CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND RECONCILIATION

WITHIN CONGREGATIONS

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that this the thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

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Date:

ETHICS STATEMENT

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this thesis, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval.

The author declares that he has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's *Code of ethics for researchers* and the *Policy guidelines for responsible research.*

DISCLAIMER

All effort has been made for a gender neutral approach in this document. Quotations from resources, including scripture, is reflected as it appears in the original text which may not be gender neutral.

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Without good direction, people lose their way;
the more wise counsel you follow, the better your chances.

(Proverbs 11:14; The Message

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"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; *apart from me you can do nothing*" (John 15:5, NIV)

SUMMARY

The foundational hypothesis to this study is that congregations which have a healthy perception and a greater understanding of conflict will develop more effective responses to conflict that will translate into more effective conflict resolution and reconciliation.

The process and sustainability of the development of a missional church, the context of the study, is pregnant with potential conflict. Untamed conflict has the propensity to retard, jeopardise or even destroy the development of a missional church. When conflict arises, it must be understood and dealt with theologically. The inherent problem is that conflict appears to be neither understood nor appreciated sociologically and theologically. This knowledge and praxis vacuum has the potential for conflict to translate into inappropriate or ineffective responses that do not always make for effective resolution and reconciliation.

The research focuses mainly on an empirical study based on the four practical theological questions of Osmer (2008). Participants for this study were randomly selected from specific sectors of Methodist congregations in the wider Pretoria area. The research explores congregants' perceptions, understanding and views of conflict; their responses to conflict; and some felt and observed outcomes of conflict. The presupposition is that the development of the local missional church would be more effective and efficient when the management and process of conflict resolution and reconciliation are well led and well managed.

This study confirmed that conflict, despite its normalcy and necessity, carries a negative undertone and is mostly avoided in congregations. This is compounded by the evidence that there is little, if any, theological or scriptural understanding of conflict. There is also no indication that churches intentionally and purposefully educate their members to appreciate and understand conflict. In so doing, churches are harming their innate calling as the glory and manifestation of God's divine grace through faith communities for the transformation of all peoples. Yet, the church understands the dangers of unhealthy conflict, and on occasion even expects conflict to arise, although deeming it inappropriate. Practical theological discernment is sought as to why this may be so and remedial action is proposed to address the problem of conflict within congregations.

KEY TERMS

Practical theology

Hermeneutical spiral

Development of a missional church

Resolution

Reconciliation

Quantitative research

Strata

Perception

Behaviour

Destiny

Healthy

Unhealthy

Education

Strata

Leadership

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"For we cannot but speak the things

that we have seen and heard"

(Acts 2:20, KJV)

A unique characteristic of the church is that it is the world's greatest agent for peace,
yet its very message is conflict producing.

Jesus, the Prince of Peace, said:
"I have not come to bring peace, but a sword."

When the church is at its very best in terms of faithful living and preaching,
it is then its conflicts may be greatest in number and intensity.

Norman Shawchuck
(1983:7)

CHAPTER 1   INTRODUCTION

At the outset, be invited to view conflict as neither good nor bad; to apply no ethical prejudgement; not to label it warfare; but simply an appearance of difference (Follett in Metcalf & Urwick, 2004:1). Ramsbotham *et al.* (2011:7) urges one to understand that

> *…conflict is a universal feature of human society. It takes its origins in economic differentiation, social change, cultural formation, psychological development and political organisation – all of which are inherently conflictual – and become overt through the formation of conflict parties, which come to have, or are perceived to have, mutually incompatible goals.*

This universal feature is also "…a normal part of life. As long as you live around other people, you're going to find your opinions and actions bumping up against someone else's" (Sande & Johnson, 2011:7). The environment in which we live is permeated with conflict that requires constant management and resolve. Most people confess that they do not like conflict and admit to having limited knowledge thereof and therefore are not equipped or familiar with how to handle or resolve conflict.

1.1   Theme selection

Little, if any, research focuses on conflict in congregations in a South African context. The South African Church is far more active and successful in dealing with conflict in external contexts. Available literature on congregational-related conflict relates mainly to American or European contexts.

This research focuses on normal conflict defined as when "normally functioning persons interact" and find themselves in disputes over issues of gender, ethnicity, age, class, vocational differences, amongst others, mainly resulting from miscommunication or misunderstandings, or both, between persons or groups (Rediger, 1997:54–57).

1.1.1   Focus within the theme

"We say that conflict is natural, inevitable, necessary and normal, and that the problem is not the existence of conflict but how we handle it" (Mayer, 2010:3). Conflict within the context of 'The Church' is most evident among the people, the gathering, the '*ecclesia*,' the congregation. If conflict in the congregation is consistent with Mayer's statement, what outcome of such conflict would be most valuable as a Christian witness to the world? Nothing less than: conflict being handled in a God honouring way where issues are resolved and associated stakeholders reconciled.

1.1.2   General motivation

Leighton Ford's comment (2008b:251) "To lead is to struggle. In a world such as ours, in history as we know it, to choose the path of leadership is to be on a collision course with conflict," is sobering.   The relationship between leadership, progress, transformation and conflict became a reality for the researcher at an early age. Serving for decades on church councils from the age of nineteen, the researcher witnessed conflict ruin the effective growth of congregations; be the death of ministries; destroy ministers; retard missional progress; cause devastating splits within the congregation; and erode the spiritual passion within people. When conflict involves clergy, it seems clergy come off second best. Seldom is laity disciplined, sanctioned or corrected. These observations question the understanding of Christian community and leadership from an ecclesiological and discipleship perspective.

The researcher observed and experienced the intensity, aggression and hurt of such conflict where (a) persons involved in staff conflict expected a 'winner' to be identified rather than amicable reconciliation and resolution; (b) an affluent sector of the congregation forcefully drove strategic direction through statements such as: "You must remember that here we vote with our feet and our chequebooks"; and (c) some of the eldership aggressively embarked on actions not aligned to agreed vision, common values and discerned strategy of the church Council. It is acknowledged that the management and correction of such behaviour requires much energy. These and similar experiences further questioned the observed conflict-handling processes and methods. This was especially the case of those undertaken by people with little or no evidence of understanding conflict in general, let alone the application of theological or scriptural processes from a theory of action perspective (Heitink, 1999:101–239).

The initial question for this research was:

Why, in recent times does it seem that conflict directly related to the clergy arises within the first eighteen to twenty-four months of the clergy's arrival at a congregation?

Through further enquiry it became evident that the views, understandings and responses regarding conflict in congregations needed to be investigated before attempting an answer to that specific question.

The priority shifted:

To investigate the understanding and view of the local congregation regarding conflict.

On protracted reflection it became questionable whether such research would be of sufficient epistemological benefit. Focus was subsequently drawn more toward:

How conflict was being handled or managed toward attaining resolution and reconciliation in congregations.

Conflict, is a "universal feature" (Ramsbotham *et al.*, 2011:7), that is "…a normal part of life" (Sande & Johnson, 2011:7) therefore it exists naturally within the *ecclesia* and has the opportunity to birth unhealthy situations if not managed or handled well. It is apparent that, although some conflicts reach resolution, the relationship between conflicting parties often remains unreconciled. What is the possibility of more effective outcomes being realised through an improved understanding of conflict by the congregation, following scripturally aligned processes and addressing both relational and functional issues? Would resolution and reconciliation be attained?

The terms 'resolution' and 'reconciliation' are unfortunately sometimes used synonymously. For instance, Mickey and Wilson (1973:16) in a dated work exhibit this: "Thus reconciliation is a matter of mutual recognition that a conflict is ended." However, Lowry and Meyers (1991:53) clearly delineated the difference and emphasised the need to pursue both:

> *The most important help given by counsellors, ministers, lawyers, and others involved in the ministry of reconciliation is assisting people in finding a process that holds promise for the resolution of their disputes and reconciliation of their relationships.*

Resolution has to do with issues and is associated with solution, accommodation, or settling of a problem, controversy, or dispute. Reconciliation has to do with relationships and is the restoration of friendship and fellowship after estrangement (Moeller, 1994:134).

"Conflict resolution is not about supressing, eliminating, or controlling conflicts. Nor is it about avoiding a conflict, and it is certainly not about using superior force to conquer adversaries. These activities do take place in conflict, but they have little to do with its resolution" (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2009:1). Churches are predominantly biased toward

reconciliation rather than both resolution and reconciliation. Susan Dwyer's observation in Prager and Govier (2010) draws attention to this:

> *The notable lack of any clear account of what reconciliation is, and what it requires, justifiably alters the cynics among us. Reconciliation is being urged upon people who have been bitter and murderous enemies, upon victims and perpetrators of terrible human rights abuses, upon groups and individuals whose very self-conceptions have been structured in terms of historical and often state-sanctioned relations of dominance and submission.*

In an email conversation with George Bullard (Founder: Columbia Partnership, a well-known USA organisation helping with conflict resolution within ecclesiastical environments), he stated that "One of the key points surrounding conflict ministry is education. Too few people in ministry know anything about how to handle it." Bullard was referring to inclusive ministry, clergy and laity.

This study seeks to examine information, insight and conclusions relating to how conflict is understood, experienced and responded to so that the outcomes would offer possible models for conflict resolution and reconciliation and furthermore, be of prime input to further research and development that would benefit the local church.

1.1.3   Theological motivation

Theological reflections of practical theology are grounded in the interpreted theological reflections that emanate from observed practices. Practical theology seeks to analyse the said practices empirically. The outcome of such practice ought to influence and transform observed practices (Miller-McLemore, 2011:103). Heitink (1999:6–7) argues that: "…practical theology as a theory of action is the empirically oriented theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society," and such practical theology "…chooses its point of departure in the 'experience of human beings' and in the 'current state of church and society' ".

This study addresses the experience of human beings regarding conflict, being 'the observed practices' endeavouring to achieve resolution and reconciliation, which 'takes place in the current state of the church.' This qualifies the study within the practical theological sub-discipline of congregational studies.

Theologically, as the field of congregational studies is community in nature, the initial conflict between God and humankind has historical relevance. The first community, God with His creation, introduces the element of sin – a word seldom used today – into

the human context. All sin stems from this initial conflict and this needs to be kept in mind during any discussion on conflict. Secondly, John Wesley's sermon (1944:442–456), "The Catholic Spirit," provides theological and ethical direction by emphasising that, despite any differences or not all being of one mind, we should still extend Christian love toward one another and follow the scriptural importance of addressing one another directly. In doing so, Wesley brings both the reconciliation of persons and resolution of issues into perspective. He does not emphasise reconciliation over resolution or resolution over reconciliation as both these elements need to be addressed. Wesley's work supports the congregational studies' classification of this thesis as sermons are delivered to congregations and "The Catholic Spirit" is an excellent approach to conflict.

Lang (2002:29–32) reflects on conflict situations in scriptures which provides additional perspective:

- *Israel:* People (congregations) continually rebelling against God.

- *Jeremiah:* A prophet (congregant) battling with God's call.

- *Corinth:* A fractured, dysfunctional community that fought over spiritual leadership (1 Corinthians 3:1-23); sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 5:1-13); at the Lord's Table (1 Corinthians 11:17-33).

- *Acts:* The church (congregations within the world) confronts the world and seeks out its response when finding herself in conflict with the world.

1.2   Formulation of the research problem

1.2.1   Background

Despite the application of conflict management, or acts of resolution, people affected by conflict or who participated in congregational conflict seldom emerge with issues resolved and relationships reconciled in a satisfactory way. Society in general neither understands conflict nor willingly participates in conflict situations. Hence, the reactions of 'fight' or 'flight' are prevalent.

Society is deprived of good relational role models regarding conflict. This is a problem that is compounded by exposure to television programmes and news reporting, amongst other contexts, where 'fight' responses dominate.

Paradoxically, scriptures that encourage 'loving one another' or 'turning the other cheek' and 'do not judge' create unrealistic expectations of conflict-free congregations, and become barriers in forming realistic views, understandings and responses to conflict as Christ followers. Other contributing factors include a lack of understanding; a lack of education; a lack of training and the prevalent reconciliation bias.

1.2.2   Underlying theological problem

The underlying theological problem is ecclesiastical in nature, related to the communion, fellowship, and partnership of the Christian community. Biblically, *koinonia* most effectively describes the essence of Christian community. Jones (2010a:266) explains that *koinonia* means 'common' – a word first used in Acts 2: 42 where the Christian community "devoted themselves to the fellowship (*koinonia*)." Fundamentally, *koinonia* was used to describe the way people shared cups and dishes at a meal. Contemporary fellowship mostly portrays people with coffee and doughnut in hand following a Sunday service - bearing no resemblance to *koinonia* which describes the way early Christians let each other see into the 'messiness of their lives.' Contemporary congregations do not understand this and therefore struggle to live out both 'being church' amongst each other and as a missional community. This impacts the ongoing turnaround of previously mainstream denominations internationally.

Nel's (2015:61) question: "…how do we reform hundreds if not thousands of existing churches to become who they are in Christ?" holds high conflict potential which could emerge as a derailing factor in developing missional churches. It is imperative that churches understand the potential for conflict during their "continual conversion" (Guder, 2000) or "reforming" (Nel, 2015:54–63, 205–222) of the church, and have effective ways of dealing with conflict (Shawchuck, 1983; Palmer, 1990; Kale & McCullough, 2003; Unice, 2012; Free, 2013).

1.2.3   The research problem

Mayer's (2010:3) statements that "conflict is inevitable" and "how it is handled is important" imply that the frequent presence of conflict in congregations, which Shawchuck (1983:31) defines as "threat producing," needs careful attention. Shawchuck explains that what

> *…is being threatened are the personal relationships which are important to the individual, and the achievement of his/her personal goals/interests in the situation.*

This tension is aggravated by a thorny dilemma – if the person puts too much emphasis on maintaining warm, friendly relationships he/she runs the risk of sacrificing his/her own goals and interests. On the other hand, if one presses too hard for his/her own goals and interests at the expense of other's, he/she is almost certain to damage the relationship.

This being so, the primary question is:

Is conflict in congregations always resolved, and are relationships always reconciled?

Mayer and Shawchuck's statements above also imply that the conflict itself and eventual outcomes depend on how it is handled, posing the question:

How well is conflict handled in churches at congregational level?

Conflict is responded to, or handled, through a range of conflict styles, the effectiveness of which should be measured by the degree to which it reduces tension within participants, and "…by the short- and long-term effects it will have upon the people and the organisation" (Shawchuck, 1983:31). Therefore, one needs to determine how congregants generally view and understand conflict which in turn influences how they react or respond to conflict situations (Mayer, 2010:3). This governs the foundational question:

How well educated is the congregation in understanding conflict, responding to conflict and seeking resolution and reconciliation?

The sections thus far, associated observations, experience and quoted resources point to a problem in the processes and management of conflict resolution and reconciliation within congregations. The problem can be stated as:

The management and processes of conflict resolution and reconciliation within congregations are neither well led nor well managed.

The problem possibly exists because conflict is neither understood nor appreciated, which translates into inappropriate responses that do not always strive for resolution and reconciliation.

1.2.4   The purpose of the research

This study's aim is to help congregations and clergy understand conflict more fully so that their responses may be more appropriate and the outcomes more positive. While most people find conflict difficult to understand, respond to and manage, it seems more

complicated for Christ-followers. In this regard, it is possible that congregations require guidance in living out *koinonia.*

1.3   Conceptualising

The research focuses on the understanding, responses and observed or perceived outcomes of conflict situations by congregants. The following clarifies and defines central concepts of this thesis.

- *Conflict:* A main focus of this research is 'conflict' which is described (simply) as two ideas or occurrences trying to occupy the same space at the same time (Leas & Kittlaus, 1973:28). Brief references may be made to (i) *Conflict settlement,* which is the reaching of agreement between the parties to settle conflict, so forestalling or ending a conflict, although attitudes and underlying structural contradictions may not have been addressed (Ramsbotham *et al.*, 2011:31);   (ii) *Conflict management*, which is the process of limiting the negative while increasing the positive aspects of conflict with the aim of improving learning and group outcomes, including effectiveness or performance (Rahim, 2002:3); or (iii) *Conflict transformation* which is to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationship (Lederach, 2015:11). However, these are not of prime focus in this research.

- *Resolution:* This term defines a situation where conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solves their central incompatibilities, accept each other's continued existence as parties and cease all negative action against each other (Wallensteen, 2002:8).

- *Reconciliation:* This relates to the re-establishment of harmony and cooperation between antagonists who have inflicted harm in an either one-sided or reciprocal manner (Jeong, 1999:83). It is also a ministry to which Christians have been called to live out throughout their lives (2 Corinthians 5:18).

- *Within congregations:* The context for this research is 'within congregations,' the gathered *ecclesia*. This context also places it into the movement of 'building up the local church' or 'developing a missional local church' - terminologies that Nel (2015:7–8) uses interchangeably. 'Developing a missional church' is preferred in this study.

1.4   Research parameters

An initial investigation to determine feasibility, limitations and constraints was undertaken. Through this the relevance and type of research were established.

1.4.1   Feasibility study

Clergy of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA): Limpopo District Retreat in February of 2015 were surveyed to determine (i) the frequency of conflict in their congregations; (ii) the profile of congregations which potentially experienced a higher frequency of conflict, and (iii) where conflict originated within the congregation.

The results of this study established the following:
- 95 per cent of congregations had experienced conflict over the past five years;
- Higher frequencies of conflict occurred in congregations that:
  - have been in existence for more than eight years,
  - have an established location and buildings of their own, and
  - constitute a membership above two hundred;
- Conflict originated in small groups, mission and ministry groups, and leadership.
- That there was no significant difference in the frequency and type of conflict experienced between congregations in the Pretoria area and those in other regions of the Limpopo District.

This confirmed that there is indeed sufficient conflict in congregations to provide input to a research of this nature, and defined the participative criteria.

1.4.2   Limitations and constraints

This research falls within the Practical theological sub-discipline of congregational studies drawing input from laity of societies within the Limpopo District of the MCSA. Sample selection criteria are that (i) congregations need to be established, with operational plant and at least in their eighth year of existence; and (ii) congregations have at least two hundred members. These parameters will ensure that there are sufficient people in ministries, small groups and leadership from which random samples can be drawn. Only congregants' perspective and experience provide input into this research and not that of the clergy.

The theory of conflict is a very wide and developing field. A perspective of this research is that it focuses on conflict resolution and reconciliation in congregations. Aspects

such as conflict settlement, conflict management and conflict transformation do not enjoy any prime position in this research.

