

**THE ROLE OF LOCAL CLERGY IN THE  
FACILITATION OF THE PEACE PROCESS IN  
MPUMALANGA LEADING TO THE SIGNING OF A  
PEACE AGREEMENT IN 1990 AND BEYOND.**

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PROCESS IN MPUMALANGA LEADING TO THE SIGNING OF A PEACE  
AGREEMENT IN 1990 AND BEYOND.**

**by**

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## ***ABSTRACT***

South African society has been embroiled in violent conflict for many a decade due to apartheid policies which deprived the majority of the people the right to determine their own destiny. To uphold this hideous system of control, the government developed structural violence in the name of "law and order". Attempts were met with intransigence and contempt by the powers that be.

Consequently those who were at the receiving end of the brutal state violence were compelled by these realities to come up with new strategies of ensuring that their concerns are adequately addressed. To this end, a strategy of using force against the state was adopted. Gradually violence was seen by the protagonists on both sides as a viable option in resolving conflict. A culture of violence evolved with justification from both sides. Over time, levels of tolerance for differing view points sunk lower and lower.

Many attempts to resolve the conflict were made by various agencies in civil society at macro level with little success in many instances. In a few instances, such as Mpumalanga, the approach was "bottom up", and a significant success rate was registered. This makes it vital that a study on this process be undertaken with a view of analysing the strength of this approach and ascertaining whether this cannot be used as a model in other contexts. In the event that such a process can be undertaken successfully, it then serves as an important experience that theirs might consider replicating in their own contexts with the necessary adaptations, taking into account local material conditions.

The success of such a process of conflict resolution has serious implications for development in a community. People who have been able to resolve conflict amongst themselves begin to have common objectives, values and tolerance which enables them to focus their energies into the same endeavour, having been strengthened by this conflict resolution experience.

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This work is dedicated first to the people of Mpumalanga who are a sign of hope for many. Secondly, it is dedicated to the many in our beloved country, South Africa, who continue to engage themselves in all those projects intended to ensure that the majority of our people live life "in its abundance" as God intended at creation.

Shalom.

## *ABBREVIATIONS*

|        |                                          |
|--------|------------------------------------------|
| AIP    | African Independent Church               |
| ANC    | African National Congress                |
| AZAPO  | Azanian People's Organization            |
| CAE    | Centre for Adult Education               |
| COSAS  | Congress of South African Students       |
| HAYCO  | Hammarisdale Youth Congress              |
| IFP    | Inkatha Freedom Party                    |
| KZP    | KwaZulu Police                           |
| MCM    | Mpumalanga Christian Movement            |
| MCS    | Mpumalanga Choral Society                |
| MPURA  | Mpumalanga Residence Association         |
| RDP    | Reconstruction and Development Programme |
| SAP    | South African Police                     |
| SADF   | South African Defence force              |
| SRC    | School's Representative Council          |
| TLC    | Transitional Local Council               |
| Tricam | Tri-cameral Parliament                   |
| UDF    | United Democratic Front                  |
| UDW    | University of Durban Westville           |
| V.V.   | Valley View                              |
| WCC    | World Council of Churches                |

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## *Chapter 1*

### INTRODUCTION

The poor and marginalized communities live a life characterized by constant brutalization. Forces of death and evil incessantly hound them and makes their lives just too difficult to bear. On the surface an observer may be convinced that the poor accept their situation and continue with their meaningless and hopeless life. But upon closer scrutiny you discover that the poor develop their own mechanism of surviving. Powerful categories of life and resistance are present in the midst of suffering. They are not clearly articulated but present. Violent conflict continues this brutalization. Too often in the world that we inhabit, lives of the poor count for nothing. It is not uncommon for the dominant and powerful to use them as pawns in their deadly games of power and control.

#### About conflict

Conflict occurs when there is a build up of differences between entities. These might be between groups, persons, cultures, economic systems, ideas, beliefs or whatever.<sup>1</sup> As a result, tensions rise, needing an outlet to be released. There are possibilities of dealing with conflict in a manner that one achieves co-operation or competition. Co-operation means that there is an attempt to find an amicable solution to resolve the tension. In the latter case, one party tries to outmanoeuvre the other without attracting harm upon itself. In order to achieve success over the adversary in competition the dominant party requires power to do it. This leads to resistance which might almost inevitably lead to violence.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Nurnberger, 1989. p.9

2 ibid

In the society we live in today, conflict is usually viewed with scepticism<sup>3</sup> at best or outright fear at worst. The attitude of the church towards conflict is not that different from that of society generally. Willimon warns the church not to undermine its ability to resolve conflict.<sup>4</sup> He further states that,

"More often it is the fear of conflict that harms, the blind obedience to the notion that all conflict is wrong or unchristian that scatters people when conflict arises.<sup>5</sup>

On the contrary, asserts Willimon, conflict makes us draw upon the resources of our faith to handle the matter at hand.<sup>6</sup> He is correct when he states quite categorically the implication of attempting to suppress conflict. He points out that any institution that constantly operates on attempts to suppress than deal with conflict, in such instances, conflict acts like a pressure cooker.<sup>7</sup> It is sure to explode, thus consuming all around it.

Willimon asserts that,

"Conflict is inevitable, and for the preacher to attempt to remove his or her preaching from that conflict is to imply that the Bible is irrelevant for the

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<sup>3</sup> Scepticism is used here to describe an unhelpful way of dealing with conflict usually adopted by most people in the church in particular and society generally. The attempt is usually to pretend that conflict does not exist. It is hoped that by denying it, conflict might resolve itself or go away. Scepticism arises due to fear that conflict will be so compelling to destroy all around it.

<sup>4</sup> Willimon, 1987, p.16

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* p.17

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

church today and that preaching is too timid and detached to be of great help when the chips are down and we desperately need a guiding word.<sup>8</sup>

Willimon's argument should be taken further in that the contribution of the clergy is not just to preach in situations of conflict. There is need for the clergy to be ready and prepared not only to pronounce but to be the "salt of the world". Being salt means being there with the people in the situation where they are. It does not mean being consumed and overwhelmed by the conditions of the conflict. It means rather to be there and to make a difference. One of the attributes of salt is that it makes a significant difference in its surroundings.

### **Engaging conflict**

The challenge for clergy is to reflect in preaching *and* to engage in praxis. That praxis will be aimed at transforming the context and creating new and favourable conditions for a meaningful life of co-existence between former enemies. Willimon further points out that, "... often the test of our ministry will be, not the avoidance of all conflict, but rather our response to inevitable conflict".<sup>9</sup> This requires vigilance and commitment to life. It requires us to follow Jesus as true disciples who respond to his call. Willimon concludes,

"Jesus urged his disciples to discern the signs of the times: a fig tree blossoming, a storm gathering. Discerning potential conflict is both an intuitional and a rational matter".<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> ibid. p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> ibid. p.10

<sup>10</sup> ibid. p.18

## **Clergy and conflict**

What emerged clearly in the study of the situation in Mpumalanga is the resilience and commitment of local clergy to make a difference under very trying and difficult conditions. The violence in Mpumalanga was costly in both material and spiritual sense. Many lives were lost, people were displaced, homes were looted and gutted, families divided and mistrust set in. Hopelessness abounded as the violence continued unabatedly for several years. But, as an African saying goes, "It will rain one day", making reference to drought as a terrible experience. It is all about death and destruction. But this idiomatic expression affirms that this is not the end. It will rain. Life will be normal. Drought is but a temporary set back.

## **Hope and the church**

The churches' message of hope becomes relevant in this context. It offered a new fresh look at what hope means in situations enveloped by massive hopelessness. Positive things developed as a result. A new sense of belonging emerged in the process when people recognized the need to stand together and find ways of resolving conflict.

The situation offered a new understanding of the important symbols of the church. A ceremony facilitated by the church to effect a process of reconciliation recovered the meaning of the cross. It enabled people to revisit this important symbol. It brought home its essential message of suffering, hope and glory. Reconciliation was also given a fresh meaning. It brought the message home that reconciliation is not cheap. It is a painful process! It also became evident that peace goes hand in hand with justice. The other important aspect which came up is the question of inculturation which requires further discussion.

## **Chapter 2**

### **LOCAL CLERGY AND EMPOWERMENT FROM "BELOW"<sup>11</sup>**

... I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10.

Jesus's words are a dream that is shared by many. It is a dream that seems elusive and unrealistic. And yet it is for many a source of inspiration. It beckons on them to strive for a better life; for life in its fullness. Some give up on this project or are made to give up by massive powerful forces. In the world which we inhabit as our home the disparities between the rich and the poor continue unabatedly. Daily, life systems in the economy, in politics and in society blur this dream more and more making it an unattainable dream.

The consequences of all this is that society gets polarized, which creates deep divisions among the people. In the process those who suffer impoverishment through all this economic marginalisation have their dignity severely impaired to the point that they are reduced into non-humans. The activities of these marginalized groups are viewed as inconsequential and of no worth or value. Nothing they do is ever taken seriously unless, of-course, it threatens the comfort of the powerful.

#### **1. Introduction**

It is the interest of this research to give a voice to the silenced people referred to above to show that there is a lot that society benefits from the wisdom and insight of the poor. In South Africa, as is the case in many other parts of the world, people are as

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<sup>11</sup> The term "below" will be used to refer to a process that involves the participation and control of the peace process by ordinary people on the ground as opposed to a process from "above" initiated by outsiders to the conflict.

important as size of the bank accounts. Those who have never even seen the inside of a bank are treated as though they do not exist. Their importance in the society is only statistical. The challenge that confronts all of us is to ensure that Jesus' dream of life in its fullness becomes a reality. A reality not for a selected few but for all who have been created in God's image. Philpott sums it powerfully thus,

Members of the oppressed community are often invisible participants of society, the superfluous unknown people, marginalised by the dominant sectors of society. Yet they are usually the majority of society, and are those who must pay the heaviest price for the maintenance of the current system. Not only are they invisible, but their knowledge and practices, their wisdom and experience, are also invisible or undervalued.<sup>12</sup>

What this research will show is that poor communities have a lot to offer society in terms of their ways of dealing with problems. The survival strategies developed by the poor offer possibilities of new and fresh approaches to problem-solving. The insights gained through this research will show that the poor have the ability and will to construct their own knowledge. In many instances experiences of the poor and marginalized are never considered to be important and valuable. Instead, knowledge and its construction is seen as the preserve of the powerful in society. What this research will argue for is that space must be created for the poor and marginalized to interpret their own experiences and to be affirmed.

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<sup>12</sup> Philpott, 1993. p. 17.

## 2. Research process

The subject of this study is the evolution of the peace process in Mpumalanga. Already, some theories are in the offing as to who enabled this process to take shape. The business sector, especially big business, sees itself as the prime mover of the peace process.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, major political parties engaged in the conflict consider themselves as the main role players who brought about peace. The churches also consider themselves as the ones who created conditions for peace.<sup>14</sup> This study will show that conflict resolution cannot essentially be brought about without initiatives, support and participation of ordinary people who were involved and affected by the violence. It will be shown also that young people as a sector contributed to this process.<sup>15</sup> Also, of interest is the review of the initiators of the process. To this end the case study method is a useful tool to enable a process of accumulating the necessary data.

To achieve this a group of people from the community were identified through the help of a colleague who comes from the area and still has close links in the community. It was decided that the focus of persons to be interviewed will not be high profile people but ordinary people who will give a perspective that will be close to that of the majority of the people.

Preliminary visits to the area were undertaken. This entailed going to social occasions and having open discussions with a wide range of people just to get a feel of the perspectives that people have on the subject. It was amazing how many of the people spoken to informally shared a lot of common information on their perspectives around

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<sup>13</sup> See article by Simpson in the Newsletter, "Track two". May 1992.

<sup>14</sup> See interviews 1, 2, 3, 10 and 11.

<sup>15</sup> See interviews 4 and 6. Young people were also the main protagonists in the violence. The process essentially needed to include them for it to work.

causes and the resolution of the violence. This initial contact was very helpful in setting the necessary guidelines of the interviews that were to follow.

Subsequent to this was the setting up of the actual interviews. Eight broad categories were identified and targeted. These were; Religious sector, Political organizations, Youth structures, the Business sector, Women sector, Student sector and Teaching sector. In the Religious sector interviewees were drawn from both the so called main-line and the African Independent Churches (AIP) churches. From the political organizations interviews were drawn from Inkatha, AZAPO, and the UDF/ANC grouping. For the youth structure the Ward 4 Youth Development Forum comprising youth from both ANC and Inkatha provided a group interview. The remaining sectors; business, women, students, and teachers gave an interview each. All in all 22 people were interviewed comprising both males and females. All in all 12 interviews were recorded and transcribed. This appended to this research. The fieldwork process spanned over a period of 4 months from June to September 1995. This included numerous visits to the area to establish rapport and the interviews themselves.

### **3. Research methodology: Case study**

I decided to utilize the case study method for this research because it is appropriate for this kind of research. In particular, I chose the qualitative case study method. The question of violence, its origins and processes of its resolution is a matter of great concern for many. There are many proposals that have been made to achieve the above and respond to the concern. Fundamentally, two approaches are distinct. There is a top down approach where the focus is on those in authority who utilize the power accorded by their position to impose a solution. And then there is the contextual approach which commences with the people where they are and utilizes their experiences and expertise to find a solution that is owned by all involved. I prefer to call this contextual process, conflict resolution from below. In this context it is the experiences and contributions of



people in the situation of conflict that are taken seriously for examination with a view of learning from them.

It is with this in mind that the qualitative case study method is considered suitable for this kind of research.

### ***3.1 Defining the method***

Case study is a non-experimental or descriptive form of research where the interest is more on description and explanation rather than on predictions based on cause and effect.<sup>16</sup> Merriam asserts that in this form of research it is neither possible nor feasible to manipulate the potential causes of behaviour. The aim of this form of research, according to Merriam, is to examine events or phenomena.

This research method is distinct from the experimental design of research. Merriam points out that experimental research assumes that the researcher can manipulate the variables of interest. This notion is based on the understanding that the researcher has, "a great deal of control over the research situation".<sup>17</sup> The other characteristics she attributes to experimental research is the fact that it is intended to investigate the cause-and-effect relationships.<sup>18</sup> But is not always possible to do this. For one, it is not always possible for the researcher to control or manipulate all the variables of interest. Secondly, Merriam argues that the second variation on a time experimental design is, "... ex post facto research in which one is interested in conditions that might have caused an effect, but these conditions have already occurred".<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Merriam, 1988. p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Merriam. p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> ibid, p.7.

Case study research therefore in contradiction to experimental research focuses on looking at a situation as it is. No attempt, whatsoever, is made to manipulate the subject. Things are rather taken as they are. Descriptive case study presents its finding qualitatively, using words and pictures as opposed to experimental form of research whose results are presented in numbers. Case study therefore is more inductive by its very nature.<sup>20</sup>

The criterion for deciding the suitability of the case study research method, asserts Merriam hinges on four aspects. These are;

1. the nature of the research questions: The "how" and "why" questions are relevant for the case study method. The questions are interested in process and understanding the meaning of the phenomena.
2. The amount of control: The least amount of control characterizes historical research, since no treatment is manipulated and no observations are made. This is contrast to the experimental design where there is more control.
3. The desired end-product: This relates to the types of questions asked. Will the results be presented as the end product of a cause-and-effect investigation? Will the end product be a holistic, intensive description and interpretation of a contemporary phenomenon? Or quantification of the extent and nature of certain variables with a population. Or a historical analysis?
4. The need to determine whether a bounded system can be identified as the focus of the investigation ... . A case study is an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution or a social group. A case might be selected because it is an instance of some concern, issue, or hypothesis.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> ibid. p. 9,10.

Yin in collaboration with Merriam makes a strong case for the case study research when he states that,

The case study is preferred in examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated. Thus, the case study relies on many of the same techniques as a history, but it adds two sources of evidence not usually included in the historian's repertoire: direct observation and sematic interviewing. ... the case study's unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence - documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations.<sup>22</sup>

Case study research does not prefer a particular mode of collecting or analysis of data over others. Merriam asserts that any and all methods from testing to interview, although some methods are used more frequently than others.<sup>23</sup> The qualitative case study research method is a design more prone to researchers who are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation than hypothesis testing. This method seeks to come up with a holistic description and explanation of the phenomenon under review. Merriam further argues that this method is suited for situations where it is not possible to separate the phenomenon's variables from their context.<sup>24</sup>

Merriam further quotes important definitions by other commentators which consolidate the points she makes on the role and purpose of the case study research. Wilson, for instance, conceptualizes the case study as a process "which tries to describe and analyze some entity in qualitative, complex and comprehensive terms not

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<sup>22</sup> Quoted from Merriam. p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Merriam, 1988. p. 10

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

infrequently as it unfolds over a period of time". Meanwhile MacDonald and Walker define case study research as the examination of an instance in action. This definition relates to Guba and Lincoln's who assert that the purpose of case study is to reveal the properties of the class to which the instance being studied belongs. For Becker, the purpose of case study is twofold, and that to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the groups under study and to develop general theoretical statements about regularities in social structure and process.<sup>25</sup>

Merriam outlines four characteristics which are essential properties of qualitative case study design.<sup>26</sup> These are relevant and applicable to this research. They are;

1. *Particularistic*, meaning that the case study focuses on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon. The case itself is vital in terms of what it can reveal about the phenomenon and for what it might represent.

In this instance the research design focuses on specific problems around the role of local clergy in the resolution of the conflict in Mpumalanga and develops in the process a holistic picture of the situation. In case of this specific study the particular focus is on the role played by people in a specific situation. It is an attempt to draw a realistic and holistic picture of the peace process in Mpumalanga.

2. *Descriptive* relates to the end product of the case study which is a rich description of phenomenon under study. This includes an interpretative process of the data related to the phenomenon.

In this study an attempt was made to collect information from sources to get a broad description of the phenomenon under study.<sup>27</sup> This included informed discussions,

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<sup>25</sup> Quoted from Merriam, 1988. p. 11.

<sup>26</sup> Merriam. p. 17.

<sup>27</sup> Phenomenon in this case is used to relate to the relationship between local clergy and other stakeholders in their collaboration with the community in the process of resolving conflict

interviews, newspaper clippings, documents and observation of the setting where the phenomenon occurred.

3. *Heuristic* which means that the case study design illuminates the reader's understanding of the phenomenon being researched. It also offers possibilities of discovering new meaning, extend the readers's experience, or confirm what is known.

In this case study, for instance, in relation to the above point, it was discovered that the peace process was not necessarily the initiative of two individuals, a point which is commonly taken for granted. The process came about as a result of many factors.<sup>28</sup>

4. *Inductive* means that, at most, case studies rely on inductive reasoning. The research design is not based on a firm theory, rather theory evolves through the process.

### **3.2 Information creation, gathering and sources**

Knowledge is often considered a preserve of the dominant forces in society. Its construction and gathering is undertaken by this sector. The dominated are never thought of as creators of knowledge but rather as objects of knowledge. In some empirical research designs, for instance, the dominated are only considered important in so far as they are objects of the study providing the necessary data to be scrutinized by the expert. In that positivist research the dominated are important purely as statistics that are under the control and manipulation of the researcher.

Knowledge then is a contested concept. In modern sciences, asserts Philpott, "... Knowledge has become a commodity: some experts produce knowledge, while other

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in Mpumalanga

<sup>28</sup> These will be discussed elaborately in chapter 3 and 5.

experts consume it".<sup>29</sup> He continues and argues that today knowledge has become an important source of power and control over communities. The implications are serious in that decisions affecting communities are based on so called expert opinions and are made by those who have access to this "expert" knowledge.<sup>30</sup>

In contrast, Merriam states that knowledge learned from case study is different from other research knowledge.<sup>31</sup> It is different in four distinct ways;

1. Case study knowledge is more concrete, it resonates with our experiences because the knowledge is vivid and sensory never abstract.
2. Experiences are rooted in a context as knowledge in case study designs.
3. Readers bring their own experience and understanding, which lead to generalization when new data for the case are added to old data.
4. Knowledge is based more on reference populations determined by the reader.

The four points above subjectify the communities and gives a prominent role which empirical positivist research designs. In the case study design, the researcher does not pretend to be objective. The researcher is not a value-free individual. The researcher has interest includes empowering communities to interpret their history and create their own knowledge and articulate it. The benefit of this created knowledge is not only of interest to "expert" consumers as argued by Philpott but is meant to provide a learning experience for the community as well.<sup>32</sup> The created knowledge, in short, is accessible for consumption locally. The created knowledge provides possibilities for the community to

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<sup>29</sup> Philpott. p. 23.

<sup>30</sup> Philpott. p.23

<sup>31</sup> Merriam. p. 15.

<sup>32</sup> Philpott. p. 23

be transformed and empowered. It enables the community to learn more about itself, its strengths and weaknesses.

To summarize then; qualitative researchers are on the main concerned with process rather than outcomes or products of research. In this study our concern is to see how the peace process evolved on who was involved in it. Secondly, qualitative researchers are interested in meaning - in particular how people in a context make sense of their own lives, what they experience, how they interpret these experiences, how they structure their social worlds. This is based on the premise that meaning is embedded in people's experiences and mediated through the investigator's own perceptions. Important to note is the fact that the researcher cannot get outside the phenomenon under study. In this study the interest is to try and see how people in Mpumalanga understand the origins of the conflict, its impact on their lives and processes that facilitated its resolution. Interviews, discussions and documents will be utilized to make sense of the interpretations of the community.

Thirdly, the role of the researcher is important. The researcher is the main tool for data collection and analysis. The researcher is responsive to the context. The researcher can adapt techniques to circumstances, the total context can be considered, what is known about the situation can be expanded through sensitivity to nonverbal aspects. The human instrument can process data immediately, can clarify and summarize as the study evolves, and can explore different responses.

Fourthly, qualitative research involves fieldwork. For this study as well, extensive fieldwork was undertaken to familiarize myself with the natural setting and to observe.<sup>33</sup>

### ***3.3 Defining the problem***

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<sup>33</sup> Merriam. p. 29.

The focus of the study is an assessment of the role played by local clergy in the resolution of the conflict in Mpumalanga leading to the signing of the peace settlement in 1990. It is important that such a study is undertaken taking into account the impact that the peace process in Mpumalanga has had on many communities. It is hoped that through such a study, a careful analysis of the process will enable others confronted by conflict to use this experience to find possibilities for themselves in their own contexts. Also, the achievement of such a community like Mpumalanga deserves affirmation. A community like this which is deprived of resources and is grossly undervalued and underdeveloped deserve to be affirmed for an important contribution that they make to all through their experience. It is also hoped that the study will empower the community to move on and tackle other societal challenges thus regaining their dignity in the process and making a justified claim to be treated much more humanely by the status quo.

### *3.4 Commitment to empowerment*

The researcher in this study is committed to the importance of people empowerment. The history of the people of Mpumalanga is that of impoverishment and disempowerment. The historical background will show that the township was established after people were removed from Emaplangeni, Emalangi and Glenwood and resettled in this township. The previous government attempted to compensate them but the amount granted was not satisfactory. There are fresh attempts by the present government to redress that situation. Commenting on the concept of power with the participatory research design, Philpott elucidates this point thus,

With its specific commitment to progressive social transformation for the benefit of the oppressed, Participatory Research needs to be evaluated on the extent to which it transfers power to the oppressed and serves the specific interests of the marginalized.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Philpott. p. 24.



While Philpott makes this claim for the Participatory Research design it is also relevant to the Case Study research. The commitment is to find ways and means of responding to the critical question raised by Philpott, of transferring more and more power into the hands of the oppressed.

The outbreak of violent conflict in Mpumalanga fundamentally denied the community the possibility of amassing more power to themselves thus opening them to more brutalization and disempowerment. The conflict made the job of the "real" enemy<sup>35</sup> much easier. Violent conflict divided people. It blurred their focus and destroyed lives. It almost succeeded to destroy the Mpumalanga community. The vigilance that enabled the people to find each other needs to be strongly affirmed. It creates conditions for people to focus on real issues that maintain and perpetuate their marginalization from power, power to change their lives and be architects of their destinies.

This study seek to find ways of ensuring that people of Mpumalanga are able to recognize the significance of the peace process and therefore able to utilize the space created by this condition to address many other matters of concern. Transformation of society is key to development and reconstruction.

### ***3.5 Analysis of data***

Data was collected through discussions, documents and interviews. Once all these were collated into some coherent whole, it was analyzed by the researcher. Going through this material later necessitated the need for the researcher to return to some of the people who participated in the process to verify and clarify some of the issues. This was done using categories that emerged in the evolution of the study. There was willingness by all

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<sup>35</sup> By "real" enemy in this context is referred to the apartheid regime which was the main issue to be contested and overcome.

the people consulted to react to these concerns raised. But in the final analysis the responsibility for the analysis was the researcher's.

### ***3.6 Utilization of findings***

The findings of this study will be made available to the people of Mpumalanga through a new library that has been established in the area.

A report back session which will include all those who contributed anyhow to the process of this study will be held after the completion of this project. People expressed interest to engage with the researcher on this aspect.

The researcher has had contact with a unit within the World Council of Churches (WCC) which has interest in the Mpumalanga Peace Process. To date, the WCC has facilitated visits of people from conflict ridden countries to Mpumalanga with a view of making contact and learning from this experience. It is hoped that this humble contribution can be useful in strengthening this process of contact and enable a sharing of notes.

## **MPUMALANGA: THE SUN SHALL RISE**

### **1. Introduction**

Mpumalanga is celebrated internationally as a model for peace-making engineered by ordinary people. At present, the leadership of this township is kept busy by many visitors from far and near who come to listen and learn with the hope of setting something similar for their communities. People from Burundi have been here to meet with the leaders and learn from the Mpumalanga experience. The leaders Hadebe and Mlaba were invited to Burundi to address leaders and counsel them on their experiences of Mpumalanga on how they managed to resolve their conflict. The interest was to see whether they as Burundians can learn from the Mpumalanga experience. People from the U.S.A. have been here to acknowledge the significant contribution of the people of Mpumalanga. To this end, the leaders got awards recognising their role in peace-making in Mpumalanga. The impact of Mpumalanga's peace process reverberates far beyond the borders of this humble township.

But what does Mpumalanga mean? Mpumalanga is a Zulu version of sunrise. More precisely, it means East. In the discussion I have had with various leading members of this community the response to the question about the meaning of the name of the township was enveloped with emotions of frustration and seeming despair. For many, Mpumalanga has no deep sentimental meaning. People do not easily identify with this name purely because its origins are related to the sad history of grand apartheid with its consequences of land dispossession and force removals.

## 2. Social context

The township was established in the mid sixties to serve primarily as a labour reservoir for the sprawling white owned industries just on the border of Hammarsdale and the now Mpumalanga.<sup>36</sup> Hammarsdale itself, according to Steve Simpson, "is a product of South African government's decentralization policy".<sup>37</sup>

Simpson further states that, "Hammarsdale is situate 60km inland from Durban, just of the national road to the Transvaal, Mpumalanga itself is 4km from Hammarsdale".<sup>38</sup>

## 3. Rise of unemployment

The area is an urban township surrounded though by numerous rural areas. One set of statistics suggest that Mpumalanga has 50,000 residents, and about 100,000 more in the adjoining rural areas. These are estimates quoted by Simpson in the article already referred to earlier. Just over half of the population is unemployed. The majority in the population are youth under 15 years of age. There are a few schools, one derelict stadium and absolutely no recreational facilities. Recently, a teacher training college was built. The nearest town is Pietermaritzburg which is about 40km away.

