

**THE INFLUENCE OF APOSTOLIC BELIEFS AND PRACTICES ON COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT IN A RURAL COMMUNITY IN ZIMBABWE: IMPLICATIONS FOR  
SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE**

**by**

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# DECLARATION

I, Admire Phineas Chimbera hereby declare that this dissertation submitted to the University of Limpopo for degree purposes has not been previously submitted to any other institution of higher learning. I further acknowledge that the work presented in this study is entirely my own work except where sources are acknowledged.

Signature:.....

Date:.....

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# ABSTRACT

Religious beliefs and practices have become a common feature of human life in Zimbabwe as they are executed by the fast-growing number of apostolic churches in almost every community. This study sought to explore the impact of apostolic beliefs and practices on community development in the context of the Johanne Marange Apostolic Church in Ward 12, Nyanga District in Zimbabwe. Community development is a strategy used in the practice and execution of community work and is relevant in uplifting community standards since it is based on the principles of social justice, equality, empowerment and social change focusing on human development with a special emphasis on communities. Community development is premised on the primary purpose of building the capacity of people to work as a collective in producing tangible and sustainable benefits to address their common challenges.

To understand how apostolic beliefs and practices impact on community development, the study focused on the following objectives. To identify apostolic beliefs that contribute to community development; to describe the role played by apostolic churches in community development; and to establish which of apostolic practices contribute to community development.

The study adopted a qualitative approach in exploring the impact of apostolic beliefs and practices on community development. The qualitative approach was useful in understanding the subject under investigation and it gave the research participants an opportunity to freely share their experiences and thoughts about their church. The study used the exploratory-descriptive design to examine the relationship between apostolic beliefs and practices and community development. It also used convenient and purposive sampling to get the appropriate participants for the study.

The data was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews by interviewing individual participants. The participants were long time members of the church as well as a social worker employed by a local NGO. The data collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews was analysed using thematic content analysis following the Creswell's six steps of data analysis.

The aim of the study was achieved as the study revealed that apostolic beliefs and practices do contribute to community development. It was observed that the belief system of apostolic churches inspires several roles and practices which the apostolic members perform leading to community development. These roles include respect of leaders, self-reliance, encouraging trust, conflict prevention and peace building as well as the provision of social care and assistance. However, it was also revealed that some of the beliefs and practices of the church have impacted negatively with community development. This was revealed in instances where the apostolic churches have been involved in violent clashes with law enforcement agents because of their abuse of human rights including domestic violence, abuse of women and children resulting in early marriages and rape.

The study concluded that apostolic beliefs and practices contribute to the success of community development largely by creating a conducive and enabling environment for community development initiatives to flourish. However, there are other instances where it was concluded that instead of facilitating the success of community development, apostolic beliefs and practices actually pose a risk to the development of the community because of some of their beliefs and practices that perpetuate the violation of human rights.

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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABCD	-	Asset Based Community Development
ACCZ	-	Apostolic Churches Council of Zimbabwe
AIAC	-	African Initiated Apostolic Churches
AIDS	-	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CBO	-	Community Based Organisation
CCJP	-	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
EMA	-	Environmental Management Agency
ESAP	-	Economic Structural Adjustment Programs
FBO	-	Faith Based Organisation
HIV	-	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
INGO	-	International Non-Governmental Organisation
JMAC	-	Johanne Masowe Apostolic Church
MICS	-	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organisation
TCA	-	Thematic Content Analysis
WCC	-	World Council of Churches
ZANU PF	-	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZCC	-	Zimbabwe Council of Churches

# CHAPTER 1

## GENERAL ORIENTATION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Community development remains one of the main model of community work commonly used in social work practice (Weyers, 2011). The point of departure of this study is to focus on the impact of apostolic beliefs and practices of an African initiated church (Johanne Marange Apostolic Church) on community development. Community development practice has defined and is often cited as the birth of the social work profession (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2009). Social workers use community development practices to facilitate the development of strong and morally grounded communities. The development of strong communities has long been a tenet of the social work profession (Shulman, 2012). These strong communities play a protective role in human development by offering conducive communities that provide for all the community members' needs.

According to Butterfield and Chisanga (2008), community development is focused on improving the lives of community members, with specific attention to those areas that form the bonds of their membership in their communities. The social work profession's early community development efforts are notable for setting a practice agenda that called for a simultaneous focus on the inter-relationships of the individuals and the community's development (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2009). In support of the above observations, Weyers (2011) explained that community development is based on the perception that community members are ultimately in the best position to develop themselves and their own communities and to eliminate the obstacles that impede this process. It was in line with these early observations by the scholars cited above, that the researcher found it imperative to explore the contribution of apostolic beliefs and practices to community development. This was motivated by the idea that the apostolic beliefs and practices form part of the social bond and subsequently becoming a form of inter-relationship between members of the community under investigation.

In this study, the researcher was arguing from a strengths perspective that communities have inherent strengths and resources and the capacity to positively address their own challenges. In that context, community development work is directed at strengthening, empowering, and building community capacity in the face of the challenges that might be faced by communities (Gamble & Weil, 2008; Streeter, 2008; Weyers, 2011). Thus, the viability of community development draws on the assets of the diverse stakeholders who are involved in the community and how those assets are used to address the community challenges (Council on Accreditation of Services for Children and Families, 2008). The researcher found it viable to explore apostolic beliefs and practices as assets possessed by the apostolic members, who are significant stakeholders in the community under study and establish how they contribute to the development of the community.

The researcher was pre-occupied with the idea of the tremendous growth of apostolic churches hence the beliefs and practices of these churches flourishing and becoming a dominating characteristic in almost every community in Zimbabwe. These beliefs and practices were viewed as the assets possessed by the community members that are being used in addressing community challenges hence facilitating community development or upsetting the efforts of community development.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND**

This study is premised on the fact that religious resilience in the form of apostolic churches has proved to be one of the greatest surprises and a notable characteristic of almost every community in the recent decades in Zimbabwe (Ha, Salama, Gwavuya & Kanjala, 2014). Apostolic beliefs in the pretext of religious faith have become one of the most diverse human characteristic that can be found in Zimbabwe as well as other countries and regions of the world that embrace religious tolerance and diversity. Clarke (2013) and O'Brien and Palmer (2007) supports this assertion by arguing that 80% of the world's population profess religious faith, making religious beliefs a common human characteristic found in all cultures and societies.

Apostolic beliefs can be both a private concern for individual beings and a macro social force that can help make up or bring down every community. These beliefs provide meaning for existence through which those who adhere to them interpret

their own circumstances and make decisions on how to act and interact in wider society. Apostolic beliefs influence the way in which those who uphold such beliefs respond and contribute to community development efforts initiated from outside bodies such as government as well as the general community which do not form part of the belief circle (Clarke, 2013).

Apostolic beliefs are based on religious tenets concerning how to live a righteous life including how to respond to those who are materially poor. According to Clarke (2013), for many religious institutions and individuals motivated by religious faith, concern for the physical welfare of those living in poverty is equal to the provision of spiritual nourishment. Clarke (2013) further argues that while religious organisations are primarily concerned with providing spiritual leadership, an interest in the physical welfare of their communities is also a core aspect of their existence. This will go a long way in uplifting the living standards of the other congregants within the same belief thereby aiding development in people's personal lives. Clarke and Donnelly (2009) are of the view that religious organisations and faith-inspired individuals were undertaking development long before the concept of development came into being.

It is in this very scope of religious beliefs that there are apostolic beliefs in Zimbabwe that are contributing to the upliftment of people's lives through meeting their spiritual as well as material requirements. The World Conference of Religions for Peace concluded in 2001, that:

'religious communities are without question the largest and best organised civil institutions in the world today claiming the allegiance of billions of believers and bringing the divides of race, class and nationality. They are uniquely equipped to meet the challenges of our time: resolving conflict, caring for the sick and needy, promoting peaceful co-existence among all people' (James, 2009).

Thus, in line with the above observation, religious beliefs have contributed in enhancing community cohesion as well as encouraging the existence of a conducive environment where community development can thrive.

Zimbabwe has been one of the strongholds of the African Initiated Apostolic churches (AIAC). Although the exact following of the Apostolic movement in the country has not been determined with certainty, the best available estimates from the

existing Demographic and Health Surveys and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), indicates a rather rapid growth of the group from 20% of the population in 1994 and 21, 5% in 1997 to 27% in 2009 (Central Statistics Office & Macro International, 1995; Machingura, 2011; Zimbabwe Statistics Agency, 2010). These statistics would put the current population following the apostolic faith at 3, 5 million and transfers into a 1, 4 million increase over the 15-year period (Ha *et al* 2014).

### 1.3 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

- **Impact** – in the context of this study, impact means the effects on community development.
- **Apostolic** – connected with the Biblical Apostles or their teachings, which are considered to have had authority passed down to them from Christ. Apostolic followers are referred as ‘*Vapostori*’ in Shona language.
- **Beliefs** – a strong feeling that something exists or is true that people believe in, especially as part of their religion.
- **Apostolic beliefs** – form of religious conviction with a strong inclination and connection towards the Biblical Apostles and their teachings which are believed to be a direct authority from God.
- **Apostolic practices** – the way of putting into action the apostolic beliefs and ideas.
- **Community** – a social grouping of people sharing the same environment normally with shared interests, the identity of whom and their degree of cohesiveness is influenced by the extent of their collective intent, beliefs, resources, preferences, needs, risks and several other conditions (Maruta, 2010).
- **Community development** – a process whereby community members come together to take collective action to achieve planned change or evolution in all aspects of community well-being that is, economic, social, religious, environmental and cultural as well as generate solutions to their common problems (Smith, 1999).

### 1.4 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN ZIMBABWE

While there may be several macro level theories with implications for direct practice in social work, the researcher was of the belief that community development is the most practical framework for social workers seeking lasting change for individuals

and the communities and societies in which they live. According to Tan (2009) and Weyers (2011), community development focuses on the centrality of oppressed people in the process of overcoming externally imposed social problems and social work, at its foundation, shares much in common with the tenets of Community Development. Mendes (2009) defined social work as a professional intervention to address situations of personal distress and crisis by shaping and changing the social environment in which people live. Community development is defined as the employment of community structures to address social needs and empower groups of people (Mendes, 2009). The unique focus on the employment of community structures in the process of change stems from Community Development Theory's roots in sociology, as opposed to the psychology-based theories of micro level social work practice. Community Development Theory is a framework capable of bridging the micro-macro divide in social work, the tenets of this theory have implications for the ways clinicians view and engage with clients as well as the ways social workers can seek to make large-scale change within a community (Tan 2009). In light of the tenets of the community development theory explained above, the researcher sought to understand how apostolic beliefs and practices as executed by a local structure (JMAC) are being used to address the needs of their members and empowering them to fully function in the community.

York (1984) summarizes the foci of Community Development as the organization of community agencies, the developing of local competences, and political action for change. Paiva (1997) calls the theories tenets structural change, socioeconomic integration, institutional development, and renewal. Pandey (1981) refers to the strategies of Community Development as distributive, participative, and human development. Schiele, Jackson and Fairfax (2005) summarizes the work of Community Development as collective problem solving, self-help, and empowerment. Payne (2014) refers to developing social capital, social inclusion and exclusion, and capacity building. Each of the above authors may offer their own perspective and language in the description of Community Development, however, the general truths are common in all of their work and descriptions of the tenets of community development.

According to Maruta (2010), community development in Zimbabwe have been fronted and undertaken through the following key players: central government, local

government, international nongovernmental organisations (INGOs), local nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs) and private sector companies. Government has the primary obligation to engender community development as part of its public responsibility. Every government has certain responsibilities for its citizens. Among these is the obligation to ensure a decent standard of living for all the population of the country. To that end, therefore, governments put up such infrastructure as roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, and recreational facilities. In some cases, they also intervene to improve the lives of disadvantaged members of the population by promoting income generating and other projects in their communities (Maruta, 2010).

In Zimbabwe, there are government ministries and departments dedicated to community development. The efforts of central government are complemented by those of local government institutions within specific geographic units of the country, like a district, city or town. Partly due to limited resources but mainly in the name of participatory governance, both central government and local authorities in Zimbabwe have taken to working with local groups to facilitate their community development (Maruta, 2010).

The projects that donor organisations often support are identified by communities under the leadership of their associations or the local authorities. Support also comes from central government in response to needs expressed by communities, under the leadership of their associations or the local authorities and by NGOs working in conjunction with or through local authorities or CBOs. Thus whether the funding comes to the community directly or through central government or NGOs, the implementation of the projects is carried out with the active involvement of the local community groups (Maruta 2010).

According to Maruta (2010), NGOs are the organisations mainly associated with community development work, at least in the minds of recipient communities. However, their work is carried out almost invariably with or through CBOs which are in contrast generally less visible. These CBOs are mostly run at local level with the assistance of social workers working under government authorities. Thus, social work became apparent to community development using community development as an intervention method in the quest to enhance human well-being in societies. Social



workers work in the social sphere, mobilising people from the community and encouraging them to form partnerships with government and international agencies.

The upsurge in apostolic faith and beliefs has coincided with the downward spiral of the Zimbabwean economy in almost every sector and the consequent stagnation of community development. This has seen religious groupings, apostolic sects included, coming up with their own initiatives to cater for their livelihoods as well as developing their communities where they are situated. This has also added on government efforts in trying to resuscitate development in communities. This has also led to people to notice that faith based organisations are engaged in a variety of community development activities and that in some instances their outcomes often surpass public or government efforts.

Religious beliefs and practices of Johanne Marange Apostolic church have a bearing on the members' economic and social activities and ultimately community development. It was therefore the focus of this study to find out how these beliefs and practices influence community development

## **1.5 RELIGION, CHRISTIANITY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

According to Iannaccone (1998) there is abundant evidence that affirms that religious belief affects a wide range of behavioural outcomes and religious activity can affect economic performance at the level of the individual, group, or country through at least two channels. In the wealth of nations participation in religious sects could potentially convey two economic advantages to adherents (Anderson, 1988). The first could be as a reputational signal, while the poor might look alike to potential employers, lenders, and customers, membership in a good sect could convey a reduction in risk associated with the particular individual. Second, sects could also provide for extra-legal means of establishing trust and sanctioning wrongdoers in intragroup transactions, reducing uncertainty and improving efficiency, especially where civil remedies for failure to uphold contracts were weak (Noland, 2005).

In the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Weber (1905/2002) contended that the Protestant Reformation was critical to the rise of capitalism through its impact on belief systems. Weber (1905/2002) argued that the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and the associated notion of the "calling" were essential for

transforming attitudes toward economic activity and wealth accumulation. The result was a “this-worldly asceticism,” which focused adherents on diligent, efficient economic activity, thrift, and non-ostentatious accumulation of wealth, which he saw as the bedrock of modern capitalism. Thus, in line with Weber’s argument, the researcher was convinced to conclude that religion and Christianity do influence community development.

According to Tu, Bulte and Tan (2011) economists have long considered the relation between religion and economic performance. Religion is closely related to social capital, culture, and informal institutions. As in the broader literature on development and institutions, the nature of this relation is characterized by mutual feedback mechanisms. Demand for religion may be determined by economic factors and development, but economic outcomes are not invariant with respect to religion either. Development raises the opportunity cost of time spent in religious participation, and modern lifestyles shield people from the vagaries of nature, possibly undermining beliefs in the supernatural. Conversely, religiosity matters for development because time spent praying is unavailable for work-related activities (a costly effect, operating via the “input side” of the religious process), or because religion promotes certain norms and traits in people that may, or may not, be conducive to work and savings (an effect via the “output side” of the religious process). Examples of traits conducive to income are work ethic, honesty, thrift, and trust. Moreover, religion may impact on economic outcomes via a social capital or networking mechanism (Tu, Bulte & Tan, 2011).

In Zimbabwe, community development is mainly facilitated by religious faith organisations through Christian based NGOs such as World Vision and Christian Care which the researcher used as examples among others. According to Bornstein (2002) in the late 1990s, faith-based NGOs were at the forefront of providing economic development for Zimbabwe. The national economy during this time was a context of increasing disparity between the few that benefited from neoliberal economic restructuring and the majority of the population for whom structural adjustment policies meant daily economic hardship (Bond, 1998; Potts & Mutambirwa, 1998). It was in this setting that the work of faith based NGOs in development increased in prominence. The role of NGOs in processes of democratization and in debates surrounding the strength of states versus civil

society in Africa has been analysed extensively (Bratton, 1989; Moyo, 1991; Riddell & Robinson, 1995; Sachikonye, 1995; Vivian, 1994). How Christian organizations factor into such processes, however, is still a relatively specialized field of inquiry (Chepkwony, 1987; Gifford, 1994; Jenkins, 1994; Petersen, 1987; Quarles van Ufford & Schoffeleers, 1988; Ranger, 1987).

