

The Role of the Methodist Church in Resolving Electoral Conflict and Promoting Peace in Zimbabwe

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1. Introduction

Religion is not a new player in politics. It has been central in igniting conflicts as well as in resolving others, in matters of peace destruction as well as peace building, in governance as well as causing mayhem, human destruction and genocide. Religion can play oppressive, exploitative, subordinating and dominating roles the way it can play very critical, liberating, reconstructive and developmental roles. History has demonstrated the ambivalent roles of religion that it becomes impossible to present only one side in any serious scholarship. It is therefore important to understand the paradoxical character of religions if one is to appreciate their roles and functionality amongst the different social groups, at different times and in different places. Africa is replete with all these of religions right from precolonial times through colonialism up to today.

The negative roles of Western religions in the colonizing project of Africa and in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda vis - à - vis the liberating roles of the African religions in the anti - colonial resistances ably demonstrate these (Murindwa - Rutanga, 2011; Lwanga - Lunyiigo, 2011; In Zimbabwe the liberating role of the likes of Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi through the African Traditional Religion is more visible than the role played by Christianity during the liberation struggle. The struggle for equality and justice.

Despite the different characters, functionalities and orientations of religions, it is important to analyse the positive, developmental and constructive roles which religions can play in salvaging situations and reconciling peoples. Some religions have capacities to carry them out because of the nature of their tenets, structures, inbuilt capacities, internal drives and ideologically or religiously committed leadership. The permanence of the states and their increasing incapacities have created gaps which make religion to become critical links between the people in the society and the political class. Many religions tend to have advantage of teachings and the style of delivering their message that ends up appealing to the conscience of the followers. The proximity of religion to all the levels of the society is vital in peace building. In the post - colonial Africa, the Christian religions have followers with linkages in different sectors and levels of society. This is the case in many former colonies in Africa where Islam had not established its hegemony at the time when European colonialism invaded Africa for resources and profits.

Placed in that privileged locus by the European colonialists, Christianity continued to enjoy that political location in post - coloniality. As the African countries got submerged into political turmoil, decadence, poverty and debts, they began to seek narrow solutions like ethnicity, religions and regionalism. Being placed in such unyielding complications, the church emerged with vigour to resolve the conflicts and promote peace in society. This was the case in Zimbabwe during the electoral violent conflicts. Christianity is a dominant religion in Zimbabwe which hegemonised during the British colonial rule. Faced with the assailing violent political conflicts which spread to post - colonialism, Christianity emerged organically and strongly from within the society with interest in resolving them and build peace. This article therefore analyses the preparedness of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe (MCZ) to promote peace during the 2023 harmonized elections in the country.

In the ideas of the people, the church is expected to be a compassionate entity which is committed to social justice in an uncompromising manner. For this to happen, the church must change its mentality which can be viewed as the "field - hospital mentality". The field - hospital mentality is whereby the church is occupied by treating and managing the victims of political violence. The mission of the church will be reduced to that of repairing and healing wounds of political violence.

The Church in Zimbabwe normally intervenes in situations that require it to facilitate reconciliation, healing, provisioning of shelter to the displaced victims of political violence, promoting unity accords and trying to bring together the political contestants and make them form governments of national unity. It is the mission and mandate of the church to foresee danger especially basing on past experiences. Whenever danger is anticipated, then, the church normally tries to take a proactive approach or preventive stance. A pattern seems to have been established where the politicians mess up the situation and then call in the church to rectify it. The church has therefore to prepare and participate actively in the elections in Zimbabwe so as to help the people and ensure that the country remains united.

In terms of research methodology, the data were collected through the desk research method. More data were gathered by using the grey literature about the MCZ, from the church offices and from online about the role of religion in peace building.

An Overview of Religion and Peace Building

The Religion and Peacebuilding studies is an area that seek to explore the role of religion in the development of peace. Hayward (2012) opines that religious peacebuilding developed around the issue of religion being both a source and a solution to conflict particularly after the 1979 Iranian Revolution. He further explains how the engagement of religious organizations in peacebuilding has been around for a long time. However, there were no systematic and institutionalized methods or models which were put in place that worked as a framework for religious peacebuilding.

Religious organizations have resources - financial, material and skilled, experienced and dedicated personnel. In facilitating peace building activities, its personnel try to advance the religious values of peace, love, forgiveness, healing and reconciliation (Hertog, 2010). Religious groups and organizations have an advantage as they have moral authority over their followers. This becomes a potent and effective tool which they utilize. The moral authority helps the religious organizations to engage with people at all levels of the society.

Religious peacebuilding has been rising and gaining impetus in the developing countries after the formation of international structures and systems such as the World Council of Religious Leaders (WCRL). This was formed after the Millennium World Peace Summit at the United Nations summit in August 2000 (World Council of Religious Leaders: 2000). This summit which was held at the United Nations for the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders attracted over 2000 religious and spiritual leaders from different countries, faiths and traditions.

There are also a number of ecumenical and interreligious bodies and organizations which are involved in peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the conflict - ridden areas. These include the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP), the World Congress of Faiths (WCF), the World Council of Churches (WCC), the United Religions Initiative (URI), the Council of the Parliament of World Religions (CPWR), the Interreligious Peace Foundation (IRPF) in Sri - Lanka, the All - Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC).

Religious organizations face a setback in the process of peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Hertog (2010) State that, religious peacebuilding and conflict resolution is a heterogeneous field of study and there is no well - developed framework or tradition to situate the studies of religious peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives. This makes it difficult to come up with a single approach which can be assumed to be the religious approach. While Christians have values, tenets and praxes which are different from those of the Muslims and of the African indigenous religions, still, theirs are not monolithic. This is due to their multiple identities and outlooks.

The other setback which emanates from the characteristic of being heterogeneous is that there are varied backgrounds to the study area, the study is approached from the background

of historians, anthropologists, political scientists, sociologists, philosophers, theologians and dialectical and historical materialists (Suprpto, 2015). There are a number of scholars who contributed in the study of the field of religious peacebuilding and conflict resolution activities.