In 1986 the population of Mpumalanga had increased to an astounding figure of 183,000 according to Lenta et al.<sup>39</sup> Most of the people, about 130,000 live in the informal settlements of the rural areas surrounding Hammarsdale. This rapid development and employment capacity of Hammarsdale. Lenta et al assert that in 1971 the eighteen

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<sup>36</sup> Track Two. p.1

<sup>37</sup> *ibid*

<sup>38</sup> *ibid*

<sup>39</sup> Community Developments Projects - Mpumalanga Area. Prepared by G. Lenta, A.W. Whitesde and P.N. Wilkins - Economic Research Unit : University of Natal, 23 June 1990.

industries operating in this area employed 8,500 black workers, by 1980 the number had increased to staggering 10,096.<sup>40</sup> By 1982 the industries had employed up to its optimum level. Recession set in a year later leading to a drop in employment levels. The government's withdrawal of the decentralization incentives exacerbated this crisis.

Lenta et al further assert that there were few other job opportunities in the area to absorb the increasing number of job seekers. They give an illustration that in 1986, only 3,000 jobs were available in the formal sector in Mpumalanga, slightly more than half of which were provided by the KwaZulu government which had its public works department based in the area. The result of all this was that more and more people from Mpumalanga had to travel to other areas like Durban and Pietermaritzburg to seek employment opportunities. The competition, however, was very steep in these areas. Almost at the same time in Durban for instance, there was a rapid influx of people from remote rural communities of KwaZulu. These developments placed a heavy burden on social institutions in Mpumalanga. The situation was becoming more desperate by day. Census figures of 1980 as quoted by Lenta et al suggest that, "... the rate of unemployment among the economically active population in the area stood at 22,5 per cent. Today that percentage has probably doubled".<sup>41</sup> This unfavourable development contributed, somewhat, to the rise of violence.

#### **4. Outbreak of violence**

According to Simpson, violence broke out in this area around 1986.<sup>42</sup> At the same time many parts of Natal were engulfed by internecine violence, particularly the Natal

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<sup>40</sup>    ibid

<sup>41</sup>    ibid

<sup>42</sup>    ibid

Midlands. But other members of the community saw this differently.<sup>43</sup> For many of them the violence broke out in 1985. There are a number of theories advanced by different people as to the causes of the violence at this time. These differ from person to person. The analysis also depends on where people stand ideologically. We shall return to this later.

In my discussions with some people from the community of Mpumalanga they all agree that violence first broke out in 1985. This contradicts Simpson's assertion that violence started only in 1986 as referred to earlier.<sup>44</sup> Lenta et al concur with the view that politically motivated violence broke out in 1985.<sup>45</sup> The violence intensified from 1988 through 1989. Mpumalanga almost became the killing fields of Natal. The violence was fierce and brutal bringing almost all social structures to a halt.

## 5. Contributory factors to the rise of violence

In situations like the Mpumalanga of the mid-eighties there are as many reasons advanced for the outbreak of violence as there are stake-holders. For the brief of this study, it is rather useful to use the category of present and contributory factors at the time of the outbreak of violence, instead of trying to find the origins of the violence. It is also worth noting that the intention of this study is to understand and learn from the process that ensued leading to the setting up of the peace process. It is of course important to discover the causes and role players in the whole violence debacle. But that is a subject of a study on its own. What we will try to do here is to consider, as suggested above, contributory factors to the violence. This is a useful category for the purpose of this study because it provides us with a useful tool which is open to consider many factors and to

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p.1.

<sup>44</sup> Track Two. p.1.

<sup>45</sup> Lenta et al. p.2.

take these as serious, legitimate aspects. Our intention will not be to evaluate and rank these factors in any form. Neither will it be to discard any other developments in the process as illegitimate. Rather, our intention is to include them as differing perspectives that give us a more comprehensive picture of which we would be deprived if any of these factors would be arbitrarily left out.

It is also worth noting that in situations of conflict as in Mpumalanga, there are as many versions of the causes as there are conflicting parties. But even more, there are also as many versions and perspectives of the causes within the same camps as there are interests. The interviews have shown for instance, that even people from the same ideological camp hold different views as to the causes and reasons for the violence.

Suffice it to say, we shall now move on and consider the following factors as they relate to the context of the rise of violent conflict and its impact on the lives of people in the community.

### ***5.1 Geographic setting***

Mpumalanga, as already pointed out earlier is situated along the N3 between Pietermaritzburg and Durban. This location is very strategic geographically and more precisely, politically. Anyone who controls this area has the possibility of setting up processes of influencing or spreading the influence to the Midlands area on the one hand and the Durban metropolitan locus, particularly the surrounding townships on the other. This point should be understood in the context of the policies of the Apartheid regime which ruled at the time of the founding of the township and later its junior partner, the KwaZulu government which continued in the path set by its master.

It is worth noting that this township like many others established at the time were under the control of Pretoria. The gelling of the relationship between Pretoria and Ulundi leaders and the realignment and closing of ranks by the two against the resistance

movement led to the ceding of this and many other townships to the control of the KwaZulu homeland government. The strategic location of Mpumalanga, with the surrounding rural areas made it a lucrative area for contestation. The implication of this ceding of control meant establishment of KwaZulu administrative structures. The whole development, policing, schooling, health services, legal services etc. were now taken over by KwaZulu. At the same time attempts were made to by KwaZulu to gain control of other townships like Sobantu, Claremont, Edendale, among many others. But these incorporation attempts were successfully resisted by these communities.

To further consolidate their hold on this enclave, the KwaZulu government, in my view, placed their Public Works department in this area. This facility provided, and continues to do so, a number of jobs for members of the community. This political leverage made it impossible for those who were against the take over of this community by KwaZulu government. It created a moral crisis where calling for the withdrawal of KwaZulu from the area was literally tantamount to exacerbating the unemployment crisis which was a problem in the area already. Realism dictated that people should use these facilities to enable development in the township. After all, these state asserts where maintained by the taxes of everyone irrespective of whether one supported the homeland system or not.

Interestingly though, the location of the KwaZulu government Public Works department and other administrative facilities like the Magistrate's Court was not translated into any developmental gain for the community. On the contrary, many of the older generation lament about the rapid decline of living standards since the take over by KwaZulu. In fact, upon comparison, it is argued that those townships that successfully resisted the take over by KwaZulu developed relatively faster and better. For example, the communities which resisted incorporation were electrified, schools and other extra mural facilities were built. In Mpumalanga most of the electrification was undertaken by



the individual residents. Such that those who could not afford are still without electricity.<sup>46</sup> Development in the area is incoherent and uncoordinated.

It is also argued that Mpumalanga's very setting, particularly its architectural design, is a recipe for conflict. The area is mountainous. Some of the houses built in the low areas for instance are flooded constantly during rainy season. The storm water drainage system is ridiculously insufficient and ineffective. But more seriously, the very layout of the township is a source of conflict. This is not unique to Mpumalanga. In other metropolitan areas, notably the former PWV (Pretoria, Witwatersrand and Vaal), now Gauteng, townships were divided into ethnic sections, thus prompting tensions which usually were recipe for violence and power struggles. The fundamental principle behind this phenomenon was the underpinning theory of Apartheid, the policy of forced removals. The situation in Natal generally and in Mpumalanga specifically obtained albeit in a particular way. In Mpumalanga for instance, the township was divided into units. The division here unlike in Gauteng was not based on language but rather on those who were landowners who were removed from their areas. People from these areas were settled in Unit 1 and 2. People who came from other areas outside the three, especially from rural areas, were placed in unit 3 and 4, laying the basis for class divisions and status consciousness. The divide was between the urban and rural, between the educated elite and the uneducated peasantry.

The other matter of concern is the urban rural divide. Mpumalanga was set up as an urban area to supply a work force to the industries of Hammarsdale. But the area is itself surrounded by massive and densely populate rural areas with no source of direct income for their development. This was another source of conflict. Most facilities for education, health, administration, among others, were based in the urban centre. This lack

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<sup>46</sup> See interview 10.

of resources in the rural areas exacerbated the conflict.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, people from unit 1 and 2 were given first preference in jobs in comparison to people from unit 3 and 4. This is another contributory factor to the violence.<sup>48</sup> As a result, there were always tensions and mistrusts between people from these units.

The other geographic factor relates to the location of Mpumalanga in relation to Georgedale, an area just outside of Mpumalanga. Georgedale has very scant facilities. People here originally came from Emalangeni, Emaplangeni and Glenwood. They were moved to this location. Many of the people here were from an elite class by comparison. They were teachers, lawyers, clerks, etc. who resisted the pressure to move to Mpumalanga. During this period Mpumalanga was governed by a Superintendent Francis - who was known by the older folk as Mr Mpumalanga because he was the first superintendent who had a keen interest in developing the township. Francis facilitated a further division of the community by setting up an elite area for teachers, nurses and other professionals in unit 6 and an area called Valley View (V.V). Interestingly, this area was never physically touched by violence, save through relations of those who lived in the area. Violence was perceived as engaging those in the lower rungs of social classes. It created an "us" and "them" syndrome.<sup>49</sup>

## ***5.2 External cultural influences***

The division between unit 1 & 2 on one hand and 3 & 4 on the other manifests itself also in fashion trends, a significant factor in this community. It is commonly known that unit 1 & 2 youth are greatly influenced by clothing fashion trends emanating from Pietermaritzburg. The taxi rank in this area is a base for taxis ferrying people to Pietermaritzburg. Youth from unit 3 & 4 are influenced by fashion trends from Durban

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<sup>47</sup> See Lenta et al report.

<sup>48</sup> See interview 10.

<sup>49</sup> See interview 10.

and the commonly used public transport goes there.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, today some people in the community are confused. They are uncertain as to which Metropolitan substructure they belong or fall under in the Transitional Local Council (TLC). To compound the situation further, in the last National and Provincial General Elections Hammarsdale as a district was part of Pietermaritzburg. But in the interim arrangements of the TLC it is placed under the Durban metropolitan which links it up with Pinetown. This then was another contributory factor to the violence. The kind of clothes one wears already identifies one with a particular section of the community. These factors made it easy for people to rally into groups which were identifiable due to factors like what one wears and which area one comes from. Thus began the issue of "no-go" areas

### *5.3 Inkatha's recruitment drive*

The period 1981 onwards was characterized nationally by massive campaigns and mobilization process by the United Democratic Front rejecting the 1983 Tri-cameral Constitution. This was the sequel to the formulation of the United Democratic Front (UDF). The mass mobilization spread like wild fire to the nooks and crannies of the country. Alternative civic structures were set up to challenge the discredited Black Local Authorities set up by the Apartheid regime.

Natal was not directly affected by the '76 uprisings like the other parts of the country were. The outbreak of violence in the 1980's was seen by some commentators as a delayed reaction in Natal of the '76 events in other parts of the country.<sup>51</sup>

Coupled with this development, it is suggested, was also a recruitment drive by Inkatha primarily in schools.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, and even earlier, there was concerted

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<sup>50</sup> See interview 10.

<sup>51</sup> See Aitchison.

<sup>52</sup> See interviews 3, 4, 10.

drive to urge people to take the KwaZulu citizenship. In 1985 an Inkatha prominent leader, Mr Z. Nkehli, lead a campaign recruiting people to take up KwaZulu citizenship. The campaign was premised on the argument that all people who lived in KwaZulu controlled areas should take up citizenship. People from units 1 & 2 resisted this mainly because the leaders of this campaign came from units 3 & 4 which were considered as areas of "outsiders".

#### ***5.4 Fear of 'outsiders'***

The other contributory factor to violence was the obsession of Inkatha with the supposition that elements from outside areas that they control and have majority support come in with an interest to destabilize these areas.<sup>53</sup> One such illustration was the violent cancellation of the play "Asinamali" with actors from Lamontville & Claremont. the play was stopped by Mr Nkehli who ordered the players to leave the area since the play was going to stir trouble. Refusal by people there to accede to this demand led to the outbreak of violence. A youth from Claremont was shot dead. There was fear that revenge attacks would be carried out. To avert this Inkatha mobilized members to monitor the flow of people in and out of the area. From discussions with various people it seemed that this became a normal practice. It was never unusual to come across a roadblock manned by Inkatha members.<sup>54</sup>

This fear of outsiders was premised on the belief that the whole of Mpumalanga was IFP. It was only a small number of outsiders who were rubble rousers who were instigating all the trouble.<sup>55</sup> It is worth noting though that in spite of all these preemptive

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<sup>53</sup> See interviews 4, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11.

<sup>54</sup> See interviews 4, 6, 8, 10 & 12.

<sup>55</sup> See interview 8, 9, 10 & 12.

measures there was violence within Mpumalanga itself. This reality challenges the notion that Mpumalanga was an Inkatha ideological hegemony.<sup>56</sup>

But it needs to be said that the fear was not groundless. During the mid-eighties, as already pointed out earlier, there was a ground-swell of mass mobilization by the United Democratic Front with its allied organizations like the civic structures including the progressive student movements viz. Cosas and Azaso at the time.<sup>57</sup>

With the build up of tensions within Mpumalanga a number of young people fled to the nearby Claremont. It does not appear that political organizations began mobilizing within the schools. There are claims and counter claims as to which organization started this.<sup>58</sup> What is not disputed is that Sthembiso Mngadi became the victim of the inception of this campaign in 1985.<sup>59</sup> He was a member of the Students Representative Council (SRC) at Ukusa High School. Sthembiso Mngadi was the first student to be killed in Mpumalanga after a dispute between teachers and students when a planned trip failed. Students demanded a refund of the money they had contributed towards the trip. Inkatha leadership saw this as a ploy by the UDF to introduce its strategies of mobilizing students as they had been doing in the surrounding townships. Consequently, a group moved into Ukusa to stamp out student revolt and at the end of that confrontation, Sthembiso Mngadi had been shot dead.

The group that had to resettle in Claremont as displacees were then mobilized into UDF structures. Upon their return later that year the first UDF structure was launched

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<sup>56</sup> Compare and contrast interviews 9 and 8, for and illustration

<sup>57</sup> See Aitchison.

<sup>58</sup> See interviews 4 and 8.

<sup>59</sup> See interview 4.

openly known as the Hammarsdale Youth Congress (HAYCO).<sup>60</sup> This open launch exacerbated the tension since the act was perceived as a threat to peace and stability. It was seen as a gateway that will bring the ungovernability strategy with its implications as was seen in other areas where the UDF was operating.<sup>61</sup> What was considered to be a sacred and untouchable hegemonic terrain was now a heavily contested one. This contributed to the violence. It was viewed as a direct challenge to the political harmony on the part of Inkatha movement. On the other hand for other members of the community, particularly the youth, this move was seen as a *serious apartheid* politics. This action linked them with the broader struggles of the progressive movement. What was put on the agenda quite forcefully by the youth was the fact that they were part of the broad South African society and shared similar aspirations and interests with the youth in other parts of the country.

### 5.5 Use of "intelezi"

It is a usual practice that when a war breaks out all those going out to either protect or attack are prepared psychologically, physically and emotionally. War is traumatic and those who partake in it need to have "nerves of steel to survive". But most people cannot humanely handle the consequences of war. It is one thing to support war. It is something else to kill yourself; or watch while someone is being killed, which is usually brutal. It is for this reason that a need for participants to be psyched up exists, and needs to be tackled carefully by someone who is familiar with the whole process of preparation.

It is in this context that the use of "intelezi" comes about. In African traditional society each tribe or nation had its war doctor whose task was to liaise closely with the king and the war "generals". His task was to ensure that the soldiers were always kept

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<sup>60</sup> See interview 4, 9 and 10.

<sup>61</sup> See interview 8.

war-ready and alert. This assignment involved a lot of rituals. This medical practice continues today, albeit differently. Today many communities are urban based and have been compelled by the situation to develop new ways of conducting their affairs. One of the problems of urbanization is that it has broken down that communal spirit which characterized life in the rural setting. Even in rural areas, life is now greatly influenced by what is happening in urban centres today and as such, it is not possible to speak of a genuine tribal approach to life which is untainted by the influences of modernity.

One of the intentions of the missionaries when they set up their missions in this country was to uproot people from their cultural context and destabilize them in order to 'win' them. Their short-sighted strategy was intended not only to convert people to Christianity but also to Westernization. As a consequence, colonialism took place alongside missionary enterprises. The same ships that brought soldiers and administrators from imperialist emperors, brought at the same time, preachers of the Word. Interestingly, the conquests of colonies was also seen as winning these areas for Christ. The symbols of the church like the cross were very prominent in these armies. In fact, the clergy who accompanied the imperial entourage kept their spirits up and urged them on, providing along the way, spiritual guidance and nourishment.

On the surface then, today, one can safely assume that the missionaries succeeded in denying people their history and cultural base. Many people have converted to Christianity. Encountering them in church you may be convinced that they have been completely won over and have nothing to do with their "brutal" and "barbaric" past, as described by missionaries. Interestingly enough, that campaign of ensuring that the "converts" do not lapse into their past "wicked" ways has now been taken over by black people themselves. In many instances both black and white clergy have internalised the way that missionaries saw black people and made that a subject of their theological barrage. Being Christian in this framework is considered synonymous as being western. As a result of this attitude some commentators who challenge this parochial approach,

like Setiloane<sup>62</sup> argue strongly that the church especially the so called main-lines is not able to minister adequately to the needs of black people. The church does not touch a significant part of people's lives that which relates to their historical heritage which is rich and meaningful.

But, in what way does all this debate relate to Mpumalanga? In Mpumalanga, like in many other townships and rural areas of this country, such issues as highlighted above are still part of the everyday reality for many people. The intentions of the missionaries of de-culturing the native population from their african heritage and re-culturing them with norms and values not only of the new found religion but those of persons who brought about this religion has created enormous problems. In many of the mainline churches today it is taboo to even talk about native customs and traditions. On the surface things seem "normal", in that people seem to have accepted this arrangement. For the many proponents of this movement of re-inculturation, their ideas are considered as having won the struggle for control. But, reality as experienced by people on the ground exposes this complacency as a fallacy. People still hold on to their culture in many instances. Have people accepted the values and norms of Western civilization, willy-nilly? Is the struggle for africanisation a lost cause? or is there still hope?

These are fundamental questions which, in my view opens up a whole range of issues which clearly demonstrate the failure, on the whole, of the colonial missionary strategy. Upon close observation of the way people conduct themselves in their private lives, especially in times of crisis, it becomes abundantly clear that what was supposed to be dead and buried ("black people's customs and traditions") are in fact not only alive but very dominant.

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<sup>62</sup> Setiloane (two articles).



It is in this context that the ritual of "ukugqiha" or "ukugcaba" (fortification) needs to be understood. The ritual itself takes various forms. These include, the jumping over some camp fire which is constantly sprinkled with "intelezi" (herbs). It also involves "ukugcaba"<sup>63</sup> where the participant is cut with a sharp object in all the joints of the body and some herbs rubbed into the open cut. It also involves the imbibing of a mixture of herbs through the mouth. The purpose of all this is to fortify the person going to war, to give him extra strength and in some instances, it is alleged, to make him invisible to the enemy.<sup>64</sup> It is also alleged that some expert healers can fortify a person in such a way that no bullet can penetrate the skin. Or, that a gun will just jam when pointed at such a person.

This sounds like a fairy-tale! But, I think it is worth conceding that fairy-tale or not, these perceptions form part of the reality for many people. The issue here is not whether these stories are true or not. That approach is wholly not helpful. The reality is that many people believe in these stories. And the impact of this in the context of violence is unimaginable. The fact of the matter is that many people in the townships practice these rituals as part of their daily experiences. The situation in the Northern Province with the burning of people accused of witchcraft confirms the hold that this phenomenon still have on the lives of many. The new Health Ministry recognises this fact and has instituted processes for cooperation between Traditional Healers and Western orientated Medical technology.

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<sup>63</sup> Ukugcaba is to make an incision on the skin or to vaccinate.

<sup>64</sup> A lot can be said about this ritual. The main point to be grasped is that the whole group from each side would have their own "inyanga" (healer) who performs this ritual. Coupled with this would be slaughtering of sacrificial animals and consumption of traditional beer specially prepared for this occasion. The whole activity is private limited to those who will partake in the war. No women will be allowed near such a ceremony.

This was a factor as well in the Mpumalanga violence.<sup>65</sup> Both supporters of the UDF and the IFP engaged in this ritual of "ukugqiha". This fuelled the violence in that many of the youth who went through the ritual felt strong and were psychologically motivated to go to war. Successes against the enemy were attributed to the skill and ability of the "Healer".<sup>66</sup> Business was good for the traditional doctors (healers) at this time because their services were required by all and sundry. Even those who did not go out to partake in the fighting itself, sought the service of the Healers if only to ensure that they are protected against any of the spillage from the war. Defeat by the enemy at any point would be viewed by the defeated as a temporary set-back. What was required, people would argue, was a repeat of the ritual perhaps with extra-help from another Healer to strengthen the process. So the cycle continued as more and more people died. The church was challenged in this context to intervene and break the cycle. This was not easy for the church to do since it had marginalized itself from this reality experienced by many of her members. It was not easy for people to even raise this matter within earshot of church leadership. Any open discussion would put people in unviable position where they could face discipline and perhaps even excommunication.

There is an obvious need to review the relationship between the church and African life experiences at a deeper, honest and meaningful level. Unless this is done this "schizophrenic" Christian attitude will persist with devastating consequences for the church as an institution, on the one hand and the community at large, on the other. We shall return to this point later in our discussion.

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<sup>65</sup> See interviews 2, 3, 4, 9, 10 and 12.

<sup>66</sup> I am using the concept "Healer" instead of the problematic witchdoctor which is loaded with negative connotations.

### 5.6 Imaging

In a situation of conflict, derogatory name-giving is part of the psychological warfare waged by protagonists. This "imaging" seeks to portray the enemy in the worst possible light. Its intention is not only to denigrate but to come with an image which would demonize the enemy in the eyes of everyone. This was prominent also in the Mpumalanga conflict, "sell-outs", "collaborators" were common labels attached to enemies. More serious were the images that these labels portrayed which remained as stigmas on people and fuelled the violence. To illustrate, "Theleweni"<sup>67</sup> a collective noun used to describe Inkatha members meant that anyone who is pronounced a "theleweni" was in danger of being targeted because of this label. Their protagonists would retort that, "utheleweni umabonw' abulawe"; meaning "he is a thing to be killed". Other labels like, "uklova" (a killer); "uxubh 'agwinye"; "ogezwa yimvula", (filthy one or a hobo); "izinja zikaMandela", (Mandela's dogs); "izincelebane zamakula", (slaves of Indians ; (in reference to leaders like Jay Naidoo) were derogatory terms which described people as things lesser than human.

The implication of this negative imaging was that it made it easier and somewhat justifiable to annihilate the enemy in whatever way. In the minds of many, killing was easier because those labelled were not like "us". They were less human. They did not deserve to be treated humanely. When you refer to other people like yourself as dogs, you obviously deny that person dignity and respect. But the irony is that, not only is the enemy the only one who is dehumanized and debased by this negative imaging, even the one dishing out the negative imaging loses the self-sense of value and worth. When a person stoops so low as to deny the humanity of another, in the process he or she loses dignity; self-worth and respect. Both in the process are reduced to the level of animals.

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<sup>67</sup> "Theleweni" means throw over the cliff. It is alleged that it was a threatening slogan used by Inkatha members when they were on the attack. It later was used to mean a vigilante, a country-bum, a stooge.

It is perfectly possible at this level to brutalize each other. This becomes a contributory factor that propels violence beyond control. Unfortunately, this negative image remains, even beyond the crisis itself.<sup>68</sup> When people regain their human senses and begin to find one another, as it eventually occurred in Mpumalanga, some of the negative imaging remains and becomes a potential source for the outbreak of fresh conflict. Some people continue to be referred to as "ophakimpi" (war-lords) today in spite of the fact that there is peace now. This threatens stability and is a challenge needing attention.

Linked to this phenomenon is the no-go-zone saga. In the process of the violence what tended to happen is that an area was polarized along ideological lines. Certain areas were identified as strongholds of one party making them inaccessible to members of the opposition. So, it was not uncommon to find the area of "amaqabane" (comrades) which were UDF areas (referred to as liberated zones since it was in these areas where the UDF began to have structures) and "otheleweni" referring to Inkatha strongholds. Certainly, this did not mean that all the people in those areas were supporting that organization which controlled the area. But the consequences of this arrangement were such that mobility was curtailed. It was only possible to move within the areas controlled by the same group. If one ventured into a wrong area there would be a possibility of being attacked by the opposition group. This also meant that some people had to vacate their homes and go to other areas which were controlled by their group. To date, some people have not felt comfortable enough to return to areas they had to leave due to this problem.<sup>69</sup> The legacy of no-go areas lingers on beyond the signing of the Peace Accord and the return of normalcy and peace in Mpumalanga.

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<sup>68</sup> See interview 4 and 9.

<sup>69</sup> See interviews 4, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 12.

## 6. Effects and impact of the violence

The outbreak of violence impacted negatively on many in the community of Mpumalanga. It had long lasting effects. Many were displaced. Homes were destroyed and looted. To date some houses have been occupied by displacees from other parts of the township. The pain of loss is still alive for many. But how were socio-political and economic structures affected by all this?

### 6.1 Politically

A number of prominent leaders from all organizations were killed in the violence. Ordinary members lost their lives. Families were affected. In some instances members of the same family belonged to different political organizations, prompting a separation. The level of political tolerance was very low. In the process of the violence each political organization attempted to destroy the other. Innocent people who found themselves in the middle of this conflict suffered tremendously. It is often said that if two elephants are fighting the grass suffer the most.

What is not often mentioned in the assessment of the impact of the violence in Mpumalanga are the casualties suffered by the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO). It is often forgotten that AZAPO, which functioned before the UDF structures were established in Mpumalanga, became the first victim of political intolerance. AZAPO had a small but effective presence which was based in schools in the form of study groups.<sup>70</sup> Its programmes were so effective to warrant the attention of Inkatha who saw them as a threat to political hegemony. Their leaders were harassed to an extent that some left Mpumalanga or those who remained had to drastically curtail their programmes. So much

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<sup>70</sup> See interviews 9 and 10.

pressure was put on AZAPO that it almost literally folded its entire operations in Mpumalanga.<sup>71</sup>

It is interesting also to note how the UDF gained ground in Mpumalanga. It is often argued that Inkatha was the "mid-wife" to the birth of the UDF in Mpumalanga. Most people interviewed agree that the UDF had no presence in Mpumalanga before 1985.<sup>72</sup> It seems apparent that the Inkatha leadership was obsessed by the gains made by the UDF nationally and especially in the immediate surroundings. The rapid ground-swell of support for the UDF which was spreading like wildfire caused panic for the Inkatha leadership. All attempts were made to try and keep the area UDF free.<sup>73</sup> Some of the activities undertaken by AZAPO for instance were attributed to the UDF. The move to set up democratic student structures in schools were attributed to the work of the UDF even though it was common knowledge at the time that AZAPO was behind this activity.<sup>74</sup> In 1985 also, the "roadblocks" which were set up at the entry points of the township by Inkatha were intended to keep the UDF out of the area since it was viewed as an external force bent on destabilizing the support base of Inkatha.<sup>75</sup> This move had a contrary impact on its intentions. The youth who ran away began to be curious and sought information on this UDF. A lot of these groups were based in Claremont and Umlazi which were UDF strongholds at the time. Linking up with stalwarts of the ANC in Claremont like the veteran political activist, Archie Gumede, provided an entry point for the UDF through this contact. In fact it is cynically alleged that Inkatha brought the UDF to Mpumalanga through its own panicking and miscalculations.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> See interviews 4, 8, 9 and 10.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> See interview 9.