According to Bornstein (2002) Christian NGOs in Africa emerged from a history of missionaries who provided economic development services during the colonial era. Before NGOs, missionaries were at the forefront of covering agricultural assistance, education, and self-help programs for Africans where colonial states did not (Chepkwony Ongaro, 1991; Gundani, 1988; Hallencreutz, 1988; Maxwell, 1995; Ranger, 1987). In many ways, faith-based NGOs in Zimbabwe occupy a similar social space to missionaries of earlier eras, at times collaborating with states and at others resisting state policies (Ranger, 1962; Zvobgo, 1996). After independence, NGOs assisted in what were sometimes intrusive state-led development programs that echoed the civilizing gaze of earlier missionary endeavours (Alexander & McGregor, 2000; Robins, 1994; Worby, 1998). In the late 1990s, however, development was less state-led than NGO-driven. NGOs received funds directly from international sources and performed much of the work that a radically downsized Zimbabwean state could no longer accomplish (Bornstein, 2002). The strength and urgency of NGO work in relation to the weakness of state development efforts may in fact be correlated to liberalizing trends driving Economic Structural Adjustment Programs (ESAP) in the region (Hanlon, 2000).

Bornstein, (2002) is of the view that economic development in Zimbabwe is a religious act for some of the key people involved. Faith in the work of World Vision and Christian Care frames development practice in administrative offices where development is conceived and managed at rural project sites where development takes place. NGOs share a great deal in terms of Christian, humanitarian philosophy and overall objectives, such as the eradication of rural poverty. World Vision is a transnational, evangelical, NGO that operates in 95 countries, including Zimbabwe. It was founded in the late 1940s in the United States and is funded primarily through child-sponsorship, the practice whereby sponsors send monthly remittances toward the assistance of needy children. World Vision began its work in Zimbabwe in the mid-1970s, assisting orphans from the liberation struggle (Bornstein, 2002).

Christian Care, in contrast, is the development arm of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC). Linked to the global ecumenical body, the World Council of Churches (WCC), it began its work in Zimbabwe assisting political detainees during the liberation war. Christian Care and World Vision both work in collaboration with local churches and with the Zimbabwean state. Christian faith is presented in a different type in each organizational mission. While World Vision has specific corporate rituals that provide structure for the faith of its employees and the recipients of its aid, Christian Care's faith base is less formal, arising from structural linkages to local churches that constitute its membership and governing bodies. Despite differences in history and orientation, Christianity provide a dynamic rubric for development in NGOs, faith is the frame through which employee performance is evaluated and through which employees evaluate each other. Faith also provide the logic for the development work of the Christian based NGOs.

The researcher thus argue that apostolic beliefs and practices contribute to community development in the case under investigation. This was after considering the fact that the JMAC affiliates to the Zimbabwe Council of Churches and the Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe which are national faith bodies involved in development work in the country.

## **1.6 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The Apostolic beliefs and practices, a rapidly growing and increasingly influential religious and spiritual force in Zimbabwe, have received a lot of attention in a wide variety of available literature (Machingura, 2011; Sibanda, Makahamadze & Maposa, 2008; Machingura & Nyakuhwa, 2015) due to its potential role in shaping its followers' attitudes and behaviours towards their approach to various spheres of life. The majority of existing literature, however, have mainly examined other issues of the apostolic beliefs for instance issues that has to do with the apostolic members' attitudes towards health seeking behaviours (Maguranyanga, 2011), healing practices (Mabvurira, Makhubele & Shirindi, 2015) and their spirituality (Mukonyora, 1998). Therefore, there is little research that has been done in recognition of some of the notable contribution of apostolic beliefs and practices towards development of their communities.

The lack of research in terms of the contribution of apostolic beliefs and practices to community development has created a gap as well as an imbalance of approach in terms of the available literature about apostolic beliefs and practices. The imbalance of approach has prompted this research with a quest to examine the impact of apostolic beliefs and practices on community development initiatives in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, there is need to position the role of social work as a profession in working with apostolic members preferably in an African environment in trying to incorporate apostolic beliefs and practices in community development initiatives.

## **1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

This study was premised on the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) theory which was used in conjunction with the Strength-Based Perspective as its theoretical frameworks.

### **1.7.1 Asset Based Community Development theory**

Asset-based community development is a community development process that 'is asset-based, internally focussed and relationship driven' (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). According to Maruta (2010), the methodology starts with what is present in the community, the capacities of its residents and workers, the associational and institutional base of the area, not with what is absent, problematic, or what the community needs. Being internally-focussed, the development strategy concentrates first of all upon the agenda-building and problem-solving capacities of local residents, local associations and local institutions. Being relationship driven, it points to the importance of and the need to constantly build and rebuild the relationships between and among those local residents, associations and institutions (Maruta, 2010).

By focusing on "the glass half full" (rather than half empty), ABCD diverges from conventional development agency practice that defines communities by their problems and deficiencies (Mathie, 2006). Maruta (2010) is in support of this when he argues that it is an approach to working with communities that emphasizes people's assets, rather than their deficiencies, and encourages the mobilizing of community assets to meet opportunities for genuine community-driven or citizen-driven development.

The approach has a transformative effect on the individual member of the group or community, on the social relations between and among individuals, and on the relations citizen groups have with each other and with external agencies (Mathie, 2006). The methodology has emerged globally as a rejection of deficit community development models, where communities have to demonstrate all the things they lack in order to win resources. A community that inquires into problems will keep finding problems while a community that attempts to appreciate what is best in itself will discover assets (Maruta, 2010). ABCD takes as its starting point these existing assets, particularly the strengths inherent in community based associations and social networks, and mobilises these, alongside tangible assets such as land and buildings, to create new economic and social opportunities (O'Leary, 2009).

The asset-based community development theory falls under the strength-based approaches of development. However, Maruta (2010) warns that despite being glamorous and perhaps desirable the strength-based approaches might sound, the process of switching to them away from the more traditional deficit model is fraught with challenges. The first is that any prospect and process of change is always a difficult one. Donor and intermediary organisations which are used to telling communities what to 'do or die' will not be comfortable with the loss of power that the strength-based approaches entail. Recipient communities on their part, used to being pitied, might not take too kindly to being asked to 'fend' for themselves. Another is that the change might not be in line with the political agenda of some funding organisations, as a result intermediary NGOs who opt for it might risk losing funding support. As the main priority for many NGOs is institutional sustainability, this might be a very difficult decision to take. Therefore, while the changeover has already begun, the process will be very slow indeed (Maruta, 2010).

The ABCD theory was suitable for the study since the main focus was on apostolic beliefs and practices and how they impact on community development. The researcher was concerned mainly with the relationship that exists between apostolic beliefs and practices and community development with a special emphasis on how this relationship can be tapped to enhance community development. The researcher, thus, started by viewing apostolic beliefs and practices as the capacity that the community members possess. The researcher was convinced through the lenses of this theory that promote internal focus rather than outside factors, that the apostolic

beliefs and practices possessed by the community members actually enhances their problem-solving capacities thereby aiding to their own wellbeing. Through this theory, the researcher was able to focus on the positive relationship between apostolic beliefs and practices and community development rather than focusing on the members' deficiencies.

### **1.7.2 Strengths Based Perspective**

According to Kisthardt (1997), the strengths based perspective was formally developed in the 1980s at the University of Kansas as a case management approach for work with adults with mental health problems. The strengths perspective is based on the belief that individuals possess abilities and inner resources that allow them to cope effectively with the challenges of living (Rothman, 1994). Brun and Rapp (2001) further, argued that even individuals normally seen as hopeless, intractable and resistant to accept assistance are assumed able to make significant strides in facing difficult challenges when assisted in rediscovering their abilities. Furthermore, these individuals are allowed to retain control of their lives to activate personal strengths. The strengths perspective holds that when a helping agent focuses on pathology and deficits they cripple the individual's ability to transcend life challenges (Holmes & Saleebey, 1993).

According to Rapp and Chamberlain (1985), strengths-based case management is a specific implementation of the overall strengths perspective, combining a focus on client strengths and self-direction with three other principles: (1) promoting the use of informal helping networks, (2) offering assertive community involvement by case managers, and (3) emphasizing the relationship between client and case managers. Thus it can be argued that each principle indicated above supports the resource acquisition activities that characterize case management.

Oliver (2006) has propounded five (5) key characteristics of strength based approach as follows:

- The belief that all people, families and communities have the capacity for continual growth and that their untapped abilities and resources can help resolve their current problems. The helper's primary task is to systematically help the client to identify and access these abilities and resources.

- The belief that clients are the experts of their own lives and have the best insight into what they need to be successful. This means the helper's role is not to tell clients what to do, but to listen to and support their perspective on their situation. The helper-client relationship is collaborative and respects client's capacity to make their own choices.
- The belief that clients' best achieve success by pursuing what is important to them. When people set their own goals they become motivated to meet them and when they connect with their intrinsic strengths they access what they need to reach their goals. This means the work is centred on the client's goals. In an on-going process, the helper supports clients to identify small goals which will lead to the experience of success which motivates them to continue.
- The belief that language is important. When clients are supported to talk about areas of strength and success it changes the way they see themselves and opens up new hope and possibilities. Problems are not ignored, but they are not the focus of attention. This means that the helper's task is to expand all interactions with the client to include other areas of the client's life and in particular to 'talk up' success and examples of resilience.
- The belief that clients are part of a broader community which is rich in formal and informal resources. One key resource is the collaborative helper-client relationship, which should generate much of the motivation and empowerment needed for the work. The helper uses this relationship to support the client to engage in community resources and this engagement provides the client with an important sense of connection and agency.

In light of all the above expositions, in the study, the researcher explored the apostolic activities that are based and derived upon their beliefs and practices as their strengths that they possess and how they collaborate towards community development. These strengths were explored in relation to the general community development initiatives by government, community developers and donor agencies and how tapping on these apostolic beliefs and practices can actually add value in the process of developing communities.



## **1.8 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

### **1.8.1 Aim**

The aim of the study was to explore the impact of apostolic beliefs and practices on community development in the context of the Johanne Marange Apostolic Church in Ward 12, Nyanga District in Zimbabwe.

### **1.8.2 Objectives**

The objectives of the study were to:

- Identify apostolic beliefs that contribute towards community development.
- Describe the role played by apostolic churches in community development.
- Establish which of apostolic practices contribute to community development.

## **1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **1.9.1 Research Approach**

The research approach for this study was qualitative in nature. Qualitative research can be understood as an interpretive, naturalistic, constructivist, ethnographic and fieldwork are variously employed to designate the broad collection of approaches. Qualitative research methods were developed in the social sciences to enable researchers to study social and cultural phenomena and it is data that is usually not in the form of numbers. Qualitative research is an inductive approach, and its goal is to gain a deeper understanding of a person's or group's experience. Nevertheless, qualitative approaches to research are based on a "world view" which is holistic (Neuman, 2003; Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006).

According to Babbie and Mouton (2011), qualitative research refers to that generic research approach in social research according to which research takes as its departure point the insider perspective on social action. Qualitative researchers always attempt to study human action from the perspective of the social actors themselves, often referred to as 'emic' perspective. Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest and Namey (2005), also explained that qualitative research seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves and is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific

information about the values, opinions, behaviours, and social contexts of particular populations.

The primary goal of studies using this approach is defined as describing and understanding '*verstehen*' rather than explaining human behaviour (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). The researcher adopted the qualitative research approach for this study since the aim was to explore and describe the contribution of apostolic beliefs and practices in community development. This is supported by Mack *et al* (2005), who outlined that qualitative methods are also effective in identifying intangible factors, such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity, and religion, whose role in the research issue may not be readily apparent.

### **1.9.2 Research Design**

In this study, the researcher made use of the exploratory-descriptive research design. According to Babbie and Mouton (2011), exploratory research is used to make preliminary investigations into relatively unknown areas of research. They employ an open, flexible and inductive approach to research as they attempt to look for new insights into phenomena. However descriptive research is aimed to describe phenomena accurately, either through narrative type's descriptions, (Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). Therefore, the use of the exploratory-descriptive design enabled the researcher to examine the relationship between apostolic beliefs and practices as well as observing them with the intention of describing how they contribute to community development.

### **1.9.3 Population and Sampling**

Babbie and Mouton (2011), described sampling as the process of selecting observations for the study. The population of this study was made up of selected members and leaders of Johanne Marange Apostolic Church in Ward 12, Nyanga District in Zimbabwe. These research participants were selected members of the church who are involved in notable community development activities and making significant positive changes in their lives and that of their dependents and helping their folks in the church. Local Church leaders were also part of the research population.

The researcher limited the sample of the study to two (2) local church leaders, five (5) church members involved in notable community development activities and a social worker employed by a non-governmental organisation working in Ward 12 of Nyanga District in Zimbabwe. The population size was limited considering the time frame which was available to conduct the study as well as the objectives of the study which were limited as well. Mack *et al* (2005) supports the above when they explained that sample sizes may or may not be fixed prior to data collection, depending on the resources and time available, as well as the study's objectives. Mack *et al* (2005) further explained that purposive sample sizes are often determined on the basis of theoretical saturation (the point in data collection when new data no longer bring additional insights to the research questions).

The researcher used convenience, purposive and snow-ball sampling techniques in the process of getting to the desired participants. Purposive or judgmental sampling, in qualitative research, involves the investigator or interviewer selecting cases that can shed light on the object of study (Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). Sampling is based on purpose and judgement rather than statistical probability of selection. Participants were selected for their ability to provide rich information rather than based on complete understanding of the topic. The researcher approached the church leaders first since they are the ones with adequate knowledge of the church and its doctrine. Snow-balling technique was then used following up on other church members as advised by the church leaders.

Mack *et al* (2005) argued that purposive sampling is one of the most common sampling strategies which groups participants according to preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question. Purposive sampling is therefore most successful when data review and analysis are done in conjunction with data collection. In this regard, the researcher purposively selected the church leaders for the study who later linked the researcher to other church members who were useful for the study. Thus, the researcher only targeted those members whom he deemed to be appropriate to give the needed information basing on their membership to the church, positions they hold and their involvement in economic development activities. Convenience sampling is useful in studying sub sets of a population that

are judged to serve the research interest not understanding the whole population (Blanche *et al*, 2006).

Furthermore, the researcher made use of the snowballing technique from the church leaders to identify members involved in notable economic development activities. According to Mack *et al* (2005), snowballing (chain referral sampling) is considered a type of purposive sampling. In this method, participants or informants with whom contact has already been made use their social networks to refer the researcher to other people who could potentially participate in or contribute to the study. Mack *et al* (2005) further explained that snowball sampling is often used to find and recruit “hidden populations,” that is, groups not easily accessible to researchers through other sampling strategies. This research involved the unearthing of the positive contribution of apostolic beliefs and practices to community development, an issue that was previously ignored and often overlooked by researchers.

#### **1.9.4 Data collection**

In terms of the data collection technique, the researcher used semi-structured in-depth interviews, often called a conversation with a purpose. Mack *et al* (2005) defined in-depth interviews as optimal tools for collecting data on individuals’ personal histories, perspectives, and experiences, particularly when sensitive topics are being explored. The interviewer and the interviewee are equal partners in this technique. Therefore the interviewer knows the areas he wants to cover with the interviewee, but allows the interviewee the options to take different paths and explore different thoughts and feelings. The interviewer, however, can then bring the interviewee back to the subject under discussion by means of prompt questions, before allowing the interviewee to explore that particular aspect of the research problem; and so on, it is very much a two way dialogue (Marks & Yardley, 2004).

A semi-structured interview involves many open-ended questions, although they may also contain some closed questions (i.e. yes-no answers). In addition, there are probes and prompts to tease out from the interviewee various strands of their narrative to complete the story (Marks & Yardley, 2004). The researcher used this technique since it is possible to adjust in cases where the interviewee would not have understood some of the questions asked and re-phrase again. It then allowed

adjusting some of the questions and explaining further as well as assisting the interviewee to understand the questions.

### **1.9.5 Data analysis**

The researcher used Thematic Content Analysis (TCA), which is a descriptive presentation of qualitative data using the Creswell's six steps of data analysis. Data was presented in form of themes generated from the textual field notes compiled during data collection. Data was in the form of interview transcripts or field notes that were collected from research participants during data collection who reflected experientially on the topic of study. In this research, the description of TCA was limited to textual data.

### **1.9.6 Quality criteria**

The researcher considered quality criteria in complying with the research methodology. According to Botma, Greeff, Mulaudzi, and Wright (2010), quality criteria has four epistemological standards attached to it, namely truth value, credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. With regard to credibility, the researcher had confidence in the truth of the findings with regard to the participants as well as the context in which the research was undertaken. For purposes of this study the researcher ensured credibility through engaging participants with interview schedules. The researcher ensured that the participants were not forced to participate in the research and explained the purpose of the research and what was required of the participants. To ensure dependability, the researcher provided a detailed account on how data was to be collected, included in the research design as planned and executed during the study as well as ensuring that data was correctly coded.

Transferability enabled the researcher to determine the degree to which findings can be generalized to the larger population which was the influence of apostolic beliefs on community development. Transferability allows the researcher to improve on the selection of resources and sampling, saturation of data and the detailed description of the data (Shenton, 2004). Conformability entails the research process and results are free from prejudice. The researcher ensured that the study's results were objective and were not based upon biases, motives and perspectives of the

researcher. The researcher used an outsider's perspective since he was not a member of the church and tried to minimize bias by subjecting the provided information to scrutiny. This was done in accordance with the noticeable facts on the ground in the community as well as comparing the provided information by the participants to that of the social worker.