Among these is Marc Gopin, the director for the Centre for World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict resolution. He emphasizes the role of religion and culture and makes great contribution to the study of religious peacebuilding and conflict resolution by developing a framework for religious conflict resolution. His works include; *Gopin (200) Between Eden and Armageddon: The future of World Religions* He focused on the interaction between social, psychological, economic, and cultural circumstances and the human drive to hermeneutically develop religious meaning to the conflict. He calls for an intimate knowledge of religious traditions, their myths, rituals, laws, beliefs, texts, and values. While his approach is relevant to contemporary conflicts, still it fails to understand the locus and importance of politics in conflicts. Conflicts are by their very nature political and any effort to address them must involve political methods. The other shortcoming with his approach is its failure to show how the numerous religious beliefs and backgrounds could be reconciled to be able to address the conflicts.

Sampson and Johnston (1995) viewed religion as the missing link in peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes. This was well - captured in their title of *Johnstone and Sampson (1996) Religion the Missing Dimension of Statecraft*. This work explains that the role of religion in peacebuilding and conflict resolution has been relegated in the studies of international relations (Johnston & Sampson, 1995). They further explain how religion has been a missing ingredient in peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes. They bring out the positive role that religion plays in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. They underpin the importance of including religion in policy making (Johnston, 2003; Johnston & Sampson, 1995). They explain the distinction between faith - based diplomacy and other approaches to diplomacy. They reveal how religion and diplomacy have become more interrelated since the end of the twentieth century where globalization and the shifting landscape of contemporary conflicts have exposed the limitations of the orthodox way of diplomacy in the processes of resolving contemporary conflicts in a global era (Scott Thomas, 2010).

Faith - based diplomacy gives priority to dialogue within religious traditions. It aims at promoting a holistic approach to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This makes it different from the traditional models of peacebuilding and conflict resolution. It promotes the restoration of the political order which is susceptible to ravishes of war and injustice. It also pushes for reconciliation and forgiveness of individuals and social groups. In the process, it ends up cooling the raging or simmering political flames of conflicts and wars. The application of religious or faith - based principles and instruments seems to have value in peacebuilding. The application of these principles triggered the need to formulate a specific theoretical framework and praxis of faith - based peacebuilding and conflict resolution. This theoretical framework has been designed to facilitate

the restoration of relationship between the conflicting parties.

He urged policy makers to stop relegating the religious element in peacebuilding and conflict resolution but instead to factor it in their activities. He presented it as defining element of national and international security during conflict. Johnston advocated for the application of religious principles and instruments to the practical work of peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The setback of this approach is that these scholars did not provide religious instruments and principles that would be used in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. This could be as a result of the heterogeneity of religious beliefs, traditions, backgrounds, and culture. The other problem is that some religions could be party or the causes of the ongoing conflicts. The third limitation was that not all conflicts and wars can be reduced to a single cause or solution like religion.

Given that conflicts are political, then, all the solutions have to have political elements. To ignore that would be idealistic and utopian. Finally, there are many industrialised capitalist countries in Asia, Europe and America where religions have become museumised or are taken as cultural symbols. China gives the best example. What this shows is that the above theorisation is aimed at the former colonies, which are highly trapped in the imported religions and capitalist modes of production as appendages. That is the fate of Africa. This therefore requires us to explore if their solutions are not shrouded by racism. In other words, if religions have been abandoned in the developed countries, some of which spread them to these colonies, why should those religions be reemphasised as the solvers of the conflicts in these neocolonies today? To put this into context today, why aren't the USA and Europe invoking religions to solve the raging Russian - Ukraine war? What about the USA wars with Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria?

Luc Reyhler (2020) advances a different peacebuilding model which requires five blocks in order to realize maintainable peace in society. The first block is effective communication. This involves attentive listening to what is being said in regard to the conflict, understanding non-verbal communication to grasp what is being underpinned in the context; understanding and interpreting the emotions in the context. He argues that this effective communication will help in getting the gist of the conflict.

Effective communication has to be followed by consultation and negotiation systems. The negotiation systems have to be effective so as to assist the negotiating team to avoid making mistakes during the negotiations which would cause negative outcomes. The system has to enable the negotiators to feel the other side's pain and emotions and be able to reframe the problem for facilitating positive analysis.

The peace - enhancing structures, systems and institutions peacebuilding block is about institutions and systems such as political systems, economic systems, and social services systems. The peace enhancing structures include legal, educational, health, information, and security structures (Jackson, 2018). An example are the commissions which can

be established through an Act of Parliament. Such commissions have to be independent bodies, free from the influence of the politicians and the political parties.

Religious leaders have been helpful in leading the truth and reconciliation commissions in newly independent countries. An example is the post - apartheid South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission which was led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. These commissions have possibilities of resolving conflicts (Fambad, 2008). This is because they are created to deal with the pains, trauma, wounds and psychological violence caused by the conflict. They can help to bring out accountability of the wrongs done during the conflict and they are usually structured in a way that prevents past mistakes to resurface in the future.

The negotiation systems need to be followed by peace enhancing structures, systems and institutions. This is a process that creates structures or infrastructure for peace with capabilities of institutionalising the mechanisms for dealing systematically with any future conflict. It will be a response mechanism to any new conflict or whenever a possible eruption of conflict is detected. There is need to establish systems and institutions that promote preventive measures to conflict. Examples are the institutions which facilitate: free and fair elections, separation of powers between the arms of the state, systems and institutions that promote the upholding of human rights, those that enable and sustain the rule of law in the country, promote governmentality and create a vibrant civil society.

The creation of peacebuilding leadership blocks enhances peace building. To have sustainable peace requires a leadership that is well equipped to comprehend the nature of the contemporary conflicts, their causes, promoters, beneficiaries and the challenges posed on the path to address them. The leaders require certain skills, qualities, characteristics and attitudes that are predisposed to peace building. The qualities of such leadership include having a clear ideology which provides it with shared goals, a clear and mutually attractive future for all who want to cooperate (Chandler, 2017). They should have the capacity to cognize the conflict in a reflective way. They have to be of high - level integrity and impartial and these qualities have to be exhibited whenever they are dealing with conflicts.

There is a peace building block which consists of supportive regional and international actors. This environment is needed to support sustainable peace process. These are expected to remain neutral. There are instances where regional and international players can help to motivate the conflicting parties by providing the process with funding for repatriation of the victims, economic recovery and/or sustainable economic integration after the conflicting parties have agreed to cease the altercations and hostilities. Donors from the industrialised Western countries sometimes bring some resources which are specifically aimed at humanitarian activities. This is not blind to the fact that the conflicts which the former colonies witnessed since independence have been getting their funding, arming and ideological fuelling from the Western capitalist countries. After supplying them with the reasons for fighting, selling them

arms and lending them more money to spend on the war, they turn round and appear as peace brokers.

