoted national healing and reconciliation within the Zimbabwean context of political transitional inadequacies between 1999 and 2009. It analyses how MCZ participated in national healing and reconciliation, and identifies challenges encountered during the process. The study adopted Lederach's peace-building model as the theoretical framework, and the methodology of sequential explanatory mixed-method design of qualitative and quantitative data gathering, worked with a sample size of 52 participants from the MCZ community. Primary data were gathered through questionnaire and an interview schedule while secondary data were obtained from textbooks, journals, the internet, unpublished theses, MCZ Connexional Archive material and National Archives of Zimbabwe (newspapers). Established strategies used in fostering healing and reconciliation were; humanitarian aid, training workshops, counselling, public religious gatherings, preaching and teaching and engagement. Experienced challenges were; lack of political will, financial inadequacy, lack of social justice desk, partisan politics and fear. The chapter argues that the ineffectiveness in peace-building by MCZ was because of the multiple challenges encountered. However, the study made a number of recommendations to the church under study and for future researchers.

Keywords: Political transition, Conflict, Violence, Church, Conflict transformation, Reconciliation.