Reliability suggests that if the same study is repeated, the same results will be found (Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). An informal method of establishing reliability is to question participants about issues that are relevant to them and be clear in what is asked. Additionally, to enhance the reliability of measurement instrument it should be administered in a consistent fashion, that is, there should be standardization in the use of the instrument from one situation to the next (Blanche *et al*, 2006; Royse, 2004; Blanche *et al*, 2006). Concerning content validity an extensive literature review of the area under investigation was conducted.

#### **1.10 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This research will go a long way in shading more light as well as bringing to the general public's attention some of the efforts and activities of the apostolic members that contribute to community development. This is very much significant as it also contributed to the patchy available information regarding the influence of apostolic beliefs on community development. This also contributed to the process of making the general community members who did not share the same beliefs with the apostolic group to be aware of these positive contributions and to embrace them as well as partnering them in moving their community forward in development.

The research will also help community development agents, donor agencies as well as the government to regain trust in the apostolic groupings and contribute towards unlocking their potential and providing funding to their projects. It will also raise the community's awareness about the positive contribution of apostolic beliefs to the community's general wellbeing. This will assist in eliminating the prevailing stigma against apostolic groupings that their beliefs are always derailing progress and development in society. Trust and unity will also be gained in the community among all members which is a basic tenet and primary ingredient for positive change and development in every community.

More importantly, this research will also be of significance to policy makers in formulating policies that will not conflict with the apostolic beliefs since there is need to embrace them and their efforts for collective community development for all who live in it despite their religious affiliations. This research will also guide policy makers on how to encompass apostolic beliefs and their activities as a positive factor in their strategic community development planning.

## **1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

According to Babbie and Mouton (2012), ethics refers to conforming to the standards of conduct of a given profession or group. Mark *et al* (2005) postulated that research ethics deals primarily with the interaction between researchers and the people they study. In conducting this study, the researcher was guided by the following ethical issues.

### **1.11.1 Permission to conduct study**

This study got ethical clearance from the University of Limpopo, Research and Ethics Committee. An ethical clearance letter was issued out in this regard by the university. In addition to this, permission to conduct the study was also obtained from the ward councillor.

### **1.11.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity**

Confidentiality is a basic ethical principle while anonymity is one way in which confidentiality is maintained. Anonymity means that no one including the researcher should be able to identify any subjects afterwards, (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011). To ensure anonymity in the proposed study, steps were taken to protect the identity of the participants by not mentioning the names of the research participants when presenting research results, nor including identifying details which may reveal their identity such as addresses, work place, personal characteristics and occupation. However, the researcher informed the participants of the limits of confidentiality which applied in the information obtained from the research that appeared in the report but their anonymity was guaranteed. The interview guide did not have the actual names of the participants.

### **1.11.3 Informed Consent**

According to Mack *et al* (2005), informed consent is a mechanism for ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in a particular research study so they can decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they want to participate. Informed consent implies that, all possible or adequate information on the goal of the investigation, the procedures which will be followed during the investigation be rendered to potential subjects or their legal representatives (Babbie & Rubin, 2011). The researcher explained to the participants the purpose of the research and their role in the study before engaging in the study. Furthermore, the participants were requested to sign a consent form stipulating that their participation is voluntary.

### **1.11.4 Voluntary Participation**

According to Babbie and Rubin (2011), voluntary participation refers to the willingness of an individual to participate in research, as no one should be forced to participate. Participants of this study were informed that their participation was completely voluntary and that they can withdraw from the study at any stage if they feel they cannot continue without any consequences.

### **1.11.5 Competence of researcher**

The researcher is ethically obligated to ensure that he/she is competent and adequately skilled to undertake the research project (Babbie & Rubin, 2011). The researcher of this study had acquired the necessary research skills as well as interviewing skills as part of his undergraduate studies.

### **1.11.6 Publication of research findings**

A dissertation format was used to publish the research findings to the public. There are also plans to publish the research findings in an accredited Social Sciences journal. The leadership of the Church was also informed of the use of the research findings and their consent pertaining publication was sought.

## **1.12 CONCLUSION**

Chapter one introduced the concept of Apostolic beliefs and practice in the context of religion in Zimbabwe. It chronicled the origins and history of the Johanne Marange Apostolic Church in Zimbabwe as well as its beliefs and practices. It also briefed on



the background of community development in Zimbabwe. Lastly, it outlined the methodology used in the study as well as the theoretical framework upon which the study was premised. The next chapter will focus on literature review in relation to apostolic beliefs and practices.

# CHAPTER 2

## APOSTOLIC BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN RURAL ZIMBABWE

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the inception of apostolic beliefs and practices in human communities, they have made great and noticeable strides in contributing to community development. The contributions of apostolic beliefs and practices is now evident and their efforts to community development and human well-being is now appreciated especially in this decade in which Zimbabwe has faced an economic downturn. The resilience of the apostolic church members in the face of the economic crutch and only surviving from their efforts and even improving their well-being as well as that of their surrounding is adequate proof of their contribution to community development and survival.

Modern governments and policymakers now accept that sustainable development can be achieved only if people build on their own resources. These resources are no longer viewed as only assets that should be considered to include intellectual and social resources, but also spiritual ones, if and when these are available. It is a fact that large numbers of people, particularly in developing countries such as Zimbabwe now have a religious outlook on the world hence in that sense it becomes imperative to engage in a scholarly exposition of some of these religious tenets that are complementing community development.

Ter Haar and Ellis (2006) are of the view that there are in any case eminently practical reasons for including religion within a broad concept of development, since religion provides a powerful motivation for many people to act in the ways they do. They further denote that religion equips many of the world's people with the moral guidance and the will to improve their lives and that religion, whatever form it takes, constitutes a social and political reality.

According to Garner (1998), the suggestion that religious beliefs might be a factor in economic development can be traced to the Old Testament and the other religious texts of the Ancient Near East. Garner (1998) further argued in support of his assertions by citing Max Weber's work in the 'Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism of 1904' as having explained the role of Christianity as a contributory

factor in the economic rise of Britain and North America. Most policy makers today now accept that sustainable development can be achieved only if people build on their own resources. Logically, these asserts should be considered to include not intellectual and social resources, but also spiritual ones. It is a fact that large numbers of people, particularly in developing countries, have a religious outlook on the world (Ter Haar & Ellis, 2006). Ter Haar and Ellis (2006) further explained that people all over the world enter into various forms of active communication with a spirit world in such a way as to derive information or other resources from it with a view to furthering their material welfare or interests.

The researcher's preoccupation was with the question that, "Are religious and spiritual resources producing a type of knowledge that is, or could be, relevant to community development." At this juncture, one does not need to profess any religious belief, or to be religious in any sense in order to explore this matter, as the researcher actually did in this study. The approach was broadly secular and from a Social Work perspective inasmuch as it did not imply that either the researcher or readers of this study are required to share the religious world-views that are describe in the forthcoming discussion. Below is an exposition of some of the apostolic beliefs and practices as enshrined in religious beliefs that have convinced the researcher to have a view of how religious ideas are relevant to community development. These are sometimes viewed under the umbrella term of religion and Christianity since they are rooted in these macro concepts.

## **2.2 ORIGINS AND HISTORY OF JOHANNE MARANGE APOSTOLIC CHURCH**

According to Sibanda *et al* (2008), Johanne Marange Apostolic Church is one of the various Independent Christian Churches that emerged in the last century. Quite a lot has been written concerning the causes and nature of independent churches. However, it should be highlighted that there is not much literature on Johanne Marange Apostolic Church, especially in the new millennium. The origins, growth and spirituality of Johanne Marange Apostolic Church as a religious movement can be attributed to the schism towards renewal in terms of organization, leadership and liturgical expression from Western oriented mainline Christian churches (Daneel, 1986).

According to Sibanda *et al* (2008), Johanne Marange Apostolic Church arose as an acculturative, sociological and religious movement in the history of 20th century Christianity in Zimbabwe. According to Chitando, Gunda and Kugler (2014), Johanne Marange (1912-1963) was born Muchabaya Momberume in 1912 in Marange Tribal Trust Lands and his father was Muchabaya Momberume with his mother being the daughter of Chief Marange. Originally, before he formed his church, Marange himself was a full-fledged member of the United Methodist Church (Bourdillon, 1987). Chitando *et al* (2014), are of the view that the African Apostolic

Church of Johane Marange evolved from the local interactions with the Seventh Day Adventist Church which had expanded from South of Bulawayo to Wedza and Marange Reserves. They argued that Marange was influenced by the Seventh Day Adventists who had expanded into the area. Therefore, his church was formed as a separatist movement from a mainline church. Sibanda *et al* (2008) concurred with the above stating that Johanne Marange Apostolic Church arose as a rural phenomenon in the Marange area, situated about 50km southwest of the city of Mutare in Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe.

According to Bourdillon (1987), Johanne Marange claimed to have seen a prophetic vision in 1932 at a tender age of twenty. This assertion was further supported by Chitando *et al* (2014), who reported that Johanne experienced visions and near death illnesses from a tender age. Chitando *et al* (2014) propounded that on 17 July 1932, on the road from Mutare to his home near Mount Nyengwe, Johanne had a visionary experience. He was suddenly struck by a powerful light and he fell unconscious wherein he heard a voice that spoke to him:

“You are John the Baptist, an Apostle. Now go and do my work! Go to every country and preach and convert people! Tell them not to commit adultery, not to steal and not to become angry. Baptise people and keep the Sabbath day” (Hastings 1979:77 as cited by Chitando *et al*, 2014).

According to Chitando *et al* (2014), Johanne Marange founded the African Apostolic Church of Johanne Marange in 1932. Sibanda *et al* (2008) further propound that in the subsequent years, Johanne Marange proclaimed to the people that he was divinely commissioned by God to pronounce oracles to the people of his community and even beyond. His church spread from Zimbabwe to South Africa, Botswana,

Zambia, Malawi, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Sibanda *et al*, 2008). Through migration, the church has spread to Europe among the African migrant workers. He developed a well-knit organisation with a greater evangelistic outreach. His church quickly spread first among his kith and kin and then in all parts of Southern Africa, before becoming the international movement that it is today (Chitando *et al*, 2014).

Chitando *et al* (2014), narrated that the spread from Zimbabwe and Southern African countries was spectacular, with no ecclesiastical centre of unity and only the Pendi or Pentecost celebration of the Eucharist, which is normally observed in July to mark the call of Johanne, became an event that united all peripheral centres with their leader. Marange's prophetic call consistently remained the spiritual-fountain anchoring the entire church as well as a wide range of charismatic gifts, such as speaking in tongues and faith healing have become strong liturgical traits of the Johanne Marange Church (Daneel, 1986). Therefore, it is a spirit-type church. This is what accounted for the momentous growth and expansion of the church as a great renewal movement.

### **2.3 APOSTOLIC BELIEFS OF JOHANNE MARANGE APOSTOLIC CHURCH**

Sibanda *et al* (2008) note that in terms of historical and theological inspiration, Johanne Marange and his subsequent followers claimed to have been influenced by the Old Testament figures like Moses, Elijah, and Elisha. These prophets were associated with ascetic desert life and had no permanent residence thus explaining why the *Vapostori* of Marange, conduct their services on open places typifying the wilderness life. According to Daneel (1986) wherever these apostles are found, there are 'Jordan Rivers' nearby where they perform baptism and cleansing rituals. Each 'Jordan River' is regarded as a Pendi.

The term Pendi, which the *Vapostori* derive from the Jewish festival of Pentecost, symbolises a spiritual nucleus around which any local *Vapostori* church revolves (Daneel, 1986; Sibanda *et al*, 2008). It normally constitutes at least forty to fifty families. It supplies a physical and spiritual justification for the existence of an authentic local *Vapostori* church because it offers a particular place to administer the sacraments of baptism and paseka (Passover or Paschal). The *Vapostori* hold their passover ceremony during the first two weeks of July annually in the Marange area.

Members of *Vapostori* attend such a gathering from different countries in the Southern African region. Faith healing is another distinctive feature of the Marange Church whose theology is based on the Bible. Faith healing is important to the church since the members do not believe in seeking modern scientific clinical interventions to diseases but only rely from faith healing from their prophets. This element has made this movement more attractive to Africans than the mainline churches (Sibanda *et al*, 2008).

According to Sibanda *et al* (2008), in terms of hierarchy, the church has no offices such as those found in the mainline churches like papacies, bishops or deacons. Bourdillon (1987) also outlined that there are four major offices in the Marange Church namely, baptizers, evangelists, prophets and healers. He further indicated that the higher office is that of the Baptizer which directly emanates from Johanne Momberume Marange himself. Senior Baptists are identified by a six star badge on their garments labelled 'APE'. This star is reminiscent of the Star of David. Junior Baptizers are identified by a three star badge labelled 'AP'. In the absence of their seniors, the juniors can lead a local church session (Sibanda *et al*, 2008).

Sibanda *et al* (2008), further explained that the office of the Evangelist, also known as 'Mutumwa' (One who has been sent), is second in command. He is also referred to as 'Labhauma'. The letters 'LU' patched on their garments identifies this office. Junior evangelists have their garments labelled 'L' to distinguish them from their seniors. The evangelists are also described as 'vakuru vebasa' (Veterans in church activities). The Evangelists initiate the would-be converts into the church and eventually refer them to the baptist after 'kusunungurwa' (an act of forgiveness complemented by the laying of hands). Therefore, their roles are complementary. Besides their specific duties in the church, they can also prophesy and heal. The positions in the church are accorded basing on seniority in terms of when one joined. Men occupy the above offices although women can be prophets and healers. A prophet appoints all office bearers to their posts through dreams or inspired announcement. Initially, close relatives of Johanne Marange occupied most of the positions of the church (Sibanda *et al*, 2008).

### 2.3.1 Source of trust

According to Garner (1998) many black communities have a legacy of distrust between each other in the townships. These are mostly a hangover from the bloody struggle for political supremacy in these areas from the mid-1980s until the early 1990s (Garner, 1998). In these conflicts many households suffered loss of property or family members by the hands of fellow African brothers and sisters. Garner (1998) argued that it is the duty of Churches to do something to transform these communities to be high trust communities, where law and order reign and where the owners of business are happy to invest and build.

According to Dodo, Banda and Dodo (2014) religious leaders also influence society by fostering mutual trust among community members through their public pronouncements and actions. The degree of popular credibility, trust, and moral authority vested in religious leaders enable them to direct events on the ground. For instance, retired archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa has often been asked to lead peace and trust building efforts around the world. Similarly, in Zimbabwe, the Catholic Bishops Conference and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) have championed attempts to quell political crises. During the 1982 to 1987 dissident insurgency that claimed over 18,000 innocent lives at the hands of the then Prime Minister Robert Mugabe, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) tried to use reason to quell the violence, and subsequently documented the tragedy (Dodo, 2010).

According to Dodo *et al* (2014), several missionaries sacrificed their lives and resources for the development of the communities in which they lived. The late Archbishop Patrick Chakaipa provided both material and policy support for Zimbabwe's struggle for liberation. During the Zimbabwean war of liberation, the Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU PF), realizing the influence that religious groups have in the community, utilized the influence of African Initiated Churches' leaders to mobilize and gain trust of their membership for political election campaigns. Notable individuals who were involved include *Madzibaba* Lawrence Katsiru of Marondera, the late *Madzibaba* Pedneck Godfrey Nzira of Seke, and the late *Madzibaba* Border Gezi of Bindura from the Johane Masowe Chishanu church (Dodo *et al*, 2014).

Ter Haar and Ellis (2006) indicated that the end of an armed conflict in Africa is often accompanied by religious rituals designed to cleanse fighters from the pollution of bloodshed. In the same vein, Dodo *et al* (2014) echoed the same sentiments when they postulated that indigenous religious groups provide spiritual, emotional, and psychological support to people who have suffered from violent and protracted conflict. They have also set up centres to feed needy victims and to counsel them for possible reintegration into society. These religious groups provided rehabilitation facilities and trauma healing programs, especially after armed conflicts that leave people maimed and disabled. The sick or trauma victims are housed at local prophets' residences or healing shrines for sessions that can last for as much as six months (Dodo *et al*, 2014).

According to Dodo *et al* (2014), religious practitioners ensure trust in communities through advocating non-violence, training communities in methods of nonviolence, and promoting reconciliation based on their religion-based pacifist conviction. They also use rituals, such as peace walks, to build worldviews supportive of peace and justice which in itself builds trust. For instance, Africa University in Zimbabwe hosts the annual Peace Marathon dedicated to world peace. Religious institutions usually survive war but states collapse, and other social and government structures fall away (Dodo *et al*, 2014).

According to Pouligny (2006) religious networks, churches, temples, and mosques are usually the first to begin picking up the pieces after violence and remain as part of communities long after humanitarian workers and international aid have moved on. They may be the only remaining institutions with credibility, trust, and moral authority immediately after a war or conflict. This is another reason why they are able to provide services around the promotion of poverty reduction, addressing economic inequality, reintegrating and developing communities, and reuniting families.

### **2.3.2 Form of Governance**

According to Ter Haar and Ellis (2006) religion is part of the social fabric for most of the world's people. Many voluntarily associate themselves with religious networks, which they use for a variety of purposes – social, political and economic – that go beyond the strictly religious. Interestingly, many religious networks in Africa survive largely or entirely from tithes or other monies donated by their members: in effect,



their ability to tax their own members or supporters is testimony to the success of many religious organisations in developing a close bond with their adherents, and shows a degree of accountability to them. This stands in sharp contrast to the problems of revenue collection that are faced by states in Africa, often heavily reliant for their revenue on dues levied on import–export trade, or on external sources of funding, including aid (Ter Haar & Ellis, 2006).