That is why they work as pressure groups. They can employ a carrot and stick approach. This approach is effective in cases where there is a deadlock between the conflicting parties. They may put pressure on the belligerent parties by giving them conditions, programmes and deadlines in the negotiation process. They could be like asking them to put in place negotiating teams or to form implementation committees for the agreed positions within a certain period. They use such ultimatums to force them hasten the peace process (Reychler & Langer 2020).

The last building block is the creation of an integrative climate. This is aimed at creating a favourable socio - psychological and political environment. This type of environment helps to create future expectations. It helps to create conditions for trust building and reconciliation. It eliminates stereotyped mental walls that project others as enemies and instead helps to create shared values and positive perceptions of one another. The integrative climate facilitates the healing of psychological wounds and embittered emotional feelings that will have been ignited by the conflict. Reychler (ibid) argues that all the five building blocks have to be in place for sustainable peace to prevail.

Abu - Nimer (2007, 2001, 1999) brings out the importance of the peacebuilding models which are aligned to non - violence and dialogue in the process of peacebuilding. His understanding of Israel and the Jewish religion was key in his work on peacebuilding. He hailed dialogue as the most important ingredient in peacebuilding. He advanced the contact theory and demonstrated its capacity to bring out models of peacebuilding because of interaction.

He based on the Islamic approach to peacebuilding. He argued that Islam had scriptures, traditions, values like justice, benevolence and wisdom, beliefs, and strategies that promoted peaceful and non - violent ways for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In his account, Islam had rich resources that could be used peacefully to construct an effective model for conflict resolution and peacebuilding through dialogue.

He posits that consistent and systematic application of the values of Islam had the capacity to transcend the magnitude and dimensions of the conflict. While there are limited scriptures that sound as if they promote violence in Islam, there is, however, great potential for non - violence in Islam. He identifies some of the attributes of Islam which promote non - violence to be including the belief in unity of humankind, the supreme love of the creator, the obligation of mercy and the believers' duty of subjection of their positions to accountability for all their actions.

He advocates for a paradigmatic shift to peaceful means rather than using force and military interventions in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. He dismisses the western methods for conflict resolution. He appeals for integrative indigenous and local cultural methods of conflict analysis and peacebuilding that are relevant to the context of the

conflict. The approach that uses non - violence and promoting dialogued in peacebuilding is an effective method of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It creates space for the people involved in the conflict to come out and discuss matters concerning their situation.

However, Abu - Nimer seems to base his approach on the defence of how Islam is perceived by non - Muslim scholars. His effort is to portray the values of Islam in promoting peace. An interreligious or secular approach would be of greater epistemological and practical value. Nevertheless, his contribution is of great value in highlighting the role which religion can play in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

The ripeness model is hinged on the belief that parties to a conflict can be willing to resolve their differences only when they are ready to do so. This is especially when all the other means of winning the conflict have been blocked (Aytekin; 2016; Zartman, 2008, 2005). Zartman argues that the parties to a conflict have to be allowed to reach a stage where they feel that they are cornered in an uncomfortable and costly predicament, where they are left with no option other than coming together to deal with the conflict. It is then and only then that they are able to welcome any proposal that offers a way out of the conflict. This has been termed the ripeness and readiness theory. It is premised on the cost - benefit analysis whereby the parties involved in the conflict will weigh the cost of continuing with the conflict against the benefits they are likely to get through negotiations vis - à - vis those through continued fighting.

Zartman, (2008) cites Henry Kissinger, who in 1974 stated that stalemate was most propitious condition for settlement. The other one was the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister, who submitted that the situation in Azerbaijan was not yet ripe for mediation. Zartman argues that the conflicting parties finally reach a level of a deadlock which is a "mutually hurting stalemate". In other words, it is when the belligerent parties fail to see any possibility of winning the war that they become willing to accept secession of the hostilities.

Evidence of ripeness and readiness for negotiations is when the conflict reaches a stage of a mutually hurting stalemate whereby all the parties to the conflict will discover that they are locked up and there are no ways of victory to either part to the conflict. The conflict situation will be hurting all the parties to the conflict hence they all need relief. A mutually hurting stalemate can also be reached because of a looming catastrophe as a result of the conflict. A mutually hurting stalemate is also characterized by a deteriorating situation. It could be demonstrated by a rising inflation, a collapsing economy or widespread famine which may lead to civil unrest in the country without any tangible solution in sight.

While the belligerent parties may not be able to judge that they have reached a stalemate, Zartman (2000) holds that it is the duty of the mediator to make them realize that they have reached a deadlock. Thus, the mediator has a duty of studying the conflict and judge as to whether it has reached the climax or maturity, declare it and then proceed to warn the belligerent parties of the adverse consequences if the

conflict goes on. This theory transforms the mediators into referees of the conflicts. This is problematic.

At this stage, the parties involved in a conflict must realize that they need a way out of the conflict. Therefore, ripeness and readiness become necessary conditions for conflict resolution and peacebuilding especially when the process of negotiations has been initiated. However, this ripeness and readiness theory is limited to situations of negotiation. It cannot be used in other approaches to conflict resolution and peacebuilding without modifications (Abu - Nimer & Nasser 2017). It is also handicapped as some parties to the conflict may not realize that the conflict has reached the hurting stalemate and that they have reached the time for conceding to negotiations. Another problem is that the theory assumes that the belligerent parties are at the same level of development, with similar resources and military forces. Yet, the current Ukraine - Russia conflict reflects a war between unequals. While Russia is busy manufacturing weapons and other war requirements, Ukraine is waiting for weapons, money and military specialists to use those weapons which are supplied on highly costs and interest credit. The hegemonic countries which are highly industrialised supply the weak ones with weapons and incite the weak ones to fight one another. Others hire other countries to fight their proxy wars. Above all, capitalism is inherently characterised by wars and not peace. The problems with the current nation - states in Africa is that they were formed through wars. When Western Europe invaded Africa for colonies, it used force and was resisted. Fanon explains succinctly that colonialism was violence, was instituted by violence, maintained by violence and had to be removed by violence. He edifies thus:

We must rid ourselves of the habit, now that we are in the thick of the fight, of minimizing the action of our fathers or of feigning incomprehension when considering their silence and passivity. They fought as well as they could, with the arms they possessed then; and if the echoes of their struggle have not resounded in the international arena, we must realise that the reason for this silence lies less in their lack of heroism than in the fundamentally different international situation of our time. It needed more than one native to say, "We've had enough"; more than one peasant rising crushed, more than one demonstration put down before we could today hold our own, certain in our victory (Fanon: 1961: 166).