1.4.3   Type of research

This exploratory research will utilise *quantitative analysis* which gathers and analyses numeric data to explore relationships between variables (Osmer 2008:49) to determine congregational understanding of conflict, their responses to conflict and experiences regarding the process and methods used in working toward reconciliation and resolution. Time and resources permitting, a q*ualitative method* to gain clarification on aspects of the quantitative analysis where deemed critical could follow. This would entail exploring, describing and interpreting the subjective and inter-subjective and/or collective experience of participants (Yin, 2010:7–10) through a focus group.

1.4.4   Relevance of the research

Bullard's email conversation (See page 5) and Richard Osmer's (2008:10) question of: "Why had the congregation never taught its members how to resolve differences in the spirit of Christian love? Or, as I may put it today, why were there no practices of reconciliation present in the church?" provide good reason for initiating this study.

Christian leadership flounders as clergy are inadequately trained to handle conflict, yet clergy and lay leaders alike deal with conflict in its many facets on a daily basis. This applies not only to the MCSA but to all congregations, as the available resources referred to earlier, explain. Hence, this study will be of value to other churches and organisations not affiliated to the MCSA.

1.5   Practical theology methodology

"One must ever keep in mind what theology is all about: the unity of knowledge, faith, and action" (Heitink, 1999:110). Practical theology, a sub-discipline of theology, "…describes a context, interprets what has been discovered, brings in Christian norms, and constructs models of Christian practice…," and comprises a process that involves *epistemology* and *hermeneutics* (Park, 2010). In order to access and understand lived human experience in context, a variety of empirical research tools are employed (Cahalan & Mikoski, 2014:3) which are aimed at generating knowledge (Heitink, 1999:224). Research requires methodology to systematically guide the process (Kothari, 2004:8).

1.5.1 Epistemology

Epistemology, from Greek *episteme* (knowledge, science), and *logos* (study) is defined as

> *…the science of knowledge studied from the philosophical point of view, or the science of knowledge in its ultimate causes and first principles, studied using the light of natural reason. With this definition there is both material (subject matter) and formal (end-view, purpose) objects (Horrigan, 2007:vii).*

Plato considered knowledge as a true belief of which someone can give account, or an explanation (Greco & Sosa, 1999:2). Aristotle's view of knowledge does not carry innate ideas as with Plato, but claimed knowledge is initially gained through the senses-favoured empirical methods to increase knowledge (Horrigan, 2007:15).

Most of the central questions of epistemology pertain to knowledge (Zagzebski, 2008:2):

- What is knowledge?
- Is knowledge possible?
- How do we get it?

Epistemologically, the quality of this knowledge is significant *vis-à-vis* accurate, adequate knowledge as opposed to false, inadequate knowledge (Steup, 2014).

Epistemology is sometimes misrepresented as a way to challenge scepticism, determine absolute foundations, and legitimise other disciplines, or as a search for certainty (Greco & Sosa, 1999:2). Rather, knowledge evolves, or develops contextually, through interpreted experience and disciplinary traditions, thereby influencing the shift of epistemology from a motionless, passive approach in fundamentalism, to a dynamic, adaptive approach through post-foundationalism (Müller, 2004a).

Foundationalism is the "…thesis that all our beliefs can be justified by appealing to some item of knowledge that is self-evident or indubitable" (Van Huyssteen, 1997:2), and that "…some beliefs are non-inferentially justified, or 'foundational' and that all other justified beliefs depend for their justification on these foundational beliefs." (Dancy et al., 2009:25). "Foundationalism is often rejected in favour of non-foundationalism" (Van Huyssteen, 1997:3) which "…asserts we have no foundational beliefs that are independent of the support of other beliefs" (Shults, 1999:31).

Concluding that both foundationalism and nonfoundationalism are inadequate for theological discourse, Van Huyssteen (1999:13) proposed a postfoundational approach that "…acknowledges the role of context, the epistemically crucial role of interpreted experience, and the role of tradition in shaping religious values" (Park, 2010). Müller (2004a) "…'translated' Van Huyssteen's (1997:4) description of and summary of Postfoundationalist theology into practical theology steps…" and expanded on the concepts to develop a five-category, seven-movement process for practical theological research to support the argument for a concept of narrative practical theology as follows:

A. The context and interpreted experience.
   i. A specific context is described.
   ii. In-context experiences are listened to and described.
   iii. Interpretations of experiences are made, described and developed in collaboration with "co-researchers."
B. Traditions of interpretation.
   iv. A description of experiences as it is continually informed by traditions of interpretation.
C. God's presence.
   v. A reflection on, as it is understood and experienced in a specific situation, God's presence.
D. Thickened through interdisciplinary investigation.
   vi. A description of experience, thickened through interdisciplinary investigation.
E. Point beyond the local community.
   vii. The development of alternative interpretations, that point beyond the local community.

The kind of knowledge sought determines the type of research to be applied:

(i) Fundamental research, aimed at increasing theoretical knowledge;

(ii) Applied research, mostly related with policies and is directed toward changing or improving situations in the short term; or

(iii) Technological research, focusing on developing working models.

In the actual practice of practical theological research "…one usually meets a combination of the above. For research always aims to generate knowledge that will enable one to change the current situation into a more desirable situation, and this requires certain instruments" (Heitink, 1999:223–224).

1.5.2 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is "to say," or "to explain," or "to translate" or "to interpret" (Palmer, 1969:13) "…particular episodes, situations, and concerns" (Osmer, 2008:8). Hermeneutics is an interpretation theory, which is the "…study of human experience of interpretation" contextually integral in "…discerning how to lead a congregation through conflict" amongst other disciplines (Brown, in Cahalan & Mikoski, 2014:116).

According to Heitink (1999:111), this can be illustrated "…with the image of a hermeneutical circle. Theology aims at understanding (discernment), explaining (definition), and grasping (internalisation)." Osmer (2008:11) supports the use of a hermeneutical spiral of four interconnected tasks, namely, a descriptive-empirical task, an interpretive task, a normative task, and a pragmatic task. Osmer's hermeneutical spiral is detailed on page 15 and illustrated in Figure 1.1.

1.5.3 Methodology

Osmer's (2008, 2011) approach, which contends that much contemporary practical theological reflection attends to four tasks along the lines of a hermeneutical circle or spiral, namely: Descriptive-empirical; Interpretive; Normative and Pragmatic. These tasks are performed within the environment of congregations and are not as linear in nature as the following descriptions appear.

Firstly, a *descriptive-empirical task* (Osmer, 2008:31–78) seeking to answer the question: *what is going on?* This task pertains to the gathering of information that would help discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts of conflict with the purpose of listening well and postponing judgment. This practical theological task is informed by different types of research and methodology and is inspired by the *habitus* of priestly listening and an attending with a spirituality of presence. The aforementioned quantitative and qualitative analysis (Section 1.4.3, page 10) informed through the theoretical research of developing a missional church (Nel, 2015) and relevant theory related to the resolution, and reconciliation of conflict in the congregation, and taking the research problem (Section 1.2.3, page 7) and purpose (Section 1.2.4, page 7) into account, is applied.

Secondly, the *interpretive task* (Osmer, 2008:79–128) follows and through analysis, searches for explanations and theories that can explain or clarify specific conditions, attending to the question: *why is this going on?* Theories from the arts and social

sciences are drawn on to better understand and explain why certain patterns and dynamics are occurring, thereby possibly reframing the researched context and data. The execution of this task may require reflecting back to the descriptive-empirical task for additional gathering of information as illustrated in Figure 1.1 below.

The *normative task* (Osmer, 2008:129–173) which asks: *what ought to be going on?* This task uses a normative frame of reference, theological concepts, ethical theories and other fields to interpret the focus of this research, constructing ethical norms to guide possible responses, and learning from "good practice." Prophetic discernment is imperative here as an essential *habitus.*

The pragmatic task (Osmer, 2008:175–218)*,* seeking to answer: *how can we respond?* - is then attended to for the formulation of strategies of action that will shape episodes, situations or context in ways that are desirable and enter into a reflective conversation with the "talk back" emerging when they are enacted.

The non-linear relational interconnectedness of these tasks is clarified through the concept of the hermeneutical spiral or interpretive spiral (Figure 1.1). The application of this spiral supports Gadamer's (1975) five-stage depiction of hermeneutical experience, namely, (a) pre-understanding, (b) being brought up short, (c) dialogical interplay, (d) fusion of horizons, and (e) application (Osmer, 2008:10–12).

Figure 1.1: Interpretative Spiral
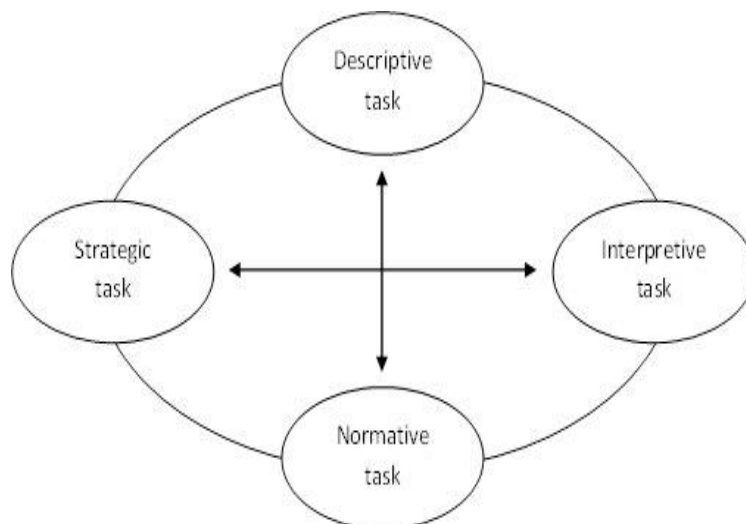
(Source: Osmer, 2008:11)

Osmer's approach is not foundationalism, being a class of epistemology, which contends that all knowledge is constructed on certain undisputed facts or primary belief.

Rather, knowledge would be discovered through the understanding, experiences and encounters of research participants. Osmer's interpretive task seeks answers from different perspectives, even disciplines, which epistemologically positions this research as postfoundationalist, somewhat different to that of the seven phase approach advocated by Müller (2004) in section 1.5.1 on page 13.

The above supports the choice of a potential mixed approach to the empirical study utilising both *quantitative analysis* to determine congregational conflict-intelligence and *qualitative analysis* for additional insight.

1.6   Thesis structure

Following this introductory chapter, the study is recorded in the following chapters:

Chapter 2: This deals with developing a missional church - providing an overview of critical aspects of developing a missional church acknowledging the negative impact of potential conflict at the outset. The searching discussions and discernment required in the continual process of reformation too will have degrees of conflict that, if not approached and managed well, could result in undesired and unnecessary outcomes.

Chapter 3: Conflict theory, covering the concepts, definitions, descriptions, dimensions and prevalent responses to conflict, is dealt with in this chapter. The approaches to conflict resolution and reconciliation are addressed both practically and theologically.

Chapter 4: This chapter offers a description of the empirical research, of an exploratory nature, to determine the perceptions and views of congregations on the understanding, responses and observed outcomes of conflict. The research is limited to the Limpopo District of the MCSA.

Chapter 5: Here the way forward is examined, in answering the final *pragmatic* question to Osmer's approach: "How can we respond?" (Osmer, 2008:175–218). This will be answered through recommendations and proposing areas for future investigation.

The church is the only society that exists for

the benefit of those who are not its members

William Temple
Archbishop of Canterbury
Bishop's Visitation Charge, 2007
Diocese of Monmouth
Retrieved April 7, 2008

CHAPTER 2   DEVELOPING A MISSIONAL CHURCH

The context for this research on conflict is 'within congregations' of Christian churches described through the lens of developing a missional church. 'Missional' is a valid adjective as "…the church exists by mission as fire exists by burning" (Brunner, 1931:108), arguably describing what 'church' should be since inception. The works of Newbigin such as *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (1953); *Trinitarian Doctrine for Today's Mission* (1963); *The Open Secret: Sketches for a Missionary Theology* (1978); *Foolishness to the Greeks: Gospel and Western Culture* (1988); *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (1989); and *Signs amid the Rubble: The Purposes of God in Human History* (2003), provide a narrative of the unfolding concept of a Missionary Church — as Bishop, Newbigin (1993:99) saw his whole task as developing missionary congregations. This chapter addresses the theory of cultivating a missional local church relative to the title and purpose of this study.

In reviewing each of the various aspects of developing a missional church, the question arises: "How would this be a catalyst for conflict?" It is possible that there is conflict potential in every phase or step in developing a missional church through the varying opinions, experiences, theologies and study, or lack thereof, of the decision-makers in the process. Conflict can arise at any time during these phased processes and must be dealt with theologically (Nel, 2015a:234).

2.1   Perspective on building up the Church

This thesis adopts Nel's (2015a:7) interchangeable terminology of the concept "of 'building up'" which is used in scripture, "and which in essence is a missional concept" and the descriptive concept of "developing a missional local church."

We are reminded:

> …at the very outset that our King Himself while on earth never commanded His followers to 'organise a church,' never even hinted at any model of a church as an ecclesiastical institution that it is hard for us to realise that there was no organised church at all in our King's own day (Mumford and Taylor, 2008:61).

2.1.1   'Building' requires a builder

"Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God, and what came was the Church" writes Kung (1978:43), citing Loisy (1976:166; updated 2015) with the footnote: "This quotation is always taken in the wrong, i.e. a negative sense; Loisy meant it as a positive

statement." Indeed, it is this church in its local forms which, or should it be, as Hybels and Hybels (1995:49) describe, "…the only hope of the world." What an incredible example it is when the "hope of the world" deals with and works through internal conflict in the God-honouring way that Paul instilled in the *ecclesia* of Corinth and Colossae:

> *…so whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:33 NIV) And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Colossians 3:17 NIV).*

Only the power of Christ, unleashed through the activity of the local church under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit, could change downward trajectories of individual lives and cultures (Hybels & Hybels, 1995:50). Nel (1990:2) writes that "…building up the Church is primarily concerned with the local church as the defined subject of God's plan for his world" and introduces the concept of "building up" or "cultivating a missional local church or community" (Nel, 2015a:18). Lest 'church' gains centre stage, Cole (2005:xxiv) provides an illustrative perspective:

> *…for Japan to be changed Jesus will have to give the people something new and powerful…It is not the local church that will change the world; it is Jesus. Attendance on Sundays does not transform lives; Jesus within their hearts is what changes people.*

It is in *being* church when *doing* church that Groff (2007:13) believes is key and observes, "…if the church doesn't reach out to the community, people won't come. But if people come into our churches and don't sense the presence of God, they're not going to return." The crucial issue, Groff suggests "…is the heart of the Christian faith itself, the Incarnation: 'The Word became flesh' (John 1:14) and dwells among us."

It is this incarnational, dwelling presence that congregations need to honour amidst conflict potential and associated responses. In so doing, congregations are a witness to their relationship to, and discipleship of Jesus Christ.

2.1.2   Building toward growth

"Many of us launched our boats on the Mississippi of church growth in the past two decades," writes Morgenthaler in the foreword of *Future Church* (Wilson, 2004:xi) and continues that:

> *…we dutifully set them afloat in the world of big and simple. We followed those who had built massive riverboats, along with the equally massive paddlewheels of programs to propel them. But the landscape shifted beneath our feet. From big and simple, we entered the postmodern topology of small and complex,*

transforming culture from homogenous demographics, seeker-believer compartments, easy answers, and fill in the blanks to diverse neighbourhoods, ubiquitous spirituality, paradox, and tell-me-our-story. The boats we need now are kayaks, but having spent our ministry years building and operating riverboats, some of us find ourselves not only up the creek without a paddle but without the expertise to use one if it were handed to us.

Cotterell (1981:9), on the other hand, viewed church growth thinking as challenging "…any church that is not seeing people being saved, coming to Christ, being discipled into the church, being born again, ought to be concerned to ask: 'Why not?'" Church growth is "…not merely a method of filling the church. Church growth is concerned with the biblical-understood task of the church to be Christ's witnesses and so to see people discipled into Christ and becoming *real* Christians" (1981:11).

However, far too much emphasis has been placed on church size and not nearly enough on health (London *et al.*, 2002:17). Congregational health, Scazzero (2010:8) emphasises, must include "emotional health" where the narrative of growing through difficulties is realised "…through the Spirit of Christ and holds hope for all of us."

More recently, a "…convergence of three distinct ways of thinking" about developing the local church is being championed by Hirsch and Ferguson (2011:42). These are:

- *Church-growth theory*, which extends and maximizes traditional ecclesiology and organises the church around the evangelistic function;

- *Exponential thinking*, as an application of the emerging science of idea-viruses and tipping points to ecclesiology. It has also stimulated church-planting efforts over the last decade or two; and

- *Incarnational missiology*, which requires re-orientating the entire church around the primary outward-orientated function of mission and re-contextualising the church into different subcultures.

The authors propose a new paradigm, which they believe will serve the church well into the future (see Figure 2.1 that follows). They suggest that "…when exponential / viral / networking thinking informs church-growth savvy, which in turn is being reframed around missional-incarnational theology, then history is in the making" (2011:43).

Figure 2.1: Convergence model
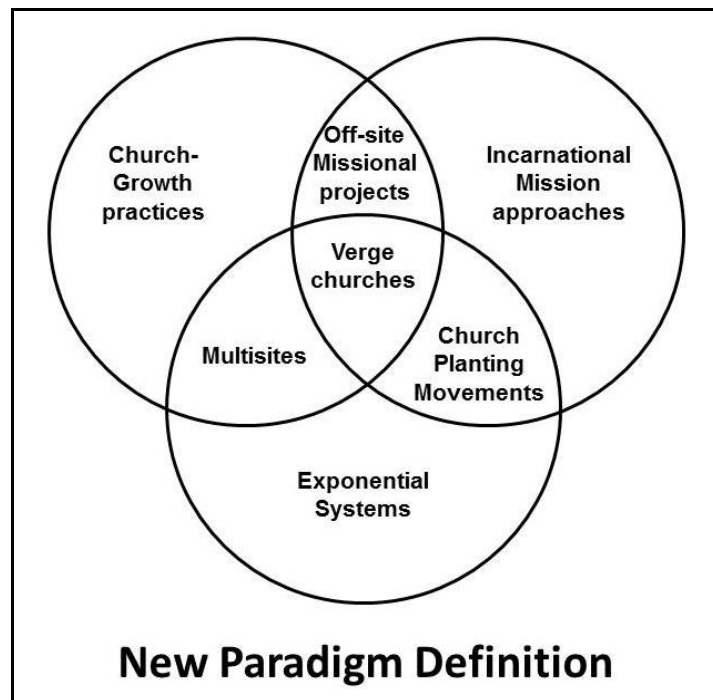
(Source: Hirsch and Ferguson, 2011:43)

Much education and some paradigm shifts are necessary for congregations experiencing the tension between adapting to a growing post-modern congregation or continuing to retain traditional thought and practice of church. "Change is tough. Longer-tenured members like the recognizable patterns of congregation life that have been established. Even if the changes are needed for the future vitality and vibrancy of the congregation, and to reach the next generation of people, longer-tenured people often oppose them" (Bullard, 2013a:356). At the same time, when congregations elect to adapt and reform, "…tension is sometimes created by the mere fact that the leaders and members expect conflict to arise" (Nel, 2015a:235).