Dodo *et al* (2014) are of the view that mass exposure of children and youth to abuse and violence, lack of education, poor nutrition, and poor moral standards have long-term implications for governance and peace building. Religious groups, therefore, sponsor youth initiatives in peace-building and development (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2008). Many churches have youth programs that generate income with the goal of keeping youths off the streets and employed. Youth groups also sponsor sporting activities to build relations, especially after protracted violent ethnic or political clashes. Other ways in which youths can contribute towards governance are through media production, conflict transformation and reconciliation initiatives, psycho-social recovery programs, and programs that address human rights and transitional justice, security issues, and economic recovery (HPCR International).

The researcher was intrigued by the question that usually arises of whether religious networks are not assuming some of the functions normally attributed to governments and governing bodies in communities. Ter Haar and Ellis (2006) are in support of the above when they argue that religious organisations have taken government responsibilities for welfare services in the fields of health and education where failing states can no longer fulfil. Many of the best-rooted non-state organisations have an explicit religious basis, whether it is in the form of educational establishments run by churches or by Muslim networks (Ter Haar & Ellis, 2006).

#### **2.4 ECONOMIC PRACTICES OF JOHANNE MARANGE APOSTOLIC CHURCH**

According to Sibanda *et al* (2008), the kernel of the economic activities of *Vapositioni* of Marange is vocationalism. Each family is renowned for a wide range of one or more of technical skills like carpentry, basketry, metalworking, building and leather working. Women and children are mostly involved in the trading of homemade artefacts of their respective families. Church members are usually discouraged to

seek formal employment, either in government, or in the private sector. There are two reasons to this belief. Firstly, their church was born in the context of the hated white colonial labour capitalism. Therefore, economic exploitation has remained anathema in the minds of the people ever since. Secondly, seeking formal jobs is seen as potentially negative to the numerical growth of the church as members are likely to be absorbed by the outside world (Bourdillon, 1987).

The *Vapositori* believe that God is the source of their practical skills. It is the Holy Spirit that puts a skill into 'the hands' of each person in order to survive and help spread the gospel of Christ. Each family is endowed with a particular trade. If the father was gifted in say, basketry or tin-smithing, then the sons would likely be good at those trades as well. Therefore, self-reliance is the prime motivating factor behind *Vapositori* economic activities. However, today a number of *Vapositori* are employed in the public and private sector as lecturers, school teachers, managers and some holding political positions in government (Sibanda *et al*, 2008).

#### **2.4.1 Source of economic legitimation**

Garner (1998) postulated that the suspicion that current economic systems in most African countries remains illegitimate and not balanced despite the democratic breakthrough of independence in the previous decades, could pose severe consequences to public finances as well as public order. The ushering of community development cannot thrive in this environment. Thus in such a setting, according to Garner (1998) is whereby religious beliefs create legitimacy for economic development.

According to Garner (1998) religious groupings promoted the de-legitimation of the pre-independence political dispensation in Southern Africa. He further argued that this created a whole lot of problems which include theft of equipment meant for public services provision and defaulting from paying bills. It is now the duty of religious groupings in this post-independence governance by black majority rule to encourage community members to embrace the legitimate political dispensation of today. This will enable co-operation from the people hence community development will thrive (Garner, 1998).

#### **2.4.2 Source of wealth creation and production**

It is widely acknowledged that religious ideas played an important part in the development of capitalism in the history of Europe (Weber, 1992). This was not primarily as a result of direct action by religious institutions, but through the influence of religious ideas on people's thinking concerning the legitimacy of wealth and the moral value of lending, saving or investing money, for example. This helps to illustrate the significance of current religious ideas in developing countries in forming people's ideas about wealth.

A good example is the emergence of the so-called 'prosperity gospel' in African charismatic churches. The label 'prosperity gospel' has been applied by Western analysts to a strain of theology that considers financial success and material wealth as a gift of God to believers, and that these can be achieved by faith and prayer (Ter Haar & Ellis, 2006). This is a controversial subject, since some authors consider the prosperity gospel primarily as a form of wishful thinking or a distraction from more urgent business (Gifford, 2004).

#### **2.5 SOCIAL PRACTICES OF JOHANNE MARANGE APOSTOLIC CHURCH**

According to Mukonyora (1993), the social life of the members of Johanne Marange Church is typically guided by spiritual religiosity for it is rooted in Holy Scriptures. Their social pattern is anchored in patriarchal conceptions reflecting enduring Jewish influences. Women are in the majority of church membership but in terms of status they are marginalized (Mukonyora, 1993). Top leadership positions like being priests, bishops and evangelists are monopolized by men, yet women play active roles in Church especially in the areas of singing, ushering, healing and prophecy (Bourdillon, 1987).

According to Sibanda *et al* (2008), the *Vapositori* families are characterised by the social institution of polygamy. An ideal family constitutes an average of four to five women married to one man. This polygamy has biblical justification. It is noted in the Old Testament that patriarchal figures like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were polygamous (Gen.16: 3ff; Gen.29: 9ff). *Vapositori* believe that wives must come from within the church. Therefore, they are endogamous (Sibanda *et al*, 2008).

### **2.5.1 Source of conflict prevention and peace building**

Ter Haar and Ellis (2006) propounded that there is a general agreement that the large number of armed conflicts in Africa is a serious obstacle to development. Insofar as conventional international approaches to conflict prevention and resolution take religion into account, they tend to focus on the institutional aspects of religion. In line with the above assertions, it can be safely concluded that for effective development cooperation, it is necessary to take people's own understanding of the world as a point of departure. It is in this same vein that apostolic beliefs and practices can also be tapped and use these principles in preventing conflicts and promoting peace building. Ter Haar and Ellis (2006) noted that while development agencies have certainly worked with religious institutions and their leaders in many situations, notably in the fields of education and public health, they have devoted far less attention to the religious ideas that underlie the behaviour of religious believers and communities.

According to Dodo *et al* (2014), religious groups and churches traditionally play important roles in society, especially around peace-building. Ter Haar and Ellis (2006) support the above assertion when they postulated that ideas concerning a spirit world play a major role in discouraging violence. Ter Haar and Ellis (2006) further explained the above argument by giving the example of using religion in resolving conflict in South Africa, where the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was led by an Anglican archbishop (Desmond Tutu) and was closely associated with the country's faith communities. The work of the TRC was based on the idea that long-term reconciliation depends crucially on religious notions of reconciliation and healing, even in the absence of formal justice (Ter Haar & Ellis, 2006).

In the same vein, Sampson (2007) uses four categories of religious intervention to peace building, that is, advocates, intermediaries, observers, and educators. Advocates are those who fight to empower the disadvantaged and to restructure relationships and unjust social structures. For instance, the Roman Catholic Church, which during the Zimbabwean liberation struggle advocated for truth-telling as a way of healing the wounds that were created during the struggle that ended in 1979 (Sampson, 2007).

Sampson (2007) further argued that intermediaries include those in fact-finding, good offices, facilitation, and conciliation. Mediation includes the role played by church leaders who successfully mediated a peace agreement in Sudan in 1972. Observers provide a physical presence that is intended to discourage violence, corruption, and human rights violations (Sampson, 2007). Such observers have been in various countries and situations monitoring and observing elections and any other national activity that could be controversial and attract national or international attention. In Zimbabwe, national elections have been observed by the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (Dodo *et al*, 2014).

Dodo *et al* (2014) indicated that conflict prevention and peace building can also be achieved through education which could be in a variety of forms, ranging from awareness programs, civic education, and training in human rights and other basic social and political matters. A particular example is the Roman Catholic Church in Zimbabwe, which, through its agent Silveira House, offers various training programs to communities free of charge. Other religious denominations also have organizations dedicated to training and community empowerment. Bhebhe (1999) argued that besides these organizations, religious institutions have traditionally provided education to communities through missionary schools. It is these schools that educated most of the early African scholars, particularly the most prominent ones, by providing a balanced curricula and well-equipped facilities, unlike the few government-run institutions that were influenced by the colonial system.

Bhebhe (1999) describes the role played by churches in Zimbabwe to ensure peace building and conflict prevention during the 1966-1979 liberation struggles as church authorities and communities provided financial, moral, and material resources. Some missionaries were killed and others were either deported or incarcerated for their participation during the war. While many religious groups participated, Bhebhe (1999) says the most prominent were the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Roman Catholic Church, and that other churches that contributed immensely were two Methodist groups, the Salvation Army, the Anglican Church, and some apostolic sects. Religious groups made use of their mission schools, clinics, and hospitals to make contact with liberation combatants; apostolic groups provided moral and spiritual support.

Dodo *et al* (2014) postulated that the Johanne Marange Church also played an important role during the liberation struggle by providing prophecy consultancy and religious support to the fighting cadres so that they could endure the battle challenges and be able to evade some of the imminent encounters with their rivals. It became apparent that church institutions were the only places where politics could be discussed and strategized because all other avenues had either been banned or were closely monitored by the colonial regimes. To this day, religious organizations work to bridge social divisions by hosting conferences, interfaith dialogues, and retreats. Universities either affiliated or owned by religious organizations have developed peace programs, and churches are incorporating more explicit peace-building efforts into their outreach and development efforts. Both Africa University, owned by the United Methodist Church, and Solusi University, owned by the Seventh Day Adventist Church, currently offer peace programs in Zimbabwe (Dodo *et al*, 2014).

At this juncture, the researcher can safely argue that it is laudable for representatives or any advocators of peace and conflict prevention in any given human community, to include the most prominent religious figures in their programmes of peace building. Though the above assertion is of importance, it is however commendable as indicated by the Netherlands Institute for International Relations (2005), to also communicate with a far wider range of religious authorities, including both traditional spiritual authorities and leaders of the new religious movements that are flourishing in Africa (Apostolic churches included). Ter Haar and Ellis (2006) are of the view that these flourishing religious movements have to be included in a regular programme of consultation and discussion with a view to preventing and understanding conflicts as much as resolving them.

### **2.5.2 Source of health care provision**

According to Ter Haar and Ellis (2006), throughout Africa, there is a widespread supposition that people in need of healing include not only those with obvious physical ailments, but also those who are suffering from vaguer problems that in clinical medicine might be diagnosed as psychological problems, including stress or depression. In Africa, both illness and healing are generally viewed as holistic in nature, requiring attention to the spiritual as well as physical aspects of a person. For

this reason, religion plays an important role in health care in Africa generally. This strongly suggests the need to integrate spiritual ideas into health-care policies (Ter Haar & Ellis, 2006).

Ter Haar and Ellis (2006) argued that people's ideas about health may also reveal a great deal about popular perceptions of relations between donor countries and Africa. For example, they went on and argue that, although the means by which HIV and AIDS are transmitted are widely understood, Africans often suggest that the disease may have been deliberately exported to the continent by Western countries' intent on depopulating Africa, or that 'aid' and 'AIDS' are related phenomena. Such ideas are clearly misguided, but they do reveal a great deal about how many Africans perceive their relationship with the West (Ellis & Ter Haar, 2004). Whatever one's opinions of these views, development policy needs to take account of them. Differences in perceptions of illness and healing sometimes lead to outcomes that surprise Western analysts, such as the occasionally progressive role played by traditional imams, in Mali and elsewhere, where even conservative clerics have been prominent in the fight against AIDS (Ter Haar & Ellis, 2006).

Ter Haar and Ellis (2006) are of the view that health and education constitute an area in which the role of religious institutions has already been widely noted by development experts, notably in the field of service delivery. The scope of religious institutions in welfare provision is currently further expanding through the rapidly-growing activity of Islamic non-governmental organisations (NGOs) throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter was intended to illustrate the potential of religion in promoting development in communities. As indicated by the researcher from the onset, it is now widely accepted by policy makers today that any effective and lasting development should build on people's own resources. These resources include, as argued by the researcher, not only material and intellectual resources, but also people's religious or spiritual resources, apostolic beliefs and practices of African Initiated Churches included.

# CHAPTER 3

## PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the results of the qualitative data collected during the study are presented, analysed and interpreted in accordance with the objectives of the research. The qualitative data was collected from members of the Johanne Marange Apostolic Church (JMAC) as well as some of their sect leaders. These participants will be termed '*Vapostori*' in this chapter. A community worker working in the area who is a social worker was also reached and is attached to a local non-governmental organisation working in the area. A brief discussion on the characteristics of the research participants is also presented in this chapter. The major part of the chapter encompasses the themes that emerged from the conducted interviews with the church members and their leaders as well as the social worker.

### 3.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VAPOSTORI

A total number of eight people participated in the study. Out of these, seven were male church members and one was male social worker. The age groups of the participants ranged from forty to seventy years. During the time of selecting respondents (both sect leaders as well as their church members) and the conducting of the study, it came to light that there were no females neither holding leadership positions nor involved in major decision making structures or venturing in notable community activities. This observation is in support of what was propounded by Bourdillon (1987) that top leadership positions like being priests, bishops and evangelists are monopolized by men. All the participants were middle aged and above 30 years with families and dependents to look after.

Five of these participants were in polygamous marriages with two or more wives. This finding lends support to Sibanda *et al* (2008) observation that the *Vapostori* families are characterised by the social institution of polygamy and an ideal family constitutes an average of four to five women. It was also observed that most of the participants were not formally employed and they earned their income for survival through vocationalism (basketry, carpentry, iron-smith or sculpturing) and personal



entrepreneurship ventures (gardening, livestock rearing projects or operating grocery shops). This was also observed by Sibanda *et al* (2008) that the kernel of the economic activities of Vapostori of Marange is vocationalism.

### **3.3 VAPOSTORI'S UNDERSTANDING OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

The participants showed considerable knowledge and understanding of the concept community development. It was further observed that majority of the apostolic members do engage in community development initiatives. However, the researcher found out that though these apostolic members are involved in community development propounded by their beliefs and practices, they often do that unaware of their contribution and value to the notion of community development. The researcher also found that the *Vapostori* are adding great effort to community development without noticing that they are actually aiding to the development of their communities.

The participants also indicated that they often found themselves at the receiving end of accusations (such as harbouring and spreading diseases when there is an outbreak of disease such as cholera or typhoid since they do not immunize children or seek medical help) by other community members who are not part of their church and even authority figures, that they are drawing back the progress of the community by their beliefs and practices. They admitted that this is almost an everyday reality but they are not deterred by that in pursuing what is right to them and their church.

On the church's conception of community development, all participants confirmed that JMAC has mechanisms of development initiatives that range from peace building exercises (through peace prayers conducted periodically), self-reliance (through vocationalism and entrepreneurial ventures) as well as nurturing children towards Christian norms and values (that promote tolerance, forgiveness and peace) that they considered necessary for development. The same participants also indicated that their church has relationship building measures that ensure that there are no conflicts and that harmony is nurtured between their church members and others who do not fellowship with them within the community. The general understanding of community development was that it is a long-term process aimed at enhancing the well-being of people and their living conditions, with a focus on fostering independence in the community's survival not relying on external support.

However, responses by the interviewees were quite diverse, and the information gathered is given below in themes.

### 3.4 EMERGING THEMES: VAPOSTORI'S ACCOUNTS

After gathering all the data possible and subjecting it to analysis that established and defined common elements across data, information was arranged in specific themes that could respond to the initial research objectives of this study. The results are in three main themes as follows:

- a) Apostolic beliefs and practices
- b) Apostolic roles in community development and
- c) Apostolic practices aiding community development.

The above themes and the subsequent subthemes are reflected in Table 3.1 below as they emerged from the interviews conducted during the study.

**Table 3.1: *Vapostori's* accounts: Themes and subthemes**

Theme number	Main theme	Subthemes
1	Apostolic beliefs	Prophets and spirituality
		Faith healing
		Power of leaders
		Worshiping in open spaces
		Self-reliance
		Power of men (male dominance)
2	Apostolic roles in community development	Encouraging trust
		Conflict prevention and peace building
		Health care provision
		Fostering governance
		Provision of social care and assistance
		Providing economic legitimation
3	Apostolic practices and community development	Conservation
		Employment

		Prophecy
		Marriage

### 3.4.1 THEME 1: APOSTOLIC BELIEFS

The researcher discovered that the belief system of the apostolic members plays a pivotal role in almost every aspect of their lives as well as the well-being of their surrounding environments. It was found that virtually everything in life of apostolic members is centred on their belief system hence attention was given to some of these beliefs and how they contribute to community development. These beliefs were grouped into subthemes which include prophets and spirituality, faith healing, power of leaders, worshipping in groups, self-reliance and the power of men. Below is an exposition and presentation of the subthemes mentioned above.

#### 3.4.1.1 Subtheme 1: Prophets and spirituality

The belief system of the apostolic churches cannot be fully explained and understood without dwelling much on their belief in prophets and spirituality. In actual fact the existence of these churches can be traced and attributed back to the existence of prophets such as Moses, Elijah, and Elisha who are recorded in the Biblical narratives of the Old Testament. The rise of these prophets was linked to the hardships and needs of those times, the same way that led to the rise of Johanne Momberume Marange, the founding prophet of the JMAC (Sibanda *et al*, 2008).