So, how will the two belligerent forces reach a point of ripeness and readiness for negotiations. The point of ripeness is the point where the two contestants have reached a level of equal destruction. The problem with theory is how the mediators or the belligerents will be able to know that point which may be termed the point of equal destruction or equilibrium of war. What measurements or formula are there to show that that point has been reached and that bypassing it leads to equal destruction? Isn't it imaginary and highly subjective? In the absence of negotiators, who of the two belligerent parties will study the war conditions and then deliver the findings to the other one? And will the intended recipients accept them or they will reject them as forged alarmism? And given that war is not a tea party, how will the one meant to study the conflict be able to study it and its

effects on both sides and come out successfully without being harmed?

Such could be possible where the conflict is between weaker contestants and where the conflict is not of intense political contestation say over natural resources, territoriality, labour and market. It assumes low intensity conflict between the weak countries or parties that are not highly militarised and whose diplomatic relationship has in the past been amicable.

All in all, this is a reproduction of evolutionism which Karl Marx and Engels advanced. They argued that both the objective conditions and subjective factors had to be ripe for any revolution to take place. The problem with this is that it ignores the fact that human beings are subjects of their history. History is neither mechanistic nor fatalistic but is a result of conscious, planned and willed human activities.

John Galtung, who is regarded by scholars like Baljit Singh Grewal (2003) as the patriarch of peace studies, coined the concepts negative peace and positive peace in 1964. He defines negative peace as a situation where there is no violence probably because of ceasefire. He calls it negative peace because it was ceasefire which removed the undesirable situation but left the conflict intact and in the ebb. For this ceasefire to stop the war could have been forced by military intervention. This is because the end of flaring war does not necessarily mean that the issues of the conflict are resolved and finalized (Adams James 2014). Shields M Patricia (2017) describes it as peace which is brought by means of superiority of military weapons. This kind of peace produces a victor and a victim. It covers the conflict but leaves it with enormous potentials and possibilities of resurfacing any time if left unattended.

The way how the conflict is handled determines the outcome. This is underscored by Galtung who argues that peace does not mean the absence of conflict but a condition that follows after conflict is handled in a constructive way. Handling conflict in a constructive way enables people to interact over their conflict in a non - violent way. That way, they are managing their conflict positively (Diehl, 2016). Galtung (2003) defines positive peace as a result of a well - managed conflict. All the approaches discussed above have one thing in common. Their method is reactive rather than being proactive. Their focus is on peace building instead of conflict prevention. The truth is that prevention is better than cure.

Marx and Engels (1848) *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician (aristocrat) and plebeian (working class), lord and serf, guild - master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re - constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.

Marx further elucidated how revolutions were indispensable midwives of old societies pregnant with seeds of new ones.

Zimbabwe's 2023 Harmonized Elections

History has shown that when politics develops from small socio - political formations, fiefdoms and feudal powers in form of kingdoms to sovereign nations and nation states, then, elections rather than heredity become important modes of bringing forth leadership to manage the political affairs of the country. The oldest recorded form of electoral politics was democracy which reigned around the Mediterranean area. Popular democracy was invented and practiced thousands of years. The rise of capitalism emerged with the bourgeoisie class and this initiated new forms of politics. Among these was to create a new form of politics where individuals would represent others in politics. Popular democracy was replaced by representative, bourgeoisie or parliamentary democracy. After losing direct participation in their political matters, the people became content that electing their leader to positions of power was the voice of the people. The UNDP (2011) explains how elections have been subjected to serious abuse, manipulation and fraud in almost all the countries. Elections are abused of being the only sure means to gain political power in the society, which in turn leads to economic power. As such, whoever needs power will use all desperate means including vain ones including manipulation of the election process so as to access it. One of the most serious rivalries today is the struggle to join the political class. It is this characteristic of being a sure way to access power which makes elections a catalyst of electoral conflicts. The 2000 US elections which brought Bush to power and those of 2016 which brought Putin to power and those of 2022 which made the Republicans to invade the Congress on Capital Hill reveal these very clearly.

In Zimbabwe, elections are held after every five years. Before 2008, the parliamentary and presidential elections were held separately. In 2008 the elections were harmonized. This meant that the council, constituency, senatorial and presidential elections would thenceforth be held on the same day. This is a massive exercise. As is the common saying that there is no perfect election, some elections in Zimbabwe have been claimed to have been held in atmospheres that could not guarantee free and fair elections. The revolutionary armed struggles which the people of Zimbabwe waged against the British colonial imperialists for their independence humiliated and infuriated the British. They could therefore leave Zimbabwe to settle and manage its political and economic lives. Yet, these were the *raison d'être* for their struggle. Zimbabwe continued to experience direct external interference hitherto. The detractors took interest in political machinations to replace ZANU PF through politics, destabilised the country's politics and economy through sanctions and other embargos, sabotage and brain drain. Other mechanics included making false or exaggerated reports about electoral malpractices, famines, and other failures. All these ignited anger among the population and especially among the ruling ZANU PF. They used the international media to magnify the problems in Zimbabwe and demonise its political class. What became classic and repetitive were their claim of electoral violence right before, during and after the elections.

It became like a norm that whenever Zimbabwe was having elections, some people would take advantage of the electoral

fever and commit atrocities. The Zimbabwean elections became characterized by violence, which could at times be fatal. A persistent pattern of electoral violence emerged. It started during the pre - election period - during the campaign period and would be followed by electoral violence during the election days. This was worsened in 2008 by the eruption of post - election violence. This started during the period towards the presidential rerun and immediately after the rerun. The main political contestants were the incumbent President Robert Mugabe and his challenger, Tzangarai. This electoral violence was following at the heels of the one in Kenya the previous year.