2.1.3   Building considerations

Congregations often look to clergy and lay leadership to build the church. Yet, Christ's words are: "I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it" (Matthew 16:18, NLT). Barbieri (in Walvoord & Zuck, 1985:57) suggests that Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11) "…was introducing *His work of building the church* on Himself" (Researcher's emphasis). Thus, Jesus builds His Church, and the Christ-follower is equipped to make disciples and do the work of ministry within the Body of Christ and to the world (Coppedge, 1980). There is often much tension between the initial expectation of the congregation described above and the patience required when leadership "…listen for

the still small voice that beckons us onward, quietly revealing what we are here on earth to do and to become" (Rendle & Mann, 2003:139).

Similarly, Barna's (2002:106) research highlights a contemporary challenge:

> *…the information gathered regarding what people want from a church once again emphasises that there are many different tastes, needs and expectations among the unchurched. A church might be just what God intends it to be, yet it may not be at all attractive to certain unchurched people — and that is to be expected, given the 'satisfy me with customised experience' mind-set.*

These tensions are pregnant with conflict potential that, despite the diligence of leadership attempting to anticipate all the results of change, could translate into unforeseen circumstances, occurrences or influences that "…no one predicted or planned. This is called the Law of Unintended Consequences" (McMullen, 2007:87).

2.2   The term: church

'Church' is not understood through scriptural definition, but via a symbolic language of "...image and narrative…" which "…introduces richness and variety" that "…have universal appeal and validity" and are infinitely translatable (Driver, 1997:9). Merriam-Webster (2003) defines church in terms of a building, the clergy, a denomination or a place to go to for worship. None of these subscribe to any of the biblical images or narratives. The Enhanced Strong's Lexicon (1995:Ref 1577) shows the word 'church' in Matthew 16 as: ἐκκλησία (*ekklesia* /ek·klay·**see**·ah/) which provides a deeper understanding of 'church' than traditionally understood by laity. Stott (2007:19) explains that

> *…the church lies at the very centre of the eternal purpose of God…God's new community. For this purpose, conceived in a past eternity, being worked out in history, and to be perfected in a future eternity, is not just to save isolated individuals and so perpetuate our loneliness, but rather to build his church, that is, to call out of the world a people for his own glory.*

The Collins English Dictionary (2000) defines *ekklesia* as: (i) In formal usage meaning 'a congregation'. (ii) There is the secular usage, 'the assembly of citizens of an ancient Greek state'. Achtemeier (1985:168) provides some background, in that

> *…the word does not normally appear in English translations of Old Testament. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint), two main words are used for the People of God: assembly (ekklēsia) and synagogue (synagogē). Since Jews in the first century used the latter term, the first Greek-speaking Christians selected the former in order to show that their roots lay in the Old Testament and that they continued the Old Testament People of God.*

Ekklēsia in Acts 19:32, 39 and 41 is used to denote a 'secular assembly of people,' while in Acts 5:11 'all the church' being the first of more than twenty occurrences in Acts of the Greek word *ekklēsia*, is usually translated as 'church.' Stephen uses this word for the Old Testament 'congregation of the people' (Acts 7:38). In the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament), the worshiping assembly of God's people is often designated with this word. In ancient Greece, the *ekklēsia* was the political 'assembly of citizens' (Acts 19:32). The New Testament (Acts 8:1; 11:22; 13:1) uses the word initially to refer to an organized body of believers (Book of Acts, Sproul & Packer, 2001).. Hence, *ekklēsia* "…means both the actual *process of congregating* and the *gathered community* itself" (Küng, 1978:84). As such, "…the *ekklesia* is visible, touchable, locatable, and tangible. You can visit it. You can observe it. And you can live in it." (Viola, 2009:230).

The above creates an impression of a people movement, not static locations, similar to that of early Methodists when Wesley, his brother Charles, George Whitefield, and others embarked on "…a venture that was to be the cradle of the *Methodist movement*" (Douglas, 1992:709). This movement, similar to the *ekklēsia* of the New Testament, expressed the notion propagated by Cole (2005:xxvi) whereby "…instead of bringing people to the church so that we can then bring them to Christ, let's bring Christ to the people where they live…" sketches a picture of movement, or outreach. Today's *ecclesia* consists of wide varieties of attitudes, beliefs, understanding and practice of 'church' that could, and often does experience conflict within the *process of congregating* in the local church (Kale and McCullough, 2003:13).

2.3   Context and Influences

Concepts inherent in this subtitle are vast, therefore attention is only given to the more prevalent challenges that churches face. Characteristically, congregations are not static, but are communities in motion (Osmer, 2005:67). Congregations alter significantly as they respond to changes in pastoral leadership, shifts in societal context and coping internal structures. These challenge the experience and desire for many who envisage the church as a place of stability, familiarity, and security in a world where, as the old deacon in the play *Green Pastures* by Marc Connelly put it, "Everything nailed down is bustin' loose!" (Nicholson, 1998:8). Three prominent variables influence congregational life, namely, *size* which determines shape, *life cycle*

and *context* which contribute continuously to the process of development (Gaede, 2001:v). Each of these has the propensity to attract or initiate conflict.

2.3.1   Contexts

Contexts from the historical to contemporary that influence today's congregations are addressed before considering the impact of congregational life-cycle and size.

2.3.1.1   Historical shifts and influence

During pre-Constantine centuries, the church was a missionary community (Newbigin, 1966:104) that "…saw itself as a movement launched into the public life of the world, challenging the *cultus publicus* of the Empire, claiming the allegiance of all without exception" (Newbigin, 1980:46). Christendom emerged during the Constantine era with the sacral unity of church and state that witnessed the demise of the missionary charateristic whereby "…the church had become the religious department of European society rather than the task force selected and appointed for world mission" (Newbigin, 1966:103). Christendom was a self-contained world and "…the sense that the church is a body sent into the world, a body on the move and existing for the sake of those beyond its borders, no longer played in (people's) [sic] thinking" (Newbigin, 1961:110).

Rutz (1992:1) from a decision-praxis perspective believes this was the occasion "…when the church blundered by voluntarily giving up on the three key freedoms that powered the early church to success: (i) Open worship (Praising God). (ii) Open sharing (Building each other up). (iii) Open ministry (Serving others in the church and the world.)." Rutz (1992:2) maintains that by about A.D. 450, the degeneration in congregational singing evolved. Church music moved from pew to professional choirs. Laity suddenly found worship to be more distant from their personal lives and daily concerns. They fell into Spectator-Christianity, "…where loneliness doesn't end at church – it starts there." Rutz (1992:3) lists ten (10) aspects: apathy, shallowness, worldliness, teenage dropouts, failure to tithe, pastoral burnout, fear of evangelism, flabby self-discipline, maxed-out schedules, and a chronic shortage of strong men, prevalent to the present day, due to the 'fallout' from this massive mistake. Each aspect on Rutz's list has the potential to encourage or ignite conflict within congregations.

These and other influences impacted Church Doctrine (Seeberg, 1997). The Protestant Reformation affected both church structures and doctrine (Küster, 2009), as did the

waves of the Holy Spirit during the twentieth century. The First Wave birthed the Pentecostal Movement (1906 – 1960). The Second Wave or Charismatic Movement (1960-1982) was very much within the mainline denominations whereas the earlier Pentecostal Movement was for the most part a separate movement outside the mainline churches. The Third Wave or Signs and Wonders Movement commenced in 1982 (Wagner, 1988). These authors support the fact that these 'movements' brought positive gifts to the Church, yet not without difficulty and conflict. This is evident in contemporary society which "…has three religious forms," writes Tamney (2002:38–39): *Historical traditionalist* who "…favours both the permeation of all churches by the group's beliefs and values and the use of the state to enforce the group's control of all institutions," secondly, the *modernist* with "…a modern civic code, a fragmented culture, and the separation of church and state." And thirdly, the *late modern* influence with "…the individual at the centre of spirituality" and "…doubt as a permanent condition." There is record of many other positive and negative historical influences on the Church. However, for the purpose of this research, there is sufficient indication in the above to strongly underscore the potential for, or even the presence of conflict.

2.3.1.2　　Shifts from a 'we / us' to an 'I / me' paradigm

United Methodist researchers on the Board of Discipleship, Dick and Burry (2006:36), identified a shift from a 'we,' community culture to an 'I' individual culture evident in church history and life. This is apparent even in the hymnody from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth, where 'A *mighty fortress is **our** God' (1527)* gave way to '***I** walk through the garden alone' (1912), and; 'Now thank **we** all **our** God' (1636)* succumbed to '*Blessed assurance Jesus is **mine**' (1873).* (Researcher's emphasis) This has influenced a skewed perspective of both scripture and of community where

> *…historically, all instruction given to the church was corporate. The people of God were understood as a single entity. When Jesus taught 'you are the light of the world,' and said, 'I will not leave you orphaned,' the 'you' was always plural. In contrast, today's contemporary music shows an increase in the individual, 'I' factor, with a vast decrease to almost non-existent, in the 'we' factor (2006:36).*

Similarly, Nel (1994:15) coins the term "ontgemeentelogisering" of the scriptures, indicating that (2015b:26):

> *...we are 'a we'. Building up the local church is about building a corporate sense of identity. It is this understanding that is so often missing even among people who may be enthusiastic about their personal and individual identity in Christ. It is almost ironic how biblical truths about corporative identity are so often interpreted in an individualistic way rather than corporative as they were meant to be.*

Kelly (1996:59) comments that in strong healthy churches, group commitment is wholehearted with "…each individual's goals being highly or wholly identified with – or derived from – those of the group." Dick and Burry (2006:37) warn that "…one of the most significant dangers facing our church today is that so many people view membership in a community of faith as personal, private, and optional." It is probable that these shifts from community to individual fuels consumerism and increases the desire of wanting things 'my way.' When a significant section of the congregation moves its focus from 'we' to 'I' the church is headed for decline. A congregation cannot survive long-term if individuals focus on their own preferences. Unhealthy conflict often occurs when members do not get their own way (Rainer, 2014:49) (See Rainer, [2013] on 'entitlement', on page 31).

2.3.1.3   Consumerism

A major cause of the Industrial Revolution was the British Agricultural Revolution through which improved productivity released agricultural workers for employment in other economic sectors (Overton, 1996:206). Improved productivity in more sectors through industrialisation increased consumer choice, and created greater competition and market expansion. This, in turn, expanded customisation and personalisation during recent decades. This was further enhanced "…by drawing from the new psychology of self-expression" and influenced in part by such groups as the Human Potential Movement, economists and psychologists who together popularised and expanded the concept of lifestyles (Anderson, 2004; Goldman, 2012:34–38; Clavier, 2013:10), which has experienced "…an intensification of the consumer culture" since the 1980s (Moritz & Bartholomew, 2000:5).

The resultant "…consumeristic society has created a population that seeks only self-gratification," claims Campolo (1995:30). People no longer attend church as a fellowship of believers to *commune* with God, but to *consume* (Laurie and Kopp, 1999:42)*,* and even "…arrive at worship with a reviewers' mentality" (Ogden, 2010:25). The church in turn "…has all too easily been seduced by consumerism of our age" through seeking to "…compete instead of challenge" (Moritz and Bartholomew, 2000:ix). Following Christ calls for nothing less than death to self (cf. Luke 9:23, 24; John 12:24; Galatians 2:20). If churches reconfigure this formational process, the result should not be surprising. We simply cannot entertain *consumers* into becoming disciples, nor can people *consume* their way into following Jesus. More problematic than a consumeristic church, today's society is powerfully discipled by pop culture and

we have become inveterate consumers holding values that often run completely contrary to the ways of the gospel (Hirsch and Hirsch, 2010:110).

Dr Robinson (Foreword in Moritz & Bartholomew, 2000:ix) sums up the conflict a Christ-follower faces, and by implication, the church, regarding consumerism:

> *…Scott M. Peck's wonderful book, The Road Less Travelled, begins with the memorable sentence 'Life is Difficult.' It is so, because Jesus calls us to be both in our own culture – understanding its passions and attractions — as well as to be deeply counter-cultural in our relationship with the same culture.*

Wells (1995:114), argues that evangelicals have "…allowed consumerism to turn the God of mercy into a god at our mercy, satisfying our wants." Laurie and Kopp (1999:42) explain that in order to prosper, churches adapt to the appetite of the spiritual consumer. Such a consumer-oriented approach requires commercial perspective and marketing to determine that which satisfies their hunger. Competition arises when nearby providers seek to meet the needs of the same local church 'consumers'. Strategic concerns and related questions would change, initially unnoticeably, to "…make our product more appealing and unique" and "…improve customer service" and simultaneously "…adjust our product offering to meet and beat the competition." This consumeristic shift is driven, directly or indirectly, by the demands and expectations of church 'customers,' not pastors. A survey enquiring 'Why does the church exist?' returned: 'to take care of my family and my spiritual needs' (89%); 'win the world for Jesus Christ' (11%). The vast majority of pastors from those same churches gave the opposite answers. Gibbs and Coffey's (2001:52) response is:

> *…[I]t should not be the customer who determines the agenda of the church but the Lord, whom the church is called to worship and obey. We are to become all things to all people, not to satisfy as many people as possible, but in order to save some (1 Cor. 9:22). In pursuing that aim Paul was prepared to go to any lengths, employing all means that were consistent with the end in view.*

Laurie and Kopp (1999:43) conclude that "…clearly the drive for new ways to do church is partly the result of a *conflict of expectations between pastors and lay people.*" The authors suggest that the pastor is asking: "What will it take to get you plugged into this church?" and the people in the pew are answering: "Meet the needs of my family and make church a place we want to come to." *(Researcher's emphasis)*

Congregational leadership is faced with attitudes of "…self-serving, self-giving, and self-entitled" which is all "…about me, myself and I" (Rainer, 2014:50) and struggles to discern the path the congregation is to follow without the presence of conflict.

2.3.1.4   Greater spiritual awareness and choice

Gilkey (1991:21) explains that although "…many religions have always existed," there is a "…new consciousness" that "…entails a feeling of rough parity" representing "…the presence of both truth and grace in other ways," as well as "…diversity, among religions." In recent decades the "…openness to perceiving life in a variety of ways has contributed to the re-emergence of spirituality as a viable and necessary part of the human struggle for meaning today. People are very secular, but they are often spiritual secularists" (Guder, 1998:44). Few currents have shaped the mind-set of our modern world more than *pluralization* (White, 2012:55), which is the process whereby "…individuals are confronted with a staggering number of ideologies and faith options competing for their attention" (Berger, 1967:127).

2.3.1.5   Fading denominationalism

Western 'mainline churches' experience fading membership (Gibbs, 1993:12) in the face of advancing secularism and rampant atheism; simultaneously; non-traditional denominational churches are birthing everywhere (Virgo, 2006:7).

Mixed economies of church membership are evidenced by an increasing percentage of South Africans who indicated "No religion, refused, not stated" in the periodic censuses (Hendriks in Froise, 2000:87). In 1996, 4.6 million (11.5%), returned "No religion." A total of 3.75 million (3.75%), refused to answer. By 2001, the "No religion" returns had increased to 6.7 million (15%). There is currently more openness to reporting non-religiosity which is reflected in the overall decrease of the membership reported of Christian denominations since 1980 (Chipkin & Leatt, 2011:42).

Most mainline congregations today consist of members at varying points on the conservative-liberal spectrum regarding scripture and theology, fuelling the ever-present potential for strong disagreement and congregational turmoil (Nicholson, 1998:xiii). It is probable that the mixed economy of membership, infused with an added pressure of declining attendance, has a challenging impact on the occurrence and levels of conflict experienced in churches today. This is particularly true of, those of traditional denominations. The challenge is augmented by newcomers to churches who mostly come from a wide variety of backgrounds that have determined their attitudes, beliefs, and values and meaning of church (Kale and McCullough, 2003:13).

2.3.1.6 Culture war

Sociologist Tony Campolo (1995:7) coined the term 'culture war', in *Can Mainline Denominations Make a Comeback?* Previously, Niebuhr (1951:vii) outlined five categories of relational tensions: (i) Christ against culture; (ii) The Christ of culture; (iii) Christ above culture; (iv) Christ and culture in paradox; and (v) Christ, the Transformer of culture. Campolo (1995:29) agrees with Niebuhr (1951:14) that "…Christ leads men away from the temporality and pluralism of culture." However, he does not propose Christ being the "Transformer of culture" but argues that culture is evolving so that there is a need to understand its influence on life transformation. He also advocates an understanding of how the three forces of television, the emergence of the culture of narcissism, and the advent of the culture of wars have overtaken traditional Christianity and made mainline churches into victims of cultural lag (1995:15). Elliot (2000:39) addresses "…these three forces" from a preaching perspective:

- *Television*: The immense role of television in society challenges the church's willingness to adapt its message to the configuration of television shows;

- *Culture of narcissism*: Christianity does not preach against happiness and wealth, but these blessings are not our reason to exist (2000:40). Many perceive "…the God of love is at work in the world not so much to bring about His kingdom of justice for all, but to ensure that the individual gets all deserving personal happiness" (Campolo, 1995:64); and

- *Culture of wars*: Churches have unfortunately allowed cultural skirmishes over politics, abortion, homosexuality, and the like, to spill over into pulpits. While these demand discussion and dialogue, too often fundamentalist, evangelical, and liberal churches have done more harm than good by staunchly advocating one position (Elliott, 2000:41).

As identity is central in culture wars, Loscalzo (1995:127) calls on people not to strive to be 'somebody' and die of exhaustion in the process, because they are already a people, who have a name: "God's children." In Anderson's (2001:11) words: "It is not what we do that determines who we are. It is who we are that determines what we do."