<sup>75</sup> See interviews 4, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 12.

<sup>76</sup> See interviews 4, 9 and 10.

There are a number of examples which support the above suggestion. Some of them are, the attempt by Inkatha to control the schools. In many surrounding areas where the UDF was active its effect was mostly felt in schools through its student wing Congress of South African Students (COSAS). The youth who were "exiled" to those areas like Claremont upon their return set up Hammarsdale Youth Congress (HAYCO) which was the first UDF structure in 1985.<sup>77</sup> There was another incident at Phezulu High School in 1985 where a planned trip failed due to some reasons which were not apparent at the time but certainly had nothing to do with student politics. Students demanded a refund of the contributions they had made towards the trip. Inkatha apparently intervened under the pretence that this was a UDF strategy to gain entry into Mpumalanga through students. Other examples included taxi or bus boycotts which were seen purely as a UDF guise to gain control of Mpumalanga. Similarly, strikes by the labour movement were not seen in a favourable light. This by no means suggest that the UDF itself had no interest or intentions of establishing itself in the area. The point made here is simply that the panic response by Inkatha created the necessary conditions for the UDF to move into Mpumalanga sooner than it might have had it not been for this attitude by Inkatha.

## **6.2 Education**

The violence impacted heavily on education in Mpumalanga. What tended to happen was that an incident like the one at Phezulu High School, on mentioned above, resulted in the school being labelled UDF. Students from this school could not travel to school through certain areas because they would be identified through their school uniform and would be harassed.<sup>78</sup> This then set the trend of the infamous "no-go areas". It caused a lot of polarization in the community. A school like Phezulu, for instance, by

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<sup>77</sup> See interview 4.

<sup>78</sup> See interview 10.

being labelled UDF meant that even the area where the school was located was regarded as a UDF stronghold.<sup>79</sup>

This created serious problems for the students who stayed in unit 1 North which was identified as an Inkatha strong-hold. It meant that high school students from this area had their schooling disrupted because they could not travel to schools which were in the other parts of the township. In an attempt to resolve this crisis, the Inkatha leadership in this area 'transformed' a primary school, Woza Nazo extending it to cater for the needs of the high school students. This ad-hoc arrangement was not well planned. No sufficient infrastructure exists for this high school to function properly. The situation prevails to date, placing a lot of stress on limited resources available to the school. This affects effective education.<sup>80</sup>

The other matter of concern was that of school Inspectors. Their offices were based at the border between unit 1 North and South. They could not continue to function from this location due to the problems of violence. They were targeted since they were seen as part of the status quo which was on the side of one of the parties in the conflict. A neutral zone had to be found for this facility. Mpumalanga College of Education was faced by this dilemma as well at its planning stage. It also was built at the "neutral" zone making it available to all in the community.<sup>81</sup> Schooling was affected by the establishment of the "no-go" areas. Some students either had to drop out of school completely or move to other areas surrounding Mpumalanga in order to pursue their education.

Teachers were another sector that was affected by the violence. It was unit 1 north also which was hard hit since many of the teachers teaching in the area came from other

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> See interview 10.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.



parts of Mpumalanga. Due to the violence they were pressurized not to go to unit 1 North because their safety could not be guaranteed. Those who came from "UDF areas" were not welcomed in areas that were not UDF because they were viewed as threat to the security of the area. Political leaders realized that this was very serious and that it could have grave implications for the future of the youth. A free passage for teachers was negotiated so that they could continue with their job without fear.<sup>82</sup> This was a progressive step which, it is argued by some, kept possibilities open for a negotiated settlement of the bigger crisis of violence.

### ***6.3 Health services***

A thriving health clinic operated 24 hours per day at the border of unit 2 South and North. Like other community facilities the clinic was affected by the violence. This facility was probably more affected than others. All the casualties of the internecine violence had to be treated at this clinic. There were many instances where groups carried out revenge attacks on each others at the clinic. This endangered the lives of the staff who were perceived to be aligned with one party at the expense of the other. There were accusations and counter accusations. The situation was so serious that the administration of the facility decided to close it early at night to avoid problems

Nurses themselves were viewed as targets depending on the area where they came from. Hard hit by this were the community of unit 2 North who could not access the facility. Locals from unit 2 North could not go to work. It was a grim situation for the health workers who had to work under severe strains.<sup>83</sup>

### ***6.4 Church***

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<sup>82</sup> See interview 40.

<sup>83</sup> See interview 10.

The church was also affected by the violence. Members of the church as individuals supported particular parties. Although they themselves would not fight over this the location of the church building meant that some members who were from areas which were not ideologically aligned to the position of the area where the church was based could not go to church. Most churches in Mpumalanga have their buildings in unit 1 and 2 south. This also effectively cut off the 1 North community from spiritual nourishment.<sup>84</sup>

It is not hard to imagine the impact that this isolation meant for the people in 1 north. More over, the results of the violence produced a lot of deaths and maiming. Everyone needed the service of the church to help them cope with the grief that went on for years. In some instances church workers who lived in unit 1 north ran away from the area for fear of being identified as collaborators or members of the dominant party in the area. Only a few ministers, mainly from the Independent churches remained to offer their service to the community.<sup>85</sup>

This lead to the marginalization and isolation of a significant number of people from mainstream church activity. None of the important church rituals could be undertaken for and by these people. Their children could not be baptized nor confirmed; they had no access to Eucharist service; they could not fellowship with fellow Christians as they used to do for so many years.<sup>86</sup> The problem, of course, was not that they were not welcomed in the church. The issue relates, once more to the creation of "no go" areas. It was suicidal for people to venture and go to church in areas of the "enemy"! What an irony! The church is historically known to be a place of safety, a sanctuary for refugees in times of trouble. In this instance, there was no guarantee that those who dared to go to

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<sup>84</sup> See interview 1, 2, and 10.

<sup>85</sup> See interview 1, 2, and 11.

<sup>86</sup> See interviews 1, 10 and 11.

church would not be pulled out of the service and be killed. In fact the gruesome Rwandan experience detailed in a book titled, "The angels have left us," proves this point.

In response to this most of the people turned to the Independent church clergy for service. They called on them to bury their dead and provide necessary spiritual guidance during those difficult times. Due to the informal nature of the structures that govern Independent churches, it was easy for these to continue functioning in homes and schools. These churches are not usually roofed in particular places. They tend to adapt to all conditions which is not usually the case for the so-called mainline churches. For example, in the sprawling informal settlements, it is the Independent churches that have a stronger presence as opposed to "mainline churches".<sup>87</sup> In other instances, the Anglican church for instance which was itself caught up in this mess where the parish was grossly divided, decided to establish a preaching place in unit 1 North. A lay preacher was given the task of ministering to the members in this area. This somewhat responded positively to the situation obtaining in the context where people were feeling hopeless and desolate.

The cemetery was itself a contested terrain. Its location just outside unit 6 did not make things easier. It became a targeted area for revenge attacks. A group that came to bury a victim of the violence would be ambushed on their way to or from the cemetery.<sup>88</sup> This is unheard of in a black community. A time of bereavement is revered and treated with utter respect. Even if people are at war when the other party was engaged in funeral rites they would not be attacked. In this society, respect for the dead was key to a harmonious future. An act which was deemed untoward carried out during this period of bereavement was considered to be a bad omen for the future. But all that tradition was put to the test in the Mpumalanga violence. Whereas going to a funeral of a friend, neighbour or kinspeople was considered an act of solidarity, doing so during the time of violence

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<sup>87</sup> See interview 2.

<sup>88</sup> See interview 10.

was considered a stupid and suicidal act. This stirred the lives of the people at the core. It raised questions about the very meaning of life. It challenged the deeply held moral value of "ubuntu". We will return to this aspect later.

### ***6.5 Recreational amenities***

The violence grossly affected all extra-mural activities in the community. Soccer, which is a major sport in the area was affected. The stadium being located in unit 2 south meant that it could not be accessed by others. Teams were based in various units but had players from all over. This disrupted teams, especially a few who were plying their trade in the second division. As a result, Soccer standard has not recovered from this major setback. To date clubs are still reeling from this set back and have not been able to reassert themselves effective enough to challenge for the high honours in the national premier league.<sup>89</sup>

Most facilities were based in unit 2 south. The vibrant soccer stadium which was a communal centre of attraction now lies derelict with absolutely no amenities. Tennis courts in the same area are in a similar shameful state. They just have not been maintained. The impact of all this is still felt today where many young people are bemoaning this situation of lack of facilities.

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<sup>89</sup> See interview 10.

### *6.6 The role of the youth*

The youth were engaged in a number of activities before the violence broke out. An ecumenical youth movement was established under the leadership of the charismatic leader Rev C. Ngcibi of the Methodist church. (He was himself a victim of violence and was later killed, although his death was alleged to be unconnected to the ANC/IFP conflict). The work of the Mpumalanga Christian Movement (MCM), of which Rev Ngcibi was one, was very crucial and began a process which united Christian youth in a common witness. This was appreciated by the community. It also had a huge success among the youth who saw it as an important vehicle to help them address their problems and find each other. Gospel concerts were organized which unearthed a lot of talent and brought to the fore a lot of creative ideas in empowering the youth. Even Mr Nkehli, the local Inkatha leader, was involved in these activities. The outbreak of violence undermined all this important work.<sup>90</sup>

There was also a good choral group in the community known as the Mpumalanga Choral Society (MCS). The choir participated in the popular national choir competitions sponsored by Ford Motors and did well. It was the pride of the community. The outbreak of violence disrupted the progress of the choir. It was not safe to meet for practices in the evenings. The hall used for practises was targeted.<sup>91</sup> Making it impossible for the choir to assemble. The contribution of the choir in building the community was curtailed. Nothing of cultural significant in the arts could take place in the community for the many years of violent conflict.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> See interview 10.

### **6.7 Business sector**

The business was affected in various ways. First, was the impact on the businesses of the local people. It is important here that we trace the historical context of conflict involving local business people. Some attempts were made in late 1970's and beginning of the 1980's to set up a civic structure in Mpumalanga. Some of the prime movers of this idea of setting up MPURA, the Mpumalanga Residence Association, were business people like Mr. R.D. Sishi. This structure was viewed with suspicion by Inkatha. Tensions were high since MPURA was viewed as a challenge to Inkatha and as result of massive pressure MPURA folded up.<sup>92</sup>

The outbreak of violence in the mid-eighties found the business sector still reeling from the "defeat" of their earlier attempts to set up a civic association that would have rallied communal support for developmental concerns. There was fear that this time around support for any side of the conflict would place their businesses in jeopardy. The only role they played was to give some donations when there were funerals but, even then, that was done in a way that would not attract attention to them.<sup>93</sup>

On the other hand, the industrialists in Hammarsdale played a role in the conflict resolution process. They were affected by the violence. Production levels were low. There was a high rate of absenteeism and people arriving late for work. Some of the violence spilled over to the factories. Big business had no option but be involved. Some factories were broken into and looted. In an attempt to cut their losses some factories adopted a short-sighted and dangerous strategy of employing only UDF members if their workforce was predominantly UDF or Inkatha if the opposite was the case.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> See interviews 4, 8, 9 and 10.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

The economy of the area was hard hit by the violence. Potential investors were scared away. Some of the factories in the area saw relocation to another area as a viable option to save their businesses. Many people lost their jobs because of the situation of the no go areas, it was difficult to find a safe passage to work. Families were divided where some bread-winners were forced to stay at the factory where it was possible, in order to keep alive and maintain their jobs. Through pressure from the trade union movement and the factors listed above the business sector, through their Chamber, provided their facilities and personnel to mediate in the peace process. This created the necessary space for the peace process to be given a chance.

## **7. The sun shall rise**

For many in Mpumalanga the thick dark cloud hovering above their community was seen as a shadow that will never go away but remain with them. It was difficult for many to see beyond this cloud. It was almost impossible to even think about the possibilities of the clearing away of the clouds to let the sunshine in. For many, the situation was like the words of the young Rwandan girl who said of her situation, "... the angels have left us".<sup>95</sup> Indeed, Mpumalanga of the mid-eighties was a place where no angel could tread.

The Security force played a dubious role in the Mpumalanga situation. Since Mpumalanga was under the KwaZulu homeland administration, it was policed by the KwaZulu police. There were allegations of their complicity on the side of Inkatha against the UDF.<sup>96</sup> The pressure of the eighties saw an introduction of "half-baked" police constables known as Kitskonstabels, who were unleashed on the communities. These were a band of rogues who were taught how to shoot and then let loose on the

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<sup>95</sup> Quoted in H. McCullum.

<sup>96</sup> See interviews 4 and 10.

community. They were not well trained and as a result exacerbated the crisis. In some instances it is alleged that Inkatha gangsters were trained and brought back to the community. The only difference was that they were in uniform and had licence to kill with impunity.<sup>97</sup> Some justified this on the pretence that, after all, the other side, meaning the UDF, had a well organized resistance army in Umkhonto weSizwe (MK). So the argument advanced is that Inkatha also needed some form of army to protect its interests.<sup>98</sup>

The church intervened through the Fraternal of local clergy to try and bring back stability in the community. For this the church was labelled UDF one day and Inkatha the next day.<sup>99</sup> The attempt by the church to mediate got it into trouble usually. Despite this the church pressed on with its programmes for peace. It was not easy. But the church did its best given the limitation. It could not afford to stand by. The very core of its message, that of reverence of life, was under attack. Members of different political groups belonged to the same church. They were divided by their political outlooks but share of common factors in their faith.

The name that comes up constantly when people talk about the role of the church in the peace process in Mpumalanga is that of the late Rev. Bhengu, a pastor of the Lutheran Church. He was the first chairperson of the Minister's Fraternal and its founder. He worked with World Vision programmes in the community. He is seen as the one who started the peace process. Through the Fraternal, he organized weekly meetings for all the clergy in the area for prayers, meditation and reflection.<sup>100</sup> These meetings were very

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<sup>97</sup> See interview 4.

<sup>98</sup> See interview 6.

<sup>99</sup> See interview 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, and 12.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.



crucial. They provided a facility for the clergy to be in solidarity with each other and with the community. They created space for mutual affirmation, growth and empowerment.

It was through this Fraternal that the gospel choir activities were revived. A lot of young people were involved in this activity. It provided a sense of sanity in a senseless environment. It offered hope in a situation where hope was a luxury very few people could afford. It provided space for young people to creatively find ways and means of expressing themselves through song and dance. The lyrics of the songs portrayed the mood in the community. The songs expressed hope in prayer for the dissipation of the dark cloud. The most popular of these songs was one produced and sung by the Mpumalanga Mass Choir, "**Siyabonga ukuthula**". This group has members who come from different political organisations based in Mpumalanga. They decided to start this project of a Gospel singing group to make their own contribution to the peace initiative.

The group which broke the dividing wall of political intolerance and dared to bring together people from opposing strands is led by Sambulo Nkwanyana, Lucky Sibiya and Thokozani Dlamini. This act witnessed to many in a practical way the possibilities offered by a church of God living true to its witness. The lyrics of the song are very contextual and relevant.

The Fraternal also called rallies at the stadium in unit 2 south where the stadium is located. These were billed peace rallies and set the tone for the peace process. The peace initiative was strongly put on the agenda at these rallies. All people were invited to partake. But the location of the stadium did not make it possible for some people to attend. People from unit 1 North for instance could not attend and consequently labelled these rallies the UDF at prayer.<sup>101</sup> But these rallies were important. They were symbolical acts which offered a window of hope. Those who attended felt that there were

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<sup>101</sup> See interview 4.

possibilities for members of the community to find each other. The rallies offered alternatives to war. They challenged leaders of political organizations to try this alternative of "jaw, jaw instead of war, war"<sup>102</sup>.

It was because of this public witness that political leaders saw the commitment of the church leaders and their non-sectarian attitude as a possibility of a negotiated settlement. When the leaders, Dr Meshack Hadebe of the ANC and Mr Sipho Mlaba of Inkatha saw the opportunity for peace, they grabbed it with both hands. It was towards the church that they looked for mediation. When this window of possibilities became open church leaders moved swiftly and arranged a communal cleansing ceremony. This entailed a peace procession throughout the township placing crosses at various points where violent acts occurred. Some of these crosses are still there today standing as a reminder to the unfortunate painful past that everyone prays will never return.

The symbolism of the cross was very important in this context. The cross represents agony, pain and death, an experience that had touched almost all members of the community in varying degrees. But, importantly, the cross also represents resurrection and victory over death. The church, through this act of planting crosses in strategic places of the township, was communicating a message of hope. Hope that the sordid past was gone and had made way for a future free of the massive and brutal destruction of life. The crosses communicated a new message that life is not cheap, that life is precious and should be valued.

During this cleansing ceremony in November 1989 which culminated in the placing of crosses referred to above, just before the first signing of the Peace Accord, church members from all denominations joined together with the entire community for the first time since the outbreak of violence. The familiar picture of women in their

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<sup>102</sup> See interviews 1, 4, 10 and 11.

different church uniforms once more led the procession. The women were there, praying during the violence and here now in celebration and committing themselves to a new beginning. It was this group that enjoyed the respect of both groups. Throughout the violence none of these groups were ever attacked. In fact it is sometimes suggested that a tent crusade, set up by a woman by the name of Fisakuphi Langa at 2 South, some time in the second half of 1989, where she challenged both groups in the conflict to surrender their weapons, was a precursor to the peace process. Some of the youth were touched by her message and did surrender their weapons.<sup>103</sup> This, then, is the assessment of some people on how the violence was halted.

Others suggest that the situation was much more complicated than that.<sup>104</sup> They offer as an explanation the fact that the "war" had dragged on for a long time. There were serious casualties on both sides. It became apparent, for both parties that no one party was going to win outright. If they continued to fight it would only mean more casualties but no outright winner. The whole community was suffering because of this. People were polarized politically and socio-economically. But more seriously, the people were getting tired of the war. Even the main protagonists could no longer keep their spirits up. The "troops" from both sides were weary and burnt out. They had no energy left to continue fighting. The "war" had been a long arduous exercise. They had to camp most nights to watch whether the enemy would attack. Since a lot of fighting happened during the nights as well. It was just not possible to keep the spirits high. It seemed that both sides had thought that it will be over sooner, but that was not to be. Also many of the "troops" who also happened to be young people mostly wanted their lives back.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> See interview 1, 2, 4, 5, 10 and 11.

<sup>104</sup> See interview 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 12.

<sup>105</sup> See interviews 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12.

This fatigue and low morale created the necessary conditions for the peace process. When the two leaders made overtures to each other for peace their stance was vastly supported by their groups and the entire community because this step offered a much needed reprieve for the society. There was willingness all round to try and find other ways and means of settling the dispute. Virtually all sectors in the community supported the initiative.

The other factor for consideration is that, at the same time nationally, the Peace Accord was successfully negotiated by all the major parties. The talk of about the culture of tolerance found its way into this community as well. People began to realize that it is possible to sit down with your enemy and come to terms with your disagreements with a view of finding solutions that will take seriously your disagreements but help you find some common ground.<sup>106</sup>

Joint structures were set up from all the major stakeholders. These included; the political organizations, Inkatha - UDF/ANC, the business sector and the security forces. The church presided over this and accompanied the process - nurturing it along the way to ensure that trust builds up to support the intentions of all involved. It was not easy going. There was a lot of mistrust. But the care and support given by the church carried the process through the storm to the point where it was possible for the leaders to meet without the need of a mediator. Joint rallies were organized and addressed by both leaders.

It is acts such as these that finally sent a strong message to the community of Mpumalanga that peace has arrived. No go areas began to open up. People slowly began to return to their homes. Schooling became normal and economic activities were back in business.

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<sup>106</sup> See interview 4.

## **Chapter 4**

### **UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT: A SURVEY**

#### **1. Context**

Conflict is viewed by many in society as a negative thing. Consequently all attempts are made to avoid whatever might result in conflict developing. If and when conflict arise, as it normally does, people would rather deal with the symptoms and not the root causes. This has been imbedded in our social institutions which reproduce this attitude through socialization. In our society the apartheid system dealt with conflict by polarizing society. The privileged were lulled into believing that the problem is not as bad as it is made out to be by "instigators". "After all", we would hear, "... peace loving people are happy with the policies pursued by the government".

The situation prevailed in the families as well. To some extent, the high rate of divorce can be attributed to this. Instead of dealing with issues some people find it easier to move on. This does not mean that the issue that lead to the conflict has been resolved. It usually re-emerges in later stages and impacts on the lives of all involved with devastating effects. Conflict left unresolved is like a ticking time bomb. It does not go away. Its suppression only delays its impact, resulting in more damage when it eventually bursts because it is no longer possible to keep it suppressed. This also has discriminatory gender implications. In most weddings in the African community the advice given to the woman is that she should persevere (*bekezela*, *bambelela*) in spite of everything. The clear intention seems to imply avoidance of dealing with issues that potentially lead to conflict. The woman is expected to suppress her feelings and accept her condition even if she might not be happy with the situation.

In the church the situation is similar if not worse. An attempt is always made to, at best avoid or ignore conflict, or at worst, spiritualize it. Avoidance is premised on the notion that the church is a place of "peace", serenity and tranquillity. In an event that conflict arises, it is viewed as the devil again trying to stir things up and bring about confusion, people would say. The remedy offered is to "pray" and hope that the demon goes away. This approach undermines the fact that God has given us the capacity and responsibility to deal with issues in a manner that ensures the improvement of creation. Human beings are intended by God to be co-creators with Him. In furthering this function differences will and do arise. Dealing with these differences appropriately enriches the process of co-creation and makes it exciting and creative. It provides opportunities for growth and development.

McCollough<sup>107</sup> in a book, "Resolving Conflict with Justice and Peace", makes the following point which is worth noting;

Church folk usually rate spiritual peace at the top of the church's agenda and social action near the bottom like an unwanted cousin or even a foreign enemy. One reason for this ranking is the fear of conflict in the church (91: ix).

He continues and states that the attitude of people in the church is to avoid fights (conflict) whenever possible. "If we fail to avoid it we the shift gears and embark on a trail to win, and win at all cost". (91: ix) The compulsion to win, asserts McCollough, "occupies our beings and take hold of our rationale faculties", and this urge to win has, according to McCollough, a residual fallout which comes around again to haunt us. For him then, neither avoidance nor winning at all costs is, "... the high calling we hear from

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<sup>107</sup> McCollough, C.R. 1991 Resolving Conflict with Justice and Peace. New York: The Pilgrim Press.

the Bible" (91:ix). The challenge is to clearly find other alternative ways of dealing with conflict, ways which will enable, as far as is possible a win/win scenario.

He further asserts that, "conflicts are essential to life, but boundless, destructive fights destroy life" (91:x). This is a crucial point to note. Conflict is inherently part of human existence. We need mechanism that enables us to deal with it constructively. But as McCollough puts it, limitless and directionless conflict destroys life. Conflict is part of human reality. It is a part of human relations. We have been created as individuals with independent minds. Differences in the way we view things is inevitable with respect to our independent way of looking at things. There is nothing wrong with this diversity in our approach to things. The problem arises when we consider the use of force as the only viable mechanism of resolving disputes. Violence is costly, both in human and material terms. It can never resolve conflict - it only exacerbates it. Violence begets violence. Those who are at the receiving end of the violence look forward to a chance in the future when they can retaliate. South African history has shown that violence can never be a solution. The former Apartheid government had a massive security establishment with sophisticated weapons for mass destruction. It had a well trained army with all the logistical support to maintain the Apartheid state. But in spite of all this, Apartheid is no more. The sheer dedication and commitment of ordinary people to liberate themselves spurred them on, regardless of all the odds. Today, after a long struggle, South Africa is no longer a pariah state. A number of factors contributed to this transformation process. The ground-breaking negotiation process which ushered in democracy became the climax of this transition from the futile civil "war" to a negotiated settlement. The country could be far in development terms had the previous government acceded to call for negotiations much earlier. Other countries bordering South Africa, like Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique faced similar ordeals. As things stand now, the economies of these countries will take years to recover.

Political conflict in all these countries took a long time to be resolved. Thousands of lives were lost because those who were in control of state power felt that they could use these to batter their opponents into submission. The colonial powers of these countries, with support time that they can deal with the conflict through state force. Securing forces were unleashed on the majority of the population in all these cases. But, that strategy failed in the long run, not without costs to everyone. These countries will take years to cover economically from this set-back placed upon the shoulders of future generations to come by the war. Undoubtedly, had other options been considered of resolving the conflict, as it happened later through negotiations, the economic potential of the entire region would be much brighter.

What is apparent then is the need to deal with conflict in a manner that impacts on what seems sordid and turn that into a positive learning experience. It is imperative that the process engaged to resolve conflict is not carried out to the disadvantage of the powerless party. Central to the issue of conflict is the contestation for power and material interests. Those in power hold the monopoly to control the flow and distribution of materials. The tendency in many circumstances is for the powerful to undermine the rights of the people on the margins, the powerless and the poor. In many instances, those in positions of power institutionally use that advantage to win, and win at all costs as McCollough pointed out earlier. I will urge that, in instances like the latter scenario, an outside party, someone who has no personal interest, no stake in the matter at issue, should be brought in essentially to level the playing fields, and balance the power relations. The task for the mediator would be to ensure first that, the question of power relations, the imbalance is addressed. A congenial atmosphere must be created to facilitate effective communication. Both parties need to feel that they can participate equally. Secondly, the mediator should enable parties to focus on the causes of the problem, giving rise to the conflict. Thirdly, the mediator should also help parties to focus on their interests and not positions.



The church, argues McCollough, has enormous potential for conflict resolution ministries<sup>108</sup>. Resolving conflict constructively is a useful skill that can be learnt. The question that arises is whether the church as an institution has the capacity to undertake conflict resolution? We will return to this question later.

## 2. Defining conflict

What is conflict? Anstey<sup>109</sup> in an instructive book on this subject, *"Negotiating conflict - insights and skills for negotiators and peacemakers"*, asserts that,

Conflict exists in a relationship when parties believe that their aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously, or perceive a divergence in their values, needs or power in an effort to defeat, neutralise or eliminate each other to protect or further their interests in the interaction (manifest conflict) (91:4).

This definition provides a few pointers towards the understanding of conflict and its causes. It relates to a strained relationship between parties engendered by the belief that their differing interests need to compete for resources. This is so because available resources are insufficient for the needs of respective parties. Consequently, a struggle ensues to garner as much of the resources for the in-group in contra-opposition to the out-group.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid. 91 p.x.