Political violence is normally perpetrated by people with a purpose of achieving their political goals. During political competition for power, some individuals or groups who have great urge to acquire political power resort to underhand methods and invest in violence in a bid to accomplish their mission. Political violence can take various forms. It can be employed by the political class or by those in opposition. In situations where the culprits are those in power, then, the state becomes an accomplice and liable to the mayhem. As elections normally become occasions of confusion, states either become confronted by a violent situation which they are not ready to suppress and arrest the culprits. This then transforms such states into accomplices of political violence. In such cases, the states become cited as the perpetrators. In other cases, members or groups who are opposed to the ruling party become the main investors in violence and turmoil. This has been on the rise in the developing countries. The current rallying song is "People Power". Others may instrumentalise ethnicity, religion or regionalism. This leaves a gap which requires strategic intervention by non - aligned actors from within and outside the country so as to stop or prevent the violence. The possible interveners include other states, regional organisations, religious and socio - cultural organisations, associations, Trades Unions, professional associations and renowned national and international personalities.

Political violence in Zimbabwe and other former colonies traces its history in colonialism. That was when the European colonising powers invaded Africa. They embarked on carving out their colonies using the technologies of military power, lies and boundaries. Colonialism was a system where the conquerors established a state over a conquered people and took total control of all the domains. These included political power, economic power, land with all the resources on it and underneath it plus all the developments on it, all the people in it, their labour and other resources. It had total control of the production and functions of the ruling laws, ideas, knowledge, language, ideologies, the forms of rule and the ruling ideas, religions and how the colonised people would be defined and named. The indigenes resisted all these and the colonial states responded by deploying all forms of primitive force and lies to suppress them. This went on in different forms and intensities until when the colonised peoples' struggles earned them their independence.

In Zimbabwe, the violence escalated from the time when Ian Smith made the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965. This was an exclusionary political move which aimed

at encapsulating political and economic power and keeping it in the hands of the minority White Settlers in Zimbabwe. He did this to pre-empt the independence movement which had been spreading all over Africa since the end of WW II.

That declaration fuelled the people's anti-colonial struggles and these went on until independence was achieved in 1980. Instead of subsiding or petering out, political violence took new forms after independence. The first one was between the nationalist political parties. However, the rejection of the government-sponsored constitution in a referendum in 2000 and the coming in of a labour-backed Movement for Democratic Change political party ushered in a new political environment. A new political culture emerged; this new political culture was so frightening because it came with new methods, trends and levels of political violence.

There are several theories of political violence that may help us to put the Zimbabwean political violence into context. These include the social conflict theory. This is a Marxist based theory. It states that social systems reflect the vested interests of those who own and control resources. The people in power create systems that keep them in power while preventing others from accessing power. They use these systems and structures to exploit those peoples and groups without power. This is exploitation based on the technologies of oppression, suppression and exclusion from power. Confronted by this terrible situation, the subalterns seek different solutions. Some resort to violence with the aim of stopping these inhuman ills. This requires them to break down the colonial order, its system and structures which separate the people in power from the subalterns (Morgan, 2003).

The implication of this is that violence is likely to break out when those who are excluded from power and subjected to excruciating exploitation try to get to power and eliminate all forms of exclusion, domination, oppression and exploitation. Should they try to reverse the existing order using constitutional means and fail, then, they try other means. These include resorting to violence. Their aim is to break the walls which separate them from power. Another cause is when they develop a consciousness that the system which is being used to elect leaders is favouring those in power. What normally happens is that they decide to fight the system which they will be damning as illegitimate and all the incumbents. On the other hand, those who are in power may resort to violence as a way of repelling or intimidating those who want to break their security wall which keeps them in power and control.

The other one is the functionalism theory. It holds that society has to be viewed as an organism which functions through a system. The society's entire system has to be in good functioning order for it to maintain a complete equilibrium. However, when there is an unexpected shock to the system, the society becomes a disoriented system and this then paves way for violent clashes between the members of the society. So, when there is disharmony within the social system, violence will erupt (Walter and Barbara, 2006). Following this form explanation, the emergence of a strong opposition political party in Zimbabwe thirteen years after the 1987 unity accord between the ZANU - PF and the

PF - ZAPU shocked the system in a way which was not expected by the ruling ZANU - PF. The way it reacted to the shock was another shock to the society.

The mass society theory argues that violent social movements are created by people who feel that they are marginalized or left out of the socio-political and economic power. This isolation leads people to seek the attention of those who will be in power. The marginalized people become vulnerable and they are easily convinced to join the new movements that seek to change the system which has been marginalizing them, especially the systems that are perceived to be oppressive and are denying people space to participate in the socio-political and economic arena (Buechler, 2013). The economic situation in Zimbabwe was created by the West in retaliation for the defeats which they had inflicted on the British colonialism and the subsequent land reforms or reclamation from the White Settlers. Other problems emerged from the structural adjustment programmes and other hostility measures by the twin sister US banking institutions plus the hostile economic sanctions which Britain, the US, Australia and Canada imposed on it. These were exacerbated by those countries' direct attacks on the Zimbabwean currency and they maligned Zimbabwe in the international arena. All these left most of the Zimbabweans in abject poverty. Being placed in these economic hardships, the population became easy targets for manipulation by the politicians.

They became ready to engage in acts of political violence. These subalterns would be promised jobs and social amenities to improve their lives. They became enticed by these trappings and became ready to fight the system for these promised rewards which the emerging political class had promised. Having discovered this social group which was ready to be deployed to carry out any criminal activity at mere promises, the opposition group started posture itself as the future leaders. It had external linkages and they felt secure and ready to challenge the incumbent political class.

Urdal (2011) brings in the youth bulge theory. This is a situation of a demographic pattern where a larger percentage of the population is comprised of the youth. It holds that the youths play a prominent role in political violence, especially where there is a youth bulge. The youth bulge is a common phenomenon in many developing countries. It is often due to a stage of development whereby a country achieves success in reducing infant mortality and mothers still have a high fertility rate. So, children and the youth will end up forming the bigger part of the country's population, this usually increases the number of unemployed people, civil unrest, and political violence. The World Bank (2011) views it as a demographic bomb in some countries. The argument is that the youth bulge will become a demographic bomb when large numbers of youth are not employed to earn incomes. These youth will become frustrated and this is likely to lure them into joining social movements that are anti-government. Their aim may be to cause political instability in the country.