2.3.1.7 Culture and church health

"The church desires to change the surrounding culture. The truth, however, is that the church has been infected by the very culture it seeks to transform" (Ford, 2008a:32–37). Ford's research analysis regarding congregational health (Transformational Church Indices: TCIndex) indicated that the five key indicators of church health each had an

underlying "problem" at one end of its dimension, which correlated directly to a dysfunction in today's Western culture, and a "solution" at the other, covering the following:

Consumerism vs community: How church members related to one another. Unhealthy churches have people acting individually while healthy ones relate as a community;

Incongruence vs code (identity): Gauging the church's "genetic code." Unhealthy churches lack a clear identity. Healthy churches have a clear sense of their DNA and take steps to align their ministries and culture with their code.

Autocracy vs shared leadership: Unhealthy churches tend to be overly bureaucratic or autocratic. Healthy churches see leadership as a shared function and as a ministry.

Cloister vs missional: Assessing how the church relates to the local community. Unhealthy churches disengage from the world around them. Healthy churches are mission-focused and have an outward orientation that starts with their own locale.

Inertia vs reinvention: How members view the future. Unhealthy churches resist change and fear or deny the future. Healthy churches embrace, even painful, change.

Leadership needs to navigate a culture, all too often characterised as a collection of individuals disconnected from one another, drifting without an overarching story or unifying values, expecting someone else to solve their problems, largely self-serving, and resistant to change. This is fertile ground for conflict (Stetzer & Rainer, 2010:32).

2.3.1.8   Paradigms, expectations, obstacles and criticism

Spencer and Tomlin (2005:111–121) researched perceptions of church, mostly by people who are currently not attending church, yet form a potential constituency of a missional church. Samples of these recordings follow, suitably categorised, and it is plausible that some could be recorded under more than one heading.

2.3.1.8.1 Paradigms

Spencer and Tomlin discovered a strong belief that what you did in life was more important than going to church. People interviewed wanted a bigger picture, and not have religion rammed down their throats. Some explained that they did not find the Good News, the preached Gospel, embodied in their church experience. Others described their preference of venue: large sitting-rooms, and coffee and a real sanctuary where one can find forgiveness, being peaceful, and all being treated equally. Another group were inspired by churches where they saw people dancing around in the aisles and singing from the soul.

2.3.1.8.2 Expectations

Most people interviewed believed that the church should reflect what the community and society, wanted: That church would always be open, welcoming, no matter who you are, with a sense of hope, belonging, and warmth; That church would be a place of respect, comfort, solace, fun, that reaches out and goes to the people. In so doing, it would meet the needs of the community and offer sanctuary for those who need it. They suggested that the church should use different activities to bring the community together. A high expectation is that it is the church that must nurture the young, give them a sense of respect and love without forcing it. The church would bring spiritual knowledge, sustenance, and a strong sense of morality to public affairs. Sermons should be more of a discussion than one person's interpretation. The gatherings should be much more about meeting, discussing, trying to learn and finding enjoyment and pleasure in developing one's spirituality. Hence, the church would provide opportunities to develop '…oneself into the person that God - if there is a God - wants you to be' (Spencer & Tomlin, 120)

Rainer (2013) reports that studies on the phenomenon of the church "back door," the metaphorical description of people leaving the church, all report one major "back door" theme: *a sense of some need not being filled*. These members have ideas of what a local congregation should provide for them, and they leave because those needs have not been met. Rainer's (2013:para 4) emphasis is that, probably more commonly than believed; members leave a local body because they *have a sense of entitlement*. "I would therefore suggest that *the main reason people leave a church is because they have an entitlement mentality rather than a servant mentality."*

Direct quotes from exit interviews include: (i) "The worship leader refused to listen to me about the songs and music I wanted." (ii) "The pastor did not feed me." (iii) "No one from my church visited me." (iv) "I was out two weeks and no one called me." (v) "They moved the times of the worship services and it messed up my schedule." (vi) "I told my pastor to go visit my cousin and he never did" (Rainer, 2013:para 5).

Members should expect some level of ministry and concern. Unfortunately, over time, church membership has morphed into country club membership. Rainer (2013:Para 8) contends that the biblical basis for membership is clear: "The Apostle Paul even uses the 'member' metaphor to describe what every believer should be like in a local congregation. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, Paul describes church members not by what

they should *receive* in a local church, but by the ministry they should *give".* Also, that the people *are* the church, they do not *go to* church. (Researcher's emphasis)

2.3.1.8.3 Obstacles

People saw themselves as consumers of the church. Hence, the church was not to dictate to them. They found the incomprehension of language in hymns, sermons and readings distracting. Many found churchgoers to be very self-centred, just wanting to talk about themselves and rarely interested in other people. The authors encourage church leadership to listen, but not necessarily obey every feedback (Spencer and Tomlin, 2005:114). One can imagine the potential conflict in trying to satisfy any of the above. Despite these observations, slow positive shifts do exist, whereby "…people are not as insistent that their churches be activity centres. 'Belonging' no longer means inclusion in a club or organisation, but connection in community" where "…rather than developing a relationship to the church, people are seeking relationships with Jesus Christ and with others" and that "…becoming a member of the church" is no once-off event, but that "…participation in the community of faith requires a commitment to take a journey" (Dick & Burry, 2006:34). Context plays a vital part in developing missional churches and, if not taken into account, a higher level of conflict may prevail in the process.

2.3.1.8.4 Criticism

There is both negative and positive criticism. Negative criticisms tend to become amplified in comparison. Those in leadership need to learn how to handle these challenges. Nehemiah received a great deal of criticism when he embarked upon the rebuilding of the wall. "From both inside and out, he battled the naysayers until one day they just had to say, 'Let us start building' (Nehemiah 2:18). Immediately his co-workers began to build, but the critics mocked and ridiculed them. Nehemiah answered, 'The God of heaven will give us success. We, his servants, will start rebuilding.' (Nehemiah 2:20). Church work is risky" (London *et al.,* 2002:36).

2.3.1.9   Sociological dimensions

Nicholson (1998:x–xv) recounts an arguably standard reply for today when he asked someone about their acquaintance with congregational life. The person had been baptised as an infant, but never attended church with her parents apart from funerals, weddings and other baptisms. Now married, the family enjoyed an active social life and stated: "We have never felt the need of going to church, even though we both do

believe in God." Nicholson then explains five contexts out of which the intentional interim ministry (See section 3.7.8, page 154) has emerged. Each of these aspects relies on different views and ideas, which in turn make the potential for and fact of conflict very sensitive:

- *Resistance to change* — "Congregations need to change the way they do things if they want to reach and hold into the new generations" (1998:xi);

- *Redefining purpose and mission* — where Proverbs 29:18, 'where there is no vision the people perish' has "…never been more apt than today. Clarity about theological foundations, doctrine, and social mission is critical in our modern pluralistic world if congregations are to have a clear sense of identity and direction" (1998:xii);

- *The need for viable stewardship* — where members' pledging falls woefully short of what is needed widely through lack of both relevance and a sense of purpose. "Some may say there are too many churches maintaining too many expensive buildings, siphoning off resources needed for outreach; others insist it is more a matter of teaching and training believers to give the way they should" (1998:xiii). Much tension and conflict relate to the allocation of scarce resources. "As giving decreases, programs begin to decline, congregations reduce staff, and a downward cycle accelerates toward a survival mentality. Stress develops"…"Conflict emerges, pastors leave, and transition periods increase in frequency" (1998:xiv);

- *Controversial social issues* — such as sexual preferences and abortion, "…will continue to produce conflict and tension well into the future for mainline denominations" (1998:xiv); and

- *Increasing diversity* — contributing to a blurring of differences in religious traditions. "There is rising opinion that the day of denominationalism is past, and the sooner Christians consolidate their resources and influence, the better it will be for all churches" (1998:xv).

Indeed, "…the Church must continually change its mode of expression, for it is historically orientated to a constantly changing world. The new ideas should enhance and strengthen the missiological dimensions of the Church's nature as those are given concrete expression in today's world" (Van Engen & Glasser, 1991:74).

2.3.2   Life cycle stages

Warning that "…what got you here won't get you there," McIntosh (2009:9) utilises the biological, organisational and church life cycles as evidence. It is relatively easy to identify with the nine-stage bell-shaped human life cycle from birth through to death in Figure 2.2 below:

Figure 2.2: Human life cycle
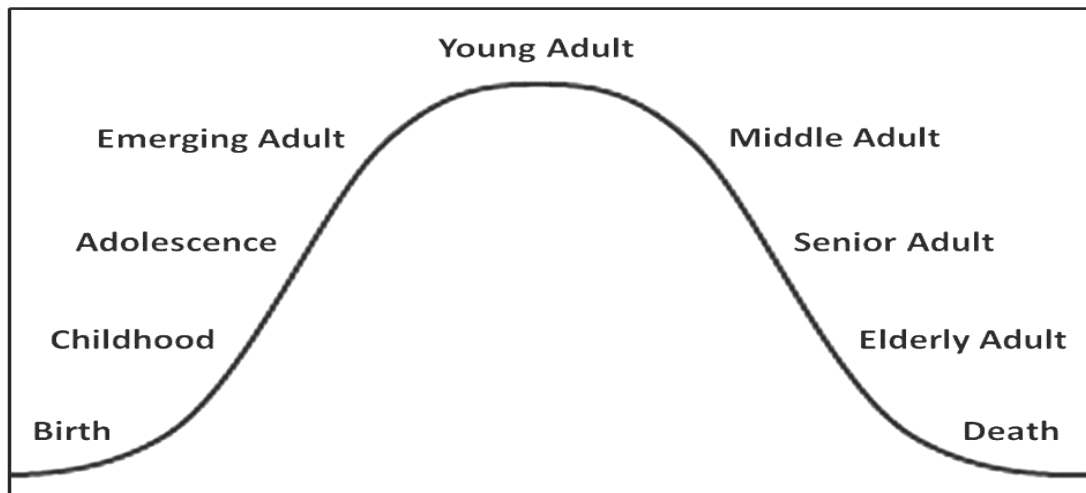
(Source: McIntosh, 2009:23)

Organisations, like living organisms, experience similar struggles and difficulties at each stage of the cycle and " …are faced with the transitional problems of moving to the next phase of development" (Adizes, 1988:3).

McIntosh (2009:35–86) comprehensively details five stages of a church lifecycle. Unless leaders understand and agree with their church's context on the lifecycle stages, attempting to lead the church forward could be very difficult and become prime terrain for unhealthy conflict (See a tabulated representation of the stages on Table 2.1, page 35).

Table 2.1: Congregational life cycle

	Emerging	Growing	Consolidating	Declining	Dying
Mission & purpose	• Mission very clear • People passionate to fulfil the mission • Energy driving the church into the future	• Strong sense of mission and vision • High level of goal ownership • Excited about what God is doing	• High visibility of mission • Common purpose in al ministries • Second-generation members and newcomers unaware of mission	• Newcomers and third-generation members do not know the mission • Older members try to restore former mission to avert decline	• Sense of mission and purpose is lost • Purpose is meeting the budget and survival
Involvement of People	• People committed • High involvement levels • Mutual dependency • Members willing to work • 50 percent or more serving	• Volunteers easily located • People donate their time, talent, and treasure • New people quickly involved – 40 percent serving	• Lay mobilisation system formalised • Higher quality of leaders desired • Enthusiasm begins to wane – 30 percent serving	• Original people say "We have done our part" • Newcomers find it hard to get involved • Some expect others will do work – 2-percent serving	• Few volunteers available • Ministry programs eliminated due to lack of leaders or participation • People say, :It's the pastor's job" • 10 percent di 90 percent of the work
Morale	• High morale • Congregational self-esteem being established • Positive attitudes • Hope for the future of the church	• Morale continues to build • Corporate esteem affected by successes and failures • Core values string	• Morale at its highest – this is as good as it gets • Confidence that goals can be reached is contagious • People are appropriately proud of their church	• People lose a sense of corporate identity • Corporate self-esteem is based on looking back to better days • Morale polarizes	• Frustration and despair are evident • Corporate self-esteem is based on meeting the budget and meeting missionary obligations
Facilities	• Rented or leased facilities • Many meetings held in homes • Dream of having own facility in the future	• First building units completed • Vision for more property and facilities	• Buildings completed • Property maxed out • Possible vision to relocate	• Buildings show their age • Deferred maintenance becomes a problem • More space than needed • Space for meetings not a problem	• Upkeep and maintenance a problem • More space than needed • Desire for less space
Programs & structure	• New programs easily started and cancelled • Bare-bones organisation • Lots of trial and error • Spontaneity in decision making	• Function of ministry determines the form • Programs developed in response to needs • Traditions begin to form	• Programs are formalised • Ministry is maximised; maintenance is minimised • New ministries and opportunities for service still being created	• Few new ministries added • Forms of ministries determine function • Programs create needs rather than meet needs	• Programs cancelled for lack of support • Maintenance is maximised; ministry is minimised • Tradition drives ministry
Attitude toward Change	• Change is the only constant • Change viewed as positive • Changes quickly owned by all	• Changes easily adopted and integrated • Changes determined by mission and vision • Changes accepted by all	• New ideas given serious consideration • Leaders responsible for approval • People responsible for implementing new ideas	• Few changes proposed • No change considered that departs from the status quo • Insider's ideas preferred over newcomers' ideas	• Closed to change • People say, "we've never done it that way" • People say, "we've tried that before, and it didn't work"
Pastor & staff	• Visionary leader • A "doer" of ministry • Small volunteer staff • Characterised as prophetic or apostolic	• Full-time pastor with secretary • Sets example as worker • Delegates to volunteers	• Pastor leads a multiple staff • Pastor works primary with church leaders • Pastor may lead seminars or write a book – "How I Did It"	• Pastor focuses primarily on management • Oversees a dwindling staff • Self-satisfied with achievements	• Pastor looks forward to retirement • Staff eliminated due to budget concerns • Pastor may move to another church with more potential
Worship & attendance	• Small but growing • Desire for more people • Designed with the non-Christian in mind	• May need multiple services • People very regular in attendance • People invite and bring friends and family	• Worship centre full • More inactive members but they are not missed • Newcomers not connected due to overcrowded conditions	• Worship style out of touch with younger generations • 55 percent of members not at worship • Few newcomers attend	• Worship centre uncomfortably empty • 65 percent of members not at worship • Newcomers rarely seen and almost never return
Key focus	• Who are we?	• Where should we invest our resources?	• Where do we go from here?	• How do we stop the decline?	• How can we turn this mess around?

(Source: McIntosh, 2009:71)

Rainer and Rainer's (2008:16–19) empirical study identified the "…seven sins of dying churches," which they claim "…are not mutually exclusive and are often interconnected." The "sins," mostly self-explanatory, are (i) *doctrine dilution,* (ii) *loss of evangelistic passion,* (iii) *failure to be relevant,* and (iv) *few outwardly focused ministries,* where "…it's all about me!" is the anthem chant of the dying church.

(v) The fifth 'sin', *conflict over personal preferences,* relates to people in the church beginning to squabble over the most insignificant things. These internal conflicts smother a church as trivial matter take priority over the greater gospel message.

(vi) The sixth 'sin', *the priority of comfort,* is where people do nothing outside the bounds of their comfort levels. (cf. Expectations on page 31) People in dying churches choose a priority of comfort over reaching into a community full of specific needs. The foregoing highlights the final 'sin' of a lack of (vii) *biblical illiteracy,* as people of the church do not understand the foundation of their faith; and falter during the first time of trouble.

Figure 2.3: Renewal, revitalisation, redevelopment represents a way for continual reformation for congregations (Mann, 2000:8): (i) *Ongoing renewal* is necessary for churches at the stability crest. The formation questions: "Who are we? What are we here for? Who is your neighbour?" need continual attention. Conflict arises when such strategic realignment is greeted with, "…If it ain't broke, don't fix it!" or "Discount any disturbing trends or hard questions that come to the surface" while "Key programs are humming along successfully," (ii) *Revitalisation* is when a new pastor is thought to be the answer; however, "…more typically, the forces driving the decline – internal dysfunction, external change, or both – will be ignored until things get worse." Two illusions dominate: "…the fantasy that growth can occur without change," and the "…fantasy that change can occur without conflict" (2000:11); (iii) *Redevelopment* requires spiritual, financial, and political "ministry capitally — to create the possibility of a turnaround" (2000:12).

Undercapitalisation translates into: (a) *Spiritual failure* — where old identities are not relinquished and the fact of dying ignored; (b) *Financial failure* – working with inadequate funding; and (c) *Political failure* – where leadership at all levels "…underestimate[s] the amount of political resistance that redevelopment efforts can provoke." Mann (2000:12) further states that "…redeveloping congregations are important to the whole church," as they are often geographically situated in high ministry demand areas; experience a learning curve from which others can learn; and that such

"…congregations live out the mystery of death and resurrection by 'losing their life to find it'" The church has a choice, namely "…to die as a result of its resistance to change or to die in order to live" (Regele and Schulz, 1995:Subtitle).

Figure 2.3: Renewal, revitalisation, redevelopment
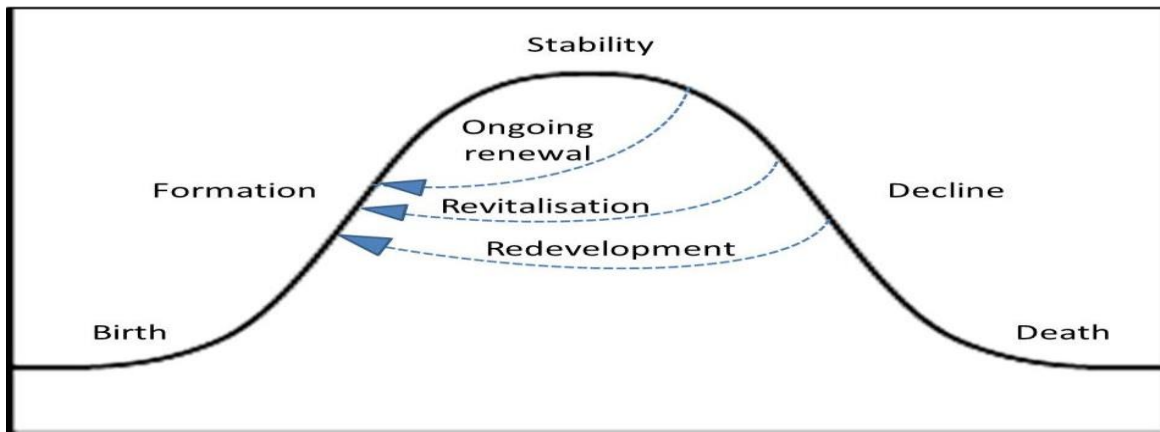
(Source: Mann, 2000:9)

The lifespan of effective congregations is forty years, after which a renewed sense of purpose is needed. The accelerating pace of cultural change will shorten the life cycle so that the "…congregation will need to engage in a transformational process every ten to twenty years" (Rouse & Van Gelder, 2008:125). Easum (2001:17) warns that to rigidly apply the life cycle concept to fix or preserve the church would be fatalistic and self-serving. Rather, the church is "…to follow Jesus onto the mission field for the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission." Hahn (2001:xi) states that

> *Loren Mead, founding president of the Alban Institute, and others emphasise that, unless churches can replace busyness and survival anxiety with a rediscovery of their spiritual centre and a willingness to listen for Gods call, they will continue losing energy and relevance.*

It seem feasible to suggest that developing a missional congregational would be more challenging, and filled with tension, frustration, anxiety in decision making and conflict potential whilst leading congregations gravitating toward stagnating stability, decline and death. Rendle (1998:21) observes that when leaders "…do not know what to do, they do what they know" and continues to explain that "what they know," may be the only idea the congregation has about its future or current state. When change is required, more than 'one idea' is needed. "Change will produce conflict, which is good and not to be avoided…Out of the conflict of more than one idea come energy, motivation, clarity, and direction. Without such conflict, which is the engagement of differences, it is very hard to responsibly meet a changing future."