The apostolic members believe in the power of the biblical prophets (Moses, Elijah and Elisha) and they live their lives in the same manner as these biblical prophets lived and are influenced by their narratives. It was found that even the way the apostolic members worship in open spaces was influenced by the prophets' way of worship which is reported to have been in the wilderness (Daneel, 1986 & Sibanda *et al*. 2008). Marange's call consistently remained the spiritual-fountain anchoring the entire church as well as a wide range of charismatic gifts, such as speaking in tongues and faith healing which has become strong liturgical traits of the Johanne Marange Church (Daneel, 1986). It is a spirit-type church and that is what accounted for the momentous growth and expansion of the church as a great renewal movement (Sibanda *et al*, 2008).

The researcher noted that the belief in prophets and spirituality by the church members in accordance to their church doctrine creates and promotes a culture of allegiance to authority figures in their faith. This allegiance is respectively transferred to community leaders, traditional leaders as well as the political leadership of the community and country. This allegiance creates a governable society that is peaceful and without resentment and uprisings which in turn creates a conducive environment for community development initiatives to thrive. Peace and tranquillity in the community are major factors that are necessary for community development to take place in every community. The researcher was convinced to conclude that the belief in prophets and spirituality by the church members has a contribution to the general development of the community through fostering peace.

In support of the above scholarly findings, some of the participants indicated that the belief in prophets and religious spirituality is indeed a corner stone of their beliefs and practice system. The value given to prophets and spirituality is of paramount importance as they are regarded as the direct link between the worshipers and God. The local prophets are also highly respected as they are the appointees of the founding prophet and are given equal honour and respect. The church proceedings are run and guided by the Holy spirit through the facilitation of the prophets. Children are brought up in the ways of the spirit and are socialised to respect the prophets as well as the beliefs and spiritual system of the church. As a result of this socialisation children grow up respecting the prophets and the spirituality of the church and this knowledge is passed through generations. The church is thus premised on the belief in prophets and spirituality which was derived from the founding prophet, Johanne Momberume Marange and his spirit type of worship. In this regard, some of the participants had this to say:

*“...we grew up in this church knowing our way of worship is centred around our mighty prophet Johanne Marange and the Holly spirit with no one else above that and our children are growing up in the same system which they will pass on to their own children and grandchildren”.*

*“...without the prophets and the Holly spirit then there is no church at all people will just be wasting their time claiming to be worshipping God”.*

*“I can say that any other way of worship without prophets and the Holy spirit is ungodly and to us, what we believe in is the true Biblical way of worshipping sanctioned by God the creator of earth and Heaven”.*

Based on the narratives expressed above, it can be seen that the belief in prophets and spirituality plays a central role in the beliefs and practices of the JMAC. This can be seen by their preoccupation and obsession to the Biblical prophetic figures which they always give reference to. The belief in prophets is also evident through the names of church members and their children, majority of which are mainly derived from the characters in the Biblical narratives, for instance John, Peter, Abraham, Moses, Mary, and Martha etc. Some participants even vowed that they do not give their children names that are not in the Bible or after Biblical Apostles since it will be a diversion from their belief and practice system. Thus it can be suggested that the main belief and practice of the JMAC is the belief in prophets and their spirituality.

#### **3.4.1.2 Subtheme 2: Faith healing**

The belief in faith healing is one of many astounding beliefs of the JMAC that form the basis of their belief system. As discovered by Sibanda et al, (2008) faith healing is another distinctive feature of the Marange Church whose theology is based on the Bible and this element has made this movement more attractive to Africans than the mainline churches. Members of this church believe that with faith, any disease or ailment on earth can be cured by the power of God through the Holy spirit. They believe that their prophets are empowered by God to deliver them from any sickness and what is required from them is just to have faith that they will be healed. The apostolic members of JMAC do not believe in modern health interventions and as a result they do not seek medical assistance. This is in line with Marange’s call which consistently remained the spiritual-fountain anchoring the entire church as well as a wide range of charismatic gifts, such as speaking in tongues and faith healing which has become strong liturgical traits of the Johanne Marange Church as put forward by Daneel (1986).

The researcher noted that the *Vapostori* use faith healing as their own method of health care provision. Though this method cannot compete with clinical health care nor its effectiveness proven scientifically, it remains an important provision to the members of the church. The *Vapostori* do not abandon their own people in need of

health care but they use faith healing to assist themselves. Thus, by providing faith healing to their people, the *Vapostori* contribute to the general health care system of the community. The researcher concluded that faith healing is a contributing factor to the general development of the community. However, it should be noted that there are instances whereby the *Vapostori* have been accused of harbouring diseases and contributing to the spreading of communicable diseases such as cholera and diarrhoea whenever there is an outbreak of such diseases. Despite that, the researcher's argument was that since the *Vapostori* take care of their own people through faith healing, they contribute to community development through assisting in health care and treating some complicated health conditions that cannot be treated at hospitals.

The participants indicated that they have their own ways of taking care of their sick through faith healing. They do not vaccinate their children whom they argued that through faith healing the church healers will take care of every ailment. Senior women in the church are responsible for taking care of pregnant women and delivering of babies as midwives. This is supported by what was propounded by Maguranyanga (2011) that members of the apostolic communities especially among religious objectors or ultra-conservative groups do not allow their children to be immunized or their sick to be treated using modern medication. The church believe that any disease or ailment has spiritual connotations hence faith healing becomes the most effective intervention than modern secular healthcare systems. The subsequent extracts illustrate the belief in faith healing:

*"We believe in the power of prayers from our prophets and we know God will always answer those prayers and grant us everything we need just like deliverance from illness".*

*"Faith healing is the only way we believe in and it works well for us, going to hospitals only shows lack of trust and faith in our God who is the provider of everything include good health".*

*"Going to seek medical assistance in hospitals is a sign of lack of hope and faith in God and those are earthly things that are ungodly."*

The participants indicated that members of the church rely on holy water (*muteuro*) and prayers from the church elders to cure illnesses and diseases. When illness or disease befall members of the church, it is often regarded as an evil omen and this can only be addressed through spiritual means hence the members are taught to seek healing only from God and not from institutions of modern clinical practices or health care in accordance with their church doctrine. The participants further stated that going to hospitals depicts that they have lost faith and hope in their God. They indicated that modern medicines are earthly and ungodly whilst their purpose is to seek the kingdom of God.

The participants also reiterated that birth control mechanisms are satanic and a tool to deliberately subvert the will of God for people to multiply. This is consistent with what was also postulated by Maguranyanga (2011) that apostolic churches emphasize church-related interventions, which they deem as having a spiritual competitive edge over secular, modern healthcare services primarily through the belief that illnesses and diseases have spiritual and religious undertones and spirits can influence the health of the living.

The above extracts from the accounts of the participants backed by other scholarly findings makes it practical to point out that faith healing is a major aspect of the belief system of the JMAC. Much emphasis is on maintaining the holy purity of church members hence the belief in faith healing than modern healthcare interventions which are deemed to be unholy and defiles church members' purity before God and an indication of lack of faith.

#### **3.4.1.3 Subtheme 3: *Worshipping in open spaces***

The JMAC is characterised by worshipping in open spaces (*sowe*) which also form the basis of their belief system. This open spaces (wilderness) kind of worship was derived from the instruction that was given to the Biblical Moses who was instructed by God to go and pray in the wilderness. Sibanda *et al* (2008) discovered that JMAC is associated with ascetic desert life and have no permanent church buildings thus explaining why the *Vapositioni* of Marange, conduct their services on open places typifying the wilderness life. These spaces are regarded as holy ground and they are entered whilst barefooted and no one is allowed to bring shoes on the holy ground of worship.

These places of worship are always located near a river for baptism purposes. Each 'Jordan River' is regarded as a Pendi and the term Pendi, which the *Vapostori* derive from the Jewish festival of Pentecost, symbolises a spiritual nucleus around which any local *Vapostori* church revolves (Daneel, 1986; Sibanda *et al*, 2008). The church believes in baptism as one of the major cleansing and healing exercises which they use at almost every church service. According to Daneel, (1986) wherever these apostles (*vapostori*) are found, there are 'Jordan Rivers' nearby where they perform baptism and cleansing rituals. The researcher found out that in Ward 12 of Nyanga district in Nyamaropa area, the place of worship for the *Vapostori* was located adjacent to Nyaruwaka river in Bumhira village. The members of the church indicated that they conduct baptism and cleansing after confessions at every church service. The *Vapostori* believe they should not be under roof when they worship even in extreme weather conditions of heavy rain, sunny or wind they are not fazed because their belief is that God will stop any harm from them.

The members of the church worship in the open spaces in small groups of families which usually comprise of not more than fifty families. The above is reflected in the two extracts below:

*"In our church we believe in worshiping in open spaces because our God is in spirit which cannot be confined in a room or a building".*

*"... we worship following the footsteps of our great prophets in the Bible such as Moses and Elijah who never built buildings for worship but had to seek God in the desert and sometimes instructed by God himself to go and worship in the wilderness... hence we also worship in the same style and we don't need shelter or buildings to worship our God".*

As a result of this, the Holy places of worship for this church can be found in every community. However, each group is headed by on senior prophet and has its own leaders and office bearers of the church's hierarchy such as healers (*varapi*), prophets (*vaporofita*) and preachers (*vaparidzi*) among others. These various groups of the church affiliate and regularly receive direct commands and directions from the headquarters of the church which is located in the Marange area in Mutare.



The groups of worship in this church meet annually in major events organised by church leaders to celebrate the Pentecost (*Pendi*) event to mark the historic call of the church founder, Johanne Momberume Marange by God. Chitando, Gunda and Kugler (2014), narrated that the church has no ecclesiastical centre of unity and only the *Pendi* or Pentecost celebration of the Eucharist, which is normally observed in July to mark the call of Johanne, became an event that united all peripheral centres with their leader.

The researcher concluded that by owning and managing places of worship, the *Vapostori* have developed a sense of ownership and responsibility that is necessary when executing community development initiatives. Moreover, the *Vapostori* assume the duty of taking care of the environment when they manage their open spaces of worship which also contributes to community development. The responsibility of taking care of the open spaces of worship also inspire the conservation of the natural environment since the *Vapostori* do not build church buildings. It was observed at one of the places of worship in Ward 12, Nyanga district that the members have planted a gum tree plantation. This initiative will supply them with firewood in future and is also providing shade during times of worship as well as combating erosion along the river bed. In some instances, the *Vapostori* are also involved in land reclamation exercises such as filling of gullies and road maintenance which all contribute towards community development.

Thus, in line with the above observations, the researcher was convinced that the belief of worshiping in open spaces have a contribution to community development through environmental conservation. It should however be noted that there has been instances whereby these open spaces of worship have been linked to violation of environmental protection laws through pollution and deforestation. This has been mitigated through the intervention of the environmental management authorities who are trying to work with these churches and control this negative impact on the environment.

#### **3.4.1.4 Subtheme 4: Power of appointed leaders**

The apostolic (*vapostori*) members of the JMAC believe in the power of appointed leaders in the church and this is part of their belief system. These appointed leaders hold the positions in the office hierarchy of the church and are appointees of the

leading prophet. They are revered by the church members with high respect and honour as their authority is believed to be direct from God. These leadership positions are dominated by men with very few women holding the positions of prophets and healers. The positions in the church are accorded basing on seniority in terms of when one joined. The above expositions are in support of what was discovered earlier by Sibanda *et al* (2008) that a prophet appoints all office bearers to their posts through dreams or inspired announcement. This was confirmed by one responded who said:

*“Our leaders here are very powerful and sacred and we believe and trust in them as they were selected and appointed by the senior prophet (muporofita mukuru) to save us and guide us in everything we do”*

According to Sibanda *et al* (2008), in terms of hierarchy, the church has no offices such as those found in the mainline churches like papacy, bishop or deacons. However, Bourdillon (1987) also outlined that there are four major offices in the Marange Church namely, baptizers, evangelists, prophets and healers. Despite having distinct duties to perform in accordance to their different offices, the leaders duties are complimentary and they work together to meet the demands of the congregation and ensuring the functioning of the church. Team work and collaboration among various office bearers was also confirmed by one participant who is a leader in the church who said:

*“...we have different duties as leaders but we work together as leaders of one church to make sure things run smoothly every time we are having our church services and gatherings. As prophets, healers, evangelists and baptisers we always meet and discuss issues and delegate duties as they come from mutumwa (founding prophet) through our senior prophet. We also meet other leaders from other branches and discuss matters affecting our church...”*

Based on the narratives above, it can be seen that appointed leaders in the JMAC have power and are well respected and honoured by the church members in that respect. Thus, it becomes one of the belief systems of the church since the members believe in the power of these leaders and follow their leadership.

The researcher concluded that by believing in the power of anointed leaders, the *Vapostori* have developed immense respect of authority figures which they do not limit to their church leadership only, but also extend it to community leadership as well. Those in leadership positions have also embraced the importance of team work and collaboration with others in leading positions. The *Vapostori* are also submissive and place their allegiance and support to community leadership, characteristics which stem from the belief in the power of appointed leadership in the church and community. The above qualities of the *Vapostori* will ensure an orderly community with no uprisings and chaos. The researcher was thus convinced to conclude that the *Vapostori's* belief in appointed leaders as argued above, has a bearing on the success of community development initiatives since it creates a community that has order, peace and that embrace team work and collaboration.

#### **3.4.1.5. Subtheme 5: Self-reliance**

The apostles (*vapostori*) of JMAC believe in self-reliance than depending on assistance from others. Their belief is that a man should provide for himself and his family than being assisted or employed somewhere. This belief is the driving force behind the church's reliance on vocationalism other than pursuing formal employment. They usually rely on vocational ventures to provide for their needs which they venture into mostly as a family enterprise and it is passed from one generation to the next through apprenticeship. According to the findings of Dodo *et al*, (2014), apostolic members are encouraged to venture into their own businesses or income-generating projects as a way of solving the problem of unemployment, poverty, and over-reliance on other people. The members of this church believe God is the provider of everything and if they worship him He will provide for all their needs through their hard work. The following extracts illustrate this:

*"We depend on ourselves and we don't rely on anyone else to come and provide for us".*

*"...we work hard for our survival and God will reward us for that. We don't believe in living on other people's means hence we rely on ourselves".*

Based on the above extracts, it can thus be pointed out that self-reliance forms part of the JMAC's belief system. This was a general consensus across the research

participants who concurred that self-reliance is one of their fundamental components of their belief system.

The researcher was convinced that *Vapostori's* belief in self-reliance contributes to community development. The members venture into self-sustenance projects and do not put pressure on the government for jobs. The *Vapostori* are entrepreneurs and are involved in projects such as farming and even employ other people. Some of the members own retail shops and hardware which they operate as family businesses. The *Vapostori* have also engaged in community projects using their own resources. The researcher discovered that the church was in the process of building a primary school with efforts of adding a secondary school as well in the Nyajezi area under chief Saunyama in Nyanga district. The *Vapostori* are using their own labour and expertise in building a modern school that will benefit the whole community without external funding coming in except for the land that they were given for free by the chief. Also in the same Nyajezi area, at the district headquarters of the church, the *Vapostori* have made safe drinking water pumped from their borehole to be accessible to the whole community at no cost even to non-members of the church. Thus, the researcher was convinced that the belief in self-reliance by the *Vapostori* is actually aiding to community development.

#### **3.4.1.6 Subtheme 6: The power of men (male dominance)**

Male dominance over women in the church was also observed as another underlying part of the church's belief system. In both the religious and social lives of the church members, the power of men is well orchestrated. Women respect their husbands and are very much submissive to them. The belief is that women were created as helpers of men as narrated in the historical narratives of creation in the Holy Scriptures of the Bible. This was also observed by Mukonyora (1993) who narrated that women are in the majority of church membership but in terms of status they are marginalized. One participant had this to say:

*“Men were created to be leaders... in our church men are the leaders and our women follow and respect the leadership of the men”.*

Men in the church lead polygamous families and they have the exclusive right to decide on the number of wives they want. According to Sibanda *et al* (2008), the

*vapostori* families are characterised by the social institution of polygamy. An ideal family constitutes an average of four to five women. This polygamy has biblical justification. It is noted in the Old Testament that patriarchal figures like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were polygamous (Gen.16: 3ff; Gen.29: 9ff). This is reflected in the following extract from one of the participants who was involved in a polygamous marriage who said:

*“God created us to multiply and fill up the earth... we cannot achieve this with one wife so just like our father Abraham we believe in having many wives as we can so as to fulfil our God given mandate”.*

Their social pattern is anchored in patriarchal conceptions reflecting enduring Jewish influences as adopted from the lifestyle of the Biblical characters and apostles. In the church hierarchy, majority of the posts are dominated by men. This is supported by what was discovered by Bourdillon (1987) who reported that top leadership positions like being priests, bishops and evangelists are monopolized by men, yet women play active roles in Church especially in the areas of singing, ushering, healing and prophecy. This male dominance as seen from an insider’s perspective does not have any effect to the church members as it forms the basis of their belief system. They believe in it as they were born and raised in that system and to them it is the best way of leading their lives in accordance to God’s commands. Thus it can be concluded here that the power of men or simply male dominance over women is one of the fundamentals of the *vapostori*’s belief system.