The United Nations estimated the population in Zimbabwe during the period starting from 2000 to have been in the range of 12 million people, of which around seven million

people were youth. In other words, the youth population was over 50 percent of the country's total population. Hence the role of the youth in the Zimbabwean context of political violence is very critical to understand when engaging in peace building and prevention of violence.

However, it needs to be stated here that youth are the main actors in social movements. This is because of their nature, impatient, agile, revolutionary, with stamina and socialite. Youth is a stage of human development where those who enter it become impatient with their surrounding world. They are impatient with the slow or sluggish movement of things and they tend to be opposed to the hegemonic socio-cultural interpretation of the world. They are ready for change and they see themselves as the change agents. One of the explanations for this is that they are not yet integrated into their cultures. They do not therefore understand the role of culture and history, and the reason why people do things the way they do.

Henrik advances five factors that link the youth bulge with conflict or political violence. These are the cohort size effect, economic growth, education, lack of democracy and urbanization. The cohort size effect is whereby the mere existence of a large pool of young people affects the opportunities of getting employed. Thus, creating a large number of unemployed poor but young and energetic people who do have goals to achieve in life brings into existence a pool of people to be recruited from.

However, the youth bulge theory is very problematic. It is based on the capitalist West, China, India and other Eastern countries which have been controlling populations. On realising the ageing population, these countries have woken up to their population mistake and began to encourage their people to produce more children. This however is failing as the young people had come to learn about the complications of having family responsibilities. As such, the youth bulge is not actually a theory but is premised on the mistakes which the ruling class designed at a particular historical moment to match the labour supply with the demands of their economies. Any social group that becomes redundant can be recruited into any subversive activities.

From these explanations, the youth are likely to join rebellions against the existing socio-political order or authority which they may perceive as the roadblock or cause of their problems. This was explained by the dependency discourse in the 1960s. They explained that the colonies were integrated into the Western capitalist system as appendages. This was because capitalism remained externally located. In this process, capitalism integrated the colonies and their populations into the Western capitalist system as appendages of the capitalism in the metropolitan countries. As a result, they remain in await of the demands from the capitalist West. This ranges from the production of raw materials to food and other products for export plus labour for local production and for export.

Economic growth can generate conflict because the state of the economy is very critical to the youth particularly at the time when the youth get into the labour market. When the economy is not growing, it means the labour market shrinks

and will not be able to absorb the big number of the youths. This will force the youth to look for alternative ways of earning a living thus making them vulnerable to manipulation by politicians who may use them to create violence. International intelligence organisations will channel money into the country to effect regime change through street dynamites. This money will be used to hire the youths to attend rallies and demonstrate against the government. They will be ready and willing to participate in acts of violence in the streets as long as they get monetary rewards.

In a situation where the capitalist countries have been targeting certain countries like Zimbabwe with hybrid wars, then, their economies do not only shrink but they collapse. The assailants continue with political attacks and funnel the local middle class to replace the targeted incumbent political class. The collapsed economies result in idle youth and these are easy to be manipulated by politicians. They are easy to gather together and organize through the proliferation and massive use of the social media technology. The most subtle and well-planned ideologically designed form of mobilisation is done by external intelligence organisations. Their object is to effect regime change so that they get back their resources which were nationalised and/or those which the state is protecting from external exploitation. An example was the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party. At its formation in 1999, it was composed of mainly the young generation. These hoped that change of the political leadership would improve their situation. Thus, after the 2000 general elections, the youngest legislator was from the MDC.

Education is like a double-edged sword whereby high levels or low levels of education have historically proved to be a danger to a country. Both these categories can make the youth vulnerable and make them a ripe recruiting ground for the rebel groups, insurgent politics, uncompromising opposition politics or even by external enemies. Worse still, a large group of unemployed highly educated people can be a ticking time bomb if they cannot be accommodated in the economy and fail to be recruited in the other sectors of the country. These are not vulnerable like those with low education. These can plan sabotage of the economy or its politics, undermine the political class, plan insurgent politics and mobilise the population into insurrection or ally with external forces. The other vices include going out and malign their country through international media like Straight Talk Africa, mobilise money and purchase arms or hire mercenaries to attack their country, or persuade other countries to place embargos, sanctions, deny them resources and withhold exports including arms, machinery and spare parts, etc. Others include lobbying in international organisations to vote against their country or to deny it slots in certain organisations. All these have been happening to the different African countries. The capitalist West has been hobnobbing with this category from the developing countries and investing in them to the chagrin of the African continent. It is this highly educated class which has been at the frontline of bringing down their countries in the South.

In most cases, the public service will also fail to absorb all of them. Zimbabwe's tertiary education system produces

thousands of graduates every year and this augments the number of educated youths without jobs. The public service cannot employ all of them.

Where there is no democracy, there is no freedom. Young people need space to participate in the issues that affect their lives and future. Hence lack of democracy in the governance of the country may force some youth to try and create space for expressing their interests. They may want to exercise their rights and denial of such space may make them rise against the existing system.

From 2000 onwards, the youth in Zimbabwe began to clash with the police because their rejecting to follow the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) whenever they wanted to conduct their meetings and political rallies. They perceived the POSA to be a draconian law which was infringing their freedom of association. They would fight against it continuously.

Urbanization is whereby there is a population shift from rural areas to the cities. When urban areas are crowded it makes it easy for young people to link with each other and form groups. In the urban areas, people are not geographically spaced. As such, they can get organized within a short space of time. They know that any action that they take will have a big impact. An example is property in the urban areas which is expensive. Any damage to it is likely to cause alarm to the society. They therefore know that such an action will give them international publicity and immediate attention from the authorities so as to prevent damage of property and injury to people.

The youth bulge theory therefore showed the youth as a time bomb with potentials of causing political violence at any given time. Ironically, the opposition political party in Zimbabwe, the MDC was mostly composed of the young and educated people, mostly university graduates, with formidable strongholds in the urban areas. These filled the rallies. The massive unemployment in the country also contributed to the restlessness of the Zimbabwean young generation.