2.3.3   Church sizes

It is not only diminishing, or dying churches that have tensions, frustration and anxiety amongst their leadership. There is a 'size culture' that profoundly affects how decisions are made, how relationships flow, how effectiveness is evaluated, and what ministers, staff, and lay leaders do. Most people tend to prefer a certain size culture, and unfortunately, many give their preference a moral status and treat others as spiritually and morally inferior. They may insist on practising a certain size culture despite their congregations being much too big or too small to fit that culture (Keller, 2006). Mann (1998:28), in addressing an "in between size" stage of congregational growth, observes that "…leaders find themselves in a lose-lose position because two competing sets of expectations are laid upon them. Confusion, anxiety, and indecision often result."

Two church-size terminologies prevail, namely *church size-types and church-growth barriers.* Size-types are given descriptive names and are numerically defined (Rothague, 1986; George, 1993; Mann, 1998; Gaede, 2001; McIntosh, 2009) (See Table 2.2, page 39, and Table 2.3, page 40) while growth barriers are described numerically (Fletcher, 2006; Searcy & Henson, 2012a). Irrespective of the terminology, each classification has its own identifiable culture and individually required behaviours of their pastor, leadership, activities, worship participation and attitude of laity, clergy and worship attendance. While there is no single agreed-upon framework for describing size differences, there is convergence of opinion regarding some key dimensions of size transitions and some of the typical plateaux points (Mann, 1998:2). Rothauge, in the foreword of Gaede (2001:v), comments as follows:

> *…[I]f we enter the confusing realm of any particular congregation through the lens of size analysis alone, we have already distorted that mysterious reality by viewing the congregation from only one perspective. Further, categories distort the picture because they are static configurations, inadequate for objectively analysing the dynamic processes of a vast social experience.*

As congregational leaders do not enjoy conflict, the most natural response to a plateau phase is to pretend it is not there, or imagine that it will go away and right itself (Mann, 1998:39). A bias toward conflict avoidance is at the root of leadership's not addressing pressing issues of sustainability, to the detriment of its future.

2.3.3.1   Church size types

Tabulated representations of the work of George (1992), Mann (1998), Gaede (2001) and McIntosh (2009) follow:

Table 2.2: Size-type description of churches (George, 1992)

Descriptive Names	Mouse-Size Home Group	Cat-Size Small Church	Lap-Dog Size Medium Church	Yard-Dog Size Large Church	Horse-Size Super Church	Elephant-Size Mega Church	Metropolis-of-Mice Meta Church
Size	3 – 35	35 – 75	75 - 200	200 – 1,000	1,000 – 3,000	3,000 – 10,000	10,000 +
Clergy leadership	No formal or dedicated clergy oversight	Optional, only for sacraments, baptisms, weddings & funerals	One pastor	Pastors too become specialised, teaching, music, care, etc	Ministers hired as shepherds – no longer for speciality – but focus on segments of the population according to life-stages	Ministers hired to focus on segments of the population according to life-stages Senior Minister as CEO!	Ministers hired to focus on segments of the population according to life-stages Senior Minister as CEO!
Decision making	Informal over coffee	Off-site, during 'clan gatherings'	Formal, within the structures denominationally or agreed in church constitution	However, it's not staff led, boards and committees typically dominate agenda setting and budgetary processes	Board level strategies and budgets, committees, with staff executing them	Board level strategies and budgets, committees, with staff executing them	Board level strategies and budgets, committees, with staff executing them
New members	Friends and family	Difficult to break into, difficult to change Perceived as very cliquish	Assimilation through lay leadership	Assimilation through staff- led programmes	Assimilation through staff- led programmes	Assimilation through staff- led programmes	Assimilation through staff- led programmes
Social context	Relationship-based, informal gathering	"Cat-size" (Schaller) due to independence, behaves as cats toward their owners! Needs no care-giver and comes in for periodically Typically a 'clan' inclusive of matriarchs & patriarchs A family church	'Lap-dog Size" as it likes the companionship of a pastor and treats them very well	Like the Great Dane, it too big to cuddle! Culturally diverse economically, educationally, vocationally, etc.	Culturally diverse economically, educationally, vocationally, etc. Membership from ever-widening geographic circles	Culturally diverse economically, educationally, vocationally, etc. Membership from ever-widening geographic circles Multiple campuses	Culturally diverse economically, educationally, vocationally, etc. Membership from ever-widening geographic circles Multiple campuses, even in other provinces
Structure	Non existent	Rarely grows beyond fifty, because its durable structure needs years to penetrate	Lay-led organisations, in cooperation with pastor Ministry groups form; lay leaders take jealous ownership and pastors tend not to meddle	Paid staff replace volunteers who have become overextended Problem: staff leaders lecture, spoon-feed, and entertain "listeners" in bigger-is-better classes Leaders fail to give equal attention to set up opportunities to apply the truths learned in settings where the span of care is small enough to motivate and put into practice ministry behaviour	Modify structure to gain speed and power of a horse by becoming a 'divisionalised,' multi-staff group of congregations	Support staff, function as specialists are hired within each division – teaching, music, counselling, drama, and so on	Continual adapting to growth A network of various size churches falling under one umbrella Likened to the Wesleyan Class system; and the outcome of the change to Dr David (Paul) Yonggi Cho's Seoul Church

(Researcher's summary: George, 1992:42–54)

Table 2.3: Size-type description of churches (Mann, 1998; Gaede, 2001)

Descriptive Names	Family	Pastoral	Programme	Corporate
Size	1 – 50	51 – 150	151 – 350	351 +
Clergy leadership	Part-time or a Retired pastor functions as chaplain	Pastor is the hub of the wheel, master coordinator, and chief minister	Pastor functions as the executive	Pastor is CEO, with mythical qualities
Decision making	Through 'Family' matriarchs and patriarchs	Lay leaders are short-term task-doers, decision makers	Board, or Executive members are managers, policy-makers who oversee but do not necessarily lead program groups / teams / activities	Board functions as Board of Directors
New members	Through family and friends, drawn in to existing groupings (cliques)	Mainly through family and friends, others required organised assimilation to neutralise overcome the issue of perceived cliques	Assimilation is organised as new members are drawn from an ever-widening circle	Assimilation is organised as new members are drawn from an ever-widening circle
Social context	One group consists of tightly knit extended families or 'clans' that centre on matriarchs and patriarchs	One large group centres on the pastor, with some members in loosely knit functional or friendship circles	Two or more distinct worshipping congregations include one-third of all members (in small groups of 5-15 people) that centre on skilled and empowered staff or lay leaders	More than two worshipping congregations include half of all members coalescing by affinity into small 'congregations' of 30+ people
Structure	Ministries exists to support matriarchs and patriarchs	Ministry coordinators are permanent task-doers who value close working relationship with the pastor Other staff – usually a musician and secretary – are part-time and perform limited but essential functions	Staff includes full-time and part-time assistants to pastor, programme resources	Staff, several ordained, includes full-time executives in charge of programme areas

(Researcher's summary: Mann, 1998; Gaede, 2001)

Table 2.4: Size-type description of churches (McIntosh, 2009)

Descriptive Names	Relational Church	Managerial Church	Organisational Church	Centralised Church	Decentralised Church
Size	15 – 200	200 - 400	400 – 800	800 – 1,500	1,500 plus
Pastoral Leadership	Bi-Vocational Seen as care-giver Move toward administrative	Administrative capacity Grows more to being a leader	Player coach Leader Caregiving by laity	Visionary Communication is key Preaching move to excellence	Lead pastor Executive pastor required
Ministry	Delegate with growth to 200, mobilise laity Approaching 200 requires programs & courses	Organising new ministries Delegation is key	Build team to do ministry Training vital New aspects required	Staff managed, for laity to minister	Staff builds teams and empowers laity
Decision making	Families, small cohort Outside of formality Moving to formality	Becomes more committee driven Begin empowering laity	Board, or Council	Drawn in to staff Delegated to specialised areas	Decentralised Evaluated at board level for vision alignment
Structure	Haphazard, but relational Begin small groups Hire part-time staff around the 150 mark	Small staff struggle to form teams, do work self! Roles of staff change with approach to 400	Staff require ability to build larger ministries Small group leaders become more pastoral	Multiple level staff Pastor directed and Board protected Church of small groups	Divisional approach moving to decentralised Matrix movement
New members	Slow to trust in leadership by congregation	Build on success Draw in, train and empower	Discover the peculiar collective needs and minister to that	Vital to identify and assimilate	Vital to identify and assimilate, trading and empower
Worship	Developing Add second service to pass 200 barrier	Additional service paramount	Develop teams Evaluation key	Become programmed	Programmed
Key points transitionally	Numerically: 35-85; 85-125; 125 beyond 200	Tension pulling either side to smaller or larger Add necessary staff	Mobilising and empowering laity	Think beyond local education and development of staff	Brand development and management

(Researcher's summary: McIntosh, 2009:134–177)

The first ever size-type presentation was simply "…to demonstrate how one important factor, the size of the congregations, prevents us from using one program and one style of leadership for all church situations" (Rothague, 1986:5). Despite this, some leaders still seek to introduce ideas, ministries, policies, and strategies that worked in congregations of a different size-type. It is not surprising that these leaders experience a level of failure, rejection, and frustration that shapes their future, often negatively (Gaede, 2001:4).

Keller (2006) identifies a few size-culture conflict areas. Firstly, past members of small churches now in large churches sometimes feel they should have direct access to the senior pastor personally without much difficulty, as was the case in the smaller church. Some insist that if he/she cannot be reached, he/she is failing his biblical duty to be their shepherd. Secondly, members transferring to a smaller church after attending a much larger one sometimes complain about the lack of professional quality in the church's ministries, and the quality of the pastor's sermons. They often perceive this as a lack of spiritual excellence. The real problem, however, is that in smaller churches work is done by volunteers whereas in large churches this work is done by full-time staff. Similarly, a large-church pastor with multiple staff can afford to put over twenty hours a week into sermon preparation, whereas the solo pastor of a smaller church does not entertain such luxury. One finds that the smaller church by its nature gives immature, outspoken, opinionated members a significant degree of power over the whole body which is disproportionate to their numbers. Since everyone knows everyone else, and smaller churches fear conflict, when 'influential' members express strong opposition to the direction set by leadership, their misery can hold the whole congregation hostage. If they threaten to leave, the majority of people will urge the leaders to desist in their project.

Keller encourages leaders of small churches to be brave enough to lead and to confront immature members, in spite of the unpleasantness involved. In addition, the forgoing implies that a wise pastor may have to confront people sympathetically who are just not able to handle the church's size culture. Mann (1998:30) identified three desires regarding movement between sizes: "God's, ours and mine" so that

> …as the congregation wrestles with the possibility of growth (or decline), it is important to create space where leaders and members can explore their own particular desires in the matter and recognise the conflict that exists even within themselves.

2.3.3.2   Church growth barriers

Leaders do not prevent a church from growing, but often will! Unaware of an imminent barrier to growth, caused by their own success, they want to perpetuate "that which got us here" (McIntosh, 2009:9). Not understanding their actions, growth slows despite new people being added, as people are leaving at a similar rate – not only from the periphery but also from the core, even founders. These painful endings to long-standing relationships only add to the strife and frustration in churches that are needlessly stuck behind a growth barrier. Under the surface, frustration mounts, particularly amongst the leadership. If the internal changes are not made – and most leaders never detect the need for internal restructuring – the church will never make it through the barrier, no matter what external changes are made (Fletcher, 2006:15–21).

Many people want their church to grow but are unwilling to make the necessary changes to attract people different from themselves (Rendle, 1998:32–33). Congregations do not necessarily identify barriers because they see them and use them as cultural protection, often causing unnecessary conflict in the process: "…the first step in overcoming barriers is to identify them. The Christian has the responsibility to make that step" (Towns, 1995:26).

Searcy (2012) identifies four main numerical growth barriers for today's churches: 65, 125, 250 & 500; while Fletcher (2006:48) focused on two: 100/200 and 700/800. As the church grows, leaders are appointed and teams formed to facilitate the flow of ministry. Elders are appointed to help the pastor 'carry the load.' As growth barriers are identified and bridged, the roles and responsibilities of the eldership need to change. "You must have role clarity, or you will have role confusion. If left unfixed, role confusion soon becomes role conflict" (MacMillan in Searcy *et al.*, 2011a:133).

It is now evident that to transition size, or break through barriers, significant leadership change and development, structural change, laity functionality change, decision making, facilities evaluation, weekend worship service improvements and challenges, evangelism opportunities, assimilation improvements, social context understanding, discipleship development, and ministry development and change are required. All these developments, improvements and changes are pregnant with conflict energy, which, if not channelled correctly, managed effectively and used wisely, have the potential to escalate and retard any growth within that particular church.

Table 2.5: Breaking barriers to church growth (Searcy, 2012)

Size	65 Barrier	125 Barrier	250 Barrier	500 Barrier
Past sin	Review & heal	Review & heal	Review & heal	Review & heal
Structure	Mentor new leadership	Grow more small groups Train more leaders	Improve small group systems New small groups Develop lay leadership Hire staff in critical growth areas	Develop church wide strategy Refine small group system Strategy Structure staff toward strategy
Pastoral Leadership	Part-time to full-time Cast growth vision & have the necessary tough conversations	Transition from Pastor shepherd to Pastor leader Lead and delegate to laity Determine pastor's strengths and hire in to balance	Delegate more Better communicator Lead toward staff and eldership	Lead and delegate toward staff Excellence in communication
Focus	Worship system implementation 'Sunday celebration & seating capacity	Use special Sunday series Improve week-end worship system	Evangelism system Special Sunday series	Evangelism system expansion Programme week-end celebration system Consider additional worship service
Facilities	70% rule for worship area (30% seats unused – open)	70% rule for growth ministry areas	Space of ministry & administration 70% rule throughout	Space of ministry & administration 70% rule applied Facilities management system
New Members	Assimilation system	Assimilation system improvement Formalise New Members Programme	Assimilation system – to full integration Develop a discipleship strategy	Continually improve assimilation Class system – how do people grow

(Researcher's summary: Searcy, 2012)

2.4   Purpose of developing the missional church

In translating Roberts's (1983:72) Afrikaans work, Nel (2015a:21) states that "…this 'being build up' is always *consolidation* and *missionary* at the same time and in this sense always missional."   Being missional means leadership should "…listen to outsiders," encourages Stanley *et al.* (2008:xi) as "…the needs and interests of *insiders* have a tendency to determine the agenda for the organisation. This is especially true

for the church. Focus your efforts on those you're trying to reach, rather than on those you're trying to keep." At the same time congregations must "be faithful" argues Easum (2001:9). Being faithful overrides growth or heath in that "…congregations can be healthy and growing but not faithful."

> *Faithful congregations follow Jesus into the mission field to make disciples who make a difference in the world. Jesus' command to 'go make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:19) describes the heart and soul of any authentic Christian community of faith, because it is Jesus' Last Will and Testament.*

The tension between 'focusing on outsiders' and 'equipping the saints' internally has the potential to evolve into conflict if not addressed theologically and sensitively.

2.4.1 The purpose of being built up

"The notion that God's purpose for humans is their happiness, realised through having their every need met, is a modern one that has only partial biblical support" write Gibbs and Coffey (2001:53). They argue that the gospel

> *…is more concerned with people's holiness than with their happiness. The goal of salvation is not just that we shall be forgiven but that we shall grow in spiritual stature to become more and more like Jesus, and we should be available to God for him to continue his purposes in the world, working through us by his Spirit.*

This purpose of being built up, requires the local congregations to "…endeavour to engage their total membership in ministry to one another and in mission to the world" (Gibbs, 2013:252). Nel (2015a:20) supports this indicating that

> *…spiritual maturity, therefore, entails a willingness to serve. Driven by love, the church works in love and hope. The sick self-righteousness (so typical of immaturity) is constantly challenged and changed. It makes way for the individual's growing willingness to contribute to the sake of the building of the body as a whole – a unit of which the individual is a living part.*

This supports Raymer in Walvoord and Zuck's work (1985:845) who states "…believers not only make up the church but serve in it, ministering as a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices. All believers are priests (cf. 1 Peter 2:9; Heb. 4:16; Rev. 1:6) and need no mediator other than Jesus Christ to approach God directly." Similarly, Barna (1999:124) observed that one of the philosophies of effective churches is that "…ministry is about personal investment in people's lives, not about funding professional ministers to do ministry in their stead." The Methodist Book of Order (2014:Para 1.8.5 p12) emphasises 1 Peter 2:9, in the

…reaffirmation and consistent exercise of the New Testament truth of the universal priesthood of believers. The Methodist Church, therefore, holds that while certain of its members are called of God and are ordained and separated to the holy office of the Ministry within the Church, these hold no priesthood differing in kind from that which is common to the Lord's people, and have no exclusive title to the preaching of the Gospel or to the care of souls.

Nel (2015a:19) contends that the church exists and works toward the glory of God

…because it is God who builds his church, it must be maintained that the purpose of building up the local church is to make God known. The local congregation must reveal to the world that the triune God is the only true God – as he has revealed himself through his word. When this happens, God is glorified.

Nel (2015a:21) further explains that "…God's purpose in building His church includes (i) shaping / building an enthusiastic community of disciples of Jesus Christ; (ii) in which the believers together and individually use their gifts for mutual service and salvation, and (iii) as equipped and trained people, reveal God in such a way that the world will get to know Him through Jesus Christ and through the work of the Holy Spirit, and so (iv) be built into (added to) God's building, His church."