The researcher concluded that the belief in male dominance by the *Vapostori* lead to orderly organised families that create strong social fabric in the society. The families also provide the much-needed human resources in community development in the form of labour and social support. Thus, with orderly families and enough human resources community development initiatives will be made possible.

### **3.4.2 THEME 2: APOSTOLIC ROLES IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

The researcher discovered during his engagements with the participants that apostolicism (*vapostori belief*) play an important role in bringing community development and change in the communities they are based. It was discovered that there are a lot of roles that the church is playing in aiding and facilitating community

development initiatives. The church members engage in these roles as inspired by their belief system and sometimes unaware of those roles' value to the development of the community. The researcher grouped these roles into subthemes which include encouraging trust, conflict prevention and peace building, health care provision and fostering governance among others. Below is a description and presentation of these roles in subthemes as indicated above.

#### **3.4.2.1 Subtheme 1: Encouraging trust**

The researcher found that encouraging trust is one of the roles that the church plays in the community. The church members have trust in their leadership as well as among themselves. Based on their belief system, the church believe and trust in leaders whether church leaders or any established leadership outside the church because they believe leaders come from God. The church leaders encourage their members to have trust among themselves and in other community members who does not form part of their congregation and membership. This direct encouragement for building trust by church leaders within the church and the community thus control the behaviour of church members and events on the ground in the community. The above observation is in support of what was reported by Dodo *et al*, (2014) that religious leaders influence society by fostering mutual trust among community members through their public pronouncements and actions. The above sentiments were validated by one participant as reflected in the following extract:

*“We believe in trusting each other and our leaders as instructed by God even the leaders in our community and anyone else in the community deserve to be trusted and we don't judge for judgement is only reserved to God”*

The researcher also observed that whenever there are misunderstandings between church members or even outside the church, the church leaders and elders usually intervene and mediate between the involved parties and encourage peace and the building of trust afterwards. They play a pivotal role in ensuring the development of trust among their church members and the community at large in the community leadership as well as state governing bodies. This is based on the church's belief that leaders come from God whether church leaders or community leaders hence they deserve all the trust and respect as explained in the bible. Church members even indicated that they have trust in the ruling party ZANU PF and place their

allegiance behind it since they believe it was put in power by God hence they respect that. One participant had this to say on this matter:

*“We respect and trust our leaders and our government and chiefs since every leadership structure in power on earth were put in place by God and without God’s blessings they won’t be there hence we fully support and trust in their leadership”.*

Through encouraging trust, the church discourages violence and encourages reconciliation in line with their belief system whenever they are wronged. The church members do not hold grudges with other community members who do not share their belief system and respect them for their decisions in life. This plays a major role in quelling political crisis in the rather turmoil political landscape of the Zimbabwean society. Thus, at this juncture, it can safely be concluded that by encouraging trust in the community, the church plays an important role in community development since trust is one of the pre-requisites for community development initiatives to be successfully implemented. Significant community development cannot be achieved if there is no trust amongst the various stakeholders of the community, apostolic groups and their beliefs included. Thus, the level of trust among community members does play a role in facilitating effective community development.

#### **3.4.2.2 Subtheme 2: Conflict prevention and peace building**

The researcher discovered that the church also plays a role in conflict prevention and peace building. This observation is in support of what was noted by Dodo *et al* (2014) earlier that religious groups and churches traditionally play important roles in society, especially around peace-building. The participants indicated that the church’s conception of conflict prevention and peace building is centred on mechanisms of peace building that they employ which include prayers for peace and nurturing their children towards apostolic norms and values. The church discourages its members from violent behaviours and encourages them to lead peaceful lives in line with their beliefs. The church also conducts prayers for peace whenever there are waves of violence threatening peace in the communities. The participants also indicated that it is the church’s norm that they pray for peace at every church service they conduct. The following extracts from interviews reflect the above sentiments:

*“We believe in peace and non-violent resolution of issues as instructed to us by God’s commandments hence our strong message to our members every day is to ensure peace and to pray for peace everywhere”.*

*“We also conduct periodic prayers for peace in our communities especially towards election time in the country to ensure there will not be bloodshed and for God to direct the right leadership to be on power”.*

The researcher also observed from the engagements with the participants that one of the church’s mechanisms in ensuring peace and conflict prevention is to stay away from politics. The church does not participate in any political activities or taking up political sides in terms of supporting political parties but they only put their allegiance and trust in the ruling party as they believe all rulers on earth are put in place by God. The church members do not vote in national elections. Haar and Ellis (2006) support the above assertion when they postulated that ideas concerning a spirit world play a major role in discouraging violence.

The researcher observed from the participants’ narrations that the apostolic church is probably one of the few institutions in Zimbabwe that effectively conducts peace-building. This was confirmed by the following: peace prayers conducted periodically, support for the ruling government, the existence of places of worship (*masowe*), and the provision allowing individuals to start up their own places of worship (*masowe*) and to develop leadership skills, the belief in peace and forgiveness, and respect for social structures. It was also observed that it is taboo for apostolic members to assault, insult, or engage in any form of criminal activity, and members are obliged to maintain peace and order in their neighbourhoods which works very well in preventing conflicts and ensuring there is peace in the community.

However, the participants indicated that they always pray for political leaders of the country so that God can give them the wisdom to lead the country. They also encourage their members to accept the political leadership and pray for them since they are God’s appointees to lead the people according to their beliefs. The participants indicated that they pledge their allegiance and work with the established political leadership but they do not participate in politics and members are not



allowed to involve themselves in political battles. One of the participants who were a leader had this to say:

*“We respect and honour the political leadership of our country and we do engage with them on other projects. However, we are not allowed by our church doctrine to involve ourselves with political issues, we just assure them of our loyalty”.*

It can therefore be seen from the above description and quotations that the church plays a role in ensuring conflict prevention and peace building within its members and subsequently the entire community. A peaceful and conflict free community is very much conducive for community development activities to thrive without disturbances. Thus, by contributing to such a community where peace and tranquillity is the order of the day, the church can be concluded to be directly influencing and contributing to the success of community development initiatives.

#### **3.4.2.3 Subtheme 3: Health care provision**

Health care provision also came out to be one of the roles that the church plays. The participants indicated that they do not believe in modern health care provision mechanisms. The researcher observed that the church believe in faith healing and they handle all cases in relation to health care in accordance with their beliefs. The church members do not go to hospitals or clinics for medical intervention. They just go to their healers (*varapi*) at church whenever they have a health related complication and receive healing prayers and anointed water (*muteuro*) which they use as instructed by the healers. This is in line with what was documented by Maguranyanga (2011), that apostolic churches emphasize church-related interventions, which they deem as having a spiritual competitive edge over secular, modern healthcare services primarily through the belief that, illnesses and diseases have spiritual and religious undertones and spirits can influence the health of the living. The above observations are validated by the following extract from one of the participants who had a leadership role in the church who said:

*“Our healers (varapi) provide all the necessary healing needed by our members and it is very effective to us and we have no need to seek medical assistance at hospitals because that is a lack of faith in our God who is the*

*provider of everything including good health and healing and deliverance to the sick”*

The participants indicate that the church also provide health care to non-church members for free as long as they come forward for intervention and they do not force them to be converted to their church. They indicated that usually some people from the community who are not members of their church always come for intervention after they fail to get assistance at hospitals or clinics. The participants also indicated that the church is famed for its effectiveness in healing non-physical ailments which are usually linked to spiritual afflictions and cannot be treated in hospitals. This was observed by Ter Haar and Ellis (2006) that throughout Africa, there is a widespread supposition that people in need of healing include not only those with obvious physical ailments, but also those who are suffering from vaguer problems that in clinical medicine might be diagnosed as psychological problems, including stress or depression. The church provides that healing to those vague health problems that cannot be healed by clinical interventions including mental illness. The following are some of the views expressed by participants with regard to the church’s contribution to health care:

*“All our health concerns are taken care of by our healers and even people from outside our church they come here for prayers and they go back healed after failing to heal at hospitals”.*

*“...we even have our elder women who stay with our pregnant women and conduct prayers with them and deliver babies when the time comes without problems...”*

Given the sentiments in the above description and extracts of the church’s role with regard to health care provision, it can be concluded that the church has a role to play in community development through health care provision to its members and even to non-church members at free of charge. Health care has become an expensive commodity in modern day society but the church readily provides it to its members who form a substantial part of the community for free. Also by providing health solutions to complicated matters of health that cannot be solved clinically and regarded as spiritual, the church plays a pivotal role in bringing sanity to the

community's health woes to a certain degree. This aid to the health sector of the community hence community development is inevitable.

Be that as it may, it should be noted with special emphasis that the effectiveness of faith healing and *Vapostori's* ways of health care provision are not scientifically proven and its effectiveness cannot be justified beyond personal accounts of beneficiaries of such healing. The researcher concurs with what has been noted by other scholars (Maguranyanga, 2011; Tapfumane 2010), that the *Vapostori* pose a health threat in times of outbreaks of communicable diseases such as cholera and diarrhoea. The *Vapostori* are also accused of harbouring diseases since they don't immunize their children and spreading those diseases to other community members who are not members of the *Vapostori* when they socialise or when their children attend school with other children who have been immunized. The researcher argues that taking the above observations, it can as well be concluded that *Vapostori's* belief in faith healing and shunning of modern clinical health interventions becomes a hindrance to community development.

#### **3.4.2.4 Subtheme 4: Fostering governance**

The results from the engagements with the participants propelled the researcher to conclude that the church also plays a role in fostering governance within the community. The church helps in creating order and instilling the sense of belonging and accountability into the people under its leadership and organisation. A disorganised group of people is difficult to govern hence by successfully assembling people into its leadership, the church fosters governance in the community. The church also plays a major role in educating people to non-violent ways of handling matters in accordance to its doctrine and beliefs. These beliefs promote peace and non-violence coupled with forgiveness and reconciliation wherever there might be a misunderstanding between people or groups of people in the community. The church also encourage their members to be submissive and respect their leaders whether traditional leaders or political leaders hence fostering governance. The above sentiments were reflected in the subsequent extract by one of the participants:

*"...we respect our leaders in the community and whenever they call for meetings we always attend or when they issue instructions and orders to be followed we respect that and abide by those..."*

The researcher also found out that the church always pray for and provide support to those of their members that could have been exposed to violence or traumatising experiences. This was also noted by Dodo *et al* (2014) who echoed the same sentiments when they postulated that indigenous religious groups provide spiritual, emotional, and psychological support to people who have suffered from violent and protracted conflict.

The researcher concluded that the church encourages community development initiatives to thrive through fostering governance in the community. The Vapostori's belief in peace and non-violence as well as encouraging their people to be submissive and respect leadership structures creates a governable society which is one of the primary requirements for effective community development to be attained. The church create order and instils a sense of belonging and accountability to members which are also fundamental requirements for community members to possess when they are involved in community development projects.

However, the researcher also noted that *Vapostori* behaviour can sometimes make society ungovernable and be a stabling block towards community development and peace in the community. There has been instances whereby *Vapostori* members fought with law enforcing agents with regard to the *Vapostori's* violation of human rights in the community such as women abuse and rape. Rusvingo (2014) detailed instances of violent clashes between the Zimbabwean police and members of the apostolic churches violating human rights. The research of this study supports Rusvingo's findings and agrees that other behaviours of the *Vapostori* have violated human rights in the community thereby rendering the community ungovernable and derailing the progress in community development.

#### **3.4.2.5 Subtheme 5: Provision of social care and assistance**

The church also assists those who cannot provide for themselves in terms of food and shelter. Those in temporary need of this assistance stay at the senior prophet's place until they can be able to provide for themselves or when the prophet and healers are done with treating them and conducting prayers for their problems. The above findings correlate with what was found by Dodo *et al*, (2014) that the sick or trauma victims are housed at local prophets' residences or healing shrines for sessions that can last for as much as six months.

Those in need of continued care and support in terms of food and shelters as well as spiritual assistance are taken to the church's headquarters for continued assistance. Other researchers have found out that continued exposure to suffering and lack of people's needs will lead to discontent in the community hence the people will be ungovernable. Dodo *et al* (2014) found out that mass exposure of children and youth to abuse and violence, lack of education, poor nutrition, and poor moral standards have long-term implications for governance and peace building. Religious groups thus sponsor youth initiatives in peace-building and development according to the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies (2008). The above findings are reflected in the following extract by one of the participant who was in a leadership position:

*“Our people who are in need of care and assistance are taken to the senior prophet's house where they will stay during the course when they will be receiving prayers and assistance. Those who do not have any means to be able to provide for themselves again and in need of continual prayers such as those who recover from mental illness or delivered from serious evil spirits are taken to the church's headquarters where they will stay.”*

The church's stance and emphasis on the provision of care and assistance to those in need can be attributed to aiding community development initiatives beyond doubt. By taking care of those in need and accommodating them, the researcher was convinced to conclude that the church is a role player in community development through improving the lives of their members who are exposed to poverty and cannot provide for themselves.

#### **3.4.2.6 Subtheme 6: Providing economic legitimization**

Economic imbalances in terms of resource distribution and income levels are usually a borne of contestation in societies and end up triggering serious fighting in the form of riots and strikes. On that note, after engaging with the participants, the researcher noted that the church is of paramount importance in suppressing these potential confrontations from a discontent mass of people to the governing structures. The participants indicated that in accordance with their church's doctrine, they believe that the economic status of people in every circumstance is upon God's will for them. Thus it being God's will, no one should be allowed to challenge it or hold anyone

accountable to those disparities in terms of economic issues such as income distribution and employment among others.

Church members are not allowed to fight or retaliate for economic rights such as fighting for employment and services provision. Instead, church members are encouraged to be entrepreneurs and start their own ways of earning and make their own lives better than fighting for it from authorities. They believe in changing their own lives for the better than waiting for authorities to do that for them. The following extracts reflect these views:

*“We believe what we have and all our fortunes are from God and it is upon his will and no one should challenge that when time comes God will change that for the better”.*

*“...no one can provide for another except God and He is not human so no one on this earth should be blamed for anyone’s misfortunes... people should just pray to God so that he can open opportunities for them to better their lives”.*

The church encourages its members and other people to embrace the status quo in terms of the economy. They believe God did everything for a purpose for his people so challenging the status quo will be revolting against God. In that way, the church plays a role in avoiding riots and public uprisings which have devastating consequences to public order and investment as well as community development. The church thus helps in creating a legitimate economy that is stable which is one of the underlying necessities for effective community development to thrive. This was also noted by Garner (1998) that it is the duty of religious groupings to encourage community members to embrace the legitimate political dispensation of today and this will enable co-operation from the people hence community development will thrive.

In line with the above narratives and descriptions, it can be concluded that the church is playing a role in community development by creating a favourable environment for community development to thrive without challenges. By legitimising the economy, the church cools down all the possible malcontent and possible contestation and uprising that might disturb the smooth running of community development initiatives.

### **3.4.3 THEME 3: APOSTOLIC PRACTICES AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

In addition to apostolic roles, the researcher also attributed apostolic practices to community development. Apostolic practices of the JMAC were found to be a major contributor to peace building in the community which is a major requirement where community development is to be achieved. The church members conduct these practices in honour of their beliefs in accordance with their church doctrine. However, the researcher observed that the majority of these practices have a direct bearing to peace building among the church members and subsequently the whole community and create a favourable environment for community development to take place. The practices are grouped into subthemes below.

#### **3.4.3.1 Subtheme 1: Conservation**

It was observed that the church has adopted a culture of environmental conversation wherever they are based. They promote the protection and maintenance of the environment especially through reducing deforestation and pollution. The church has also embarked on an exercise of building ablution facilities at their places of worship (*masowe*). The participants also raised important issues concerning community resource management. According to Dodo *et al* (2014) apostolic churches have recently adopted a policy that works towards the conservation of natural resources, especially trees, by encouraging congregants to grow trees at all worshipping centres (*masowe*). The leader of one place of worship had this to say on this matter:

*“We have planted trees to provide shade for our members during church services since we don’t use buildings and we have also built toilets. We have also planted a gum tree plantation and we hope it will assist us with firewood during our church gatherings not so long”.*

The church members have also started planting trees and creating fire guards around their place of worship. The participants of this study indicated that the trees provide shade and beautify their places of worship. The church have also discouraged its members from establishing *masowe* (place of worship) everywhere, destroying natural resources like grass and trees in the process and in some cases causing soil erosion.

In consideration of the above explained practice by the church, the researcher concluded that the church is playing a role in environmental resource conservation. This in turn assist in the efforts for community development since a properly managed environment will boost and support the community's well-being. However, it should also be noted that the Vapostori have also posed a threat to the environment in some instances whereby they have been accused of pollution, deforestation and erosion at their places of worship. As indicated by Dodo *et al*, (2014) these problems are being gradually addressed with the Vapostori now working with the environmental management agency (EMA) in mitigating the impacts of their activities on the environment. This has seen the Vapostori building ablution facilities as well as planting trees at their places of worship and reducing the number of the worship centres in one community.