Planning for the 2023 General Elections

In 2023, Zimbabwe is slated to hold its second harmonized elections in the post - Mugabe era. Two hegemonic political parties are likely to remain the main political players. The first one is the hegemonic ruling party - ZANU PF. This is a national party which emerged during the people's independence struggles and it is therefore organically linked to the Zimbabwean nation project. Its centrality in Zimbabwe's political history has bestowed it respect and love amongst the population and that is why it has been in control of political power since independence. After its founder, Robert Mugabe was deposed by the military in alliance with the civilians, Emmerson Mnangagwa took over its leadership hitherto. The other party is the rebranded opposition party, which has changed its name to the Citizens' Coalition for Change. It was formed by a coalition of internal and external socio - economic and political forces. It is led by Nelson Chamisa. While the constitution does not limit the number of political parties in the country and the existing political parties have no power to block the

formation of new ones, it is most unlikely to have a new party emerging as a credible alternative to the hegemonic ruling party and its current nemesis. Time is too short for such a party to emerge and spread so fast to threaten the hegemony of the existing duo parties. Furthermore, the ground and reasons for forming it are largely missing.

These elections are coming amidst an ongoing global economic crunch. This came partly as a consequence of the Western sanctions on Zimbabwe, the stagnation of the economy, the subsequent economic turmoil, the two - year COVID - 19 pandemic and the ongoing Ukraine - Russian war. Zimbabwe is already in a campaign mode, with the general population, the civil societies and political parties already preparing for it. To the Zimbabweans, elections are not a do - or - die but an occasion to elect their leaders. Their main concern is to get leadership which will guarantee what they fought for during their independence struggles. They want land, jobs, steady incomes which are not eroded by inflation; want peace, stability, economic development, education for their children and medical insurance for their families. Those who have direct interest in these elections are already dismissing the claim of free and fair elections as not possible under current conditions. Despite that unfounded skepticism which is increasing arrogated to Africa with a racist tinge, the two hegemonic political parties are busy organizing for these elections. The question is how?

The ZANU PF is targeting to mobilize five million voters. According to the Herald Zimbabwe (2021), the ZANU PF had embarked on their preparations for these elections. Its Second Vice President and Second Secretary, Kembo Mohadi had made a whirlwind tour of the country's ten provinces and met the party leadership in the provinces. On the other part, the rebranded Zimbabwean opposition has been motivated by the Zambian election which had been won by the opposition. Using history by analogy, they hoped that history was going to be repeated in Zimbabwe. It seemed to be trapped in populist politics which made it bask in the glory of its multitudes of urban supporters. At the same time, the ZANU PF is pulling the carpet from the feet of the opposition by luring the urban voters to join it and vote for it. These competing have to design attractive policies to convince the voters to vote for them.

The transformed opposition party seems to have a large following among the youth. The youth bulge seems to favor the opposition political party. This is because the opposition party emerged on the discontent of the vast subalterns mainly in the urban setting. The problem with capitalism which was externally located was that it created enclaves in the colonies where residual capitalism appeared to be rising. This was through trade of imports and exports. Yet, the real accumulation process of capital took place in the metropolitan centres where the industries were located. No industries could ever emerge in the peripheries where the only economic activities were on the exchange of the imports and exports. Zimbabwe became devilled by this crisis. There are a lot of unemployed youths including university graduates. Some of these have been reduced to street vending. Under those circumstances, the target of these political parties are these youth. These parties know

that these elections require to persuade the youth to the party's side using promises for a fruitful future for them.

Due to these new dynamics, the future elections in Zimbabwe are not likely to follow the past pattern of voting. The past ones were accused of political violence and electoral fraud. The opposition party cried foul that the playing field was not leveled so as to allow free and fair elections between all the political competitors. They accused the incumbent ZANU PF of using of security forces to swing the elections in its favour. Dendere (2021) states that in during the Mugabe era, the Zimbabwe Defense Forces participated in the Zimbabwean politics indirectly. They then got involved to form a coup d'état against his government. This opened a floodgate for them to enter the Zimbabwean politics hitherto. The explanation for this is that the financial interests of the army are directly tied to ZANU PF's political survival. In addition to that, the ZANU PF is tied to the military as its military wing during the anti-colonial guerrilla war up to independence in 1980.

The winner of the presidential elections of 2018 had to be decided by the Constitutional Court. There was also political violence that followed which resulted in the death of some civilians when the soldiers intervened and tried to control the demonstrators. The demonstrators had gathered at the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission offices accusing the Commission of counting the votes too slowly. They were suspicious that the Commission was trying to dampen the opposition's expectations of winning the presidential elections. The Marxist Social conflict theory comes into perspective here whereby the government which consisted of the ruling party ZANU - PF was accused of manipulating the electoral system through the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission so as to enable it stay in power.

The Strategic Roles of Religious and Cultural Institutions in Socio - political Issues

As alluded earlier, emergent interventions like field - hospitals are usually visible during calamities and pandemics when the state institutions fail to cope with the situation. Field - hospitals are response strategy for managing the situation. In the same way, religious and cultural organizations have to play a proactive role in averting political violence during elections. This is because of their unique traits in society. These include trustworthiness and credibility, propinquity to the ordinary people, their understanding of the local context, strong networks and access to various levels of power and they have trained personnel (Silvestri & Fba, 2015; Cox, Orsborn & Sisk, 2015; & UNDP, 2014).

One of the ways of handling this would be for these institutions to dialogue with the political players during the initial stages of the political campaigns and beseech them to have the nation at heart and avoid contaminating the society with hateful and negative politics. The religious and cultural institutions should try to iron out any misunderstandings and defuse rivalries which could otherwise breed political tensions and conflicts. They should take advantage of their Foucauldian functionality of governmentality in society to try and maximize their capabilities engage with the political

players and their agents meaningfully and fruitfully. Among these institutions in Zimbabwe is the MCZ.

The Methodist Church and Politics in Zimbabwe

The Methodist Church was established in Zimbabwe through the coming of Wesleyan missionaries in 1891. These missionaries were from British and they were part of the colonising mission. In performing their religio - political mandate, they established churches, mission schools and trained nurses at Waddilove. Among the schools are Waddilove Mission in Mashonaland East and Tegwani Mission in Matabeleland. It played a major role in Zimbabwe's politics. Madhiba (2010) explains how these missionaries made a significant contribution to the public life of Zimbabweans as they followed the teachings of Wesley on politics. His teaching was based on the belief that religion was not just a private matter but also public faith. In his journal of 1774, he offers advice on how the Christians should behave during the elections. Mujinga identifies three points for observation during elections which Wesley raised. He denounced commercialization of electoral politics through vote buying. His injunction to them was to always vote for the person whom judged worthiest. He debarred them from attacking opposition candidates, mudslinging and blackmailing them. He also urged them to always desist from bitterness against their opponents (Mujinga, 2021: 34). Wesley on October 6, 1774 calls for its vigilance on political issues, especially elections.