In summing up a chapter on Building the Church, Getz (1974:61) concludes that "…if it *(the church)* is immature, it shows impatience, jealousy, strife, divisions, pride, arrogance and unbecoming behaviour. If it is mature, it reflects a growing love, a unity of faith and a steadfast hope." Nel (2015a:19) reasons that immature churches are those which are not built up, while mature churches are and reminds us that

…God does not merely build a congregation for its own sake, and neither is his work of building up 'finished' with any given group of believers in a local church. He indeed builds when the people who do not yet belong to him are 'built into' the church by means of witness, faith, love, and the life of the church. Building up the local church always implies further growth – in quality and, when God pleases, in quantity (2015a:20).

From the forgoing, it seems evident that such growth would be realised through drawing in the unchurched, the lost and those previously disillusioned by church, whose presence, person and conduct may conflict with the existing congregation.

2.4.2   The vision of developing the missional church

Appel and Nelson (2000:8) pose the question as to what would happen if

…thousands of churches had a love for lost people so great that they would be willing to obey whatever God led them to do to communicate his love in ways that people would grasp, accept, and grow in? Imagine what would happen in your church if you and other key leaders were willing to change anything except the unchanging message of the gospel in order to build bridges to you community.

In contrast, Warren (1995:75–83) describes a church council meeting seeking the way forward for their church, resulting in a long list of divergent, yet valid and purposeful proposals. Warren observes that "…multiple driving forces in this church are competing for attention. This results in conflict and a church that is trying to head in several different directions at the same time" (1995:76).

The operative word is driving (or *driven).* Collins (2000) defines 'driven' as "(driv^e) *vb* the past participle of drive; and drive (draɪv) *vb* drives, driving, drove (drəʊv) *or* driven (ˈdrɪv^e) to push, propel, or be pushed or propel… to propel, control… guide…force… cause…". "Every church is driven by something. There is a guiding force, a controlling assumption, a directing conviction behind everything that happens," suggests Warren (1995:77) and provides the following examples:

Tradition (We have always done it this way); *Personality* (What does the leader want? is the most important question); *Finances* (The question on everyone's mind: How much will it cost?); *Programme* (Energy is focused on maintaining and sustaining programmes); *Buildings* (Churchill: "We shape our buildings and then they shape us"); *Events* (The calendar suggests that the goal is to keep people busy); and *Seekers* (To reach unbelievers, their needs become the driving force).

Warren (1995:80-82) conversely proposes "…a biblical paradigm: Purpose-Driven Churches," citing Proverbs 19:21(NLT): "You can make many plans, but the Lord's purpose will prevail" and suggests that "…what is needed today are churches that are driven by purpose instead of by other forces" and concludes that "…nothing will revitalize a discouraged church faster than rediscovering its purpose." Nel (2015a:25), however, believes that developing or cultivating a missional church "…is about *being,* the real *essence* and *life* of the church – a movement of and in life" and concludes that "…this is what the so-called missional conversation is all about; the real *identity* of the church" and as such, being "*identity-driven*" (Researcher's italics).

2.4.3   Discovering a missionary mentality

Stetzer and Rainer (2010:47) describe how transformational churches know, understand, and are deeply in love with their cities, communities, and people.

> *Understanding context, or missionary mentality, is a key component in transformational churches, which live out the essence of disciple-making in their activities through worship, community, and mission in the context of their culture. Mission into the surrounding neighbourhood's occurs with an understanding of the church's immediate content. These churches express their values in light of their*

context and demonstrate a heart for the culture. Engagement into the community is done with relational intention, and the churches pray for their community.

To balance the inward and outward focus of Christian community, Frazee (2001:82) proposed the concept of "Seven Functions of Biblical Community" aligned to the acronym S-E-R-V-I-C-E: **S**piritual formation; **E**vangelism; **R**eproduction (New members); **V**olunteerism; **I**nternational mission; and **C**are and **E**xtending compassion.

2.4.4 The nature of congregational development

Addressing the equipping of believers to minister the life and love of Christ with grace and ability, Hayford (1982:47) explains that "…by pure scriptural assignment, church leaders are commissioned to serve this objective, and dare not accept a hierarchical role as a spiritual 'professional.'" Citing Ephesians 4: 11-12, Hayford continues, "…Jesus has given leaders to His Church to develop every believer to do the work of ministry and to up-build the Church." Sweet (2008:43), reminds us that

> *…whenever John Wesley wrote in his journal 'I offered them Christ,' he was saying, 'I preached.' Would that more churches etched on their pulpits the words that admonish everyone who steps into the crow's nest of one West Virginia church: 'Sir, we would see Jesus.' A biblical spirituality is relationship driven. It begins and ends with Jesus: does it sound like Jesus? See like Jesus? Touch like Jesus? Smell like Jesus?*

Congregations are not only built up by what God does for them, but also in what they do for each other. When the content of building up is understood, the content of the equipment for building up is also clear. Nel identifies the following activities (in which all believers take part) in building up the local church (2015a:17): The believers encourage one another; admonish and caution one another with wisdom; are patient with one another (1 Thess. 5:11,12; Col 3:16); love one another (Col 3:12-14); speak the truth in love to one another; grow with one another in their knowledge of the Son of God; and, the unified believers grow and serve — especially when it comes to communicating the Gospel in word and deed (Ephes. 4:1-16).

"The body is therefore built by what the whole (all of us) congregation (the special ministries, ordained and un-ordained) does for the sake of its existence *(being)* and function *(doing)* as the church of Christ" (Nel, 2015a:19).

2.5 The Building metaphor in the scriptures

A search through the NTL Bible utilising the Logos 6 Bible Software produced 236 results in 225 verses of the root verb 'build'. Nel (2015a:13–15) identifies five characteristics of the root verb 'build' in the Old Testament imagery, namely (i) *God is the one who builds* — The verb almost always denotes, in different contexts, a subject that builds, makes, constructs, establishes, and repairs. Whilst the subject is sometimes the Lord's wisdom and constancy (cf. Proverbs 9:1; Ps. 89:3), God himself is always the subject; (ii) *Building is Yahweh's work* — He promises it, does it himself, even when using agents. Passages in Jeremiah (1:10; 12:14-17; 18:7-10; 24:6; 31:4, 28; 33:7; 42:10; 45:4) and Zechariah (6:9-15) refer; (iii) *Building has a future orientation* — This imagery flows from God's promise to the Israelites and the installation of a new covenant whereby God put his law in their minds and wrote it on their hearts (Jer. 31:31-34); (iv) *Building imagery has a missional perspective* — Israel is rebuilt for Yahweh, His honour and glory. They are built into the people of God (Jer. 12:16; Ezek. 36) to be a blessing, and a light for the nations (Gen 12:1-3); and (v) *Building imagery is restorative and regenerative* — It is done according to His will. Israel's failure of not working with God for restorative purpose can be seen as a missional failure. Referring to Michel (in Kittel & Friedrich, 1967:119–158), Nel (2015a:15) explains

> *…the concept oikodomein (to build) in the New Testament has a clear connection to the Old Testament. Here, too, it is strongly connected with the Messianic concept. The Messiah builds the new temple and the new community. God is the subject – it is he who builds and who maintains the new community of the faithful that is built on the Messiah (cf. Matthew 16:18; John 2:13-21; Hebrews 8:7-13, 10:11-18)*

Nel continues "…Paul is the New Testament author who uses the term *building up* the most. His letters are interwoven with the truth that *the congregation itself has to build* – especially when seen together with other terms that contain the same idea." This is evidenced through Ephesians 2:20-22; 4:1-16; and 1 Corinthians 3:6-9, 16; 12:1-11 in that the congregation builds themselves, and that "…God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us" (1 Corinthians 12:6, 2004 NLT).

2.5.1 Images of the church *(Ekklēsia)*

Images clarify congregational identity, carry vision, reflect self-understanding, challenge the congregation to realise their calling and the "…images which the church uses for its self-understanding will largely determine what the church will actually become" (Driver,

1997:16). Sections 2.5.1.1 to 2.5.1.5 present Driver's images, while those of Dale *et al.* (2011:69–75) are presented in sections 2.5.1.6 to 2.5.1.8.

2.5.1.1   The way

The sources of this metaphor are Deuteronomy 32:4 and Ezekiel 18:25. Jesus provides an image for His disciples, saying: "I am the way" (John 14:6). Later the writer of Acts speaks of those "…who belong to the way" (9:1-2). "The way is an image which communicated powerfully in a church in conflict with evil powers, in a church which loves under the sign of the cross, in a martyr church of suffering witness. When these are lost, the image too, loses its appealing power" (Driver, 1997:46–55). This image should influence congregants, even those in conflict, toward Christ-like behaviour.

2.5.1.2   Sojourners

Rooted in Israel's history, Abraham was a sojourner in Egypt, in Canaan and other lands (Genesis 12:10; 17:8; 20:1; 21:34; 23:4 35:27). 1 Clement speaks of "…the church of God sojourning in Philippi" (Polycarp in Lake, 1912:283). The Greek *paroikos* (foreigner, exile), root of Latin *parochia* and English *parish*, "…which emerged as designations for a local church!" In Peter's writings, the "…alien status of God's people is essential to both their life and mission in the world" (1 Peter 2:9-12). This too challenges congregants in conflict not to reflect worldly attitudes and responses to conflict, but that of God's Kingdom (Driver, 1997:56–67).

2.5.1.3   New creation

The church as the new creation stands between what God has already done, and what God will certainly renew and complete. Driver highlights "all things new" (Revelation 21:5) as God's sign of the future. Paul's words, "There is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17: NRSV) is community in nature and not individualistic. This image is held up as a mirror of the person of Christ into whose likeness congregations are formed and should be evident in its dealings with conflict (Driver, 1997:96–108).

2.5.1.4   The people of God

A principal New Testament image of church is "The People of God" which portrays a relational, belonging image (Driver, 1997:16) foundational for the   church's self-understanding (Küng, 1978:119). The image can be traced from Israel's covenant as God's people (Exodus 19:8), to Paul's application of "I will live in them and walk among

them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2 Corinthians 6:16: NLT). This image reminds the congregation of God's presence, and any response to conflict is carried out in the presence of God in that: "…the biblical image of peoplehood tells us that to be without a people, is to be without God. To know God is to be part of a people, God's people" (Driver, 1997:126–138).

2.5.1.5   A witnessing community

Jesus, through the Great Commission, "…charged His disciples to be witnesses throughout the world" (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8) and "…take(s) the idea of witness to the facts of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection – and combine(s) it with witnessing in the sense of evangelistic confession." The source of this image goes back to Israel being told, "You are my witnesses" (Isaiah 41:8, 9; 43:10; 44:1-2).   Mathew (10:26-39) "…makes it clear that Jesus' followers are also witnesses, confessors, martyrs." The author of Acts (Acts 1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:13f; 10:39,41; 22:15,20; 26:16) too paints the image of a witnessing people, even a suffering people (Acts 7:54-60) (Driver, 1997:196–201). The way congregations handle conflict can be witness to the world.

2.5.1.6   The body of Christ

Celebrating differences and diversity in the body of Christ, welcoming the various gifts and ways of functioning of each member is no easy task, and is loaded with conflict potential.

> *Simple church is about being the body of Christ with Christ Himself as the head. The natural body has many different parts, each with its own function. All are necessary for the healthy operation of the body. According to Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, we each have different roles, all of which are necessary for the body to be fit and strong. None of us can manage without the others. If one member is not functioning properly, then the entire body of Christ is weaker because of it (Dale et al., 2011:69).*

2.5.1.7   Church as family

Unfortunately, the authors do not provide specific scriptures, but speak of the family image of church being implied in the New Testament.

> *Simple church is family. The other members are our spiritual brothers, sisters, sons and daughters. We do not 'go to' family – it is not an event or a place. We are family. Of course, healthy families do get together – often. But it is not their getting together that makes them family; it is their relationship with one another (Dale et al., 2011:71).*

2.5.1.8 A temple built with loving stones

Colossians 2:19 indicates that the body is being nourished and knitted together by joints and ligaments, growing with the increase that is from God. The words used to describe the joints and ligaments actually mean 'bonded together.' Love is the glue that bonds us together.

> *The New Testament also paints the church as a spiritual temple built with living stones (Peter 2:5). These stones have to be cut and chiselled in order to fit together. Living a community lifestyle helps to grind us into shape. As we grow together in our relationships, particularly as this works itself out on a daily basis, tensions occur (Dale et al., 2011:74).*

This is God's way of transforming us to be more like Jesus. How much of Paul's encouragement, admonishment, reproving and correction, as found in Romans 15:14; Colossians 3:16; 4:17; and 1 Thessalonians 5:14 is heeded, or ministered in love?

2.5.2 Paradigms for continual reformation toward being missional

Gibbs and Coffey (2001:11) identify nine "…key areas in which churches need" continual reformation, which is "…to undergo transforming transitions in the midst of the seismic shifts that are happening in our cultural contexts." Each of these areas enjoys individual attention in the following very descriptive chapter titles: (i) From living in the past to engaging with the present; (ii) From market-driven to mission-oriented; (iii) From bureaucratic hierarchies to apostolic networks; (iv) From schooling professionals to mentoring leaders; (v) From following celebrities to encountering saints; (vi) From dead orthodoxy to living faith; (vii) From attracting a crowd to seeking the lost; (viii) From belonging to believing and (ix) From generic congregations to incarnational communities. The authors acknowledge the innate conflict potential in these shifts:

> *…[C]hurch leaders are well aware that significant changes in the life of the local church (or 'insignificant ones' for that matter!) are seldom made smoothly or neatly. For within most local churches, especially those in existence for thirty years or more, there will be groups of individuals who think with traditional, modern and postmodern assumptions respectively. Each group has a legitimate perspective and deep concerns. Furthermore, they have been so shaped by cultural influences that have permeated their thinking and fuelled their attitudes that they have seldom paused to examine critically their positions and reactions to the issues that so inflame their passions (2001:12).*

Some of the above and other paradigms, which are in need of continual reformation, are discussed as follows:

2.5.2.1 Legacies of Christendom

The opening paragraph of section 2.3.1.1 on page 24 introduced Christendom which Shenk (1995:34) describes as when the church "…surrendered the vital critical relationship to its culture that is indispensable to a sense of mission." Christendom as a socio-political-cultural force is dead; yet, "…we are surrounded by the relics of the Christendom paradigm, a paradigm that has largely ceased to work. But these relics hold us hostage to the past and make it difficult to create a new paradigm that can be as compelling for the next age as the Christendom paradigm has been for the past ages" (Mead, 1991:18). The way forward is "…not [to] lose sight of the bigger picture – the need to re-envision a church that is significantly different from the church that has been shaped and subverted by modernity and the culture of Christendom. Church in the West needs to be motivated and shaped by a missional commitment to a pluralistic world floundering in a sea of relativism" (Gibbs, 2009:9).

2.5.2.2 Institutionalism

Easum (2001:10) observes that

> *…most Protestant congregations are stuck in the muck and mire of their institutions with little or no movement toward joining Jesus on the mission field. To them faithfulness means supporting their church and keeping it open. For them to be faithful to their God-given mission, they must be freed up from their slavery to their institutions to live for others on the mission field, freed up to function in a constantly changing world. The same can be said of denominations.*

2.5.2.3 Doing mission to being missional

It is not the church 'doing' mission but "…God who has a mission in the world, and it is God who calls and sends the church to participate in this mission" (Van Gelder, 2007b:10). The term 'mission' is often equated with the idea of "…an overseas activity based on human initiative, by which the good news is taken abroad to those who have not yet heard it." In contrast, the term 'missional' describes "…not a specific activity of the church but the very essence and identity of the church…in the context of its culture and participates in God's mission to the world." It reminds the church that "…it is to be oriented to the world and to remain true to its identity as an agent of God's mission and a participant in God's story" (Goheen, 2011:4–5). There is a growing recognition that churches "…are now in their own mission location" and "…this awareness is generating fresh opportunities for new ministry, but it is also introducing disruption into long-standing practices" (Van Gelder, 2009:2).

2.5.2.4   Leadership's responses: Marketing to missional

Martoia (2002:135) notes that "…the cravings to experience the transcendent is God-designed. When the church fails to provide an engaging experience of God, then the seeking individual has no choice but to seek filling that God-shaped void in other ways. Far from us buckling to 'consumer demands', we're raising the need to return to biblical models of experiential encounter so those looking will find." Wilson (2004:40) believes that "…people don't want to experience church. They want to experience God's presence. The Future Church's battle cry is a return to biblical spirtualty, one that is rooted in guiding others to experience God's presence." Most people do not attend church because of great talk, music, or media. Those are merely vehicles; "…they come back because of a deeply moving experience with God," found within congregations seeking God's heart, and cannot simply be conjured up by articulate pastors, talented worship leaders, or other gifted leaders (Martoia, 2002:136). To this end, Wilson (2004:41) explains that

> …the church must live what we believe. We must 'flesh out' our faith. 'There is a difference between knowing the good news and being the good news,' says Dieter Zander, church planter in Sam Francisco. 'We are the evidence!' Everything counts – all the time. With previous generations, a strong preacher could give a good message – even if the church was hypocritical and critical – and people would still get saved. But not anymore.' Biblical spirituality is not another version of the pop spirituality of our age or a new strategy for reaching the unchurched. It is the life and breath of the church.

Unfortunately, the world sees only what churches have done or what programmes they are doing, and is not impressed. Leadership's standard response to this is to scheme, plot and plan to make churches more appealing to the people in their community. A more missional approach would be to discover where Jesus can be seen at work in their midst, where lives are changing, and communities transforming simply by the power of the Gospel. It would be more profitable to provide the space for people to encounter Jesus, alive and present as King, and get a taste of God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven (Cole, 2010:56). Gibbs and Coffey's (2001:11) comments at the start of this section on page 52 apply. *What* church is, or *why* it exists is not commonly understood; which is very disconcerting for church leaders. The average person's thought concept of church is very distant from what actually took place in the era in which the church was born. In Stanley's (2012:51) words: "…the current confusion over the purpose and mission of the church stems from a dearth of knowledge regarding the history of *the Church.*"

2.5.2.5   Missio Dei

It has been established that "…God has a mission in the world, what is usually referred to as the *Missio Dei* (the mission of God)" (Van Gelder, 2007a:18). The concept, not the term *Missio Dei*, was incubated in, through and following the Whitby (1947) and Willingen (1952) conferences of the International Missionary Council (IMC) (Goheen, 2001:48–51) and "…was later formulated as Missio Dei by Karl Hartenstein" as documented by Rosin (1972), "…and then given fuller expression by Johannes Blauw in his 1962 publication: *The Missionary Nature of the Church*" (Van Gelder, 2009:3). Missio Dei refers to the nature of mission by which

> *...mission [is] understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It [is] thus put in the context of the doctrine of the trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine on the mission Dei as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another 'movement': Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world…In this new image mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God (Bosch, 1991:390).*

The way we think about church or the world shifts when we grasp that the Triune God is the primary agent in mission. When the focus is the "…purpose of the church, the church tends to become the primary location of God, which makes the church itself responsible to carry out activities in the world on behalf of God. A Trinitarian understanding shifts the focus such that the Spirit-led, missional church participants in God's mission in the world" (Van Gelder, 2007a:18–19). It is not the church which is to fulfil the Great Commission or having a mission to realise, it is God who has a mission and calls and sends the church to participate therein (Guder, 1998:3–7).