<sup>109</sup> Anstey, M. 1991. *NEGOTIATING CONFLICT - insights and skills for negotiators and peacemakers*. Cape Town: Juda.

In order to meet the above objective then the in-group will rally its power base to remove the contending party from the competition thus leaving the way clear for the group to accumulate resources and protect their interests. The out-group does not accept this, hence the heightening of tensions leading to frustrations and adoption of desperate measures to try and redress the situation. Conflict, argues Anstey, is viewed here as a relationship and importantly, as something rooted in people's beliefs as opposed to objective facts (Anstey 91:3).

Anstey quotes Himes as defining conflict thus;

Social conflict refers to purposeful struggles between collective actors who use social power to gain status, power, resources and other scarce values<sup>110</sup>.

For Himes then, social conflict:

- is a purposeful behaviour involving planning as to how to attain scarce values and overcome resistance. This does not imply that this is by any means always efficient or even logical;
- takes place in a social structure which qualifies the situation in various ways;
- involves the use of power to neutralize or remove obstructing groups or resistance;
- is associated with collective action of a strategic nature designed to reduce resistance by an opponent who is led to understand that relief from pressure can be achieved only by concessions or capitulation;
- centres around the acquisition of scarce resources and values.

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<sup>110</sup> Himes, quoted from Anstey *ibid*.

Coser<sup>111</sup> sees conflict as, "... a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals (quoted from Anstey 91:2). In this instance conflict is goal directed in that parties seek to neutralize or injure each other in their pursuit to attain their objectives.

Most of these definitions share a common perspective in their understanding of conflict. We will use these definitions to analyze, the conflict in Mpumalanga.

For the purpose of this research I will utilize Anstey's definition as a guide to the analysis of the situation in Mpumalanga. This definition is useful in that it provides the necessary framework to the understanding of conflict and its manifestations.

### **3. Power**

We have already alluded above to the centrality of the power phenomenon in conflict situations. But what is power? How does it manifest itself in conflict? What are its constituent elements? Is it a positive or negative phenomenon? These questions are very crucial. But given the brief of this research we will restrict ourselves mainly to those questions that relate to power in its relation to the subject of conflict.

In many social instances, power relations are unequal. When a conflict situation arises the powerful party uses force provided by its institution. In case of a government, it will use security forces to overcome the contending party. In such instances, the powerful will attempt to steam-roll the process in order to win at all costs. This power may be manifested in various ways. It might be in the form of knowledge. Those who have acquired skills and critical tools of engaging in discourse use these to their

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<sup>111</sup> Coser, quoted from Anstey ibid.

advantage. In such circumstances it is vital that a mediator be brought in. Mediation, according to a manual on Conflict Resolution by ACCORD, relates to the intervention of a third party into a dispute or negotiation, who is acceptable, impartial, and neutral but has no authoritative decision-making power. The task of the mediator is to assist contending parties to voluntarily reach their own mutually acceptable settlement of issues in dispute (94:52).

McCollough asserts that conflict resolution is a useful process for people who are more or less equal in power. He quotes a famous truism, which goes, "No one can negotiate without power to compel negotiation" (91:37).

Balcomb in an article, "Third way Theologies in the contemporary South African Situation - Towards a Definition and Critique", sums up the perceptions of the church vis-a-vis power in three models. These are,

1. The church must be above the power concerns of society. "Mirror image" language is used, and the concern is alternativism.
2. The church must subvert the power concerns of society within it. "Subversive encounter" language is used, the concern is neutralisation.
3. The church must be a neutral mediator between the power concerns of society. "Mediation" language is used, the concern is reconciliation (1989:47).

In the context of this research it will be shown that the model used by local clergy in the Mpumalanga process is the third one above. The research will demonstrate how the violence in the area polarised communities. People who lived together for many years sharing a lot in common found themselves in a spiral of endemic violence which tore the community brutally apart. It will be vital on the course of this research to focus also on the contributory factors to the outbreak and escalation of violence. To this end, we will also explore the role played by local clergy in an attempt to Reconcile the community.

The third model outlined by Balcomb is a useful tool to understand the process of conflict resolution facilitated a mediator. This point is further borne out by McCollough who argues that in that process of conflict resolution, it is useful for people who are more or less equal in power (91:37). He argues that,

Religious leadership must understand that it is a disservice to try to stop conflict before it has restructured relationships. The only way the powerless can force the powerful to share power is to organize conflict-producing confrontations in which they can force their interests into the communal decision-making process. (Otherwise) ... any group coming to negotiations without power is coming as a beggar.

McCollough's warning above is very pertinent to the role that is often played by the church in conflict resolution. The warning relates somewhat to Balcomb's first model already alluded to earlier. Religious leaders in this context try to deal with difficult situations which might have give rise to the conflict, by offering easy solutions which do not unmask the underlying causes. It is usually not taxing to deal with the symptoms of the problem and not its roots. One example of this notion is the unfortunate experience of divorce. Usually when one hears that a couple are divorcing, you are shocked because it comes as a surprise. When you speak to either of the parties, you often discover a long list of issues that were never resolved by both parties. At this point, the whole thing culminates into a crisis which becomes difficult to resolve. It is no longer just one issue that can be dealt with amicably. There are now a number of issues which have so complicated the relationship that it is not possible to deal with it. I believe that what McCollough suggests relates to uprooting the problem from its roots ensuring that it will not continue to grow and spread. That I believe is the fundamental task in conflict resolution.

The second point that McCollough makes relates to the question of power imbalance. Unless this question is addressed during the process of mediation it is highly

likely that the process will not take this matter to consideration, and consequently whatever solution that will come about will only mean the perpetuation of the power imbalance. The process will favour the powerful and the solution will not be credible. It will only offer a temporary relief. The tree would have been chopped on the base of the trunk and sure to regrow to be a problem once more.

McCollough defines power as the ability to influence outcomes. This power is exercised at various levels. Abuse of power requires powerlessness and visa-versa (91:38). He also outlines five levels of power. These are:

- i. Existential/ religious level
- ii. Self esteem
- iii. Social esteem
- iv. Process level of power - referring to having a say in decision making, whether or not one achieves outcomes.
- v. Final, the outcome level - this relates to the capacity to reproduce results (91:43-45).

Conflict affects all these levels of power. It is therefore imperative that in the process of resolving a conflict all five levels, be satisfied for the solution to be sustainable. It is vital that at the outset religious and existential needs relating to power are met. When conflict arises, it is at this basic level that it is felt by those involved. It threatens security at this fundamental level. It has the danger of making people feel hopeless and utterly vulnerable. The consequences for this are very serious. A threat at this level puts people in a tight corner where the only possible alternative is to fight your way out. It creates fertile conditions for violence to be deployed as a means of survival. If this is constructively and positively countered, then the threat moves to the next level.

This is the level of self-esteem. All of us as human beings require to be affirmed as persons in our own right. We need to feel that we are in control and can determine our

own destiny. This is the level of self-assurance. In an event that this level is threatened somehow, it impairs on our dignity and compels us to find other means of regaining it. The next level, social esteem relates to the impact that conflict has on a group through an individual. Human beings do not exist as islands. Individuals are part of society. Whatever happens to an individual will invariably impact on society. Let me illustrate, an abandoned child in the streets is forced by the harsh conditions in that situation to adopt criminal strategies to survive. What began as an individual problem of an abandoned child develops into a societal problem resulting in increased crime rate. This illustration is obviously too simplistic but makes a valid point underscoring the fact that people belong and exist in community and not as isolated individuals.

The fourth level is that of process. In any situation of conflict it is incumbent upon those who broker a process of resolving the crisis to ensure participation of all concerned. Any solution arrived at leaving other stake-holders outside of the process is doomed to fail. Participation is empowering. It enables all parties to feel that whatever solution arrived at is also their own solution. It is not fostered from somewhere, even if the solution might not be favourable to their utmost advantage.

The final level is that of outcome. Here the concern is the need for capacity to produce results. This is a crucial level where a party feels that they are able to influence events and their outcome. The level of control is high. All parties have the necessary capacity to produce action. Action in this instance relate to the ability to deal with the fundamental causes of the problem and to come up with viable alternatives that offer an amicable solution for all parties. At this level a common perspective emerges out of a process of negotiation and dialogue. It is at this point that common goals, norms and values emerge shared by both parties. Whatever the source of the conflict was would have been unmasked and dealt with adequately. This assumes that the final outcome was a win/win solution. But not all conflicts are resolved in this way. In some instances, especially where the question of the balance of power has not been addressed, the solution

will almost certainly be a win/lose configuration. The solution, in this respect, tends to be temporary. The powerless party merely withdraws from the process to reassess its position and mobilise its resources for another assault with a view of overturning the unfavourable result. This is usually the case between capital and labour. The relationship between the two is characterised by adversarial positions. When the parties engage in discourse they do so from particular positions. The attempt is to try and outwit the other party. It would be fascinating to engage in a deeper analysis of the premise of the relationship between labour and capital, but that will have to be undertaken elsewhere since it does not form part of the brief of this research.

Power, for christians, is understood to be a godly phenomenon. This is emphasised by McCollough when he argues that we must affirm that power is finally grounded in God (1991). If we accept the latter statement then, asserts McCollough, we must have no other gods. He continues to affirm that anyone who abuses power plays god. But for this to happen the power abuser requires the co-operation of the powerless to play along. The challenge is for a process of power balancing or empowerment to be effected to overcome blame for others and what McCollough describes as self-hatred or self blame. This, concludes McCollough is referred to as forgiveness in the Bible (1991). But forgiveness must be understood within the context of reconciliation. The implication of this is the importance of following a process beginning with confrontation through to acceptance of faults and the institution of restitutive measures leading to restoration of relations. This process is popularly known as the levelling of the playing fields. It is the empowerment process on the side of the powerless with a view of transforming the entire relationship to a be fair and acceptable to all parties.

This process of transformation which enables the balancing of power results in an interdependent relationship between dependent and dominant people, in which both fight common problems and not each other, urges McCollough (1991). Conflict by its very nature has the potential to consume energy rapidly and erode common values between



parties if not treated carefully. If not handled well, conflict divides communities and sets the stage for the formation of a sub-culture which poses a threat to the dominant culture. But such instances provide an opportunity also for a broadening of the dominant culture to include aspects which might have been marginalised, thus enriching what was a limited experience into a dynamic transformative process. Conflict then in this instance becomes an opportunity for growth and enrichment. It brings forth positive aspects. All involved have the potential of using this experience as a learning curve. Conflict resolution becomes a source of hope, hope for a different future. A future informed both by the difficult, sad past and present characterized by violent conflict.

McCollough sums it appropriately when he states that, ".. there is no finite limit to power. Rather than zero sum, the approach to power balancing of Jesus, King and Gandhi, for example, results in both the powerless and the power abuser gaining more power" (1991:32). In one sense, one can describe the miracle of the resolution of the South African conflict in this respect. The government of National Unity (GNU) is the consequence of such a process. The "powerless", majority, in terms of sophisticated weaponry, through negotiations have gained more power and acknowledged legitimacy. This process has also empowered those who supported the apartheid regime in that the success of the negotiations have enabled them to regain their humanity. The declaration by the International community that apartheid was a heresy and a crime against humanity was a serious indictment. The attempt by apartheid proponents to dehumanise the majority of South African denouncing their status through Apartheid policies to be lesser beings in the process made them inhumane. Genesis is very clear on this issue. Human beings are all created in the image of God with the responsibility to rule over the rest of creation. Any attempt by one human being to undermine another human being through oppression and any form of dehumanization, impacts on that perpetrator as well. In essence, humans should relate to each other as equals with a common responsibility to God. Nothing more and nothing less.

#### 4. Understanding conflict

Earlier in this presentation we alluded to the negative perspective concerning conflict, held by many people. Difference of opinion is seen as a threat to peace and stability. This has to do, somewhat, with the negative means that people usually adopt to resolve conflict. In a society where the tolerance level of different views is low or non-existent, conflict that ensues from the reality that people hold different views is either avoided or swept under the carpet. This unfortunately is not helpful. Avoidance only delays the conflict from coming to the fore. There is a point where it cannot be suppressed anymore. The consequences are more damaging when it explodes. Understanding conflict is important because, it lays the fundamental basis for its resolution. As McCollough confirms, "understanding conflict is a start towards resolving it" (1991:32). He proceeds to define conflict, as a clash of goals (91:32). He further maps out two configurations of conflict, constructive and destructive conflict. He defines the latter as, a clash of goals which depletes energy, creativity, and the will to reach constructive ends. And he describes the former as a clash of goals that challenges one's energy, creativity, or competitive spirit which usually leads to constructive ends (1991:32).

The challenge that confronts everyone is to find ways and means of converting destructive conflict into a constructive mode. Destructive conflict consumes everyone concerned. It also impacts on observers who might not have anything to do with the issue being contested eg. taxi violence, train killings in the early 90's in South Africa. There are many elements that contribute to pushing conflict to the brink of being destructive. Some of these underlying factors which might not be apparent include; greed, obsession with power, hubris, and so on. The task confronting those interested in resolving conflict is first to identify these elements and secondly to find mechanisms of dealing with these elements with view of finding an amicable solution.

McCollough argues that conflict resolution is a learnable skill. It only requires a willingness to learn. He further argues that the Bible is about conflict. But, asserts McCollough, conflict in the Bible is set in a context of meaning that leads to conflict resolution (1991:15). He stresses that the Bible is about ultimate conflict and its ultimate resolution. There are many examples which bear this fact out. For instance, the Exodus resolves the conflict of slavery for the Hebrews, but is followed by conflicts in the wilderness. The history of God's people in the promised land is a history of warring kings whose reigns were judged more by their conflicts with God than by their battlefield victories or defeats (McCollough: 1991). It is worth noting though that conflict in the Bible occurs in a context characterized by a particular meaning. It is this meaning which is vital for resolution processes. The meaning relates to the fundamental relationship between God and humanity. It defines the nature of the relationship. God is God. He is the source of creation. Human beings worship and account to Him. This relates to the summarized version of the law as presented by Christ in the New Testament; love for God and for the neighbour which Christ describes as great commandments". This concept provides us with the framework on which to base the processes of conflict resolution ministry.

## **5. Theology and conflict**

What is the role of the church in society? Should the church be involved in the affairs of society? Put more sharply, what is the role of the church in the situation of conflict? Should the church take sides or should it not be involved in order for it to afford itself a mediatory or conciliatory role? These and many other questions have occupied many Synods and Conferences of the Church since the advent of the Christian church. These questions have also been hotly debated in South Africa, particularly during the apartheid era. These debates became more focused in the mid-eighties when the church was challenged more and more by the liberation movement to support the armed struggle in an attempt to resolve the apartheid question.

But these questions were being raised more poignantly within the church sector itself. The Kairos document of 1985 became the culmination of this discussion<sup>112</sup>. The analysis of the Kairos Document crystallized issues more clearly delineating particular theological perspectives and their interests. Briefly, the Kairos Document argued that the church as a whole was facing a serious crisis, a crisis of legitimacy in many respects. In the ensuing crisis the role of the church was called into question more and more. Responses to this query exposed the deep divisions within the church. It was becoming clearer by day that the church itself is a contested terrain. The Kairos theologians sums the issue thus,

What the present crisis shows up, although many of us have known it all along, is that the church is divided. More and more people are now saying that there are in fact two Churches in South Africa - a White church and a Black Church. Even within the same denomination there are in fact two Churches. In the life and death conflict between different social forces that has come to a head in South Africa today, there are Christians (or at least people who profess to be Christians) on both sides of the conflict - and some who are trying to sit on the fence<sup>113</sup>.

The challenge raised by the Kairos Document is that Christians must take sides. It is unethical to sit on the fence. As Archbishop Tutu used to say in his speeches that, "If an elephant is sitting on the tail of the mouse, it does not help for the observer to say, no, I am neutral. If one takes that attitude the marginalised continue to be brutalised and oppressed. The role of the church is clearly to take sides with truth and justice. Conflict

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<sup>112</sup> Kairos Document 1985.

<sup>113</sup> Kairos 1985. p.1

resolution in this instance relates to the transformation of the situation from one characterised by marginalisation into one characterized by justice.

This debate about the role of theology in society is a useful one, because it captures cardinal issues that need discussion and clarification. In the process, the debate enables Christians to review and re-evaluate the important aspects that inform the framework which governs the theological enterprise. It is my strong held view that theology is about life. Its central business is concern for life. The church cannot help but be involved in all aspects of human existence and its relationship to the transcendental force, God. In terms of this view, one cannot categorise life into separate segments or spheres or categories as is often projected by some. The latter proponents divide life into categories of socio-political, economical, and spiritual realms. In terms of this view a human being is divided into these segments and realms. The role of the church is therefore in terms of this scheme limited to that reality called the "spiritual". There is a fundamental weakness to this to which we shall return later.

It is imperative that the human experience be viewed holistically. After all human reality is not divided into categories but is one experience which manifests itself in all these spheres. The danger of categorising is that it limits the action or praxis of the church. If the role of the church is viewed as concerned only with "spiritual" matters, the logical implications are that the other aspects of human existence are not touched by the word of God. This attitude is prevalent today in some socio-political, economic and religious circles. In these instances it is not uncommon to hear people arguing emphatically that their business practice, for instance, has nothing to do with their faith experience. This schizophrenic view results in situations where business people see no relation between exploitation of their work force, where they pay them slave wages, with the faith they hold which stresses on matters of equality and fairness.

The role of the church, I want to argue is boundless. It is not limited. Its primary role and concern is the building of community. The community is found and exist in all the different spheres of life. The task of the church is to engage society in dialogue. A meaningful dialogue which takes serious the needs and concerns of society. The church stands at the strategic position where it has to play the role of being the conscience of society. She needs to be prophetic in her approach. Admonish when the need arise. Praise when praise is due but she cannot do this if her role is defined in the narrow sense. The role of the church by definition has to be broad and all encompassing. After the God, we believe in, is the source of all reality. His concern is for the whole of life not certain categories. The two creation narratives bear this point out very strongly. Human beings have the responsibility over all aspects of the created universe (Gen. 1:2; 2:15).

Pastoral care as a segment within the Corpus of Practical Theology stands as the cutting edge within this discipline. Practical theology is concerned with human life asserts Hawkes<sup>114</sup>. It is concerned with human activity or behaviour and human experience. Hawkes puts it more poignantly in the following quote;

Practical theology is the critical study of contemporary activities and experiences of Christians and of the church in relation to God's will and purpose for them. The study may involve concepts, ideas, beliefs, convictions, attitudes, and world views, as these affect experience and behaviour. The purpose is understanding, prediction and revision of practice with a view to enhancing Christian ministry to and by Christians and the church<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Hawkes G.

<sup>115</sup> Hawkes p. 29.

This point is shared by De Gruchy who also points out that the pastoral and prophetic responsibilities of the ordained ministry, the "cure souls" and the proclamation of the Word of God, derive from the calling to enable people to know, trust and obey God in Jesus<sup>116</sup>. He continues to assert that, what this requires is the relating of faith to the present context and he defines this as the essential task of practical theology. The church, argues De Gruchy, "... requires strong leadership, both pastoral and theological, at all times, but especially in times of crisis"<sup>117</sup>. Strong in this instance is not just about the ability to exert force or power and control but rather about being willing to risk, to being prophetic and involved in the situations of life responding to fundamental needs of the people.

Practical theology then is about an interface between the tradition and concrete engagement in the life of world (praxis), in which critical theory and praxis are in mutually critical relationship, argues De Gruchy<sup>118</sup>. It is this mutual criticality which for Hawkes is crucial for Pastoral theology<sup>119</sup>. Hawkes outlines three typologies or models for Pastoral theology. He outlines these as

- Deductive model
- Inductive model and
- Dialogical model.

In the deductive model he points out, that the practical theologian starts from a prescriptive dogmatic, theological position and draws out implications for practice/praxis<sup>120</sup>. In this model the process is a linear progression starting all the time on

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<sup>116</sup> De Gruchy.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid p. 26.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid p. 30

<sup>119</sup> Hawkes G.

<sup>120</sup> Hawkes p. 30.

theological formulation and moving to action. What action is to be undertaken and how it will be carried out is gleaned and informed by the theological formulation. For instance, programmes on aids will be determined by the theological formulation held on issues related to sexuality. this can be seen for instance, by the stance of the Catholic church. In spite of all the scientific evidence at our disposal on the spread of aids and the implication of the disease for life, the programmes of the Catholic church discourage any use of a condom since this contradicts the theological position of the church on the subject of sexuality and the ethics around this subject.

The second model, the inductive model starts on pastoral action as it actually occurs. Raw material is provided instead of theological., dogmatic statements. Use is made here of case study method to inform the approach to the pastoral ministry. Expertise from behavioural sciences is utilised in this model. There is no attempt whatsoever in this process to review or reformulate theological statements even if what emerges from the praxis necessitates this. The attempt rather is to try and "hammer" whatever emerges from the case study, in the form of action, to fit in with the held theological dogmatic perspective. This is the attempt one finds for instance from some liberation theologians in Latin America.<sup>121</sup> The latter theologians try very hard to escribe the evolution of the Base Christian Communities as a phenomenon that was driven by the church out of its relation. The attempt within this perspective is always to portray those in esteemed positions within a hierarchical organization as the prime movers of new ideas. Epistemology in this perspective is seen as a preserve of the powerful sectors in society. I differ fundamentally with this view. The rise of Base Communities in my view was more a move from below by ordinary Christians in collaboration of course with progressive clergy. But to see it as a movement from above is a misrepresentation of history in my view.



The point I am making with regard to this matter then is that the evolution of Base Communities as an example is a good illustration to affirm Hawkes' description of the second model. People in the context which was characterised by massive poverty, exploitation and injustice. The church in response co-opted those forms of action and related these to the dogma of the church. No attempt was made to review and reformulate theology to relate to the challenges brought about by the praxis of the Base Communities. Where this was not possible those groups were marginalised.

The third model, dialogical integrates essential elements of the other two into a creative synthesis. Theological statements in this model are regarded as having a theoretical character. They are never considered to be absolute<sup>122</sup>. God and not theology is absolute, argues Hawkes<sup>123</sup>.

He points out that;

If our understanding (faith) develops in the course of our ongoing experience and as we reflect on our experience and as we open ourselves to that larger whole-God-who gives meaning to our experience, then theology and practice must have an ongoing dialogical relationship with each other<sup>124</sup>.

The key concept here is dialogue. The dialogue takes place between theology and practice or praxis. In this regard nothing is ever final. Neither theological statements nor praxis. Both require review and reformulation all the times. This process continues endless as life is transformed. The task of theologian in this understanding is to deliberately facilitate this dialogue between theology and praxis with a view to bring

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<sup>122</sup> Hawkes p. 31.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Hawkes p. 31.

about "provisional proposals for action and provisional reformulations of theology" (Hawkes 89:31).

Dialogue needs to be based on the following criterion as outlined by Hawkes to be meaningful<sup>125</sup>.

- there must be no prescription, no conditions set depriving any party the right to raise issues of concern as they see them.
- there must be openness by all involved.
- there must be willingness to hear the other side.
- there needs to be effective listening to each other in order to respond appropriately.
- all parties must be ready to incorporate - either through assimilation or accommodation - of new insights gained in the course of dialogue.

If this criterion is astutely followed then there is hope that what will emerge from this interaction in dialogue will form the basis for growth and development for all involved. Hawkes concludes that a back and forth movement between theology (biblical images) and practice (phenomenological analysis of pastoral care experiences) leads to a revitalising of biblical images and a deepened understanding of what is involved in pastoral care<sup>126</sup>.

The dialogical model as espoused by Hawkes then is a useful theoretical tool for the analysis of the role of the clergy in Mpumalanga. It will be important to see whether the clergy utilised this model in their praxis in the facilitation of the resolution of the conflict in Mpumalanga. If so why and if not why not?

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid. 1985. 32.

<sup>126</sup> Hawkes 1989. p.33.

Maxwell advances four a step approach to resolving conflict. This framework is based on Matthew's gospel. It is premised on Maxwell's assertion that Christians must find and utilize alternative mechanisms of resolving conflict. He deplores the use of courts as undermining the prospects offered by the Bible to find amicable solutions in dealing with conflict. The process advocated here encourages conflicting parties to resolve conflict privately. In an event that they fail to do so, the service of a mediator should be sought to enable the parties to find solutions. If needs be, Maxwell argues the service of the arbitrator should be invoked if mediation does not deliver. The four steps then are;

1. **Confrontation** - this refers to the need for openness for the offended party to alert the offending party. Maxwell basis this on Matthew 18:15.

2. **Mediation** - in an event that the offending party does not listen, the role of the mediator becomes paramount. (Matt. 18:16)

3. **Arbitration** - if the mediation process fails because parties do not agree then an arbitrator should be called in to moderate over the process and is then empowered to give a binding ruling on the stakeholders. (Matt 18:17)

4. **Appeal** - this step is not part of the Matthew framework but is added on by Maxwell in an event that a party is not happy with the ruling of the arbitrator. This assumes that both parties operate within the same structure with the necessary capability of ensuring that this process is possible.

There are obvious problems with Maxwell's proposals. Whilst it offers exciting possibilities it is short-sighted in some instances. For one, it assumes that all parties in conflict subscribe to the Bible as a standard. This is not always true. South Africa is the case in point where we have religious plurality. Any attempt to invoke a sectarian religious perspective will meet with opposition for those parties who do not subscribe to

its imperatives. Rallying a religious framework in an attempt to resolve conflict further perpetuates tensions.

Secondly, even if parties subscribe to the same religion, Christianity for example, chances of them agreeing to this process are slim. The focus here seems to be on conflict between individuals. In such circumstances it might perhaps be possible to utilize this framework. But, the difficulty arise when both parties feel that they are victims. How does one deal with such a situation? It is not clear from Maxwell's proposal. the Apartheid scenario in South Africa was good illustration of this difficulty. Apartheid was defended theologically by some Christians on one hand; on the other hand you had, for instance liberation theologians who challenged Apartheid Biblically. In such instances, Maxwell's proposal is clearly unworkable. The matter is even more confounded if one party holds a different faith or does not believe at all!

Thirdly, the model assumes that the power relations are equal save for the conflict. In most instances what undergirds the cause of conflict is power imbalance. Even in the church the question of power becomes central in understanding conflict. Failure to recognize this leads to superficial responses to the conflict which do not go far enough in addressing the fundamental problems.

Fourthly, Maxwell seems to use these biblical verses as a magic wand that will resolves all conflict situations when invoked. The history of the church is littered with examples of a legacy of intolerance which resulted in the multi-proliferation of denominations. This experience continues to date. Matthew's gospel of-course offers possibilities. It is possible that if people follow the proposals as set out in this gospel solutions can be found to resolve conflict amicably.