#### **3.4.3.2 Subtheme 2: Employment**

The researcher discovered that in an environment with high levels of unemployment in Zimbabwe, finding a job has become almost an impossibility in everyday life. However, the church members indicated that they are slowly drifting from their traditional norm of not seeking formal employment. Though they have a strong emphasis on self-reliance and vocationalism, many of its members are now embracing formal employment for a living. Given the competition on the job market and lack of employment, the participants indicated that many of them have been assisted by the church through prayers to get employment.

It is a fact that poverty is generally understood and known to be one of the causes of civil unrest in the world. Employment has come out as the only remedy to escalating poverty levels and to enable people meet their basic needs. In Zimbabwe, especially following the devastating economic crisis that started in 1999, prospects of securing employment have become a very difficult task. However, JMAC, through its prophecy has played a role in helping people secure jobs to change their lives for the better. The participants indicated that the majority of people (usually non-members of the church) who frequent the places of worship (*masowe*) seek advice and help in securing jobs. After this encounter either they secure a job or at least some hope is kept alive. Joblessness affects families in a number of ways including a rise in rates of divorce which will tear families apart. There will also be a lot of unemployed



people with nothing to do resulting in a high record of crime. Thus, in this regard, JMAC has played a role in keeping families intact by helping people secure jobs for sustenance.

The researcher was convinced to conclude that the *Vapostori* contribute to community development through assisting people to get employment. Job security enables people to provide for their own needs such as food and accommodation thereby developing their own livelihoods and subsequently the community will develop. The hope of getting employment that is kept alive by the *Vapostori's* faith will also assist in quelling down the discontent that might rise in the community against authorities resulting uprisings. This hope of getting a job one day will therefore contribute to peace in the community which is needed for community development initiatives to be successful.

#### **3.4.3.3 Subtheme 3: Prophecy**

The researcher observed from the engagements with the participants that unlike the traditional mainline churches (Roman Catholic, Anglican and Methodist) which do not believe in prophecy, the JMAC is famed for its belief in prophecy, whereby people are told of their future, their plans, their imminent failures and downfalls, and warned of any impending dangers. The social, economic, and political problems bedeviling Zimbabwean society today have forced many people to turn to prophecy for guidance and solutions hence the growth in membership of apostolic sects. This is illustrated by the following extract by one participant who had this to say:

*“...I had to leave the Pentecostal denomination I used to fellowship with long back because the church had no mechanism of foretelling what would befall me in my life...”*

According to the narratives of the participants, prophecy has reconciled broken relations and built bridges between hostile parties as people are being told of their real enemies and how they can overcome future challenges. The participants also indicated that they can plan for their future and avert potential hurdles based on prophecy they get from church.

The researcher noted that the practice of prophecy by the *Vapostori* contributes to community development through fostering peace in the community. Peaceful communities are favourable for community development initiatives to be successful. Through using prophecy, the *Vapostori* are able to foretell people about their lives and misfortunes that might befall them in future thereby enabling the people to plan ahead. Thus, by promoting peace which is needed for community development initiatives to flourish, prophecy was concluded to be a contributor to community development by the researcher.

#### **3.4.3.4 Subtheme 4: Marriage**

Marriage was also noted by the researcher as one of the practices that the JMAC members practice in their social aspect of life. It is conducted in accordance with the doctrine of the church. The participants indicated that marriage ceremonies have traditionally been used within the church as one important way of controlling behaviours of the church's youth and reducing cases of adultery in the church and community. According to the participants, it is through the manner in which marriage ceremonies are structured and the tiresome procedures involved that discourages people from breaking the rules. They indicated that the church's policy recommends that whoever wants to marry introduces the partner to the church elders for spiritual advice and guidance. The two are not allowed to see each other alone and this is out of the fear that they could become sexually intimate before the relationship is solemnized spiritually. The participants also indicated that members of the same place of worship (*masowe*) are not encouraged to marry because they are considered to be brothers and sisters. This is also done to maintain inter-family relations and the general community in a peacefully and orderly manner.

Furthermore, the participants mentioned that the church's policy on polygamy is another way of peace-making and peace-building within their society. They indicated that the church allows men to have many wives as long they can be able to support and take care of them which means there will be bigger families that are the backbone of a stable social fabric of a community. Thus, with bigger stronger families, the church will be providing the much-needed family system to teach morals and values to the growing youth and achieve needed growth in the community. The *Vapostori* also contribute to increase human resources in the community through

leading bigger polygamous families and this human resource is needed to execute community development initiatives hence the researcher linked the marriage systems of the *Vapostori* to community development.

However, it should be noted that the *Vapostori* has also been linked to human rights abuses through their marriage system. There are cases of child marriages and cases of sexual abuses including rape that have been reported against the *Vapostori* and this discourages community development through human rights violations and drawing back the progress of the community. The researcher concur with what was observed by other studies (Kachere, 2015; Zimbabwe National Strategic Plan for the Education of Girls, Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children, 2005-2010) in line with human rights abuses especially against women and girl children in the name of marriage by the *Vapostori*.

### 3.5 EMERGING THEMES: SOCIAL WORKER’S ACCOUNTS

The researcher had an opportunity to engage with a social worker based in the district and discussed a number of issues pertaining to apostolic churches. The following two themes and the related subthemes emerged during the individual interviews with the social worker.

- a) Apostolic beliefs and practices
- b) Proposals for the improvement of existing relations

The above themes and the subsequent subthemes are reflected in Table 3.2 below as they emerged from the interviews conducted during the study.

**Table 3.2: Social worker’s accounts: Themes and subthemes**

Theme number	Main theme	Subthemes
1	Apostolic beliefs and practices	Importance to community cohesion and development
		Challenges faced
		Strategies to enhance cooperation and teamwork
3	Proposals to improve existing relations	Suggested areas for improvements

### **3.5.1 THEME 1: APOSTOLIC BELIEFS AND PRACTICES**

The researcher discovered after interviews with the church members that their belief system is very much embedded into their way of life so much that it controls every aspect of their lives. The researcher was preoccupied with the question of 'whether these beliefs and practices contribute in any way to the development of the community'. The responses from the participants pointed to a positive contribution of these beliefs and practices to community development. However, the researcher wanted answers from an outsider's perspective and preferably someone who is a professional involved in community development initiatives. To achieve that, the researcher interviewed a social worker operating in the district who contributed his views to the matters of this church from the experience of working with the members of this church.

#### ***3.5.1.1 Subtheme 1: Importance to community cohesion and development***

The social worker indicated that the church plays an important role in community cohesion and subsequently making it possible for community development to take place. The church's beliefs were attributed to promoting unity and peace among its members hence there will be community cohesion. The social worker also indicated that though the members of this church are polygamous in nature when it comes to marriage, they lead very peaceful families that can be exemplary to others in the community. The church members were also reported to be on the record of discouraging violence and promoting reconciliation.

The social worker also argued that these apostolic practices and ideas of unity and peace building as well as emphasis on non-violent resolution to conflicts are being transferred and assimilated to the whole community. The periodic peace prayers conducted by the church are not intended only to benefit the church members but the whole community. Thus, the church members were reported to be an example for others in the community to emulate when it comes to peace and cohesion. The social worker also indicated that the church members always cooperate and participate in community initiatives as long as it does not violate their doctrine.

In line with the above sentiments from the social worker, the church's beliefs and practices can be attributed to community cohesion and development. This is an important factor to achieve community development.

### **3.5.1.2 Subtheme 2: Challenges faced**

The social worker reported that the greatest challenge faced by members of the church is stigmatization. The church members are stigmatized by other community members (non-church members) who do not believe in the same ways as those of the church members. These non-members in the same community with the church members criticise the way of doing things by the church members such as not immunizing their children and not seeking medical assistance among others. More often the church members thus find themselves at the receiving end of criticisms for instance they are accused for spreading diseases because their unimmunized children attend same schools with other immunized children in the same community. Thus, the ways of doing things by the church members is highly condemned by no-church members who do not share the same beliefs with them.

The social worker also reported that it is difficult on their part to work with the church most of the time. The church is highly secretive to non-members in whatever they do especially to authorities from the government or anyone they perceive to be working to judge their way of doing things. The church members have very little trust in non-members probably because of the long standoff and criticism that they have received for a long time. The social worker indicated that it is thus difficult in most cases to understand the ways of the church and work with its members in order to assist them whenever there is need because of that lack of trust.

The social worker also indicated some structural challenges in working with the church. It was indicated that it is not easy to work with the church if you are an outsider. It also came out that shortage of staff to effectively work with the church is another challenge. They are only seen when there is a problem with the church which will discredit their work because they must be seen regularly engaging with the church on different issues not only when there are problems. This will lead to their work not being taken serious and it becomes a problem in working with the church to assist it and understanding its ways of doing things so that it can be integrated into community work initiatives.

### **3.5.1.3 Subtheme 3: Strategies to enhance cooperation and teamwork**

The social worker reported that given the standoff that exists between the church and non-members as well as state authorities, there is a lot of work to be done to enhance cooperation and teamwork among these warring parties. He indicated that most of the times there are accusations and counter accusations between the church and other community members who do not share the same beliefs with them. This leads to religious antagonism involving people from the same community which is detrimental if there is no intervention to enhance tolerance, cooperation and teamwork.

The social worker suggested that there should be extensive awareness campaigns in the community involving all community members despite their religious backgrounds. This is to make community members to be tolerant and accept each other's beliefs and ways of doing things from their respective religions and not take that against each other. This will also encourage trust between the community members.

The social worker felt that there should be a change of attitude and the way authorities view and handle matters concerning the church and its members. He argued that the approach should be spiritually sensitive and authorities should be encouraged not to force things to the church but rather try by all means to find a common understanding with them. He indicated that this should as well go to the parliament which draft policies so that they can be spiritually sensitive and consider different religions when they draft policies. This will assist in avoiding the problems of law enforcing authorities clashing with these churches on the ground.

The social worker also indicated that there is need for everyone and the authorities to recognise and embrace the practices of the church and their efforts in bringing a better life to their people and the community. What he suggested is that the community and the authorities should find out what the church is doing and assist them as well as in-cooperating their efforts in whatever community development initiatives they will be having. He also stressed that there is need to involve representatives from the church in all community issues and decision making platforms so that they can also contribute their inputs rather than neglecting them

and accuse them of not cooperating at implementation when they were side-lined at the initial stages of discussions.

### **3.5.2 THEME 2: PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE EXISTING RELATIONS**

The researcher also engaged with the social worker on some of the possible proposals to improve existing relations between the church and the entire community and governing structures as well as law enforcers. The suggested areas for improvement are explained below.

#### ***3.5.2.1 Subtheme 1: Suggested areas for improvements***

According to the social worker, there is nothing more to be done to improve relations between the church and authorities, law enforcers and the other community members who are not part of the church than only growing trust and promoting peaceful co-existence and tolerance to each other. This will reduce the stigma that is attached to the church and stopping all the criticisms and judging of either part.

It was also suggested that there is need to engage the church to grow trust and make them understand that officials and authorities are there to assist them for their well-being than to persecute them for no reason. It should be understood by the church members that authorities are not out there to fight them but to find a common understanding and work with them for the good of the community at large.

The social worker also indicated that there is need for the government to increase the number of social workers on the ground working with the communities and also train those social workers to be spiritually sensitive in their practice. It was stressed by the social worker that social workers only come attached to certain NGOs and in most cases serving the interest of those organisations which might be against the religion of other people in the community. Thus, in most cases social workers only appear when there is a crisis and that according to the social worker it discredits them and they lose trust with the people. Thus, in light of the above, it was suggested that there should be more social workers on the ground to increase their presence in the community for effective intervention.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

This objective of this chapter was to present, analyse and interpreting the data that was collected from the interviews. The data was presented in themes (thematically) in line with the initial objectives of the study. Three themes were discussed that are, apostolic beliefs, apostolic roles in community development and apostolic practices and community development. Also, information collected from a social worker was presented in two themes which are, apostolic beliefs and practices and proposals to improve existing relations.



# CHAPTER 4

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is to highlight the major findings of the study by means of a summary, conclusion and recommendations. The findings are based on the responses extracted from interviews with the members of JMAC as well as a social worker working in the district.

### 4.2 RESTATEMENT OF AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The study's aim was to explore the impact of apostolic beliefs and practices on community development in the context of the Johanne Marange Apostolic Church in Ward 12, Nyanga District in Zimbabwe. The researcher came up with three objectives to achieve this aim as follows.

- *Identify apostolic beliefs that contribute to community development.*

The researcher collected information on some of the beliefs of the apostolic members of the church. The beliefs that were identified during the engagements with the participants are prophets and spirituality, faith healing, power of leaders, worshiping in open spaces, self-reliance and the power of men. The beliefs were identified by the researcher in collaboration with the participants of the research. These beliefs were analysed in relation to their contribution to community development and this assisted the researcher to achieve the aim of the study.

- *Describe the role played by apostolic churches in community development.*

In working towards achieving the aim of the study, the researcher also noted the roles played by apostolic churches towards community development. The researcher collected information pertaining to the roles of encouraging trust, conflict prevention, health care provision, fostering governance, provision of social care and assistance and provision of economic legitimation. This information was analysed in relation to how these roles contribute to community development and in the process fulfilling the aim of the study.

- *Establish which of apostolic practices contribute to community development.*

In addition to the roles, it was imperative for the researcher to collect information pertaining to some of the apostolic church practices that are inspired by their beliefs and how they contribute to community practice. The information collected was in relation to the practices of conservation, employment, prophecy and marriage. This information was analysed and completed the task of exploring the impact of apostolic beliefs and practices on community development as intended by the aim of the researcher.

### **4.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

This study examined the importance of apostolic beliefs and practices in community development. It was noted that apostolic beliefs and practices are a very crucial aspect which must not be neglected by community developers. The sample used in this study may not have been large or fully representative because it was hindered by church policy which does not allow people from outside such as the media or individuals to record anything, interview anyone or photograph anyone or anything that has to do with the church. Despite that, the study sought the depth rather than breadth of the content which was obtained. Under these circumstances, the subsequent issues came out prominently in the study. The fact that there was a general positive understanding of the idea of community development in relation to the church's beliefs and practices validated the effort put into the study by the researcher. Another important fact is that most of the participants in the study were active members of the church and well-placed sources of relevant data.

#### **4.3.1 Apostolic beliefs**

Below is an exposition of the beliefs of the JMAC which were revealed during the interviews with the participants. These beliefs were found to be bringing the church members together and encouraging peace as well as the spirit of oneness and teamwork which are essential in promoting community development.

**4.3.1.1 Prophets and spirituality:** The study revealed that the church believes in prophets and spirituality. This belief is derived from the Biblical prophets such as Moses, Elijah and Elisha who influenced the call and rise of the founding prophet of the church, Johanne Momberume Marange. Thus the founding prophet is trusted

and respected just like these influential prophets of the Old Testament times in the Bible. The church members place their belief and trust in prophets to lead them in every aspect of their lives. This belief creates a culture of loyalty, respect and allegiance to authority figures which the *Vapostori* also give to community leaders. This will create a governable community with members who are submissive and willing to follow their leaders which are much needed requirements for community development initiatives to thrive.

**4.3.1.2 Faith healing:** The study found out that the church members believe in the power of faith healing through the Holy Spirit. It was discovered that members of the church do not use modern secular methods of clinical intervention in matters that concerns their health. Church members do not go to hospitals. They believe that all sickness have spiritual undertones hence the belief in treating and healing all those illnesses through faith healing. The church was also discovered to be one of those famed for its ability to cure bizarre health conditions that are believed to be spiritually linked and cannot be cured through clinical interventions. This assist in making members of the church to access healing when they need it rather than abandoning them without assistance. Improved health is one of the characteristics of a developed community hence by complimenting the community health through faith healing, the church contributes towards community development.

**4.3.1.3 Power of leaders:** It was also found out that the church believes in the power of appointed leaders. It was discovered that appointed leaders are the ones who hold the office hierarchy of the church as appointed by the senior prophet. These leaders also carry a direct mandate from the founding prophet to lead the people. It was discovered that though these leaders occupy different offices with different duties and tasks, they work in collaboration to ensure the successful running of the church business on daily basis.

**4.3.1.4 Worshiping in open spaces:** Open space (*sowe*) worshiping also known as wilderness worshiping was also discovered to be one of the beliefs of the church. It was discovered that this practice was derived from influential Biblical characters such as Moses who was a prophet and was instructed by God to pray in the wilderness. These open spaces of worship are regarded as holly grounds of worship and are always located near rivers for baptism purposes. It was also discovered that

each place of worship will be comprised of thirty to fifty families who worship under the leadership of one senior prophet.

**4.3.1.5 Self-reliance:** Vocationalism was found to be the core belief of the church in terms of earning a living. The church believes in self-reliance and discourages its members from looking for assistance from other people or sources. Church members are encouraged to start small entrepreneurial vocational ventures at family level often led by the father who is the family head.

**4.3.1.6 Power of men:** The study revealed that there is male dominance over women in the church in all decision making issues. It was also found out that men occupy all the leadership roles in the church. Women were discovered to be playing only a complimentary role to the men and this is out of the belief that women were created to be helpers of men according to the church's beliefs. Patriarchy was also discovered to be prevailing in the church with men leading polygamous families and having exclusive rights on deciding on the number of women they want.