2.5.2.6   Informing ecclesiology

Mission is a "…movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission…"; hence, "…there is church because there is mission, not vice versa" claims Bosch (1991:390). According to Moltmann (1992:64), "…it is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church."

Hirsch (2006:143) encourages a missional approach for a post-Christian culture where "*Christology determines missiology, and missiology determines our ecclesiology.*" Hirsch explains that "...in order to align ourselves correctly as a missional movement, we first need to return to the Founder of Christianity and, having done that, recalibrate our approach from that point on."   Hirsch sees this model as an antidote for the

observed norm of *Christology determining ecclesiology which in turn informs missiology.* Cole (2005:6) explains Christology as the initiator in that

> *…everything about church begins and ends with a single question: 'Who is Jesus to you?' Jesus' statement about the church (Matthew 16:18) has a context that begins with God's grace revealing the identity of Jesus and ends with the work of Christ on the cross and His awesome resurrection three days later* (Mathew 16:21).

Stetzer and Dobson (2007:9, 220) identify a variation on the above as presented in Figure 2.4: Missional matrix, where they envisage "…the process as more of an interaction than a progression" and is best explained through "a…Missional Matrix: engaging all three theological disciplines in conversation and interaction." They explain that the "…shaded circle illustrates the necessity of the scriptural and theological foundation, and its application enabled by the Holy Spirit. Missional churches begin and end with a solid foundation of accurate biblical theology. Only within this circle do Christology, ecclesiology, and missiology interact. Otherwise, the church will be unbalanced and unscriptural."

Figure 2.4: Missional matrix

(Source: Stetzer and Dodson, 2007:9)

Churches in the West mainly speak of mission and ministry being done *for* Jesus, but not *by* Jesus. There is a vast difference. To evaluate churches on how recognisable Jesus is in the congregation (and not by the traditional statistics of attendance and financial giving) would result in a more far-reaching influence in the world and influence the implementation of more dynamic strategies. Unfortunately, it is possible to 'do

church' but fail to demonstrate anything of the person or work of Christ in a neighbourhood (Cole, 2010:58).

Chalke *et al.* (2006:13) provides clarity by suggesting that "…in technical language, our theology (our understanding of God) must unpack itself through our missiology (our understanding of mission) which must shape our ecclesiology (our understanding of church)" where "…our understanding of God" implies the Triune God – Father, Son and Spirit. Van Gelder (2007a:17) has a similar, simple stance: "The Church is; The Church does what it is; and The Church organizes what it does," culminating in ecclesiology as the organised people. Hatmaker (2011:24) points out that

> *…it's the church's calling to the gospel and God's mission, that provide the framework for its ministry. The mission determines what we 'do' and what we 'do' requires organising that functions in support of the mission. This goes beyond simply modifying our behaviours and calls us toward a new identity in Christ.*

These are recent writings, yet the concept is not 21st century! Moltmann (1975), translated and reprinted (1992:10), claims that the "…theological interpretation of the church today should absorb the germs of a missionary church in the decay of the *corpus christianum,"* which Musser (1996:314) defines as "…that great marriage between Christianity and culture which has lasted from the fourth century to the present day in countries with large *Volskirchen* ('state churches')." Moltmann (1992:10) explains that our learning should not be that "…the church 'has' a mission, but the very reverse: that the mission of Christ creates its own church." Mission is therefore not derived from the church. Rather, it is "…from mission and in the light of mission that the church has to be understood." An about-face of the traditional practice of mission flowing from the church will not be easy as congregations are made up of different attitudes, beliefs, and values (Kale & McCullough, 2003:13).

2.5.2.7   Three necessary directions of love

Harney (2011:17) proposes three foundations for effective organic outreach in that "…we are to love God with everything we have and to love other people the way we long to be loved. If a congregation is gripped by God's love and lavishes this freely on each other and their community, God will draw people to this church": (i) *Loving God,* is "…when we love God passionately, He will entrust people to our congregation so we can lavish them with His grace" (2011:19); (ii) *Loving the World* will require sacrifice. Without compromising on God's Word or the core beliefs of the faith, if we are going to reach the word with Jesus' message, there will be a price (2011:27); and (iii) *Loving*

the Church is an often missed essential in that a joy-filled love for the church is also a key to outreach. "If we don't love the church, why should our unbelieving friends love the Lord of the church?" (2011:41).

2.5.3 Incarnational dimension of missional churches

Gibbs and Coffey (2001:212) leverage passages addressing Jesus' death such as John 12:20-26; Romans 1:4; Philippians 2:1-11; 3:10, and advocate that "…the church's ministry must be modelled after that of Jesus himself" in dying to itself, or its own agenda. In speaking of the church in mission, Gibbs and Coffey emphasise that

> *…we are not simply speaking about new emphases and programmes. Rather, we are talking about a radically different way of being the church. For the incarnational presence of the church in the world demands our dying to self – our self-reliance, self-centred promotion and selfish concerns in order for Christ to be glorified among his people. The seed that is sown must first be buried to make possible the miraculous process of germination and multiplication.*

Cook (2010:5) writes that "incarnational Christianity" (the presence of Christ in culture) can only be realised through persons, not institutions. The person of Jesus can only be clearly communicated through the people in whom He dwells, and

> *…if we are going to be Jesus in the world, we must understand who we are as individuals first. Without the foundation of an accurate understanding of our true identity, we will never have the confidence, courage, and trust to reach out to others with Christ's healing and love* (2010:43).

The foundational concept is *you in Christ:* right now, as a believer, you are Justified in Christ (Romans 3:24); Sanctified in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:2); Vindicated in Christ (1 Corinthians 12:19); Liberated in Christ (Galatians 2:4); Exultant in Christ (Philippians 1:26); Complete in Christ (Colossians 2:9, 10); Gracious in Christ (Philemon 15, 16); Hopeful in Christ (1 Thessalonians 1:3); Strong and faithful in Christ (1 Timothy 1:18, 19); and Triumphant in Christ (2 Corinthians 2:14) (2010:43–45). Western churches are not well equipped for the current missional challenge, owing to their truncated view of the gospel and a weak doctrine of the church. Leaders are largely oblivious of the extent to which secular culture presuppositions have permeated their own worldview. Church leaders who lack missiological training resort to marketing strategies. This has serious, unrecognised long-term consequences. The missional model is best described as a hermeneutic interplay of Gospel, Culture and Church whereby the gospel judges each culture according to its compatibility with the focus, values and goals of the kingdom of God. God's grace also functions outside the church, hence there will be (i)

aspects of culture that the gospel will affirm; (ii) unfulfilled cultural aspirations that the gospel will bring to fruition; and (iii) demonic elements in every culture on which the gospel passes judgement (Gibbs and Coffey, 2001:213–216).

In a similar fashion, Getz (1974:15–18) identified what he termed *lenses* as a possibly antidote against developing *tunnel vision* regarding renewal and change. He describes the following three major classes for a discussion on church renewal: (i) Those ready to change anything, which he terms *contemporary* focused; (ii) Those afraid to change, seen as stuck in the past, history, and have fears and uncertainties; and (iii) Then the 'biblical purists', for whom nothing is more important than *scripture: "…*expose people to the Bible and God will do the rest."

Figure 2.5: The three lenses
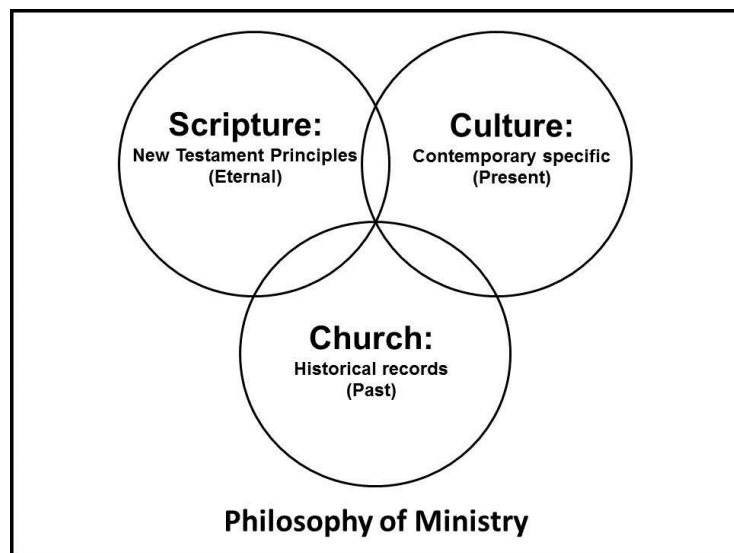
(Source: Researcher's summary: Getz, 1974:17–18)

Getz suggests that all of the groups have merit and proposes a way to "…develop a contemporary strategy that grows out of at least three sources." This is achieved by "…looking through three lenses – the lens of scripture (the eternal), the lens of history (the past), and the lens of contemporary culture (the present)" and concludes that "…to do less will result in a severe case of ecclesiastical myopia and blurred vision regarding many aspects of the ministry.

Gibbs and Coffey (2001:215-218) contend that churches are inclined to focus on one of the four areas indicated in the following Figure 2.6. Some churches emphasise contending for the faith that was once and for all entrusted to the saints (Jude 3). A second group is concerned with preserving its ecclesiastical heritage and liturgical tradition. A third group emphasises relevance to the contemporary setting in terms of

its worship style and need-related ministries, while a fourth group is characterised by all four emphases' triumphalist anticipation of the Lord. The missional church must embrace all four emphases, with the inevitable tension that this brings.

Figure 2.6: Reference points for the missional church
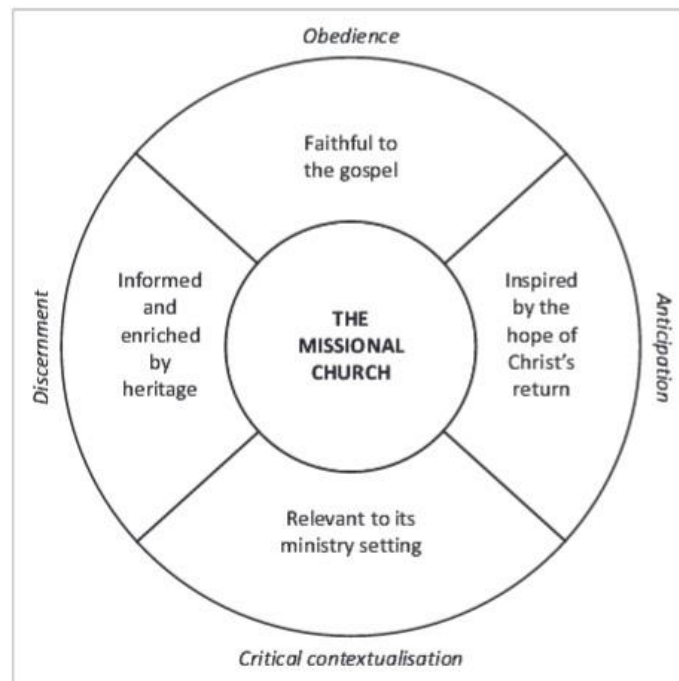
(Source: Gibbs & Coffey, 2001:217)

Furthermore, the church is called to be faithful to the gospel and needs to account for its potential bias in reading and interpreting the Scriptures through its own cultural lens. At the same time, the missional church must recognise its responsibility before God to witness faithfully by demonstrating both the relevance and the power of the gospel within its contemporary setting. When one traces the witness of the church from traditional settings to the self-assured world of modernity, then to the fragmented and fragile world of postmodernity; the church, as just one segment in that fragmented world and characterized by polarisation and conflict in which each segment is fighting for its right of self-determination, can assume no privileged position. In many churches today the process of developing a new mind-set appropriate to the present time is complicated by congregations comprised of a mix of people with traditional, modern and contemporary mind-sets. Hence, the tensions and turmoil so prevalent in churches today should not come as a surprise (Gibbs & Coffey, 2001:215–218). It is possible that Christ-followers today do not fully understand what it means to be the incarnational presence of Christ within the life of the congregation and to the world.

2.5.4   The mission of the church

"When we conceive clearly what the church ought to do, then we shall conceive clearly how the church ought to do it," write Mumford and Taylor (2008:61). The authors then enquire as to the mission of the church, this colossal institution in time, in space, in numbers, in wealth, in rank, in power, in scholarship, in resources of every kind. Their researched negative response is that it is not the mission of the church to enjoy herself. She is neither a dormitory, nor a junto, nor a library, nor a museum, nor an obelisk, nor a bureau, a treadmill, nor a wailing-place. Then in the affirmative, that it is the mission for the church to serve God by serving man. The church is a workshop, a teacher, a reformer, a peacemaker, an up-builder — God's agent in administering His kingdom on earth. Conflict arising within the church carries the same characteristics.

Sweet (2008:40) tells of missiologist Bishop Newbigin's admonishing words in reminding us "…that the key focus of the church's mission is not the church but the world." The *Missio Dei* (Bosch, 1991:309) is in the world, and congregations have the opportunity of participating with God in those redeeming tasks through His church. Gibbs (2005:52) explains with examples: "The *Missio Dei* precedes the church, and so the issue is not where to bring or take God but to find God where he is working and to participate in redemption according to God–given skills and abilities." Gibbs continues, "…when Christians join together with God, they may find themselves connecting with those outside their typical church or theological circles." With such purpose, McLaren (2006:33) believes, "…four overriding values will move to the forefront of the *new church's* mission, namely, more Christians (evangelism); better Christians (discipleship); authentic missional community (fellowship); and, for the good of the world (mission), all in the difficult prevailing contexts, expectations and influences.

2.5.4.1   The missional essence of the church

Gibbs and Coffey (2001:55) explain that the term 'missional' draws attention to the essential nature and vocation of the church of God's called and sent people, as the instrument of God's mission. To be "…with Jesus on the mission field for the purpose of making disciples who make a difference in the world" is the basic reason for the church's existence (Easum, 2001:9). Together with Newbigin and others, Gibbs and Coffey (2001:56) agree that a church that is missional understands that God's mission calls and sends the church to be missionary in its own society and in the cultures in which it finds itself. Hence, mission is the result of God's initiative rooted in God's

purpose to restore and heal creation. Mission means 'sending' and it is the central biblical theme describing the purpose of God's action in human history.

Sweet (2008:91) emphasises the church's current need for a theology of culture more desperately than when H. R. Niebuhr's classic *Christ and Culture* (1953) was written. According to Sweet, the church as the body of Christ is called to triangulate: to be in the world, yet not of it. "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36, NIV). But not out of it of it either in that "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world" (John 17;15). Through the centuries, the church has repeatedly landed in trouble by getting too cosy with any one part of Jesus' 'in-not-of-but-not-out-of-it-either' triangular orienteering. Stetzer and Dobson (2007:4) see the church, missional in essence, as one which

> *…functions as a missionary in its context. It eats, breaths, and lives within its culture, while sowing seeds of love, kindness, grace, redemption, and Good News. Missional churches take Acts 1:8 literally, acting like missionaries in their own 'Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' Missional churches act faithfully and intentionally whenever God gives them opportunity. One distinction of the missional church is that it gives focus to meeting needs inside and outside the church.*

Kelly's (2011:67–68) view of mission is about the contest between idols and God: whether Christian's lives will honour and proclaim the wonders of a piece of carved stone, or sing out the glories of our living Creator. In wrestling to supress the former and magnify the latter, and helping others to do the same, we engage in God's mission. Kelly describes 'missional' in terms of ordinary Christian living: (i) *Acts of compassion* are missional when they let love shine where hate might otherwise reign; (ii) *Forgiveness* is missional where it lets grace flow where bitterness has been; (iii) *Art* is missional when through love of God and neighbour it honours the beauty of the Creator; (iv) *Evangelism* is missional when it helps people to discover that they are made by a living Creator – fashioned on purpose and for a purpose; (v) *Banking* is missional when it wrestles with the love of mammon, and seeks not so much to profit from the rich as to bless and help the poor; and (vi) *Picking up litter* is missional when it is motivated by love of God and neighbour.

Possibly Lewis and Watkins (2002:31) challenge churches through their work: "…[I]f your church closed its doors today, would anyone but its own members notice? Would the city be saddened because such a great community-transformation partner – a missionary of impact – was gone? Or would it even miss a beat?" That challenging question could be the ultimate question (or measure) of missional influence — particularly within an experienced contemporary consumerist culture.

2.5.4.2   Appearance, or image, of the missional church

Images and models have shortcomings, warns Dulles (1976:29), as these

> *…are derived from finite realities of experience, they are never adequate to represent the mystery of grace. Each model of the Church has its weaknesses; no one should be canonized as the measure of all the rest. Instead of searching for some absolute best image, it would be advisable to recognise that the manifold images given to us by Scripture and Tradition are mutually complementary.*

Gibbs and Coffey (2001:211–230) sound the reminder that the success stories of highly publicised large and thriving churches are not readily transferrable. These have mostly had the advantage of homogeneous communities, upward mobility of population and gifted leadership emerging through their development. An unhealthy climate emerges through frustration and disillusionment in seeking to emulate these churches without the convergence of the favourable factors mentioned. In contrast, the authors champion a shift from a strategy of invitation to one of infiltration which is counter-cultural for most established mainline churches. This shift necessitates a number of alterations to the established invitational competitive norm. Such churches can assume no privileges in a changing and fragmented world where each organisation, movement or segment of the culture is characterised by polarization and conflict for survival and right of self-determination.

The image and appearance required, Cole (2005:xxvi) suggests, is that

> *…instead of bringing people to church so that we can then bring them to Christ, let's bring Christ to people where they live. We may find that a new church will grow out of such an enterprise, as church that is more centred in life and the workplace, where the Gospel is supposed to make a difference. What will happen if we plant the seed of the Kingdom of God in the places where life happens and where society is formed? Is this not what Jesus intended for His Church?*

To become such a truly untamed movement of missional planting, the full missional implications of the incarnation must be embraced. "If incarnation is the most profound way that God engaged the world, then we, His people must follow in His footsteps, become incarnational. If missional defines our being sent out into the world, then incarnational must define the way in which we engage the world" (Hirsch & Hirsch, 2010:234).