## 6. Participatory process

Kraybill in an article titled "Think Process" puts forward the idea of think process which is a useful theoretical tool for conflict resolution. The theory is based on the understanding that outcomes of a negotiated settlement are worthless if the process which produced them is bad. In many instances, the focus is on the outcome of an event. The interest is on whether the solution is a useful one to advance the relationship of conflicting parties and whether the outcome is fair or not. This approach is not always helpful. There are situations where the solution looks lucrative and fair, but it is not acceptable to stakeholders because they perceive it as being forced on them. The party that has less power in the relationship will never be content with the outcome. In the event that the outcome is facilitated by an outside agency, it becomes even worse, especially where that agency is seen as siding with the powerful party that undermines the rights of the weaker party. The National Peace Initiatives were not successful in many of the areas where the violence level was high. In places like the Vaal, East Rand and more specifically the KATHORUS area, operatives of the Peace Accord were viewed with suspicion. Many of the leading figures of the Secretariat were white lawyers who were seen as outsiders who did not understand. Peace Accords were drawn from outside of the communities and then imported to the community to be marketed. In some instances, they were out-rightly rejected. In other instances, they were signed, only to be violated by the very signatories. The situation in the taxi industry is another case in point. Parties outside of the conflict came with what they thought were fair solutions, but the main contenders felt left out of the very process aimed at resolving the conflict. Process is important. It has to be inclusive from the outset to ensure that all parties in the conflict feel that they were party, not only to the end product, but to its initiation and evolution.

Four principles are essential to this think process phenomenon according to Kraybill. These are:

1. Outcome is important but worthless if the process is bad. Process is more crucial than outcome. It influences acceptability of the outcome.

2. A good process is one which involves all stakeholders in decision-making.
3. Good process involves all parties in designing the decision-making process.
4. The whole process must be conducted under auspices acceptable to all.

People are more sensitive about the process that led to the outcome. If the process was regarded satisfactorily by all, then the outcome becomes easily acceptable.

In the context of negotiations, where there is a need for openness, for give and take, even those who might have been disadvantaged from what they had set out to achieve, would be more amiable to accept the outcome if process was inclusive. The contrary is also true, that people will almost certainly reject any outcome, however good, if they feel that the process was not inclusive enough.

✓ The research discovered that the local clergy and political leadership were sensitive to this critical aspect. All attempts were made to ensure that all parties felt that they were part of the solution and therefore had to contribute to the planning of the process. This is a difficult stage in conflict resolution; ensuring that all sectors feel that they are co-authors of the entire plan. A good process would be able to deal timeously with any problems which may arise. A good process fosters the beginning of a trust relationship of all the stakeholders. This does not only relate to the leaders, it also (and more importantly) relates to the whole community. After all, they are members of the community and have had to bear the brunt of the impact resulting from conflict.

**CATEGORIES FOR PEACE-MAKING: TOWARDS A CRITIQUE**

It is wise to direct your anger at problems - not people; to  
focus your energies on answers and not excuses.

*William Arthur Ward*

Entering a lounge in one of the visits in a home in Mpumalanga, my eyes were attracted to a wall-poster with the words of William Arthur Ward quoted above. Throwing my eyes around to familiarise myself with the surroundings I felt at home in this warm environment as I settled on a settee I was offered. After the formalities of introduction, we engaged in small talk conversing about a soccer match that was about to take place. It was going to be shown live on television. and all were looking forward to watching it. My eyes focused once more on this fascinating poster on the wall with a wonderful scene of greenery in the background.

This time round I took the words in slowly to try and make sense of their meaning. How appropriate, I thought in my mind, that this family had a poster with such wonderful words that were almost written for the situation of Mpumalanga. It was ironic that for my hosts the poster seemed more important for the beauty of the picture in the background than the words contained therein. Perhaps, my assumption was out of line. It is very possible that it were the words, in fact, that influenced the choice of the family to acquire the poster and place it in such a prominent location in the lounge.

It is this kind of ambivalence which characterizes one's first impressions when you meet people from Mpumalanga. Their humble attitude is amazing. Having read about the conflict in Mpumalanga you cannot help but develop an attitude. All sorts of feelings go through the mind - fear, anxiety, sadness, confusion, among other feelings. You never

know what to expect. But that first encounter dispels all the negative feelings. You begin to realize that these are loving , caring and warm people.

Violence has clearly devastated this community. Driving around, one, still sees physical scars which tell the story of the devastation. Derelict houses that stand empty are reminders of the many families that had to flee to save their lives. Stories are told of how some of the groups would divide themselves into units or regiments and launch attacks in phases.<sup>127</sup> The first phase was a group that would attack and shoot at random, and as people flee their homes, leaving then unattended, the second unit would enter the homes and loot them. This was referred to as "isikhonyane" which relates to the swam of locusts that devour a plantation clean in a few minutes causing disaster and leaving a trail of lament behind. These scars remain.

But there are also other scars which are not visible. The scars about the loss of loved ones. Scars of having been victims of some form of violence at some point. It might be physical scars where a person survived and cheated death after an attack. Or it might be psychological scars of having been made to live through that painful period. It is the latter point which still needs attention. For the peace process to be sustainable, the psychological wounds of the violence need to be healed comprehensively. It is to this aspect that we would like now to turn our focus to with a few suggestions arising out of the study itself.

Categories for the peace making process have been isolated. These encapsulate ideas that seek to take the debate forward with a few humble suggestions for consideration for use in other situations confronted by violent conflict which seeks alternatives.

## **2. Peace with justice**

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See interview 6.



The absence of war does not necessarily mean that there is peace. Peace has to be underpinned by justice. A reflection on the Mpumalanga situation at present clearly points to the fact that, save from criminal activity, which is a general problem, there is peace in Mpumalanga, politically. There is now a great level of tolerance. There is access for everyone to almost all areas. But is there peace in Mpumalanga? Many would argue no. There is tolerance in Mpumalanga but certainly no peace. How can there be peace when some people are still not back in their houses? A number of houses that were burnt down during the violence remain derelict and uninhabitable. In many instances, due to the political strongholds saga, some people had to leave their homes where they felt threatened, and go to other areas. Many of these people occupied houses of other people who fled from the area for the same reason. The reoccupation has not taken place. It is not clear whether it will ever take place, given that previous owners might not feel comfortable returning to such an area. Clearly, justice would not have been served if this situation is allowed to persist.

It might be true that the fear engulfing the people who have not returned to their homes is baseless, but for them it is real. Some mechanism needs to be put in place to address this matter. A possibility could be an identification of vacant land for housing development. But if that route is pursued, due regard must be given to the huge housing backlog that already exists in the area. The rapid growth of the population has not been in tandem with social developments; setting up of fresh conflict if not handled well. The resettlement of families that can no longer return to their houses must be tackled within the broader context of addressing the fundamental problem of housing shortage. Linked to this approach should also be the rebuilding programme of those houses that were destroyed during the violence. It is somewhat odd that this creative process is already underway in the KATHORUS area of Gauteng province with RDP funding. The Mpumalanga peace process was one of first significant initiatives by a local community. It would have been wise to reward this outcome with some meaningful programme that would have helped consolidate the peace process.

The other element in this justice equation is the role of external forces in fermenting violence in this area. In the interviews conducted it became evident that some role of significance was played by the security forces.<sup>128</sup> The advent of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a useful process towards enabling the community to finally settle the ghost of the past. To date, many people are still wondering why their community had to go through such pain. The recent arrest of prominent generals of the past government and some leaders of political violence in this province will provide valuable information that will empower the community to deal with their bitter memories.

### **3. Inculturation with dialogue**

The struggle against apartheid was premised on the need for liberation of the majority of the people. Many strategies evolved in the process. This ranged from class orientation, race and to limited cultural foci. The dominant feature in the church was the evolution of theologies of liberation which declared apartheid heretical. These included Liberation, Black and African theologies. Black theology was developed as an attempt to mobilize the majority, utilizing their common experience of oppression and marginalization. It is my belief that African theology was always pushed to the fringes of these developments. The argument was for an alignment of forces around the liberationist motif against apartheid. To achieve this goal all sectors of society who identified with this vision in spite of their racial or cultural background were mobilized into one force that challenged the apartheid regime.

Now that, that side of the struggle has been won, the other critical elements are emerging to the fore strongly. For one, the economic question has been brought into sharp focus now that the political space has been created by the democratic transformation process led by the charismatic leadership of President Nelson Mandela. The other critical

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<sup>128</sup>

See interviews 4, 6, 9 and 10.

element that has re-emerged to the fore vociferously is the whole question of inculturation. This is the important development in the South African scene. There is a lot that the inculturation debate will offer to the entire South African society which will enable a lot of growth and offer new innovative and creative resources which will enrich us. Bate asserts that, "... the theological key of inculturation has an important contribution to make to the South African discourse".<sup>129</sup> He gives three reasons in support of this assertion, he states that,

1. Inculturation leads to a reappropriation of culture in the South African context.
2. It tackles the issue of unity and plurality within the church which is essential in an ecclesial reality which comprises so many separate churches.
3. It situates the contextual manifestations within a historical framework thus opening them to the future.<sup>130</sup>

At the core of this debate is the question of Africanisation. For a long time many sectors in this country saw themselves owing allegiance and sharing in common values of the westernized and developed countries. In fact, some commentators describe this country as a meeting of two rivers. The dominant and prominent being the First World, which has as its constituent members a sizeable number of white people surrounded on its fringes by huge pockets of the Third World, habitat of a majority of black people. The thinking and approach in institutional socializations, in schools and by the church was premised on the notion that anything good and civilized is Western and Christian.

The implication of this attitude is that a lot of good elements, norms and values from indigenous cultures were undermined. Part of the attempt of this marginalization was to deny the majority their history. The intentions were clearly designed that by

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<sup>129</sup> Bate, S.C.O.M.I. 1995. Inculturation and Healing. PMB: Cluster. p. 16.

<sup>130</sup> Bate. Ibid.

uprooting people from their historical context and thereby creating this gap, would enable the dominant forces in society to continue to control the ideas of these communities. It was taboo to be a proud African, acknowledging your history and its cultural attributes in traditions and customs and still be a Christian. The option seemed to have been Christianity which meant subsuming Western civilization, culture, norms and values. One spin-off from this whole debacle was the break-away of some charismatic leaders to form independent church movements.

Those who remained within the so-called "mainline" churches were confronted by the reality of the contradictions within these churches. On the surface it seemed that all was harmonious. It seemed as if the church had been able to deal with these contradictions. But upon closer observation it becomes apparent that this is not so. What most mainline churches have been able to do at best, is to deny the existence of these contradictions. At worst, they mount a campaign to chastise all those who fall prey to the centrifugal force of the past. What happens then as a result is that people in these churches operate in two levels. At day time, they are loyal, committed members who have embraced this new found religion wholesale. If one were to ask them for instance how they respond to a particular crisis, the response would be a recital of the formal theological position of the church outlined in the doctrinal policies. At night, though the self-same members consult with faith healers and traditional doctors. This is also evident in other family ceremonies like weddings, funerals, and laying of tombstones for instance. In weddings the church is brought in at the final stage after all crucial ritual aspects have been concluded. When the negotiations between families leading to the paying of "lobola" and agreement on gifts to be exchanged the church is not represented. At funerals, the rituals before and after burial involve the family and not the church. And when a tombstone is put up, usually a year after the death occurred, the crucial part of the family ritual takes place on Friday before the church service on Sunday!

Proponents of inculturation argue that there is a need to engage in a meaningful dialogue between Christianity and African traditional religion to find a way of dealing with these anomalies. God's creation is meant to live life in its fullness. To this end, it is imperative that people are enabled to live holistically. It is in this context that Christians within the mainline churches call for inculturation or Africanisation. It needs to be said that the church in Africa should demonstrate this through its programmes in worship and mission. This will be a meaningful contribution to the world church.

Nolan takes this point further when he points out that:

Africanisation, it is being said today, does not mean adapting a Western gospel to African culture or thought patterns. According to the Cameroon theologian Ela, Africanisation means "allowing the gospel to be reborn in Africa".<sup>131</sup>

The idea is not to window-dress Christianity with some African garb essentially to make it look like it does take the African context seriously when in actual fact it does not. Nolan puts it firmly when he states that:

The inculturation of the gospel does not mean starting from the Western cultural expression of the gospel and extracting the "pure contents of the gospel" which can then be formulated in new cultural terms".<sup>132</sup>

The challenge is to provide a platform for the two parties to dialogue as equal partners.

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<sup>131</sup> Nolan. p. 26.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

This whole inculturation debate is brought into sharper forms in the context of the peace process in Mpumalanga. In chapter two I alluded to the role of "intelezi" as a contributory factor to the violence. It came out in the study that the process was undertaken by both groups in different forms and levels. Its legacy still pervades life in Mpumalanga today.

To understand this phenomenon it is vital that some analysis of social structures be undertaken. In the analysis of geographical setting of Mpumalanga it was pointed out that at least two styles of leadership were prevalent in Mpumalanga. Areas like Unit 1 north with their attachment to rural communities were influenced by traditional orientation. In this context the command structure is very clear. It is essentially a patriarchal society with the chief at the helm who is usually a man. Even in an urban setting you will find a man designated as the leader of the community. He will be granted respect by all in society. In the Mpumalanga situation Mr. Sipho Mlaba plays this role.<sup>133</sup> Everything that takes place in this area needs sanction from him and his close associates in the leadership structure. Parental control is strong in the community.

While in the other part of the township the impact of modernization is strong. The influences of struggles in other areas in the province have imparted on the leadership structures. In many of the townships during the 1980's, struggles against apartheid were waged by youth in the main. The consequences of this is that the youth became prominent and a gap, which continues to grow, developed between parents and their children. It was the youth who were on the frontline waging the struggle. It was them also who were the major casualties of the struggle. Detractors of organizations like the UDF and its allies often accused them that they were using the youth as shock-troopers. The command structures in this section were not very clear as a result in some instances leaders who

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See interview 2.

distanced themselves from acts of these members. The youth felt betrayed by their parents who never joined them in the struggles.<sup>134</sup>

In the former group then, the "fortification" ritual was organized through the command structure.<sup>135</sup> This entails a commissioning of a group African traditional doctors to perform the ritual on all the men who will be going to war. This ritual includes a psychological preparation for war. War songs are sung and accompanied by dance routines that begin to evolve the strategy the troops will use to overcome the enemy. Women are not allowed to be anywhere near where this ritual is undertaken. After the war has been won or lost, it is incumbent on the group doctor to once more decode the troops. The whole process should be reversed, troops debriefed and demobilized. Only after this can they be re-introduced to the broader society. For the Inkatha group this process was followed to the letter.<sup>136</sup>

In the latter group the situation was different. In spite of the evolution of a new dynamic which did not take traditions and customs seriously, on the surface, in times of crisis, people resorted to those traditional elements which they believed could offer a reprieve. This is not unusual. In fact, Setiloane asserts that this is a common practice for many black people in urban areas.<sup>137</sup> So, among the UDF supporters, because of the lack of clarity in terms of command structures individual families undertook the "fortification" process for their sons. In many instances though, the youth themselves mobilized resources to facilitate their "fortification" ritual as a group.<sup>138</sup> Money was collected from

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<sup>134</sup> See interviews 2, 3, 4, and 10.

<sup>135</sup> See interview 4.

<sup>136</sup> See interview 2.

<sup>137</sup> Setiloane G. Introduction to African Theology.

<sup>138</sup> See interview 9.

the community for this. The problem is that because of this laissez-faire attitude, when the war was over, the necessary ritual process of demobilization was never carried out.

There are a number of reasons that led to the process not to be taken to its logical conclusion of demobilization. It is these issues that continue to grip the imagination of the community in their attempt to normalize the situation post the violence era. The laxity which accompanied this unfortunate state resulted in the emergence of what became known then as "com-tsotsis". This is a configuration of two concepts; "com" for comrade, tsotsis which is a township slang for a gangster. Many of the youth who were heroes that protected the community were now persecutors of the same community.<sup>139</sup> But why have the youth not engaged the community in this necessary ritual of demobilization? Four categories of responses provide possible answers to question.

1. Some of the youth discovered after the war that the traditional healer who performed the "fortification" ritual on them was himself a casualty of the war. Tradition holds that the reversal of the process like this should be carried out by the same person who initiated it or someone within his school who would know the intricacies of the coding programme.

The process is said to be almost similar to the secret coding of the banking teller machine. When you get the card in some institution it comes in a secrete envelope which has not been opened by anyone. No one knows the pin number, not even the attendant who serves you! The owner of the card also gets to know the number only when he or she tears the envelope open. But in an event of a problem developing regarding the card, say you forget the secret pin number, you cannot go to anyone to recover that. The system is designed that anyone who tries to use

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<sup>139</sup> See Khumalo's discussion of this phenomenon in an unpublished BTH thesis of 1990.



the card clandestinely would have a tough time getting the right combination of the numbers. In fact only three chances are given after which the machine swallows the card.

In this instance as well, it seems the secret coding is the prerogative of the one who initiates the coding. Not even the object of the coding is able to provide a way out of this. The death of the traditional doctor then spells trouble for those who have been attended by him. Many of the youth find themselves in this quandary and are uncertain of what to do!.

The implication for the situation now is that some youth continue to engage in some form of violent activity, most of which now is criminal activity. This phenomenon is not just unique for the Mpumalanga situation. It is a matter of concern in other areas of KwaZulu Natal. In Imbali, for instance, the Midlands young people approached the church with this concern. They informed the clergy that this issue is troubling them since in their case it was coded in such a way that it would be sparked off by any taking of alcohol. Any amount of beer that these youth imbibe invigorates the craving for violence. There is a surge for blood which compels them to go and commit serious aggressive acts of which they regret later. But once that is sparked on there is just no way of stopping until they have been able to taste blood!.

2. The youth discovered after the war that the same person they believed to be helping them through this "fortification" ritual was at the same time offering the same service to their protagonists. Mistrust developed. People felt angry at this perceived sense of betrayal. Consequently, they do not feel comfortable going to the same person to undertake the demobilization process. There is fear this double standard game played by the African "doctor" was motivated by greed. How could he be trusted now to do the right thing this time around? If indeed, he benefitted

from this double standard, the crucial question is whether, he is willing to see the war coming to an end? Would he not use the chance to cause the perpetuation of the conflict so as to continue benefitting? But the other question is a moral one. People are asking hard questions about the role of such characters in conflict. In some instances the youth turned on the character and killed him with the understanding that he has caused the death of many and his existence will be a threat to peace.

3. Thirdly, there is the group of young people who have discovered through this experience that there is power in this "fortification" ritual. Those who took part allege that not only does it empower but it also makes it difficult for the enemy to harm you. There are many stories told about incidence where a gun jams when pointed at certain individual or that bullets which past their target all the time. The issue for me is not whether these claims are valid or not. Scientists will have to research this aspect. But it is worth noting that whether the claims are true or not many of our youth believe that this is true. As a result, many of them are spurred on by this belief. They are willing to risk their lives and engage in activities that are very dangerous. They feel strong and they are willing to dare. In Mpumalanga these days the biggest problem is criminal activity. This includes car hijacking, gun running and drug trafficking. Undoubtedly, this use of "intelezi" plays a huge part in all of this. Many of them get arrested, some are even shot by police from time to time but the belief is still there and is strong. The one who gets shot or arrested is blamed for having been sloppy and not to have followed the procedures carefully. So the problem remains.
4. Fourthly, there is the group of young people who are disturbed by all this. They have developed a deep sense of revulsion for the whole process. They have lost complete confidence in the whole process and would like to get help from other sources and carry on with their lives. They have developed a sense of despondency

at effects of the process of "fortification". They consider it to have been the cause of the problems in their young lives. They refuse to believe that anything positive can emerge from these elements. They see the traditional healers as evil and intent on carrying out these evil acts. This group looks towards the church as an alternative source of inspiration. These four groups raise fundamental issues with regard to the relationship between African tradition and Christianity. The reality is that the church has not applied its mind concretely on such issues of national importance. The church is, of course, operating on the African continent. Its operations and activities should reflect this reality. Sadly, this is not the case at present. It is my view that the African church can contribute a lot to the world church if it can take this matter of inculturation seriously.

In the case of Mpumalanga and other KwaZulu/Natal townships like Imbali, Mpophomeni, Umlazi, etc. the church can no longer afford the luxury of denying these challenges. The reality of the problem confronting many of the youth poses a challenge to the church. At a national level there are calls for a national process of cleansing and healing. The issue is how this should be undertaken? What elements will be useful towards achieving this goal? Is the church able and capable of facilitating this process? These and many other questions need to be dealt with to ensure that the peace that has been attained is sustained.

In an article on this subject recently, Mngomezulu raises questions and offer possible ways of approaching this difficult subject.<sup>140</sup> The article is motivated by the call made to religious institutions to, "... perform a cleansing rite for the nation ...".<sup>141</sup>

For Mngomezulu this call raises questions as to the issue of the appropriate vehicle to facilitate this important task. Should the task be tackled by the church or the African

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<sup>140</sup> "Towards the Healing of our Nation". NW 7/10/95.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

traditionalist, asks Mngomezulu. This seems to be the crux of the matter. If the suggestion is that the church be the vehicle that deals with this process of the cleansing rite for the nation, the question which comes up immediately is whether the church has the capacity and capability of doing this? If the job is performed by African traditionalists, would it be acceptable to the church?

The issue is even more compounded if one takes into account the attitude of the church towards African tradition. A more fundamental question is that since the process was initiated by African traditionalists, can this be undertaken by anyone else? After all, they know better about that side of things because they are the experts. How then can the church perform cleansing in a domain which they have despised and labelled barbarian and heathen? After all an African proverb says "iva likhishwa ngelinye", meaning, if you have been picked by a thorn you need another thorn to take the one that pricked you out.

In this instance cleansing has to take into account the process that was used in the "fortification" ritual. It is after all, that process of "fortification" which needs to be cleansed. It is essentially this process, that many of the youth want to be enabled to get rid off. It does seem that in order to do this some form of collaboration between the two experiences, Christianity and African tradition would be a way forward. But the other matter that needs to be part of this equation is the fact of the other faiths. Our society is multi-faith. Any process which has as its aim, the building of the nation which marginalizes other sectors in society, will have serious problems of legitimacy. People of other faiths would also have to be brought on board to be part of this process. If this is the approach, Mngomezulu asks whether this would "... not imply syncretism?"<sup>142</sup> This matter requires further debate which unfortunately cannot be catered for here.

Mngomezulu suggests in the article, that perhaps the way to go about this is to explore the two traditions, Christianity and African tradition, with a view of determining offerings from both which could be tapped to meet the challenge. To this end, he asserts that the concept of healing is central to the ministry of the church. He aptly states that, "It is an integral part of the pastoral ministry of the church. It derives its origin from the pastoral ministry of Christ".<sup>143</sup> The healing ministry of the church testifies to the love of God for life as a whole and the empowerment of humanity to pursue the fullness of life.<sup>144</sup> Healing, within this tradition, utilizes the service of various symbols and signs. Mngomezulu outlines these as, for example, the cross, lights, water, laying on of hands, holy oil, prayer, incense.<sup>145</sup> Healing of one person seen as healing of all since life is understood to be a corporate venture.

In discussing healing from the African perspective Mngomezulu asserts that life is viewed as a corporate entity. The individual finds his or her being through participation in and belonging to a group. This does not only relate to the active living persons but includes the "living dead" who are considered to be part of the group only operating at another level of responsibility. The implication in this framework is that all aspects of life need to take this world-view into cognisance when dealing with issues. Healing in this instance is not only concerned with the living in the present. It has to relate to the mending of the relationships between the living and the "living dead", the ancestors. All of this, asserts Mngomezulu, is done, "... in the name of a respect for life in order to facilitate, promote and celebrate life."<sup>146</sup> He concludes:

In the event of a large scale or national catastrophe such as war, or tragic violence, healing becomes of primary

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>144</sup> Mngomezulu.  
<sup>145</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

importance. The healing of the community or nation heals the hurts and fears of both the living and this living-departed; it fosters reconciliation between the living-departed, and it restores both victims and perpetrators of war to the fullness of life.<sup>147</sup>

This is possible to do. It is imperative that this healing process be undertaken for the sake of life. To take the process forward it is imperative that all sectors of society engage in meaningful dialogue. Hawkes' argument on the need for dialogue between the context and theology becomes relevant here.<sup>148</sup> It is through dialogue that new creative ideas emerge. Let us also recall Bate's three reasons for "inculturation because they are useful for consideration in the context of this discourse. He pointed out first that inculturation leads to a reappropriation of culture in the South African context. This is imperative for a society which was divided on cultural grounds. The process of reappropriation does not mean a pouring of everything into a melting pot. It is rather a call for the creation of mosaic. The different elements retain their originality but contribute to the making of the beautiful picture of the mosaic. It is unity in diversity.

The second point Bate raises is that inculturation tackles the issue of unity and plurality within and without the church (own addition). In this context the question of plurality of ideas is taken seriously as an enrichment. In the case of Mpumalanga I think it is imperative that all experiences of the people be taken seriously. There is a problematic assumption which alleges that all people here are Christians. This is not only problematic but is in fact baseless. The fact of the matter is there is religious plurality in Mpumalanga. There are Christians, Muslims and African traditionalists. If a solution was to be meaningful and sustainable it needs to reflect this reality.

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Hawkes.

Thirdly, Bate asserts that inculturation situates the contextual manifestation within a historical framework thus opening them to the future.<sup>149</sup> The present context has been influenced by tradition. Memory plays a vital role in informing the present and future. This provides society an opportunity of reflecting about its past and reckoning with its implications for the present and future. Culture is not static, it is a dynamic process that evolves with the unfolding of history. This reflection through inculturation enables a process of salvaging those elements which are useful and capable of enriching the life experience of the community while at the same time discarding those that are no longer relevant and meaningful. Mngomezulu sums it thus: "It must be remembered that the site of conflict has a tendency of besetting positive growth and enrichment of faith".<sup>150</sup>

**4. Empowerment with local initiative**

The study has clearly shown that the Mpumalanga peace process was initiated by local people. It was local people who took up the challenge and confronted the problem using local dynamics as a basis for their programme. Local dynamics related to the fact that people in this community had lived together for a long time. They have inter-married and relations wove through the whole community. They share a common cultural expression and they are brought together by the common experience of apartheid oppression.

The work of the Mpumalanga ministers' fraternal played a pivotal role. The fact that ministers were based in the community and exposed themselves to the difficulties that people had to go through as members of the community gave them the necessary insight to discern the impact of this conflict on life. The clergy themselves were part of the community; whatever affected the community affected them and their ministry as

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<sup>149</sup> Bate O.M.I. p. 16.

<sup>150</sup> Mngomezulu.

well. The solidarity established through the fraternal served as a public witness to society of the possibility of unity in diversity. The clergy came from different denominations. The fraternal brought all of them together. It broke down the barrier even between the "main-line" and indigenous churches. It was proper and appropriate that the clergy played this role. De Gruchy states that:

As representative leader, the ordained minister stands between the flock and the tribe; as charismatic leader he or she stands in the tradition of the Apostles, speaking, leading and healing with their authority.<sup>151</sup>

Too often in situations of conflict ministers are expected or even canvassed to take particular sides. Conflicting parties seek support of the clergy for their position in various ways. The pastor might be called upon to take a particular position because of the location of the church building. But many of the clergy resisted this. Churches remained open for all the people. The conflict offered the church an opportunity to witness in unity. It compelled the church to avail their facilities for the community and minister contextually and not abstractly.