#### **4.3.2 Apostolic roles in community development**

The study found out that apostolic beliefs and practices play an important role in enhancing community development. This was found to be facilitated by the various roles that the church executes in line with its beliefs which subsequently contribute to the development of the community. Below is a summary of the roles of the church that were found to be facilitating community development in the community.

**4.3.2.1 Encouraging trust:** The study revealed that the church helps in fostering trust in the community through its members. This was found to be helpful in controlling violent behaviour and promoting peace and reconciliation in the community. The church also encourages its members to trust established community leadership as well as the political leadership. This was found to be contributing to community development since trust among community members is one of the essential requirements for effective community development.

**4.3.2.2 Conflict prevention and peace building:** It was found out from the study that the church also contributes in conflict prevention and peace building in the community. The church conducts prayers for peace and it also nurtures children in apostolic norms and values that promote peace building and conflict prevention. It

also discourages its members from violence and to refrain from active participation in politics. However, they place their allegiance to the ruling party and the political leadership. This was found to be valuable contribution to community development since community development cannot thrive in a violent atmosphere.

**4.3.2.3 Health care provision:** The study revealed that though the church does not believe in modern medicines, it has its own mechanisms for providing health care to its members. The church believes in faith healing over modern secular clinical interventions. Members of the church do not go to hospitals and they rely on their healers for prayers because they believe all diseases have spiritual undertones hence the need to treat them with faith healing through the Holy spirit. The church was also found to be providing health care to non-church members who come with complicated spiritual matters that cannot be cured at hospitals. Thus by being a major contributor to health care of the community, it was found that the church becomes a role player in community development.

**4.3.2.4 Fostering governance:** The church was also attributed to fostering governance in the community. It was found that the church helps in creating order and instilling the spirit of oneness and accountability to community members. The church has the ability to organise people under its leadership and educate them on the importance of non-violent ways of handling matters in line with the church's doctrine. The church also encourages its members to be tolerant, restraint and submissive to the leaders of the community whether traditional or political leaders. Thus, by fostering local governance, the church plays a role in community development by ensuring a stable and governable community where development can thrive.

**4.3.2.5 Provision of social care and assistance:** The church also provides support and care to its vulnerable members in terms of food and shelter and counselling after traumatic and violent experiences. Those in need of permanent care and support and taken care of at the church headquarters. This ensures that no member of the church is subjected to abject suffering and it helps improving members' standards of living and wellbeing.

**4.3.2.6 Providing economic legitimation:** The study also revealed that the church plays a role in providing economic legitimation in the community. The church was

found to be very much influential in suppressing potential discontent and uprising from the people to governing structures. It makes people understand that it is by God's will to be in the economic situation they are in hence they should not fight with anyone or any governing structure because that will amount to challenging God's will. Instead, the church encourages its members to be entrepreneurs and start their own ways of making their own lives better and pray to God to grant them a better life. Thus, it was concluded that by providing economic legitimation, the church contributes to community development through suppressing possible discontent and uprisings from the people that might turn violent and disturb community development initiatives.

#### **4.3.3 Apostolic practices and community development**

The study also revealed that there are a number of apostolic practices that contribute to community development. These practices were found to be contributing to peace building which promotes the thriving of community development ventures. The use of baptism and prophecy within the church has helped to instil discipline among church members and the surrounding community. This is supported by the fact that people believe what prophets say. The research also revealed that peace, oneness and sacredness that are created by church beliefs and practices have also worked towards the development of the community. This is seen when church members come together and work on environmental conservation projects such as gully and forest reclamation.

The fact that the unemployed are helped to secure jobs or that their hopes are restored has also fostered peace in communities characterized by unemployment, poverty, crime and violence. The JMAC supports any government in power and it does not take particular political party and its members refrain from political conflicts and activism. The research participants state that it is clear that the JMAC plays a peace-building role in the community and that it has also contributed towards resolving conflicts and under-development in their communities.

#### **4.3.4 Social worker's perspective**

Basing on the data collected from the social worker and the contributions made, the following observations were made:

- The social worker indicated that the church plays an important role ensuring community cohesion and subsequently making it possible for community development to take place.
- The church's beliefs and practice were also attributed to promoting unity and peace among its members and it assimilates to the community.
- Credit was also given to the church for leading peaceful families providing the much needed social support in the community.
- In terms of the existing relations and challenges between the church and other community members, the social worker reported that the church is faced with stigmatization on a majority of issues.
- The social worker confirmed that it is difficult on their part to work with the church because of lack of trust and the secretive nature of the church.
- In a bid to enhance cooperation and teamwork in the community, the social worker indicated that there is a lot of work to be done to enhance cooperation and teamwork between the members other church and non-members of the church.
- It was also suggested that there is need to promote religious tolerance and acceptance between community members.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSIONS**

In line with the above findings, the researcher came up with several conclusions to sum up the whole study. The researcher concluded that apostolic beliefs and practices contribute to the success of community development largely by creating a conducive and enabling environment for community development initiatives to flourish. However, there are other instances where the researcher was convinced to conclude that instead of facilitating the success of community development, apostolic beliefs and practices actually pose a risk to the development of the community because of some of their beliefs and practices that perpetuate the violation of human rights.

##### **4.4.1 Apostolic beliefs**

The researcher concluded that the belief in prophets and spirituality creates a culture of allegiance and respect among the church members which they also exercise to community authorities. This ensures order and peace in the community between all

community members thereby creating a favourable condition for community development to be successful. It was also concluded that faith healing contributes to the wellbeing of members and assist in healing complicated matters that might not be cured at hospitals. However, it was concluded that in cases of outbreaks of communicable diseases, the members of the church often harbour and spread these diseases as they refuse vaccination or treatment. In these circumstances, the researcher concluded that the apostolic belief will be a stabling block to achieving community development.

The belief in the power of leaders result in church members developing much respect towards leadership structures both in the church and in the community. This respect of authorities ensures peace and order in the community without unnecessary uprisings and revolts against authorities. These conditions are favourable for community development to be successful. Furthermore, the belief of worshiping in open spaces as groups of families facilitates the development of a sense of collective ownership to community property and accountability. This sense of ownership and accountability is transferred to the execution of community development projects leading to success of these projects. However, it was also concluded that in some instances, the worshiping in open spaces puts pressure on natural resources and usually end up posing environmental hazards such as pollution and deforestation.

It was concluded that self-reliance encourage entrepreneurship and reduce the dependence syndrome of over reliance on external help or assistance from outside the community. Thus, the members will develop a mentality and attitude of ownership to projects and they will give all their time and effort in fighting for the success of community projects. This attitude is needed when executing community development projects and it is easy to work with a community that is independent in attitude and success is easy in community development. Moreover, it was concluded that the belief in the power of men promotes order in the families through allegiance and submission. Intact families promote a strong social fabric that contributes to the community through social support, reproduction and in nurturing and grooming a strong human resource base. On the contrary, it was also concluded that the belief in the superiority of men at the expense of women have led to cases of abuse of women and children. This have resulted in domestic abuse and rape cases



escalating and majority of the cases not being reported since it happens within the church belief system. Thus, it ends up inhibiting efforts of community development.

#### **4.4.2 Apostolic roles**

The researcher concluded that through its beliefs, the church play a role of encouraging trust in the community. This is important to community development since mutual trust is one of the core requirements when executing community development. It was also concluded that the church enhances community development through conflict prevention and peace building. The church's stance on peaceful resolution of misunderstandings and routine peace prayers ensures a conflict free and peaceful community which conducive for community development.

Peaceful communities also attract investors and foreign aid to the community hence it was concluded that the church facilitates community development through encouraging peace and conflict prevention. However, the researcher also concluded that there are other instances where the church is at logger heads with law enforcing agents confronting them on some of their beliefs for instance forcing them to vaccinate their children. Some of these confrontations have turned into violent clashes thereby disturbing peace and subsequently stalling the progress in community development.

In addition, it was concluded that the church use faith healing to provide health care to its members. The church is famed for its ability to treat complicated health matters that are spiritually connected that con not be cured at hospitals and offering this faith healing to non-members of the church. The researcher concluded that this facilitate community development by taking care of the church members through faith healing. Despite this, the researcher also concluded that faith healing is not effective in times of outbreaks of communicable diseases that need immediate attention, physical complications, injury or accidents where there is physical damage of the body that require emergency attention. Faith healing can thus be concluded to be disturbing community development efforts in terms of health care provision.

The researcher also concluded that the church is providing social care and support to those in need. The church is thus developing the wellbeing of people and minimising destitution in the community. In that respect, the researcher concluded

that the church is facilitating community development by assisting the people in need of care and support. On top of this, the church is also providing economic legitimation by suppressing economic discontent and in the same time promoting order, peace and stability which in turn creates favourable conditions for community development initiatives to succeed. Moreover, it was concluded that the church encourages entrepreneurship than over reliance on the government to provide for them. Thus, by assisting in creating an economically legitimate community, the church assists in eliminating possible discontent and uprisings which come when people are demanding better living from the authorities thereby aiding community development which only becomes possible in peaceful and stable communities.

#### **4.4.3 Apostolic practices**

The research concluded that apostolic practices are contributing to the development of the community. The church practice conservation of the environment through taking care of its places of worship. The church plant trees and combat erosion at the places of worship thereby contributing to community development. The church also assist in securing jobs or keeping the hope for finding jobs alive among the people thereby averting possible revolt from discontent people. The marriage system of the church strengthens the social fabric of the community. Thus, the researcher concluded that apostolic practices play a role in community development mainly through making people peaceful and no-violent as well as taking care of the environment.

However, it was noted that the practice of polygamy in some instances leads to men leading too big families that they cannot provide for their needs resulting in neglect and abuse of children and women. The researcher concluded that this neglect and abuse which manifest itself in the form of child labour, child marriages, domestic violence, rape and failing to educate children is inhibiting community development efforts.

#### **4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

To increase the benefiting of the community from apostolic beliefs and practices, there is need to adopt a multi-stakeholder approach that will include all the community members who are non-believers of these beliefs and practices,

government bodies, non-government organisations (NGOs), community based organisations (CBOs) and all civil society organisations. These stake holders should work together in finding solutions that can help in integrating apostolic beliefs and practices into mainline community development initiatives without undermining them and imposing things to those who believe in those beliefs and practices. The following recommendations were proposed by the researcher:

#### **4.5.1 Recommendation 1: Developing policies to assist entrepreneurships**

There is need for the government and all the necessary stakeholders to develop policies and frameworks through which they can assist the entrepreneurship ventures by the church members. The *Vapostori* venture into various entrepreneurship activities such as carpentry, metal work, building, farming, transport and owning grocery shops. There is need for the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises to identify these ventures by the church members and assist them with funding as well as regularising their small businesses. The researcher also recommends that there should be cooperation with the Apostolic Churches Council of Zimbabwe (ACCZ) and the Council of Social Workers in Zimbabwe when reaching out to these churches. The promotion of these entrepreneurships will promote community development.

#### **4.5.2 Recommendation 2: Monitoring of apostolic churches practices**

It was found from the study that there is lack of monitoring of the church practices especially when it comes to healing and use of land. The researcher recommends that the ACCZ should come up with a monitoring strategy on how the church conduct its healing exercises and its effectiveness. This should be done in constant consultation with the church authorities to reach compromise and consensus least there will be accusations of violating people's rights to freedom of worship. It is also imperative to monitor how the churches got land to establish their places of worship without impacting negatively on the environment not leaving the church to just claim wherever they want to establish their places of worship. The researcher also recommends the ACCZ to work with the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) on this initiative.

### **4.5.3 Recommendation 3: Embracing church practices**

It was also found out from the study that there is no framework that is being used to embrace and consider the value of the church practices to community development. With several practices that have been found to be beneficial to community development such as the promotion of peace, conflict prevention and reconciliation, it is therefore recommended that there should be mechanisms to embrace practices towards community development. These can be tapped and be integrated into the national healing efforts by the government. There is also need to put in place measures to in-cooperate these church practices and roles into mainstream community development initiatives. For instance, the government through the Ministry of Social Welfare can engage the church and use its channels of social care and support structures to reach to the people who are in need and provide assistance.

### **4.5.4 Recommendation 4: Involving the church in decision making**

Based on the information gathered from the church members and their leaders, it was found that there is a tendency of ignoring the church in decision making forums of issues affecting the community. It is therefore recommended to make sure that the church is represented and involved in all decision making forums of issues that concerns the community. This will enable the decision makers and governing bodies as well as community developers to take on the valuable inputs of the apostolic members and also consider how they can be affected in the process.

### **4.5.5 Recommendation 5: Increasing the number of social workers**

Based on the information gathered from the social worker, it was revealed that there is a critical shortage of social workers in the communities, with those present only coming as employees of certain NGOs which might not serve the interests of the people as well as respecting their beliefs and practices but just to fulfil the mandate of their pay masters. Thus, the researcher recommended that there is need to recruit and increase the number of social workers to service the communities. It is also recommended that social work educators in Zimbabwe should include issues of religion and spirituality with a special focus on apostolic churches in their curricula. There is also need for social researchers to assess how best the spiritual needs of people can be integrated with other community needs.

#### **4.5.6 Recommendation 6: Issues for further research**

- It came to light from the study that very little has been written about this church in a formal academic manner and most of the available material about the church was probably written through covert programs as it is illegal and unacceptable to document the church's proceedings. Thus in light of the above, it is recommended that government intervention could provide some mechanism that makes it mandatory for apostolic churches to report to a regulatory body such as the (ACCZ), which will then monitor and document activities of the church, define church rituals as well as recording membership figures. The regulatory body can also enforce proper land use and resource management principles as a way of controlling environmental degradation in the form of soil erosion and deforestation as well as resource abuse and depletion.
- The researcher also recommended that there should be more formal research conducted especially on the concept and authority of prophecy and spirituality. In these formal researches, there is need to ascertain if prophecy is real, magic, or fraudulent, how prophets enter the spiritual realm and see beyond earthly eyes as well as how they relate with heavenly personalities.
- This researcher also recommends that should be research on development projects and relief work that the JMAC undertakes so that it can be documented so that the nation can understand how the church operates and if suitable and justifiable can adopt some of the church's beliefs and practices for the sake community development to be achieved.
- Generally, there is need for more research around this church and its ideology to have a much deeper understanding of its ways of doing things.

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**APPENDIX A: The consent form**

Contact number: 074 462 6901

Dear participant

My name is Mr Admire Phineas Chimbera. I am Masters Student in Social Work at the University of Limpopo, Turfloop Campus. The research study on the influence of apostolic beliefs on community development and is a fulfilment of my Master’s degree programme. As part of the study, I am expected to collect data from identified participants and that includes you. During the data collection, the researcher will make use of interview schedule or questionnaires.

You are kindly invited to be a participant in this study. The session will take approximately one hour. You are kindly requested to read and sign the informed consent provided to you. The participation in this study is voluntary and anonymous.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Mr Admire Phineas Chimbera

Master of Social Work Candidate

University of Limpopo

Signature:.....

Date:.....

## **APPENDIX B: Declaration of consent**

I ....., hereby give permission to voluntarily participate in this research study with the following understanding:

### **Nature of the Research:**

- The Social Worker, Mr. Admire Phineas Chimbera, from University of Limpopo is conducting the research.
- The research forms part of the requirements for Mr. Admire Phineas Chimbera's Master's Degree in Social Work.
- Information will be collected by means of interview schedules or questionnaires.

### **My rights as the participant:**

- I cannot be forced to participate in this study.
- I have the right to withdraw from the study at any given time.
- I have the right to decline to answer any question (s) I am not comfortable with.
- I will remain anonymous and my name and identity will be kept from public knowledge.
- Any information I reveal during the process of this study shall remain confidential, shall only be used for the purposes of this research and for publication in Mr. Admire Phineas Chimbera's thesis, and relevant or appropriate publications.
- I grant permission for any information I reveal during the interview process, with the understanding that data collected will remain in possession of the interviewer, Mr. Admire Phineas Chimbera and his supervisor.
- The identification particulars such as surnames and names will be kept securely safe in Mr. Admire Phineas Chimbera's office and thereafter the list will be destroyed.

Signature Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## **APPENDIX C (RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS)**

### **Interview guide for church leaders**

#### **Theme 1**

Identify apostolic beliefs contributing towards community development

1. In your view, do you think your beliefs and practices contribute towards the development of your community?

#### **Theme 2**

Identify roles executed by apostolic churches towards community development

2. In your view, which specific roles driven by your beliefs can you say are contributing to community development?

#### **Theme 3**

Establish which practices apostolic churches execute towards community development

3. According to you, which specific practices of your church are contributing to community development?

### **Interview guide for church members involved in notable development activities**

#### **Theme 1**

Identify apostolic beliefs contributing towards community development

1. Can you share with me what activities are you involved in? In your view, do you think your apostolic beliefs and practices influenced you to venture into these activities you are involved in?

### **Interview guide for Social Worker/ Community Worker**

#### **Theme 1**

Identify apostolic beliefs contributing towards community development

1. According to your views, do you think apostolic beliefs and practices contribute to community development?

## **Theme 2**

Identify roles executed by apostolic churches towards community development

2. From your working experience, which specific roles of the apostolic members that are driven by their beliefs and practices can you say have contributed to community development?

## **Theme 3**

Establish which practices apostolic churches execute towards community development

3. In your views, what are the practices of apostolic churches do you think ensure effective community development?