While not being involved in the socio - political issues may be tantamount to ignoring his values, still, there is need to be cognizant of the socio - economic and political changes which have taken place nearly two and half centuries later. Much of the world outside Western Europe was still under blatant European colonial imperialism. The whole of Africa was facing the raging anti - human slave trade. The law of motion states that nothing can exceed the dictates of space and time. Therefore, what he said and its applicability may neither be in existence nor applicable today

During the European colonization of Africa, the European missionaries played a very important ideological role in the service of European colonisation of Africa. This entailed the occupation of geographical, economic, political, social and religious spaces. Their ideological functionality notwithstanding, some religious missionaries like the MCZ and the Wesleyan missionaries started to demand the colonial state to reduce its crude exploitation and oppression of the colonized peoples. They opposed the draconian colonial rule. This came to the open when Ian Smith declared the Unilateral Declaration of Independence. It created a division among the Methodists ministers. The African ministers realized that their White counterparts were supporting the Unilateral Declaration of Independence. Their Church also worked with the World Council of Churches to support financially the humanitarian programs of ZIPRA and ZANLA forces.

In the postcolonial era, the MCZ continued its social responsibility. On the political front, it continued to play a critical role in bringing together two political bitter rivals, the ZANU - PF and the PF ZAPU. The former minister in the MCZ, Canaan Sodindo Banana played a critical role in

bringing the two political sides together in dialogue. The process which he initiated culminated in the signing of the Unity Accord in 1987. This ended a serious civil unrest that lasted for five years.

The MCZ has continued to play its role as evidenced by its pillar number two of its strategic plan which is to enhance the MCZ's social responsibility. Social responsibility is a framework in which the individuals, groups or organizations are obliged to be involved in activities that are aimed at benefiting the community or a certain group of people. These could be the vulnerable due to gender race or ethnicity.

The activities under this second pillar are coordinated by the Methodist Development and Relief Agent (MEDRA). To achieve the objectives of this strategic pillar, the MCZ is expected to promote social justice, to participate in the community and provide education through schools and other institutions such as vacation training centers. Social justice is therefore a key factor in the activities of the MCZ's social responsibility activities.

It is the promotion of social justice that involves the church's participation in activities associated with prevention of politically motivated violence. Social justice deals with the belief that all people should have equal rights and opportunities. The concept of social justice has religious roots. It is dated back to 1843 from an Italian philosopher and cleric Luigi d'Azegilo. However, it was adopted by the Catholic Church as part of its teaching in 1931 through Pope Pius XI's encyclical (David Hodgson 2019).

The MEDRA was established in 2004 by a conference decision in 2004. It came from the stewardship and development wing of the church which was basically doing the same activities but could not be registered as a PVO because it was a department of the Church. It was then registered as a Private Voluntary Organization in 2009, in accordance with the requirements of the government under the Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare.

It has been involved in social justice activities since its inception. On the side of prevention of political violence, the relief wing undertook some activities in the previous elections which were aimed at preventing political violence. These included voter education, conducting peacebuilding workshops that taught how to promote dialogues for peacebuilding, educating the society on the causes and dangers of political violence. It taught the local leaders how to handle conflict and it equipped them with skills of conflict management.

Some of the activities that MCZ carried out through the MEDRA included printing of materials with peace messages. These are distributed to ordinary people through the church structures. The relief arm is very fast as it uses established church structures which are capable of disseminating information to people at the lower level of society very rapidly and cheaply. Its major drawback is that it excludes those who are from other religions and the secular ones.

The problem with the MEDRA is the inadequate preparation to work proactively as the country approaches the 2023 general elections. Its funding does not come from the main church budget or the Zimbabwean state, local or regional sources but from overseas donors. It has therefore to apply for the funds, sit and wait until when they are approved and released before doing anything. This makes them handicapped as the election mood is heating up after the results of the just ended by - elections held on the 26th of March 2022 where the opposition Citizens Coalition for Change party won the majority of the contested seats.

While MEDRA and MCZ are functioning, they pose a serious danger of excluding millions of the Zimbabweans who are equally affected by the same socio - political problem. People have different identities and religion is merely one of them. There are multiple religions in Zimbabwe, including the indigenous ones and the incoming ones. Others do not have religions while others may have more than one religion. There are others who have developed hostility to religions. Despite the peoples' multiple identities – some of which may be in conflict with one another, their social problems and afflictions remain the same. The consequence of pushing for a religiously anchored monolithic solution to a social problem traces from its being rooted in one identity with foreign origin and orientation. The rest of the population remain excluded. That is why the state, religious and socio - cultural organisations, other actors and beneficiaries have to be involved in the formulation of collective solutions to their social problems.

2. Conclusion

Human history has revealed the centrality of religion in deterring socio - political conflicts and building peace. This is facilitated by its proximity to the subalterns at the bottom of society. Many religious organizations have been involved in activities of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peace building. Theorists like Gopin view religion as vital in conflict resolution, Sampson and Johnston view it as the missing link in peace building diplomacy. Reychler proposes five blocks of effective communication, consultation and negotiation systems, developing peace enhancing structures, creation of peace building leadership, and creation of a supportive environment. Nimerand Zartman propose dialogue as central to peace building. On their part, Murindwa - Rutanga (2011) and Galtung bring out the negative and positive aspects of peace approach.

The elections in Zimbabwe in the last forty - two years have been characterized by politically motivated violence which left a number of people injured, homeless and at worst dead. The MCZ has been involved in the restoration of social justice in society. It has been operating in Zimbabwe since the colonial invasion. However, its activities are handicapped as the MEDRA depends on foreign funding instead of local funding from the MCZ, the nation - state or other local funders. This leaves it with no option but to react as and when the funds are released available. It can still do something with little or no funds if they fully utilize the available church structures that can disseminate vital information even to the lowest levels of the society to reach out to ordinary people.

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