In many situations the church tends to engage in meaningless ministry of attempting to outsmart each other. Membership recruitment is characterized by this undermining of each others' programmes. Doctrinal differences are placed in the forefront of all discussions leading to endless and meaningless debates which are not helpful for anyone. It is often a situation of crisis which brings the church back to life and forces to deal with real issues that affect lives of people instead of the statistics games that are a futile exercise. De Gruchy puts it even more strongly when he asserts that:

It is not simply question of church order and ordination that should concern us in a theology of ministry, but the vocation

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<sup>151</sup>

De Gruchy. p. 23.



of the ordained ministry, its theological identity and task in the modern world, especially in situations of social crisis.<sup>152</sup>

He continues and points out that a "team ministry" is necessary and helpful in a city context.<sup>153</sup> This is clearly the approach which was adopted by ministers in Mpumalanga. The weekly meetings for prayer, reflection and solidarity empowered all the participants and made them vigilant amidst all the problems surrounding them in the community. This clearly was a meaningful experience for the clergy. It provided them with the necessary opportunity of planning together what needed to be done. It provided them with the necessary opportunity of planning together what needed to be done. It provided an important avenue for them to share personal anxieties, frustrations and fears. They were able in such forums to counsel each other. The process was therapeutic for those who felt they were not doing enough.<sup>154</sup> De Gruchy concludes by stating that:

... the ordained minister is part of a wider group of theologians, and not an isolated unit working alone.<sup>155</sup>

But it needs to be noted that,

.. the primary "team ministry" is not the working together of ordained professionals, but the complimentary exercising of all the gifts of ministry within the community of faith.<sup>156</sup>

It is vital that all resources that are available be put to use. This includes lay leaders in the church and other members of the community who have expertise that can

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<sup>152</sup> De Gruchy. p. 24.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. p. 29.

<sup>154</sup> See interviews 1, 4, and 11.

<sup>155</sup> De Gruchy. p. 29.

<sup>156</sup> De Gruchy. p. 29.

It is vital that all resources that are available be put to use. This includes lay leaders in the church and other members of the community who have expertise that can be put to good use for the community - inter alia, teachers, social workers, lawyers, doctors, nurses are all useful resources. It is through collaborate efforts that new layers of community leadership are created.

To achieve this, ministers used to the following three stage process outlined by Whitehead and Whitehead:<sup>157</sup>

1. Attending to the relevant information.
2. Assertion: from three sources (Christian tradition; scripture and theology, personal experience (practice), and culture (including science) are each given opportunity to assert their insights and contribute to a creative interchange.
3. Decision making: the dialogue is deliberately brought to a conclusion in deciding what is now to be done about the practical situation.

The ministers in Mpumalanga were familiar with the situation surrounding the outbreak of violence. At the time, it did not make sense to see people who have lived together for decades suddenly annihilating each other. The people who worshipped together were now at each other outside the premises of the church. The very fact that people from different political persuasions can afford to worship together in one church was itself a window of opportunity, placing the church at a strategic position to intervene. Knowledge of the surroundings and the history of the area provided a necessary base on which to launch the peace process. The ministers knew the leaders of organizations. They had access to them and enjoyed their confidence. This was possible because most of the ministers rose above political differences and offered themselves to be a unifying force.

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<sup>157</sup>

Quoted from Hawkes. p. 33.

The clergy also drew from many sources in their attempt to facilitate the peace process - their main source being the Christian tradition. Several prayer meetings for peace were organized in the township and these drew support from various sections of the community. The Christian women through their associations (uManyano) led various campaigns for peace. They often came together in their different uniforms to pray for peace. This public act testified to the fact that despite their denominational differences they were standing together to focus on the malaise that was tearing their children apart. Their role was very significant and risky because it exposed them to many dangers particularly in relation to those elements that did not want peace for the people of Mpumalanga. It was this group with the clergy that buried victims of the violence. In this society the funeral as a ritual is very important. Even a person who has wronged society however much, deserves a decent burial. This element differentiates between humans and animals. Thus, the act of undertaking to bury victims of violence served as a reminder to society that what was going on, the killing of people, was not in line with the fundamental principles of life in community. Ubuntu (humaneness) is premised on the importance of life and the wellbeing of all. A funeral reminds people of the responsibility we have for each others' lives.

The clergy drew also from indigenous culture. People in Mpumalanga shared a lot of cultural commonalities, for example, they all speak the same language. All of them have been at the receiving end of apartheid policies of separate development. They have shared in the same struggles attempting to fight against their forced removal in the 60's. The clergy appealed to these sentiments in sermons. It was becoming more evident that there were other external factors that fuelled the conflict in Mpumalanga. The amount of sophisticated weaponry used could only point to State Security Forces involvement in no small measure in the conflict. However, nothing has yet been proven. There is no concrete evidence save for the speculation fuelled by the unfolding of the violence. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission will provide a lot of answers to the many questions that remain unanswered.

The advent of the national peace initiative was exploited by the clergy to try and mobilize the community to engage in dialogue. People began to see their leaders who disagreed politically meeting together and having discussions. People began to see that it is possible to "speak to your enemy", in the words of one of the clergy interviewed.<sup>158</sup> The media campaign employed by the National Peace Secretariat began to plant the seeds of peace-making. The clergy exploited all these initiatives. A service of reconciliation was organized subsequently (as referred to in chapter 2). The cross was chosen as a symbol and these were placed at places where a lot of fighting had taken place. This important Christian symbol was given a fresh interpretation appropriating the context within which the community found itself. Three interpretations of the cross were given on this occasion;

1. The cross was seen as symbol pointing to suffering, death and resurrection. People understood the pain they went through as a process which builds them up as a community. The fact that they could rise above this experience meant there was hope for the future. The death of so many was lamented as a senseless loss but it was also an important lesson about the senselessness of resolving conflict through violence. As a consequence, no one in Mpumalanga was not touched by the violence. Almost all families have lost someone very close, a relation, a friend and neighbour. This experience was seen as an opportunity granted to the community to rise from the pain and set-backs brought about by the conflict; to rebuild the community and learn from the painful experience. The cross meant a chance for a new beginning.
2. The cross was also seen as an opportunity to be reconciled together as a community. In spite of all the pain, violence, and destruction of community and facilities, people saw this as an opportunity to rise above all this and embrace each

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<sup>158</sup> See interview 4.

other as community. It became apparent to many that although they have lost many loved ones it did not pay to continue the conflict through revenge attacks. People realized, as in the words of Mzwakhe Mbuli in the Peace Song, that an eye for an eye approach leaves the whole world blind. Many, therefore, saw the cross as a call for them to rise above these experiences and move on with life. This was not easy. But reconciliation is never easy. In reconciliation someone pays the price. Even if a person who wronged you begs for forgiveness, it does not take pain away. But people realized that continuing with the killing does not in itself bring their loved ones back to life. All it does is continue the spiral of violence. The cross offered the opportunity to accept the heavy price of forgiveness.

3. The cross in the community was seen as a cross-roads literally. It offered them as a community an opportunity to choose whether to continue with the violence with the implications that go with that decision. If the community would have continued to be polarized even further, no development would take place. Lives of children would continue to be ravaged by violence socializing them to also believe that the only way to resolve conflict is through violence; the alternative was to choose the peace process with implications for rebuilding the community and the township. The majority chose the latter and are still engaged in the process of rebuilding the township. Programmes have been set up by various sectors to rebuild relations in the community. There are a number of creative projects initiated by both Inkatha and the ANC in the community. The transitional local authority for instance is led by leaders from both groups. There are a number of development initiatives which bring people together across political divides, the Ward 4 Mpumalanga Youth Development Forum is a case in point. Positive things are going to emerge from such initiatives which deserve support from everyone.

Many of the groups are engaged in a process of accessing resources to upgrade facilities in Mpumalanga which in itself is a crucial project. At present there are no

creational facilities in the area. A significant number of young people have nothing creative to do with their lives. Those who are out of school have no job prospects. This state of affairs creates a reservoir for criminal activity which is becoming a serious problem in the area. The building of recreational facilities is a short term solution. Sustainable job opportunities need to be created to offer meaningful alternatives to the many young people who have a bleak future at the moment. Access to government resources through the Reconstruction and Development Programme could offer a temporary relief to this problem. But the bigger challenge is for the business sector to make its contribution to the peace process by offering jobs to the many unemployed. Only then can we be certain that the peace process will hold.

Kraybill's model of Think Process and its emphasis on the need to ensure that there is adequate participation of all the parties involved in the conflict was evident in the case of Mpumalanga. This is perhaps, one of the key aspects in such cases to ensure that there is general ownership of the solution at the end of the day. The clergy in the approach ensured at all times that members of both The IFP and the ANC gave input constantly on how they think the whole process should unfold. Both groups agreed that their leadership should address public rallies to signal to the community that they were cooperating in finding solutions to the crisis.

## **5. Reconciliation with transformation**

The resolution of the violent conflict in Mpumalanga gave rise to a new challenge in the need for reconciliation to affirm and consolidate the process. Many of the people were forced out of the area during the violence. Many houses were burnt down, looted and destroyed. It is imperative that for the process to hold some mechanism needs to be put in place to ensure that adequate response is given to these issues.

A process was set up involving big business, local clergy and local leadership to set up a process of ensuring that it is possible for the displacees to return to Mpumalanga and establish their lives. Many who ran away discovered upon their return that they had lost family members. In some instances the homes were destroyed and the displacees could not locate their relatives. A process was established to try and re-unite families. During the violence people ran all over and got separated in the process. The re-union of families became a visible sign that the peace process was on. The people who had also left the areas where they stayed because of the "no go areas" saga were reintegrated in their areas.

To facilitate the rebuilding programme the Hammarsdale Industrialists and the Mpumalanga leaders commissioned the Economic Research Unit of the University of Natal to draw up a business plan.<sup>159</sup> The plan was intended to provide the stake-holders with a clear analysis of the development needs in Mpumalanga. The idea was to utilize whatever emerged from the exercise to plan strategies of attracting resources from development agencies and the business sector to help with the rebuilding programme of Mpumalanga. The exercise was also important in that it brought concrete proposals which could be acted upon to consolidate peace process.

The group made important proposals to support the peace process. The fundamental suggestion that emerged from Lenta et al's analysis was the need to link the peace process to development needs. To this end, the community was engaged in the process of spelling out in clear and concrete terms the, "... kind of development projects (that) should be undertaken that would satisfy the socio-economic needs indicated by the political leaders in the peace accord".<sup>160</sup> Representatives of the community participated

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<sup>159</sup> Community Development Projects: Mpumalanga Area, prepared by B. Lenta, A.W. Whiteside and P.N. Wilkins. Economic Research Unit. University of Natal 23 June 1990.

<sup>160</sup> Lenta et al. p. 3.

in workshops that determined priorities. Two areas were identified in these meetings; one, the community saw priority be given to projects which would expand social infrastructures and two, that dwellings damaged during the period of unrest should be restored.<sup>161</sup> It was proposed that a trust be established to facilitate this process. This aspect pointed to the important element of linking reconciliation with transformation. It is important that peace-making be seen within the context of broader development needs in the community. This enables the community to develop a common vision and goals. Available resources are aligned to deal with priorities agreed to by the whole community. The community develops a common value system which provides the important base for other developmental work to happen.

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.



## 6. "Imaging" and the road to Reconciliation and Transformation

It became important after the peace process breakthrough to deal also with the negative imaging syndrome. It was apparent that the stigma attached to the imaging phenomenon was grossly negative and had the potential to wreck the peace initiative. The local clergy and leadership worked hard on this to ensure that this negative phenomenon is transformed into a positive aspect. Drawing from the resources of the bible, it was possible to negate this phenomenon and offer a positive element. Through sermons and speeches leaders stressed the fact that all people are created in the image of God. Genesis 1:26 and following, became a useful text to affirm this approach.

The first Genesis creation narrative on which the above text is based is very clear in its use of the concept image. God asserts the creation of human beings in His image. What is created ex-nihilo is accorded a Godly status. The rest of creation is placed under the human creature to be subdued and ruled. The relationship between human beings is very clear, it is a relationship of equals. Subjugation of one human being by another goes against the grain established by the biblical imperative as found in the Genesis creation narratives. The order of things is meant to be characterized by mutual respect, co-operation and affirming of one other. The whole of creation is interdependent. Central to it is the sanctity of life. The responsibility facing all human beings is to be co-creators with God. To be a co-creator means sustaining life and not destroying it. Local clergy in Mpumalanga drew the attention of the community to this important phenomenon and began a process of destroying the negative imaging of political intolerance.

Louw affirms the importance of reconciliation as a process of power balancing in situations of conflict.<sup>162</sup> He states,

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<sup>162</sup>

Louw - Scriptura.

It is clear that politics are intertwined with the power struggle. A theological approach to the issue of conflict management is immediately exposed to risks. One of them is the danger of misusing the concept "omnipotence", and to regard the Almighty category (God's force) as a justification either to maintain or gain power.<sup>163</sup>

The concept of omnipotence should be used in a positive way. It should be used to affirm life. Louw continues to state the following about reconciliation:

... (it) should inevitably establish itself in conciliating actions which try to achieve peaceful resolutions within a divided social context. It is very difficult to separate Biblical concepts of reconciliation from concrete actions, righteousness and justice.<sup>164</sup>

This view is supported by Bates in his discussion on conflict and the church.<sup>165</sup> He states the following:

... with regard to conflict resolution in scripture the preferred method seems to have been confrontation and reconciliation. There were elements of bargaining (eg. the Jerusalem Council) but the climate of the process and the outcome (love and reconciliation respectively) received heavy emphasis in the early church at its best.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Louw. Ibid. p. 46.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid. p. 43.

<sup>165</sup> Bates.

<sup>166</sup> Bates. Ibid. p. 199.

It is essential that parties involved in conflict engage in a process that focuses on the problem, its root causes and possible solutions that are amicable to all stakeholders. There is no point in shying away from confronting the problem. Confrontation, if handled sensitively, creates space for effective reconciliation. It is through confrontation that the erring party can own up recognizing their faults thus paving the way for forgiveness to take place.

Conflict is not necessarily a negative experience. When viewed negatively it creates an attitude where people prefer to shy away from it or push it under the carpet with the hope that it will go away on its own. The reality is that it does not. On the contrary, it escalates even further. Bates sums it up thus:

As long as we care in our finite human condition there will be conflict; that conflict will be real with very concrete potentials for our work and relationships; and we should bring to it our best spiritual resources as well as whatever wisdom we can glean from whatever source.<sup>167</sup>

The clergy in Mpumalanga amassed all resources at their disposal to contribute, in their own way, to the resolution of the conflict in Mpumalanga. Spiritual resources clearly played a significant role. The amount of quiet time in meditation taken by the clergy as individuals and as a group served as a source of inspiration and empowerment. It was a time of empowerment for them to face the challenge of the time. But it is certainly not enough to talk reconciliation. It needs to be accompanied by praxis. Concrete action cements the work started in the negotiation table. In the case of Mpumalanga, the calling of rallies to celebrate the peace process offered an opportunity for people in the community to be part of this miracle of finding each other once more. Louw affirms this when he asserts that:

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<sup>167</sup> Bates. Ibid. p. 199.

Reconciliation with God should inevitably establish itself in conciliating actions which try to achieve peaceful resolutions within a divided social context. It is very difficult to separate Biblical concept of reconciliation from concrete actions, righteousness and justice.<sup>168</sup>

It is imperative that reconciliation be understood as a process and not a once off event. The peace process in Mpumalanga has begun the journey towards Reconciliation. But in the words of Louw, the justice aspect has not yet been finally consummated. Not everyone whose house was destroyed has had their homes rebuild. A lot of the facilities destroyed during violence period; schools, recreation facilities, some business sites have not been rebuild. Until such time that all the outstanding matters have not been attended to, justice will not have been served.

Louw puts forward six points which he describes as a bible ethos on conflict resolution. These points raise an important issue of conversion as part of the reconciliation process. For reconciliation to be effective there is a need for conversion. This ensures a move away from the causes of the problem that might have given rise to the conflict situation. The points are;

1. The need for a total outlook on life and universe determined by a faith in **God the creator and sustainer of all things**. This acknowledgement places responsibility on all to be accountable to this creator and sustainer of all things. This acknowledgement places responsibility on all to be accountable to this Creator God and partake in the process of sustaining life.

2. **Character ethos.** This he describes as cure through fundamental "inner" transformation. This is theologically called conversion. The peace process in Mpumalanga needed to facilitate the important element of catharsis for the people who took part in the internecine violence. This catharsis challenged people to reach out from their inner resources, to rid themselves of guilt feelings surrounding the role they played either by omission or commission in the violence. It is only by going through this route that effective conversion can take place.
3. **Bible ethos is social ethos.** In explaining this Louw makes the point that Christians engaged in the process of conflict resolution unite with Christ in His self-sacrificing concerns for human beings. The interest is to ensure that all human life is treated with respect. To ensure this, it is vital that all parties in the conflict feel that they benefit from the processes established to resolve the conflict. It is important that all parties feel that they have won something in the process. This affirms them and ensures that they regain their dignity which was impaired by the violence. Both parties in a violent conflict lose their dignity. It is because of this that people are able to carry out horrendous acts against each other. Thus it is imperative that people are given the opportunity of participating in a process that enable them to regain their dignity.
4. **Biblical world view.** For Louw the biblical world view is not pessimistic. It has an eschatological outlook which is hopeful in a hopeless situation. This does not imply that evil things and sin are ignored. On the contrary, whilst these are considered the important aspect it is advisable to look beyond them and not allow oneself to be paralysed. This optimistic attitude compels one to look beyond the setback and therefore engage in action that moves one closer to the eschatological outlook of a life of hope.

5. **Biblical ethos**, continues Louw, does not lead to either resignation nor passive acceptance of an unacceptable situation. Faith and love should be viewed as an active process which trusts the promises of God and lead to a zealous insistence on change. There is no point in going through the process only to return to the initial stage in the near future. Change must be long-term to be effective. It seems that the Mpumalanga community has learnt a lot from this peace process. Many agree that they will not like to see a return to that unfortunate experience of violence.
6. **It is through the question of justice that communion is mediated and celebrated.**<sup>169</sup> Justice ensures that the process is sustainable. Justice does not mean retribution. In the case of Mpumalanga, it has to be translated into the rebuilding process of the community and its facilities like schools houses and others.

Clearly then conversion is a process and not an event. Morentz confirms that conflict resolution can be seen as a process of conversion.<sup>170</sup> He outlines five elements which make conversion a possible option for conflict resolution. These somehow relate to the approach as espoused by Louw and the Mpumalanga peace process. The options are:

1. Availability of strong mutually exclusive alternatives. An either or situation is crucial to the process of conversion. He warns against decisions based on external factors because they tend to be temporary and not conversion. Earlier attempts of the peace process in Mpumalanga were mediated by external forces. All those attempts were not successful. The process was taken substantially forward when local people took the initiative. For this to happen both parties involved in the

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<sup>169</sup> Louw. Ibid. p. 46.

<sup>170</sup> Morentz, P.E. Conversion: A Way of Resolving Conflict.

conflict needed to be ready to acknowledge their role in the conflict and assess its impact on their lives. It was only when people realized the meaninglessness of the violence and the costs that went with it that they opted to find alternatives. At that point they had to own up to their own contribution to the conflict and focus on the need to change course.

2. Morentz asserts that both available alternatives must be equally attractive or equally undesirable.
3. The crisis itself must compel people to make a choice. Violent conflict clearly provides this option. The choice is to fight or to find an alternative mechanism of resolving the differences. In the case of Mpumalanga, the choice became clearer as "war" evolved. The choice was either the continued misery of violence with its consequences or a negotiated settlement. People chose the latter.
4. The rejection of one of the alternatives may be a conscious rejection of the alternative as unacceptable or unconscious suppression of the alternatives available for choice. In either case though, only one alternative remains as option. This expedites the process of choosing an alternative and moving on taking the process a step forward.
5. Uncertain outcome emerges after either of the alternatives has been chosen. A leap of trust results from this and appears as part of conversion.<sup>171</sup>

At this point the stage is set for transformation to take place from destructive conflict to constructive reconciliation process. It is what Philpott aptly describes as,

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<sup>171</sup> Morentz. Ibid. p. 256-257.

... God's transforming power acting in our community of suffering and hope, life and death, creating a new healing community of brothers and sisters, comrades, kinsfolk.<sup>172</sup>

He uses these words to describe the community of Amawoti in Inanda. But the words are just as relevant for the community of Mpumalanga. Philpott also quotes Pobe who appropriately states that,

... the first purpose of theology is to "help discover new symbols for communicating reality". The second purpose is "to equip people to hold dialogue with the world" The third purpose is mission, which (is)described as a "process by which we build community of communities under the inspiration of the vision of God's sovereign rule."<sup>173</sup>

It is the understanding of these three points that inspired the clergy in Mpumalanga to work tirelessly to offer an alternative option to the senseless violence which was consuming the very fabric on which the society of Mpumalanga was built.

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<sup>172</sup> Philpott. Ibid. p. 14.

<sup>173</sup> Quoted from Philpott. p. 14, 15.



## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

In this concluding section I will summarise the main points that emerged as overall findings of this study. These points point out the essence and usefulness of local initiatives in conflict resolution. The section will also focus on the process of the research with specific reference to questions that emerged. Lastly, I will point the limitations of the present study.

#### **1. Process**

All information used here is used with permission from the participants. Most of the data referred to was recorded and documented appropriately. But some of the people were not comfortable with being recorded. It was even difficult to take notes because this made people uncomfortable. As a result, I decided in those instances to rather create a non-threatening atmosphere by not bringing any recording gadgets. This meant that at the end of the discussion, I needed to try and recollect the discussion and write notes for later reference. The latter scenario tended to be the case in most instances when people felt they were about to touch on issues they considered sensitive. Interestingly, the feeling was not that these issues should not be raised in the write up of this research as it was feared that these would be reacted to by force by those in authority.

My hypothesis was guided by a concern to evaluate the impact of the involvement of people who are part of the conflict in its resolution. My thesis is that unless the process involves the stakeholders it will not be sustainable. The study sought to see whether local initiatives of conflict resolution does empower the community involved. The study was also interested in examining whether conflict resolution so initiated will enable transformation.

The Mpumalanga community was identified as a case due to the success of their initiative in resolving a conflict that had divided the community for many years. Their achievements are recognised by many even outside this community as a significant breakthrough for other communities who are searching for alternatives in resolving their conflicts. The Mpumalanga case offers valuable lessons for all who seek a route of resolving conflict peacefully. Significantly, Mpumalanga has developed relationships with people from Rwanda, Burundi and the United States of America who acknowledge the importance of the achievements of this community.

The leadership of both the IFP and the ANC are presently having numerous encounters with many leaders from other communities who make contact with Mpumalanga with a view to learn. The leaders also get invited to address groups and facilitate workshops for people who have an interest in developing their own mechanisms of resolving conflict peacefully. This serves as a form of empowerment for the people of Mpumalanga who develop a sense of pride in their achievement. What was a sad and painful experience has been transformed into a positive learning curve.

## **2. Summary of findings**

### ***2.1 Peace with Justice***

Peace without justice is meaningless. Continuation of injustice in any form militates against any notion of peaceful coexistence. Peace by its very definition is fundamental about justice. Peace is not merely about the absence of war, on the contrary, marginalization in any form, either spiritual or material undermines peace. The many children, for instance, in our country who die for lack of proper medical care in the rural areas, it cannot be said that they live a peaceful life.

In the context of Mpumalanga the bigger challenge that confronts the peace process is the fundamental need for the authorities to reconstruct life in the community.

The houses and other communal facilities that were destroyed during the war need to attention. The peace agreement should not be seen as an end in itself, but rather as a beginning of the process. A lot of work still needs to be done on the psychological side. Many people still bear wounds of the war ,both physical and spiritual wounds. The war was a traumatic experience for many it is imperative that counselling be instituted to help the community to deal with impact of the trauma to avoid a resurgence of the conflict perhaps in another form.

McCollough emphasises the point that peace must be coupled with justice for it be meaningful. It is only when peace is undergirded by justice that a framework for development can be established. What emerged through the research was the need to consolidate the peace process by ensuring that victims of violence feel that they have been sufficiently compensated for their loss. This is obviously not very easy to achieve. After all, how does one get compensation for the loss of life of a loved one? It is possible to deal with the matter of destroyed houses. This only requires cooperation of the local government.

The issue for many people is would like to know why did violence break out when it did? Who was behind it? People would like to know who killed their loved ones? It is with this understanding that people feel the will be able to move on with their lives. There is a temptation, in such situations, to urge people to forget. This is not helpful.

Such memories remain indelible in the minds of the victims. Calling for 'amnesia' in such instances presence a danger where those unfortunate experiences are likely to be repeated because they were not dealt with adequately. The other danger is that those who feel that they have not been treated justly may be tempted to retaliate thus perpetuating the conflict. This an area that needs attention in Mpumalanga.

In the process of the research it was discovered that the rebuilding of the house that were destroyed during the war is not happening as per initial agreements. Not much work has been done on this front to date. The longer the process takes to deal with this phenomenon the more fragile the peace process. The community pointed out in the course of the interviews, that the KwaZulu-Natal province should follow the example set by the Gauteng government in its own handling of this matter in the KATORUS area of the East Rand. It is possible to draw from the resources of the RDP for this important task.

## ***2.2 Inculturation with dialogue***

The Inculturation debate was brought forcefully to the fore in the course of this study. It became apparent that dialogue is key in this process to make sure that the outcome of the discussion is enriching and transformative leading to an integrated faith experience. This is very important in a context where many people have been made to express their spirituality in a schizophrenic way; Christians by day and African traditionalists by night and in times of crisis. This obviously raises questions about the ability, or lack thereof, of Christianity to relate to the whole being of an African at all times especially during crisis.

Bate's assertion of the need for the kind of Inculturation that results in the appropriation of the culture of the majority in the South African context is a useful pointer in terms of where this debate should taking the people of this country. Inculturation has the capacity to create the basis for unity which will enable those engaged on this discourse to deal with the reality of the pluralistic nature of the South African society both within the Church and in the broader society.

Bate also points out that Inculturation situates its contextual manifestations within a historical framework thus opening up these manifestations to the future. In the context of Mpumalanga, the involvement of the church, through local clergy, in the process of resolving a conflict which was consuming the community brought to the fore issues

around the Inculturation debate. The use of Intelezi in the war challenged the church to deal with this matter in the context of Inculturation discussion. Discussions on this matter between those who took part in these rituals and the clergy of Mpumalanga opened up possibilities for the setting up of a process to take this discussion forward in a constructive manner. The fact that there was a group of young people who called for the church to intervene and help those of them who had problems with going back to the Traditional healers that they could no longer trust posed as a serious challenge to the church.

Hawkes' dialogical model for theological engagement became relevant in this discussion. What was found lacking in the in the manner in which the Mpumalanga clergy dealt with this matter of Inculturation in the course of the research was a lack of critical engagement between theology and the issues that emerged in the process of peace making. For example, the use of symbols like, the cross, water, oil and so on in the cleansing rituals introduced new dimensions of viewing these. This experience provided an opportunity for the church to transcend the gulf created by Missionaries between Christianity and African culture and Religion. Sadly, this opportunity was missed by the church. The church now wants to continue from where it left of prior to the outbreak of violence.

In terms of Hawkes' model, dialogue in this respect should lead to the reformulation of theological statements. Meaning that theological statements should demonstrate incorporation of the new ideas that would have emerged in the course of the dialogue. Practically, in the case of Mpumalanga, the important aspects that emerged in the dialogue on Inculturation are not reflected in the teachings of the church.

This interaction between African culture and Christianity offers a window of opportunity for developing an integrated faith experience which takes into account the realities of both Christianity and African culture. Whereas it was not possible to engage

in such a meaningful discussion before because of power imbalances. The fear in the churches imposed by missionaries branding anything African as barbaric and heathen, was brought into sharper focus by the crisis. The youth who took part in ritual ceremonies in preparation for the war became a serious challenge for the church when the war was over. Cleansing ceremonies needed to take into account the realities of this phenomenon in African culture. The discovery by the youth of the dubious role played by some of the traditional healers posed a serious challenge to the church when she was called upon to intervene and facilitate the cleansing process.

The other major challenge relates to the youth who are now abusing the trust bestowed on them by the community. They are now abusing the traditional ritual of 'fortification' meant for times of war. They now use it for criminal activities which are rife in Mpumalanga. This matter is of concern to all stakeholders in the peace process. It is a matter that requires urgent attention. The rapport established between erstwhile enemies provides the necessary framework for the community to deal with this matter effectively. Both Christianity and African culture have ample resources to deal with this issue. Both have legitimacy and moral values that can be put to bear in this situation. There is a unique chance here of developing a new spirituality that empowers and transforms. A spirituality that engenders holistic healing is a fundamental need in Mpumalanga. The community has an opportunity of drawing from both Christianity and African culture to facilitate this process of comprehensive and holistic healing. Mngomezulu supports this view. All this must be done to restore respect for life.

### ***2.3 Empowerment with local initiative.***

The peace initiative in Mpumalanga was facilitated by local people. This is a strength that ensures that the initiative is owned by community. This is important as Kraybill pointed out in his concept of 'think-process'. He outlined four principles which also underpinned the Mpumalanga peace process. These are; 1) Outcomes. Processes matter more than outcomes. Consequently outcomes are worthless if process is bad. 2)

Good process should involve all stake-holders in decision making. This ensures ownership and co-responsibility. If one party feels excluded at any stage, it will not identify with the outcome. 3) Good process involves all parties in designing the decision making process. It is not only the need to participate in the process that is important, but also is participation in decision making on process to be followed. 4) The process must be conducted under conditions acceptable to all. This empowers all the parties and ensures level playing fields.

The clergy in Mpumalanga, through their Ministers' Fraternal, facilitated the process and sought the support of the other stakeholders. This necessitated the adoption of a 'team ministry' approach to the process as espoused by De Gruchy. The base of this team was the solidarity interaction of clergy interdenominationally which later included other professionals in the community like health, social, security and other workers. It is through this initiative that ordinary people in the community took the opportunity to reach out to each other. The team work of the clergy and other stakeholders served as a public witness to the importance of cooperation and solidarity. Through these activities, the community began to formulate a common vision with common goals and a plan to reconstruct and transform society.

#### ***2.4 Reconciliation with transformation***

The solution of the conflict through peaceful negotiations set the stage for reconciliation in the community of Mpumalanga. The fact that the peace process was driven by the leaders of both political organizations (IFP and UDF), made it possible for followers to reach out to each other in an attempt to find alternative ways of dealing with conflict. This set the stage for people who had been displaced by the war to return to their homes.

The commitment of the business sector and government to help with the rebuilding programme of Mpumalanga served as a beacon of hope. What was a hopeless situation

turned into a promising possibility for a successful and peaceful community. The whole experience provided an opportunity for those who are Christians in the Mpumalanga community to review some of the important symbols of the church. The cross was given a new contextual meaning related to the strife that people went through.

The power phenomenon gained a new meaning for the community. People realised that they , as a community, had more power to transform their lives if they stood together. They had learnt that violent conflict divided and weakened them. Overcoming this meant a fresh lease of life and vibrancy for the community. It enabled people to develop a common value system. Reconciliation between community members meant being reconciled with God and the rest of the community as well. Reconciliation, the community learnt, must be premised on conversion, otherwise the process has very little chance of success. Conversion ensures that people do not return to the situation from which they had been converted. Most importantly, people in Mpumalanga learnt that they could not have achieved a peaceful resolution of their conflict without God. The presence of God was felt and acknowledged in the whole process.



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## *APPENDICES*

### *INTERVIEW 1*

**PERSON INTERVIEWED:**    **Fr. Mkhize**  
                                         **Anglican Church, Mpumalanga**

**B:**    Can you describe for me briefly the unfolding of the peace process in your understanding?

**Z:**    From 1991 to now party political violence ran the day. Now we are in the period of reconstruction. Violence subsided at this time (1991) due to local negotiation with the view of establishing peace structures. This process though was still at its infancy.

People on the ground during the violence period were disturbed because of the burning of houses, looting, loss of life, lowering of moral standards etc, etc. Many people fled from the area until they decided that enough is enough. Both from the side of the ANC and that of Inkatha people felt tired of the war. People talked to their local leaders to find a way to peace. The appeal raised related to the black experience of calling for peace among the Africans/Blacks. Leaders were called upon to facilitate peace.

This call found listening ears in the leadership of Mr. Mlaba of the IFP and his contemporary Mr. Hadebe of the ANC. Both leaders were ready to serve the community. They were convinced that people wanted to live peacefully and that this was possible despite all that which has happened. These leaders displayed interest and concern for the people first and put aside political differences. They avoided petty parochial party interests unlike in other areas where leaders promote their own agendas at the expense of the lives of the people.

Alongside this in response to community demands for peace in the area, there was the contribution of the religious leaders. They availed themselves to the political leaders to facilitate the process impartially. This included convening peace discussions and setting up prayer services. These leaders did not push any party political line at services. This became possible because of the solidarity network that priests in the area had established.

The approach was always to work as a team. This culminated in a service where crosses appealing for peace were placed at all exits of the area. This was an attempt to draw the attention of the community to the cross of Jesus as a monument for peace (shalom). It was a symbol confirming the testament undertaken by the people for peace in the area.

Religious leaders met every Thursday to hold joint prayer services for themselves as a team to strengthen each other in the difficulties that were confronting their ministries. These prayer meetings were held under the guidance of Rev. Bhengu, a retired Lutheran church minister who is the chairperson of the minister's fraternal.

Political, Business and other community leaders always involved the minister's fraternal in the facilitation of the peace services to avoid a situation where priests were drawn in by a particular party who would then be seen to be towing a partial party line. The approach was to always do things together to ensure a high level of accountability. The networking process helped the group deal with their own fears and anxieties. A feeling of being there for each other was built over the years.

This spirit of co-operation was also evident among the political leaders who worked together and always wanted to be seen to be doing things together. This was done to demonstrate to the people that despite the differences they as leaders are able to work together to place the interests of the people above all else.

## **INTERVIEW 2**

**PERSON INTERVIEWED:**      **Revd. Zwane**  
                                         **African Independent Church, Mpumalanga**

B: We know our country was engulfed by violence in many places at that time, but Mpumalanga has become one of the important places worldwide in such a way that there are people who like to know how did you manage to that. I think it is important for us as the church, which is not based here in Mpumalanga that we learn a lesson from, what has happened and know how did God bless the church in Mpumalanga through the ministers to help in bringing peace. From your point of view how did this happen.

Z: Mr Khumalo, I think I should first be grateful about the way you have put this, this will make the whole process good and short because it seems that the information you need is important (exact).

Firstly, I should say that what has made ministers, as you have already said that the whole world has the problem of violence. I, as Minister Zwane, I am one of the belittled ministers but who became visible during the time of violence. These uprisings took us by surprise, we did not actually see exactly what was it. But when I looked the way things happened, then I asked the leaders to pray, we then prayed, that is where we started coming together with Mr Mlaba and built peace. When difficult times came his way, we would remind him of Moses, that he also used to come across such difficulties. That made our leader as if he was now being born again. That made even Christians to be partakers in peace which was initiated here in Mpumalanga. Mr Mlaba now called me in whatever was happening, as a pastor I would pray. This happened in whatever situation even if it was fight or attack. I would then urge people not to revenge because it was clear that God was coming with something good. That made our place/township in fact the community even the children changed. People even said that when they were outside, they saw dangerous weapons but nobody was hurt. So everything was now surrounded by prayer. Of course there were mistakes, but in most cases the youth were under control. I think this peace was brought by the fact that the leader(s) accepted our advice and that gave him warmth and courage. When he encountered problems he did not hesitate to come to us to seek advice. We all then pray and after that peace continued. From there another person came to picture, that is a white man called Simpson. (UNCLEAR). During this time there were killings in one of the farms here and he was asked that there should be a meeting. We all met and held talks, it was very difficult because the people



who were fighting were the group on the other side of where we are. After we had those talks with Simpson, the situation cooled down. Most of the leaders who took part in these peace initiatives were killed, we were very fortunate because our leader Mr Mlaba whom we worked with to build peace, is still continuing. But all in all, it was God who saw us through all this because all what we did, was done through prayer. Secondly we made a sacrifice to God, it was mainly to ask God not to allow another bloodshed especially among people. It was accepted, and I was the one who conducted the whole ceremony. That was the first peace initiative. I think, Mr Khumalo I can say that peace is like a woman who has done something wrong. On our side Mr Mlaba is a humble person, on the other side their leader is very quick to do things. Even when things got really heated it was easy to sit down and talk and they will go back to normal. This was because we had prayed.

B: Now Mr Zwane, from your point of view when did this violence start here in Mpumalanga and also, what was the cause. It is quite confusing that people who have been staying together for such a long time and also I suppose you even marry each other and have children, Now where does this conflict come from which has already taken a lot of lives.

Z: I think I should say that this is a spirit. If I say it is a spirit, I take it from the biblical account, where God is saying that there will be a time when children will rise against their parents. But when this was happening we could not see but we then realized that this was the fulfilment of the scriptures. I cannot really say who started all this. It all started with some houses being burnt, and people were killed and then there was no control because parents were killed, who are the ones who have control over children. So, that was the beginning of violence. Children then started beating their parents. Fortunately, after that, the situation erupted, our leader (UNCLEAR) \*\*\*

Then I saw that I will enter heaven. My leader is a humble person when we say he should not revenge he listens to us. As you have said we used to take marriage partners from either side, so in order to restore these relations, we prayed. For the other side because there were leaders who were trying to make peace, at the end we prayed for Mr Hadebe and after that peace talks began, and we were all happy. It is like in a marriage, sometimes when you drive at home you find that your wife has not cooked. Now, because of the patience between these two men, the attacks were stopped. Because of these attacks it was like there were no parents at all yet there were still there. But the

issue is, they feared for their lives since they were burnt together with their houses. Fortunately, despite this situation children did not completely get out of hand. So I can say that it was because of these leaders which we have allowed to be our heads because we saw that they were chosen by God. So as ministers we played a mediation role. Even when they had disagreements between themselves, they would come to us and we try to resolve the issue. These are some of the things which I can mention which helped in bringing this place back to the control of the parents. What we wish mostly for other places is for children to have reference for parents until such a time when they build their own houses where they can have control. To have control over your parents when you are still under them does not make a healthy home. I believe that it was on such things where we saw God helping us. We all have our mistakes, but we need to correct each other.

B: There is a belief that the church should not take part in worldly affairs, ministers should make sure that they are as far as possible on such matters.

Z: Can you make an example?

B: Like this situation here in Mpumalanga some feel that the role of the minister is to preach not to unite political leaders.

Z: I think that can be said because of what the church constitution say. But now if you say will not be part of helping people, you will only be in the church, the question is, who will go to church because the very people who are dying are the ones who are supposed to be in church? There were incidents where people were killed on their way to the church. So in such situations, how can one afford not to be part of this. I think it is important for the community to be given the bread of Christianity. People can decide to go astray but they should know the truth. This will help in bringing control in the family. Jesus said the man is the head of his family and Jesus is the head of the man. There are many important words in the Bible concerning peace. Let me start from Moses. The children of Israel were in hardship. God led Moses to the wilderness then sent Moses to liberate his children. This does not mean that the Israelites were not sinful but it was because God has loved them as his chosen nation. What is important is that when Moses went to liberate the Israelites, he came out with a nation. So it is important to have Christ and to work for God's people. So, it is important also for Christians to be in the midst of God's people. For example, the priest is a mouth-piece for God and his weakness is like

God's weakness. So the priest, who is God like, always ask for power from God. So people need to be liberated from slavery and have freedom. So, this is what we are here are doing here in Mpumalanga.

B: I like this name Mpumalanga, what does it actually mean?

Z: This name has troubled me a lot, I was talking about it now. I asked Mr Nzimande, and also one of the ministers Mr Khomo and Mr Shelembe what does this name Mpumalanga mean? The reason I asked them is because God has blessed this place. Unfortunately, I could not get even one person who could explain this to me. I did not continue further with the enquiries. I just took it that it was named after unit 1 because it's facing where the sun rise. If the name Mpumalanga is interpreted it means the beginning of new things. I my prayers I saw God giving birth to a new world.

B: You have mentioned an important thing that during the peace agreement, you performed a ritual of cleansing. Now, the problem is that the churches we are coming from stick to the "law" because they were founded by missionaries. As you have said, there were some who did not agree with this. The question is how important is this ritual after they have agreed that there should be peace.

Z: It is important, i will just take one verse. God gave Abraham a new nation to be the head. Now as I am talking about Mpumalanga, I have seen that the nation is being born again. As I have said that I was not a minister, but when I received the call it was difficult. I lost my job. I became a minister. I was married in a spiritual sense. So this cleansing is very important. God says in the book of Hebrews 9:22, "Indeed, according to the law almost everything is purified by blood, and sins are forgiven only if blood is poured out". So if the spirit of God allows you to do that and also give you the power to do so, one should not doubt that because God has already showed that most of the things are done by him. It was through God that the leaders were able to sit down and listen to us. So this serve as a guideline for a person who has been called by God. That is why I am saying that the situation goes against what God is saying.

B: Now, concerning what you have just said, there is a belief that the wars that we have in our country are caused by the fact that people use traditional medicines (izintelezi) which drive them to go to war. So does it mean that this cleansing ritual is important in this case?

Z: Yes, by doing so, I was chasing out such spirits. This was even evident in our children, one could see that when talking to them. So I know very well that all these demonic spirits cannot prevail against God's power.

B: This is very important Mr Zwane, because even in our churches, there are those who say that there are lot of things we can learn from Mpumalanga. I am from Pietermaritzburg, and we have the same problem in one of the townships called Imbali. These young boys come to us and tell us that they have a problem because even if they do not want to fight, but because of these medicines, there is always a thirst for blood. So in our church we have a problem of dealing with this because this need traditional customs.

Z: In the book of Hebrews again, there is a verse which talks about different types of cleansing people. It is true that these "law" churches have a problem with this cleansing ritual. If you look in the book of Hebrews 15, there are different commandments which is the way in which God worked with people. We find the same account on cleansing in 2 Kings 5. So for me this ritual I take it as God's way of practising medicine.

B: Where is the situation of peace presently?

Z: Presently, I think we are experiencing a very high level of peace here in Mpumalanga but at the same the evil spirit is also growing because it is fighting God's peace but the evil spirit is powerless. I always give thanks to God when I see this place of Mpumalanga being so peaceful.

B: We are also grateful for you. We see this situation of Mpumalanga as a model for the whole country. I hope it will be written in the books of history, because this was a historical event. It is an important thing in history that the people of Mpumalanga were able to conquer that divided the whole country.

Z: I must say Mr Khumalo, that I really thank God who gave this place the name Mpumalanga, having done that, he also gave it good leaders. One of our leaders was just telling me that he has been invited to go to Israel. I told him that he must never make a mistake and tell them lies because those people were once visited by Christ whom they rejected. They should know that the peace we have in Mpumalanga was brought by the very Christ whom they rejected.

B: We are very grateful, we just hope that the people of Israel will listen and that they will allow God to use his servant.

Z: What I know about him is that he is very humble, he does not look down upon other people. I can proudly say that God has chosen a good leader for without voting for him. I also wish you all the best where you are coming from.

### INTERVIEW 3

**PERSON INTERVIEWED:**       **Khekhe Ngcobo**  
                                          **Student leader and IFP member**

B:     May be we should start by asking from your point of view how did the violence start here in Mpumalanga and what was the main cause?

I:     Ok, even if I do not know exactly, what I remember is that there was what students called targets, which means that they stopped cars from the streets. And it was discarded that the elderly members of the community do not concur with what the students were doing. I was also part of that group of students who did that, until to a point where we were forced to tell the elderly people to go away because they were an obstacle in our work/job of stopping targets, that is cars which were delivering food in the township. We were then forced to revenge to the elderly people, so when we did that, other men joined in /interfered such as Mr Zakhele Nkehli who were members of IFP. On his side, there was a group of boys/young men, they started attacking us. From there we ended attacking each other and then that marked the revolution here in Mpumalanga, as I have said, it was stated by stopping the targets, that is cars/trucks which were delivering food in the township.

B:     Then the violence went on until when?

I:     Ok, the violence went on, do you mean its end? Ok, It went on and on and at first there were means of trying to bring peace which were established and by that time there were these police who were known as special constables who were in the township, they tried to help us reconcile with the IFP and ANC, in there is a place called Ensimbini, that is where we had our meeting and we tried to have peace. Now as we were talking, the problem was, there was no longer any trust amongst ourselves but at the end of the day peace was declared. It was the first incident of peace initiative here in Mpumalanga although it was clear that it was not the "real" peace. Then, after that, one boy by the name of Thokoza Sosibo, alright after this incident, we started becoming enemies again. So after the release Mr Rolihlahla Mandela the whole thing started again and the beginning of violence for the second time. It was then, where the church people, ministers tried to reconcile us, but it was discovered that there were problems for us to come

together. Then there were meetings which were held for reconciliation after we had met with brother Sipho and brother Meshack.

They tried to help the committees to come together, we used to meet in a place called the Council Chamber at the police station. Even though we met, our purpose of reconciliation was not good until there was a need that we hold the meeting inside the police station. It was there where the meetings were held with Sipho and Meshack Hadebe and they started addressing the community urging them to stop the ongoing violence because even the reason for the fighting is not clear now. They told the people that they understand that most of the families have lost their loved ones. As a result we need to be reconciled to each other in order to be able to develop our township. And because of that effort we were able to go back to school and they started to become close friends and in most cases they were found together. That drew the attention of the people and it helped to decrease the level of violence since it was seen that the leaders were working together.

B: What do you think from your own perspective, was the role played by the church or leaders here in Mpumalanga to encourage peace?

I: From my point of view, the role the ministers played was when the people who were fighting have cooled down, after we got explanation on the importance of peace and other things which were explained to us. And also seeing that our leaders are able to work together, even if they come from different, political parties, then what is it that we are fighting for. Sipho and Meshack were able to sit together when they came to meetings, so what difficulty do we have that we can also do that and start a new life. That is where the ministers came in, when we were now cooled off by our leaders, the ministers then called/held services when we were together and they would preach. After some time, things went well and Sipho and Meshack made it a point that we meet often and have rallies together so that we do not fight, we also played sports together. So as times went on, it was clear to all of us that the way we do things, there is really nothing we can fight for. So seeing that we have a shortage of schools which were on their side and they could do likewise. And from that we realized that we have no reason to fight, anyway, what is it that we are going to gain after we have fought. What we gained in our fighting was death and filling up prisons. So from my thinking these are some of the reasons which contributed to peace in Mpumalanga.

B: From your own view, how is peace continuing here in Mpumalanga because we can see that our place Natal is engulfed by violence?

I: You see if I may have to speak about peace here in Mpumalanga, I do not think that there can be any kind of corruption which can take place here in Mpumalanga. We no longer see each other according to our political parties, it is now a matter of whether you know a person or not. The whole situation has gone back to normal. One can now be friend to anyone, in other words, I do not see the peace we have here in Mpumalanga being disturbed by anyone.

B: There were problems which used to happen, during the time of violence there are things which usually happen, like (intelezi) and such things cause the violence to go on. These are the things we usually see in at Imbali where we are coming from. Sometimes these boys/young men who have been fighting, do come to us as ministers and say that we have a problem, even when we no longer want to fight, there is that spirit which wants only blood. Did you also encounter such a problem?

I: Yes, I will only talk for the side of IFP, this is how it was solved. After we have see that now we are united, Sipho and others, bought us cows, they sprinkled us with what was going to take away the evil spirit (amaqunga).

B: Now, as you have already said, is everything right as far as schooling is concerned. Does anyone attend where s/he wants?

I: Here, in Mpumalanga there is no problem, a person can go to any school as long there is a place.

B: One other important thing for me is that Mpumalanga, as I have already mentioned, it is likened with a place where people can learn about the good act. We have seen there are people from overseas and places like Burundi, they come here. How do you feel about that as the youth of Mpumalanga?

I: As the youth, it really make us happy to be able to see that to be able to think and realize that something is bad, others also recognize that and empathize (khungatha) with you to show that you have done good. In that way we are able to even see people from other countries who are not South Africans.



B: This name Mpumalanga, the way you have heard, was named before you were even born, what do the elderly people say was the reason for it to be called Mpumalanga?

I: I really do not have an idea why was this township named Mpumalanga, because when I grew up it was called Mpumalanga.

B: From your thinking, how important is this name?

I: I think the name "Mpumalanga" literally means where the sun rise, where the light start showing. So from my point of view this name "Mpumalanga" if it has to be associated with what has happened, things like corruption especially here in KZN, you are witness to that. But here in Mpumalanga we no longer experience all that. So, all this is seconding the name Mpumalanga where the sun begins to shine the shines to all places.

B: We have heard about RDP which has been introduced by the youth, how was it started.

I: Could you please explain which one are you referring to because we have lots of development programmes which we have started.

B: There is that one which unites the youth from the IFP and ANC. Maybe I should not say it is development you are the one who can explain how did it came to being and what are the things you do to encourage the community.

I: It was started because Sipho and Josiah Hadebe most of their time they are busy with other things. Now, in order to make sure that the whole idea of peace does not go off our minds, we need to meet in different ways and we should not want for our heroes to do that for us. Then we saw that it will be better to start something liked this. The aim being that if there is anything which needs to be done, then we do it together so that we can unite IFP and ANC.

B: What are your activities?

I: Different activities, entertainment and other things. This serves as an awareness and also to make us see that life should go on and be the way it is supposed to be.

B: How do you view the future of peace here in Mpumalanga?

- I: I think, it has good fruits. Because of these peace initiatives here in Mpumalanga we had an impact even to people from countries like Burundi and worldwide, we are the talk of the day. I sometimes think that maybe even when we talk about South Africa, they take an example from Mpumalanga and other places.
- B: Is everything going well, schools, work?
- I: Yes, everything is going well because we always make it a point that we are above politics. It is true that we are part of politics but we should go beyond that as a community.
- B: There are people who ran away from Mpumalanga because of violence and their houses were burned down. What happened to those people?
- I: There was a herald that they should come back to reoccupy their houses. Then there were programmes which were started to cater for those who had occupied other people's houses before their owners arrived. This was done in order to avoid conflicts.
- B: Have most to them come back?
- I: Yes, those who did not come back are those who bought new houses and sold the old ones to others.
- B: But what happened to those houses which were burned down?
- I: Those houses were reconstructed, only a few parts of some houses which still need to be reconstructed.
- B: There are development programmes which have begun here in Mpumalanga, who are the initiators (abagqugquzeli) of these programmes?
- I: The last time I heard about development talks, the people who were responsible were the councillors, people like Mr Mlaba and Mr Hadebe.
- B: Did they also work together even for development without undermining anyone?

- I: They were united in all they did, they did not have any demarcation problems. A person on the list was the one who got a place it did not matter which organization s/he came from. S/he was taken as a neighbour.
- B: Thank you very much my brother I wish you all the best and that peace can continue here in Mpumalanga. And also that our places which are still engulfed by violence may learn from what has happened here in Mpumalanga.
- I: From my view for many people it is not violence that much but it has to do with crime. People allow their friends from other townships and even team up with them and do criminal acts in the name of a certain organization That is why there is an ongoing violence in other places. Criminals from other places are being accommodated by residents of that particular township. But all in all, I do not think that those are people who still want this violence to continue.
- B: From your point of view, do you think that ministers should take part in development and peace projects. To elaborate this question, there are people who believe that ministers should only be concerned with what happens in the church then the political leaders be the only ones who foresee the welfare of the community, which then means politics and church do not go together. But here in Mpumalanga, I have seen a different thing. This morning I have been speaking to one minister, and he told me about the way they have tried to encourage these peace initiatives. How does the youth see this role, which is played by ministers?
- I: If I can just respond briefly, ministers play an important role. Firstly, I need to say that it is not good to first judge a person before you could actually hear what s/he was to say. Now, coming to the point of ministers involvement, ministers are the community leaders because they lead churches. Also as they are community leaders, they also have a very big role which they can play because it does not mean that all the people who are in churches are not in political organizations, some are there others are not. Although some people do not show publicly which organization they belong to, it is obvious that some people do belong to certain organizations even though they are Christians. It becomes easy if ministers work hand in hand with political leaders because people respect their leaders and it is also easy to listen to them. And as a result of that it becomes easy to maintain peace in that particular place.

B: Thank you very much my brother, you have really helped me.

I: I am also thankful.

#### *INTERVIEW 4*

**PERSON INTERVIEWED:**        **Revd. Bruce Buthelezi**  
                                         **Presbyterian Church and ANC member**

B:     My interest is to try and find out about the peace process in Mpumalanga and how that come about. But also to perhaps in your view outline what triggered the process.

I:     I will say the whole thing started in 1985. It started with students, it was the time when the Inkatha Youth Brigade was reactivated. And in the schools that is where they started. They were canvassing for support from people who were non-Inkatha members in order to have a base in the schools to introduce them to politics which were prevalent at the time. So at that time I was at Ukusa High school. Inkatha Youth Brigade members would come to tell students that at such a place we would have a rally. One student started to ask why are we then forced. That was happening against the background that there was no other political organization that was existing except Inkatha because all others left the country. The students said we must not be forced to attend meetings, it must be left up to us. If we want to attend we will attend. As a result there was physical confrontation. The first man to die, lived few houses away from my home. He was supposed to be a treasurer of the SRC at Ukusa High School. And then the whole thing started to boil, the students wanted to revenge, there were murders, killings. So the whole thing snowballed into this kind of violence. Secondly, the students and the people joined, those who were Inkatha members joined Inkatha to help Inkatha Youth Brigade regain control. As a result all those who were non-Inkatha members felt threatened and the left the township.

B:     But why Claremont?

I:     Most of them and 90% went in hiding in Claremont.

B:     Claremont became a safe area?

I:     Yes, 90% of them stayed in Claremont. They met Mr Archie Gumede and they went to him for help. That is how the Hammarsdale Youth Congress was formed. It was formed in exile in Claremont. The first group that came back was fourteen young men who came back to say we are coming back to Mpumalanga now to claim back our place and to launch Hammarsdale Youth Congress (HAYCO). They came back and stayed in my

home. They came at night and stayed in my home. They started to say alright we need weapons, petrol bombs and all that. They did that very successfully. The whole thing then became a full scale war that Mpumalanga is well known about. Two groups, one was operating from unit one north. Inkatha's stronghold and the opposing group was unit one south. On the other side of the road which was later the stronghold of UDF. So it was that Mpumalanga had killings and murders on daily basis. The security forces, special constables, the KwaZulu police and Defence Force members were supporting Inkatha against the comrades. The comrades were on their own because the government hated them as they were supporters of the ANC, who were operating under the banner of UDF and that is all we have.

B: Mpumalanga was politically under KwaZulu.

I: In fact the reason why Mpumalanga is so prominent is because there was never a time when there was any political organization except Inkatha. Everybody here just knew Inkatha. Before the launch of Inkatha Youth Brigade, all others that appeared before nobody really worried about. Most of them came from Inkandla which is a rural area, because Inkatha is strong there, so they came here with that belief that there is Inkatha. If you are in school, you are Inkatha, up to now it is said that if you are a Zulu you are Inkatha. So now, even in Ulundi it was a shock for them to hear that there was another organization called HAYCO which is non-aligned to Inkatha. Number two, here in Mpumalanga the Regional offices of the Department of works for the whole Natal is here in Mpumalanga. For the Inkatha people and the authorities in Ulundi it meant that those were going to be destroyed and hence later on the rent offices were burnt, schools were burnt, creches were burnt, all the apparatus of the KwaZulu government were targeted. That is why Mpumalanga was so prominent because they would try all means to protect it but that did not happen. So, the war went on until. I must say the whole thing about peace came about after the intervention of the National Peace Secretariat. People began to hear about things like you can sit and negotiate with your enemy so that both of you can find an alternative (UNCLEAR) things can be normal. There must be a bridge of communication even in the midst of war. That man was very instrumental, Dr O.D. Dlomo, before he left Inkatha. I remember before I was arrested in 1989, in January we were supposed to have a meeting in the Holiday Inn in Durban. Dr O.D. Dlomo was to be a delegate for Inkatha to head the delegation for the whole Natal. Archie Gumede was a leader on our side. After that Dr O.D. Dlomo left Inkatha but the peace process continued until - then there was peace here in Mpumalanga. But basically what you hear

about how especially in the media, the printed and audio media is that there are two men who brought about peace here in Mpumalanga, Mr Meshack Hadebe of the ANC and Mr Sipho Mlaba of the IFP. But that is a distorted view of the real situation. A man on the ground here will tell you that Sipho Mlaba is the man who killed lots of our people, he killed lots of our young comrades definitely more than 500. Mr Meshack Hadebe was never heard about at that stage, we only heard about him just when the peace agreement was signed between the two organizations - it is then that we started hearing about him. I think it is very advisable that you approach some of the comrades like Jabu (UNCLEAR) and ask who brought about the peace process, they know. The person who is responsible, who should be sort of the hero for the UDF, HAYCO or ANC as it is now known is Rev. Ngcibi, hence this branch is called Rev. Ngciki Branch. He is the man who really did that. But I do not know how did Mr Hadebe came into picture.

B: Tell me about Rev. Ngciki, I happened to know him, what role did he play.

I: That is a good question. Rev. Ngciki felt that there was a problem because on the side of Inkatha it was the youth and adults who went all out to wipe the UDF. But on the side of the comrades it was only the youth, all old people, the adults watched that these kids were doing. And Rev. Ngcibi came (with a type of a challenge. This war had went on for 8 years without you adults participating. It is high time that you do not let down your kids. This war involves us, we own these houses it is not our kids, our kids are not burning these houses, these houses are being burned by the enemies who are forcing people to be members of Inkatha so, we must join. It is then that the old people said yes, something must be done and that is how people got involved.

B: How did he die?

I: His death was very unfortunate, because just before peace was achieved, that is when he died. He died because on our side I must say, one of the big set-backs was that some of our comrades who just after the war ended began to be criminals. They began to go from one house to another to steal radios, televisions, doing all those sorts of things. They are doing it up to know I am operating this store, they came at night and broke in. He took a stand then saying you were our comrades, but what you are doing now, you are harassing the community and we must fight against you. Anybody, and they called them comrade-tsotsis. Any one who is a comrade and a tsotsi at the same time must leave the

township. You know it was a problem and those com-tsotsis killed him of the eve of peace.

B: What would you say was the role of the national government, or they played no role at all?

I: There was a role that they played - they made sure that Inkatha won. They gave weapons to Inkatha. There was a time when hundreds and hundreds of affidavits were signed to show that Inkatha was conniving with the national government. I can tell you that I have never heard that in any part of this province that there was a time when special forces were sent from Pretoria to deal with the violence. But in this township a special task force was out together in Pretoria, Reaction 21, was put together and trained because they wanted to make sure that this township remained under the control of Inkatha. Because if that was the cause, then the Nationalist government would relax because Inkatha are boys who were born, so to say by the national government. So, that is the role they played, to support IFP with weapons and money, even now as you hear some of the accusations. Even if Inkatha had rallies, food for rallies, the tents, chairs were provided. They wanted to make sure that Inkatha wins. So, that is the role, a very negative one. I think this whole thing about the third force coming up to the fore if it is thoroughly investigated you will discover that it operated here in this township a lot, more than in any other areas.

B: Why was Mpumalanga targeted specifically, I mean there was violence in many other areas, but Mpumalanga was very peaceful, isolated, why, what was the importance of Mpumalanga? Mpumalanga is a small township.

I: I think what actually happened is that Mpumalanga is about 60 km away from Durban, it is midway between Durban and Pietermaritzburg. Administratively we are under Pietermaritzburg. We do most of our shopping in Pietermaritzburg and surrounding areas more than Durban. As things began to happen in Pietermaritzburg, we were influenced by Pietermaritzburg. In 1985 Pietermaritzburg was actually burning, so we were influenced by Pietermaritzburg. So it was a problem for Inkatha that these townships that belonged to them for these other reasons, amongst many, there were people who were using them because at that time the townships around Durban, townships like Lamontville and Chesterville there were people like Rev. Mcebisi Xundu who were mobilizing there, and there was Mxenge in Umlazi and KwaMakhutha area. So, they



were worried that some of their members who want a safe place is difficult for them, they do not have a safe passage from Durban to Pietermaritzburg because there was no way they could come here. But one can perhaps say they could use buses or taxis, and just use the freeway. But the war was at a very large scale.

You were not safe whether you were on a freeway, or subway or train station or wherever you were seen you were not safe. That was the other problem that Inkatha was faced with, this midway. It is a small place but it cannot be ignored. Because the other thing about Mpumalanga, is that although it is small, there are lots of rural surrounding areas. There is Mophela, Sankotshe, Mayeshe, Cato Ridge, Nkandla, Mntwan'ontengayo. Even when we come to the whole thing about the circuit office for the schools around here the Mpumalanga circuit but you may think that they are talking about one area, it is a very vast area. Mpumalanga is Mpumalanga but it has roots. They wanted to make sure, the KwaZulu government wanted to make sure that by controlling Mpumalanga, they control a lot of other areas. The magistrate's office is here, people from as far as Maphumulo come to Mpumalanga for pensions, ID applications. It is a small place unimportant yet very important. It is a very tricky situation. You will think that it is a tiniest township nothing happens. We have houses that you can count within a day. But for some strategic reasons it is an important place.

B: But what was the role of the church apart from Rev Ngciki, in the process, if any?

I: There was a role although to a limited extent because people were afraid to die. Ministers of religion, and IDAMASA, in other words of which I am a member because I am an ordained man myself, we were involved, because we could not sit on the fence, either you are in or out you could not be neutral. And both parties, you could not say I am nothing. I saw that happen in the hostels in Johannesburg by Rev Dandala, I wished it happened here. So what the church did here is that it called rallies in Unit 2 and the stadium, the place is not fenced if you could that a stadium, but they called rallies there anyway. But a problem would arise because some people would say for Inkatha members there is no access to the stadium because it was the stronghold of UDF. So they tried and labelled that a UDF church rally. The other thing they would say was that anything that has to do with the church, the Inkatha people would be hostile because Tut and Alan Boesak were UDF. So, they would call it a UDF thing. So, that is basically what the church did. I do not remember the time when the church participated in any peace initiative or even to give us a church as a venue. So our meetings were not in the church because there was

no minister who was prepared to open the church so that is basically the only thing that I can remember which happened at the time. There is no other role the church played. Like now, when these two leaders, Meshack Hadebe and Sipho Mlaba visited Burundi, and I saw there that the church leaders took a stand but it did not happen here while there was this violence. I must say that when Mpumalanga was burning, the church was asleep.

B: That was a very sad situation.

I: When Mpumalanga was burning, the church was asleep. There was that type of Trevor Huddleston said the same thing when he was in Sophia Town many years ago that it can be amazing when things are happening, the church can sleep through history. That is the same thing that happened here. I am saying this is not to betray the church. I am a church man myself, but that is the truth of the situation. You see this is happening to the church.

B: Well, Bruce some people would argue that the business of the church is to preach on Sundays. There are people who even said in this country, you will remember, the debates we were having nationally whether to support the ANC or not, the meetings that Tambo had with the churches in Lusaka where the churches were saying stop the arm-struggle and all that. And there were very strong church leaders who were saying that the role of the church is to mediate. What do you say to that? But to mediate meant to stand above, do not get involved. Do not dirty your hands. So, that you are able to bring people together. What is your thinking in terms of involvement of the church, do you think there is a theological basis for that? Do you think it is right that the church be involved or the church should withdraw?

I: I think that from a theological point of view or perspective. We serve a God who takes a stand, he is never neutral and it is surprising that he also takes a stand in favour of those who are suffering as against those who are talk dogs. And I feel that the church must do the same. The church is supposed to take a stand after having descent and was able to see who is actually wrong, who is actually right. By wrong I theologically mean that those who are right are those who are trying to promote the kind of kingdom of God, and those who are wrong will be on the other side of that. Whilst I feel that the church should take a stand. It was the same situation when the SACC was accused of siding with certain political organizations. I remember Dr Villa-Vicencio of Cape Town University argued that the church is not supporting those organizations like a card-carrying member do, but

they support in terms of those organizations doing, pursuing something that the church pursues itself, that is to bring about peace, to bring people together instead of destroying them and tearing them apart. So I feel that the church should take a stand, be very bold and brave and say you are rotten, this is against God's teaching. But by that we mean blah-blah you are right because of this and that.

B: Part of the problem in situations of conflict is that people formulate images of each other, the enemy as always the bad guy. the concept of "image" is important biblically, we are created in the image of God. And therefore, to call your enemy with an image that makes him lesser than what God has created him. In the struggle it is easy to say to the enemy s/he or a dog for instance "utheleweni" or whatever. What do you think of that, I mean, the dangers of that because unfortunately, images remain if you use an image that is negative about people it remains with us such that anything. We even associate people with the clothing that they wear, *laba obani* and therefore that perpetuates conflict.

I: I think that is a real problem because like you said it puts a stigma on somebody I think even when the time of peace come, it comes and goes, the like prophet Jeremiah would say the time has come, the harvest has come, the harvest has come and go, but you are still not served. It is the situation here, even if we were in a war situation I am handing an olive branch over to you, it is all over but even after that I still say he!. I have forgiven so and so using the name that I used to call you about. That is the problem because it sinks in a person's mind, it becomes part of you, although you try to hide it but it keeps rearing raising its ugly head now and again. I think that is a problem but it is part of what we do. We cannot help but do it, but it has bad consequences, it is really not helpful.

B: Do you think that the church has a role in that at all?

I: Yes, the church has a role, I should have said. The basic thing is that we are all made in the image of God. God is able to forgive even a murderer irrespectively. No matter what has happened, there is a time when we must forgive and forget. John Kennedy used to say you must forgive your enemy but do not forget his name, you are placing a tag on your enemy.

Bishop Mogoba said instead of having cheap reconciliation, rather do not have it at all. For the church reconciliation is something very deep and meaningful, So for the church community that is very important.

## ***INTERVIEW 5***

**PEOPLE INTERVIEWED:**      **Mpumalanga Development Forum (Group interview)**

B:     I will ask that we relax. My first question is from your point of view , when did the violence star here in Mpumalanga and also what were the causes?

G:     From my knowledge the violence started here in the township in 1987. In 1985 it was the beginning of political organization activity until 1989.

B:     What were the causes?

G:     There was political intolerance between the organizations.

B:     Do we all agree?

G :     Yes

B:     If I may compare with what was happening in our county, are there things which were happening in other places during that time?

G:     Yes. When we experience violence here in Mpumalanga it was already there in other places such as KwaMashu. The people who were upfront were the IFP, the ANC was still a hidden organizations. So the IFP members knew that people should be already in fear. So the students became aware that there was a new organization which was being formed. During that time the students had already formed an organization called HAYCO. But as time went on, it disappeared and it was substituted by UDF. Most of the young boys from here went to stay in Claremont next to people like Archie Gumede. All this time it was the UDF, there were slight or little talks about the ANC. We did not know exactly.

## ***INTERVIEW 6***

**PERSON INTERVIEWED:**      **Mr. Victor Dladla**  
                                         **IFP representative in the TLC**

I: I think because the truth is that those organizations whose members went to exile did not do so because or for IFP. They did that because they had a conviction that they will come back and march for the freedom of our country. Right, the NP was successful to infiltrate on both sides. That made us to see that on our side we are killed and we need help and the question was where to get help from. So one of the ways was to take the young boys to training, as special constables. Right, but what was going to happen next, no one was prepared to sit down while the army was in the house (UNCLEAR). Now, if I have to come back to Mpumalanga, we have fought and there was a lot of bloodshed and there is no type of gun which was not used here in Mpumalanga, even grenades. I did play a role when there was a fight with the soldiers because there was no other way. If a person was not on your side it meant he was on the other side and it means he must be beaten up (or shot). I think even now, the situation is still the same that is why the violence is still continuing. There came a time where we could see that we are fighting but there is no organization which is winning. Secondly, we did not know exactly what is it that we are fighting for, it was a matter of as long as I am protected, it was no longer a question of who are my enemies, you just hit. It was fortunate that the organizations were able to see that especially the young people. The peace initiative came from then truly speaking. There is a boy who normally come here who is part of those people who started talks with the ANC youth. The ANC youth attacked early in the morning, the other youth also went there to revenge. Then during the day, there was this thing called (isikhonyane) whereby ..... (UNCLEAR) Then the ANC youth did not take those things instead, they asked the other group to sit down and have talks. It was then asked, actually why are we fighting each other, and it was clear that nobody knew the cause of the fight. When they came back to section 4, they were walking together. They made it clear to people that they have not come to fight but for peace talks. Then people started to come closer. From then, there was communication in section 4 and it was a place which was even more problematic.

B: Which year was it?

I: It was in 1990, these fights were very strong during August on the same year. By now there was that communication and there was a person called Nqobizizwe Nkehli who formed a committee on the side of IFP which was to concentrate on peace. It was not the community which was to choose representatives, it was a minister of Development in the old KwaZulu government, he was also a member of the IFP central committee. When he formed this committee, he elected Mlaba as the chairperson. Then this was a suggestion

which was put forward that this peace should be formalized, peace had already started but there was a need for signatories. What I was more grateful about is that there were prayers which were made by those prayers we thought ministers also were members of certain organizations. I used to asked the ministers for which organization are they going to vote (UNCLEAR).

So a person cast a vote for whoever, s/he feels is capable of doing what one think is good. When you vote, you only vote for the brains (intelligence) of a person not that person per se.

(UNCLEAR)

I was not there during the talks in 1990 because I was in hiding for the police as one of the wanted people. I was supposed to have gone to a court case on the 7th January 1990, but I did not appear in court because of the violence, it was not easy to go out. So I continued to hide and I did not have a stable place of residence. I was now living like an animal, I ended up forwarding myself to the police in 1991. I was then sentenced in 1991, April 24, for 36 years but was reduced to 18 years. But what is important is that when I was still in prison, I already had that spirit of talks between the two parties even during the time when I was still running away from the police, this was already in my heart. The situation was in such a way that people could not go to the health clinic, to church and also to the supermarket. There is this place called KaMcoyi, it was like a pot it is where people used to fight. People were separated, a criminal one side, a pure person one side. Even then the situation points that criminals will always be there. Mpumalanga township was known as a butchery. Before the violence there are criminals who were respected because of their acts of crime.

B: So, did this peace happened in 1990 and there was a peace agreement which was signed, and from your point of view how is it going?

I: I think there was a big difference since the signing of this agreement because people were already (UNCLEAR). What I think was left is that the youth was supposed to be included in the lessons which were organized by the National Peace Accord. This training was going to help them go out and market this.

So all in all the youth was able to realize the wrong they were doing. Even now one can see what is happening, if you look in section 3 & 4 it is like one section. People from section 3 have girlfriends or boyfriends in section 4 and vice versa, people are now discovering their relatives. Because during the violence, people could not attend funerals of their relatives who were on the other side or could not ask for help from anyone who

was not on their side. Families were betraying each other. I had a fear that people were going to start this fighting afresh but now within their families. Most fortunately this did not happen. I think the situation presently for the people of Mpumalanga is what is it that we can do for ourselves rather than what the government will do for us. The spirit of organizations, is slowly disappearing from people's hearts. I can now wear a T-shirt for my organization without any fear even when we meet, we can talk about our leaders freely and even joke about them without any fear. This is the type of politics we have here in Mpumalanga, in other words we are a bit westernized.

B: What was the role played by business people.

I: I was very impressed by the fact that always when there were talks, business people were there, from the Hammarsdale Chamber of Industries to Mpumalanga Chamber of Business and Trade and also Taxi Owners. They played a very important role, they helped us with transport, venues for our meetings in such a way that Simpson, was a chairman and convenor of these peace talks. They clearly played a big role although there were outcry that people are starving and they cannot make a plan to employ them. It is a pity that when Mpumalanga entered into life, it could not get a reward quickly, things which touch development seem to be far from Mpumalanga. We have peace but we don't have leaders. If we had leaders, Mpumalanga would be the first place to see that people do not have houses, also encourage the government to develop the housing projects in Mpumalanga. Unfortunately, that did not happen, instead we just saw flames which nearly evoked violence. Fortunately two sides of the ANC & IFP (UNCLEAR) This shows that the government does not respect the presence of peace in Mpumalanga because it cannot give this peace initiative the reward it deserves. If you can look at the place of (UNCLEAR) there are houses which are built for people who live there even though their value is low, but at least there is some satisfaction that this is what one can afford. This was not the case with us. If houses are built, the companies will be able to employ a lot of people which then means people will no longer starve. Another thing is that the youth should no longer be psychologically oppressed. If the youth is oppressed, somebody will see that and then "use" this youth to start another violence, then we will find ourselves in that same situation again. So the lack of recreation and entertainment centres in Mpumalanga is becoming a danger for example, we have a very dull stadium, we do not have a community hall.



B: There is something which puzzles me, I was talking to the youth earlier on, I read about the peace process of Mpumalanga and the role played by business men. There is a trust which was established in 1991 and was supposed to have merged with IDT. IDT was very positive about the proposals from Mpumalanga in connection with what you have already mentioned, a big community hall. If I am not mistaken, there was going to be a hall for each section, there are about 9 sections, there was going to be a community centre with a creche, a resource centre, a library or something like that each area. Now, as I was talking to somebody in Durban who is in fact part of the committee which unites business people and leaders of Mpumalanga it looks like the IDT was prepared to put in money to that development and they were going to try and get money from overseas because there was support for things like that. As you said, I think Mpumalanga should be rewarded because it was able to come to the level it is in now. But to maintain peace you need also to ensure that there is transformation so that people can see that something is happening, there is a change which is taking place in their lives. But I am surprised that with the little time I have spent here in Mpumalanga I have seen little development and my problem is what has happened to that committee.

I: It is true that there is no development. You see what is happening is a disgrace when committees are being formed, the speaker look at those in the audience who are going to give him a applause and those are the people who are going to be nominated. People are not nominated because of their ability to think. I was complimenting the youth committee of ward 4. I appreciated their work, I went to attend their meeting, all the leaders who are members of the committee are known by the community. In Mpumalanga it is a different case altogether, the committees for different organizations meet and caucus and when they go to the community hall only few men sit up front and all those who were part of the caucus become part of the rest of the community and applaud the speakers. Only three or four people will be nominated that is not democracy. So now it means you have to compliment the people who have been brought before you, if you do not it will be like you are not in favour of development in Mpumalanga. Yet there is a difference, we do want development but the question is, how do we want it to come. Also we need to look into the question of what is development. Sometimes one may think is talking about development whilst s/he is talking about the development of informal settlements. At the end of the day we need to establish very clearly, what kind of development are we talking about. Like I have already said that we have peace in Mpumalanga but it needs leaders. But I have a fear that if Mpumalanga continues with this situation of demagoguism, any leader which may come up I have a fear that we can beat him up. You can see what is



happening, here in Mpumalanga if you can try to come up with a new leader, it means you are against peace. You see, now I was busy with the nominations, I have heard that there is another committee in section 3 which have good proposals. I thought some of their will pass (emkhandlwini) in the council but unfortunately, that was not the case, they were kicked out. After that, a community meeting was called and a new committee was formed. I was very surprised and I asked myself what is happening exactly in Mpumalanga. The committee was known as Zamokuhle and it was started by ANC members. They built beautiful tin shacks and unfortunately it was destroyed.

So I (UNCLEAR)

I was waiting to hear what are they going to say and also if they are going to destroy it. I was very clever, I joined it with my committee and I was waiting to see who will come to my committee.

- B: I think it is a problem of power but as we know in politics the problem is always about power. In most cases it is very rare to find politicians who dedicate themselves that they will always work for the community really. In most cases politicians work to see their organization surviving even in the following year. That disturbs the progress of development to reach the people on the ground. There is also an outcry from the youth that there is no communication between them and the prominent leaders of Mpumalanga.
- I: You know, the youth is like a horse you know when the horse is walking, it keeps looking on the sides and you will not beat it to look in front, it will only do that when it is running fast. So the youth is like that yet the leaders should accept the youth and keep them closer to them, so that there can be communication between the new generation and them. We can get educated and have our gowns but there is something which we cannot take away from elderly people, that is the knowledge of what they have experience. We need that knowledge in order to compare it with what we have. That helps us to maintain that communication. That has to continue until the 5th generation. Presently, we have a western sub-structure and we have people who are in the Transitional Metropolitan Council. The west does not have a healthy relationship even amongst its councillors but the situation is calling all black councillors to come together, but white people are united. When they speak in meetings you will hear them saying agreed, agreed. So from this we are able to see that what we are talking about here has long been discussed, we are just here to endorse. I usually tell the young people of Mpumalanga that we are just here to endorse, all these things have long been agreed upon even with the budget, they will only mention Pinetown and nothing will be said about Mpumalanga. We cannot meet with the

TLC, what is the reason, why are we afraid of each other? This shows that in leadership we have individuals who join the organization because of personal interests, they want to benefit certain things from the organization. These are some of the things which I think are going to take us back. Right now there is this committee which has been formed for community development. I was going to tell them to send Thuba because they are being recognized by the community. If you walk in the streets, people are able to recognize or see the work of this committee. Presently, I cannot accept anything concerning the youth which will come from individuals without first consulting them. But I can accept it if it comes from another committee but I will first have to know what does the community and the youth say about that committee so that I do not disturb democracy. There are some who came and I told them that I will need a letter from the youth committee which states everything because this committee is impartial it does not entertain anything which is political. It is true that they want to have recreation centres, they are tennis courts, volley ball grounds and also community halls where the youth can be entertained. For example if they invite a music artist, there will certainly be a problem of venue.

B: From your point of view what was the role played by the churches in bringing peace?

I: Personally, I think ministers did play a role although they were a bit doubtful during the time when violence was too high they disappeared but when peace was initiated they were able to see that and they came to bless it. When you enter here in Mpumalanga, there is a turn-off there are crosses which were put by church people. Those were some of the ways which were used towards making peace. It was believed that maybe if we can kneel down and pray there will be peace in Mpumalanga. Unfortunately, there was not enough communication with the leaders.

There was no way in which violence could end without political leaders being involved. The person who is the cause of violence should have or get the spirit of God so that s/he can be able to see how much damage has been done by perpetrating violence. I think it was the business people who acted fast and encouraged peace talks to take place. But I still believe that if God was not included there would be no peace. That is why meetings were opened with a word of prayer. Even now I think the church is still faced with a challenge to encourage the spirit of reconciliation within the leadership of Mpumalanga. Because if there is no spirit of reconciliation there will be no progress. I think the ministers stand a better chance, it is their time to lead the leadership but at the same time they should not fall into a trap of finding themselves affiliated in certain organizations.

Leaders in Mpumalanga are not united It will not be a surprise to hear that there is a new committee which has just been formed and that creates conflicts. The main problem now is the way in which has just been formed and that creates conflicts. The main problem now is the way in which development can be introduced. But this is mostly in the youth of IFP and ANC but also the elderly have their way of looking at things. I do not agree that there are things which can happen here in Mpumalanga which the members of parliament does not know about yet he is in our midst. Gandhi said that a true leadership is that which has the wisdom of different people". There is a danger about a person who always have the mind of delivering what people do not want. You will give people a snake and yet thy were expecting a fish.

B: My brother, the last thing, I am aware I have taken most of your time, what does the name Mpumalanga mean, what is its importance concerning this place?

I: This name Mpumalanga I really do not know what it means. I do not know the history but I know that it was named Mpumalanga when the township was built. The white people were removing people from their original places to the township. So they saw that as the rising of the sun because they were given beautiful houses. Most of them were not aware that, that was another form of oppression. People were given 4 roomed houses which were not big enough to accommodate the whole family and there was no way one could extend the house. I think this is one of the reasons why the township was called Mpumalanga.

It was not named by residents of Mpumalanga, we do not know the people who named this place and for what purpose. But, presently this name seem to sound nice because from 1986-90 this place was like Ntshonalanga. I think presently this name suits very well to this township. But for it to be Mpumalanga we will have to see if the sun does rise. This will be seen by making sure that people get employment. These are some of the things that need special attention. Right now offices are going to be opened, what will happen is that it will depend on whether one knows any person who is in authority in order to be employed otherwise a person from outside will be employed.

B: I think that is our problem and a weakness we have, this also happens even in the government that we presently have.

I: Forget about this government, you see this government belongs to us those who were struggling for peace. You just have to collect your degrees. In 1999 when you come with you degrees (UNCLEAR)

Have you ever seen a government with so many ministers and still remain liberal. This is so because there are people like us who are from the war, so we must get first share then you can follow with the mission of developing the country. What we appreciate now is that we have liberated the country from the white oppressor who believed that God gave them black people to oppress.

B: My brother I am very thankful, I wish that peace can continue in Mpumalanga. We also come from places which are still engulfed by violence we hope they will learn from you.

I: But you must be careful not to oppress the young people, they become more dangerous if they realize that.

B: Let us believe that our leaders will take this issue very seriously.