This does not necessarily negate the influence and successes of attractional churches and raises the question as to whether attractional churches are missional. In response, Hornsby (2011:5) argues somewhat differently to the argument presented thus far:

There is a lot written today about the need for the local church to be both missional (go to them) and incarnational (be like Jesus to the hurting and lost). Many churches fail in these two categories. The truth is that any church can be missional, develop people to be incarnational and attractional at the same time. The answer lies in who's responsible for this to happen.

Hornsby further explains that some of Jesus' commandments were to individuals, while others were to the Church. Hornsby proposes that being missional and being incarnational is the responsibility of individuals. However, being attractional is a corporate responsibility – Christ and His Kingdom are to be presented scripturally, as perfectly as possible by the leadership of the local church. Members must also be encouraged and trained to live as 'sent ones', living missionally, and to be like Christ, incarnationally, to the lost world around them. The local church becomes more effective in reaching the under-churched people around it when all three concepts are fully embraced.

It is highly possible that discussion over image and appearance could create much tension within the leadership of the local church if it does not collectively discern which approach is most suited to its community, without jeopardising the gospel.

2.5.4.3   Communicating the church's existence

In response to the possible question: "Does the community know we (the church) are in their area?", Gibbs and Coffey (2001:42), in their chapter entitled "From market-driven to mission-oriented," respond as follows:

…Churches realize that when they advertise their presence and promote their programmes through print and electronic media, they are in a competitive market. So they must strive for prominence by promoting some distinctive feature designed to attract potential visitors.

Previously, Barna (1998:99), who has consistently applied marketing theory to church ministry, and referring to building an authentic church similarly spells out that

…for several decades, the Church has relied upon greater sums of money, better techniques, bigger numbers and facilities, and more impressive credentials as the means to influence society at large. These elements have failed us; in our efforts to serve God, we have crowded out God himself.

Despite attempts of advertising to make the church known and draw prospective members, Barna urges: "…[R]emember, that the struggle to revitalise the church is a spiritual battle, we cannot make progress without the Lordship and influence of God."

2.6   Ministries of the *ekklēsia*

"The congregation and the process of building up the local church serve the glorification of the Father, Son and Spirit by the communication of the gospel through the communicative acts that serve the gospel" which is fulfilled through four clusters of ministries: (i) the *kerugma* (preaching) cluster that includes: witnessing (*marturia*) and teaching (*didache*); (ii) *leitourgia* (worship); (iii) the *koinonia* (community) cluster that includes care (*paraclesis*); and (iv) *diakonia* (service) which includes leading (*kubernesis*)" (Nel, 2005:30, 2015a:71). Nel further stresses that

> *…building up / developing missional congregations is about the integration and coordination of all these modes of ministry. And each separate mode, as well as all of them as an integrated whole, is about the three-dimensional service: serving God, one another and the world (2015a:71).*

Similarly, Warren (1995:49) identified the following five focused and beneficial growth movements of a church: Churches grow (i) warmer through fellowship *(kononia); (ii)* deeper through discipleship *(includes didache); (iii) s*tronger through worship *(leitourgia); (iv)* broader through ministr*y; and (v)* larger through evangelism *(includes marturia).* Barna (1999:17) cites the following "six pillars of effectiveness," namely (i) worship *(leitourgia); (ii)* evangelism *(witnessing: marturia); (iii)* Christian education *(teaching: didache); (iv)* community among believers (fellowship: *koinonia*); and (v) stewardship (*within ubernesis*); and (vi) serving the needy *(diakonia).*

2.6.1   Leitourgia (Worship)

Jones (1995:347) believes that a congregation's worship nurtures its ecclesial identity: "We are how we worship." He continues:

> *For the church, corporate worship is the most visible and profound occasion for individuals to encounter both the gospel and the understanding of what it means to be a Christian in the world. When the community of faith assembles, the normative texts are read and interpreted, the formative rites are celebrated, and the faithful are equipped for service in the world. In as much as the church is anchored in the gracious acts of God, corporate worship sustains and transmits Christian identity formation.*

Callahan (2010:13) classifies "stirring helpful worship" as one of twelve keys evident in strong healthy congregations living in the grace of God and which plays a major part in the growth and effectiveness of the local church. Callahan (2010:84) states that "…through worship people discover the grace of God in their lives," especially when worship "…speaks the language of the people God has given you to serve in mission."

2.6.1.1 The centre of worship

One could easily agree with Segler (1967:5), namely that

> *Christian worship defies definition; it can only be experienced...Worshippers may identify with Paul: 'I had such an experience that it cannot be told; in fact, it does not seem appropriate to speak about it' (see 2 Cor. 12:3-4). Certain experiences in worship are so intimate that the worshipper cannot share them.*

Giglio (2006:46) observes that "…when the subject is worship, the stakes are high – because worship is what God is all about." Expanding on the above, Labberton's (2007:13) picturesque description is valuable to this study, where "…worship turns out to be the dangerous act of waking up to God and to the purposes of God in the world, and then living lives that actually show it." This challenges Christ-followers to respond to, and handle conflict, in God-honouring ways.

Hirsch and Hirsch (2010:78) remind us that "…first and foremost, worship is a matter of allegiance: to whom or what shall we ascribe ultimate authority in our lives? Do we offer this to God or the gods? But worship must also lead us to become a particular kind of people who reflect the ways of the God we worship." Similarly, Camp (2008:130) challenges an honest answer to "Who or what are we truly worshipping?"

If the paragraphs above were the true focus, behaviour and being of congregations, it may be possible that the level and intensity of conflict regarding so-called 'worship wars' would decrease or even cease to exist.

Searcy *et al.* (2011b:22–23) highlight four common misconceptions or myths about worship that have become ingrained in the psyche of today's church. These have moved past misinformation and taken hold as false beliefs, leading to "…an anthropocentric view of worship – the view that you are the centre of your worship." Such worship purports "…that worship is about you, your preferences, what you feel, what you experience, and what you can get."

Commonly known 'worship wars' are triggered by these myths. Over the past three or four decades much conflict has been experienced through churches splitting internally or externally over worship issues (Dawn, 2015:xiii). "The word – the entire concept – has become so muddled that many people have no idea what it means to worship God in truth," writes Searcy (2011b:11).

2.6.1.2　　Healthy, missional participation

Worship celebrations prepare and equip worshippers for the work of mission to which God calls His people. Mission is therefore a continuation of worship as His people "…honour God by conforming their actions to God's sinner-loving world," which means, "…the congregation is the most immediate and crucial part of the ecology that cultivates leaders to do God's work in the world" (Cormode in Van Gelder, 2009:101).

Seeking advice on preaching missionally, Hudson (2003:15) recounts approaching Gordon Cosby, founder of the Church of the Saviour, Washington, for advice about sharing the Gospel on the suffering continent of Africa. Cosby responded, "…always remember that each person you see in the congregation sits next to his or her own pool of tears." The songs or hymns a congregation sings, even preferred stanzas, should reflect such missional perspective. Reflecting on this, Stanley (2012:71–72) queries,

> *…Who is the church for? Who gets to participate? Which sins, if any, disqualify a person? Can the church welcome sinners? What about unrepentant sinners? How much baggage does a person have to leave at the door before being admitted? Can some participate in church if he or she is still working things out?*

Stanley illustrates his point using the hymn *Just as I am.* "We love the first, second, and fifth verses":

i) Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidd'st me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

ii) Just as I am, and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot,
to thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

iii) Just as I am, though tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt;
fightings and fears within, without, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

iv) Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind; sight, riches, healing of the mind,
yea, all I need, in thee to find, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

v) Just as I am, thou wilt receive; wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
because thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

"I don't remember singing verses three and four," reports Stanley, which he says "…sounds more like a *come to worship with us* than *sneak out the back*, doesn't it?" It is possible that one could ask whether verses three and four are also more missional, carry more of the essence of the *ecclesia*, the gathered community, than the standard perception. If this is true, and Christ-followers understood the depths thereof, would they be more tolerant and understanding of one another? Would such a view of fellow Christ-followers, especially their tears, influence the initial stages of any conflict development or progression more gracefully?

2.6.2   Didache (Training and Nurturing)

"Developing a missional local church is in a distinctive sense a ministry of training" which is "…essential to the intentional ministry of building up the local church" (Nel, 2015a:185).   After laying the foundation for Paul's teaching ministry of catechesis, exhortation, and discernment, Osmer (2005:10–25) then utilises the terms of 'formation' and 'education' to describe the above:

> **Formation** *has to do with the relationships, practices, narratives, and norms of a community's shared life. It points to those aspects of a congregation's identity and ethos that build up a sense of community among its members as they participate together in a common way of life. In contrast,* **education** *has to do with those practices that focus directly on teaching and learning,*

whereas "…individual gifts and ministries are to contribute to the 'building up' of the community as a whole in love; individuals are formed by their participation in this community" (2005:27). This confirms that it is the building up of community that is central, not 'I.' Watson (1981:19) believes that in Bonhoeffer's startling statement: "…when Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die" lies the essence of the radical, uncompromising nature of true Christian discipleship. Bonhoeffer (1937:64) also believed that "..Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ." Hull (2006:16) indicates that it is unfortunate that non-discipleship 'Christianity' dominates much of the thinking of the contemporary church which causes it to assimilate itself into the culture. This is probably due to an "…understanding of salvation as decision-making rather than disciple-making" translating into "…shallow, even superficial, connections to the Christ and His body" (Nel, 2015b:1).

In addition, a subtle danger has crept into Christian circles in that Christ-followers depart from the call to follow Christ in obedience where discipleship is thought to be for super-Christians, not for ordinary believers (Ogden, 2010:48; Nel, 2005:97, 2015b:2). "As a result," Hull (2006:16) continues, "…we evangelicals accept and even encourage a two-level Christian experience in which only serious Christians pursue and practise discipleship, while grace and forgiveness is enough for everyone else." As Dallas Willard (2006:166) notes: "We have not only been saved by grace, we are paralysed by it."

It is possible, if not probable, that the essence and sentiment of the closing paragraphs above are a reason on the one hand, and recipe on the other, for conflict situations to arise.

2.6.2.1   Meaning of discipleship in a missional church

"If we simply focus on making disciples who are equipped and empowered to make other disciples, then health, strength, and growth happen naturally," professes Murrell (2011:8). He reasons "…Jesus told His followers that He would build His church. Then one of the last things He told them to do was make disciples. It is that simple. We make disciples, and He builds the church. We do not build the church, and He does not make disciples."   The prevailing paradigm of the Western church has attempted to make disciples through mainly the transfer of knowledge, which is a Hellenistic, specifically Platonic approach rather than the original Hebrew (or Aramaic) approach of Jesus (Hirsch & Ferguson, 2011:177).   The platonic approach is concerned with concepts, ideas, and the nature of being; whereas the Hebraic approach is primarily concerned with issues of concrete existence, obedience, life-oriented wisdom, and interrelationship of all things under God. Hirsch and Altclass (2009:21) remark that we cannot "…continue to try to *think* our way into a new way of acting; rather we need to *act* our way into a new way of thinking."   Hirsch and Ferguson (2011:176) state that Jesus made disciples by living and ministering with them on the road. "This way," argue the authors, "Jesus formed his apprentices, and we shouldn't think we can generate authentic Jesus followers in any other way." To this end, Osborne (2008) presents a 'lecture-lab' concept. Sermons are the 'lectures', and the 'laboratory' is weekly small groups that search scriptures, discuss and discern the relevant life applications. Would this paradigm shift invite more conflict than others? Is it possible that because the learning is 'on the road together' and gained through shared experience and application; it would be of more value in leading the congregation on her mission, toward her vision and attract less divergent conflict?

2.6.2.2   Becoming a lifelong learner

"Experience has demonstrated beyond doubt that *knowing* does not automatically lead to *doing*," writes Getz (1974:78). The importance in the regular reading of scripture, worship and serving others lies in how these activities position disciples where God is known to move, and experience the possibility of a transforming engagement with Him (Wardle, 2010:62-63). Leadership operates from the assumption that growing faith, which translates into obedience, is the catalyst for personal growth. And personal growth will eventually result in personal maturity (Stanley, 2012:17). This is no instant event, but a "…life-long journey of rediscovering and recovering the fullness of abundant life" (Nel, 2015b:1).

Getz (1974:79) believes that the "…learning process must be in the context of relational Christianity – fellowshipping with God and with one another." Thus Getz continues that this "…must be in the context of dynamic Christian witness and outreach. If believers are merely recipients of truth without the opportunity to truly worship God, minister to one another and to win others to Christ, they will not get beyond the knowledge level." Rumble (1982:13) encouragingly comments as follows:

> …[B]ecause of the emphasis and glamour so often associated with the role of public ministry in the Church, I am impressed to establish a fundamental truth at the onset: greatness is not measured in what we do for God: it is based on what we are in God. Nothing is greater that in becoming a son like Jesus; there is no higher personal goal than seeking to be conformed to His image, and each believer is given this privilege.

It is these characteristics that the congregation needs to display and exercise when facing conflict, responding to conflict and managing conflict.

2.6.2.3   Discipleship courses and conflict education and training

The following commonly used discipleship courses or programmes were perused to determine whether any guidance on conflict handling in any way was evident: *An Ordinary Day with Jesus* (Ortberg and Barton, 2001)*; Companions in Christ: A Small Group Experience in Spiritual Formations* (Scott *et al*., 2001)*; CORE: Following the Master's Plan* (Morrell, 2003); *3D Ministries* (Breen and Kallestad, 2005); *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* (Scazzero, 2006)*; Alpha* (Gumbel, 2009); *A Disciple's Path* (Harnish, 2012); and *Journey 101: Knowing, Loving, Serving God* (Cartmill *et al*., 2013). Although some encouraged reconciliation following conflict, none were found to teach about conflict nor educate on handling conflict.

Is it possible that, if discipleship or spiritual formation courses, programmes and workshops addressed the understanding of conflict and conflict handling, congregations would function more effectively?

2.6.2.4   Discipleship and conflict

The statement by Robinson (2006:119) covers this section well, in that

> ...no matter how effective our discipleship processes are there will always be some conflict in the body of Christ. One could even argue that conflict is God's tool for rubbing off our sharp edges so that we are able to develop the fruit of the Spirit. In fact, when one looks at the fruit of the Spirit, it is difficult to see how we could develop any of those fruits without it taking place in the context of relationship with others. Conflict needs to be seen as an opportunity for deepening understanding, not as an occasion to leave the church.

2.6.3 Diakonia (Serving God, His Church and one another)

Nel (2015a:117) emphasises that we serve as Disciples of Christ which is inclusive of the work of the Father and Holy Spirit. The "...*service in,* and the ministry of, the congregation must be understood in terms of the ministry of the triune God." Leveraging De Vries (1962), Burrows (1980) and Collins (1990), Nel writes:

> *…the diakonia (ministry) of Christ is the source and example of the diakonia of the congregations. The ministry of the church is but a following of Christ's diakonia and must therefore show the same characteristics – this is the ultimate test to see whether it is a ministry brought about by the Spirit (2015a:118).*

The Apostle John captures the essence of Christ's *diakonia* in the Upper Room: "And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you" (John 13:13-15 NIV). Nel (2015a:120) explains that

> *…when Paul uses the words diakonein (to serve) and doulein (to serve) he utilizes two terms that: express his belonging to Christ, as a slave belongs to his Master (doulein). He has been bought and belongs totally to the One who has purchased him. His master's will comes first. "Slave of Christ" becomes a title of honour that expresses the fact that he belongs to Christ in order to serve him… expresses his humble willingness to serve as his Master served.*

Capturing such an approach to service, Putman (2008:150) explains that those who have made the transition from an 'I' to 'others' realisation serve in a way that seeks to ensure that God will be glorified. Nel (2015a:121) draws on Ephesians 4:1-16 for the corporate collective.

> *…[I]n Paul being a Christian and being a congregation is at the same time being in service. Gifts given by the Spirit to and in the congregation have been given with an eye to a 'work of service' (ergon diakonos). The diakonia of the congregation is to build itself up and, in serving, to grow into him – growing in faith, knowledge, truth, and in the fulfilment of its function.*

2.6.3.1 A theology of service in the local church

Most of the serving and service *(diakonia)* in local churches is through laity. Available resources on raising and encouraging volunteers to serve include: *The 3 Colours of Love* (Schwarz, 2004); *What you do best in the body of Christ* (Bugbee, 2005); *S.H.A.P.E. Finding & Fulfilling your unique purpose for life* (Rees, 2006); *Volunteer Revolution: Unleashing the Power of Everybody* (Hybels, 2009); *Servolution: Starting a Church Revolution through Serving* (Rizzo, 2009); *Serving from the Heart: Finding your Gifts and Talent for Service* (Cartmill and Gentile, 2011); *The Greatness Principle:*

Finding Significance and Joy by Serving Others (Searcy and Henson, 2012a); and *Connect: How to double your volunteers* (Searcy and Henson, 2012b).

Most of the resources listed do not refer to Jesus having delivered the ultimate service in laying down His life for the sake of others and calling His disciples to do likewise. A continual realignment to His teaching was necessary as the disciples fell victim to two equal and opposite service crippling temptations: Firstly, ambition — several times, they argued amongst themselves as to who was the greatest. Secondly, self-pity — Peter's complaint in grasping the considerable cost of discipleship in Luke 18:28 (NIV): "We have left all we had to follow you," (Watson, 1981:26). Similarly, London *et al.* (2002:60) caution that the way Jesus ministered and led

> *…is so different from what we experience around us today. Fuelled by an unquenchable desire for power, clever leaders too often posture, intimidate and scheme their way into control. Their success, however, comes at a big cost. Power addiction is a dreadful disease of the soul that always takes its toll. Even one team member infested by this contagious virus can cripple most efforts of a whole church.*

Moltmann (1992:300) believes that

> *…the traditional word 'ministry' has in some traditions an undertone of hierarchy and bureaucracy and has become open to misunderstanding. The more modern expression, 'service', is supposed to exclude claims to rule, though it can of course conceal these.*

Have Watson, London *et al.* and Moltmann possibly identified an area prone to conflict? What is the common attitude to serving in relation to being a disciple of Christ? Is serving seen more as work, than ministry for, with, to and through God?

Searcy and Henson (2012b:39–52) propose that local churches develop and clarify their theology of service to create greater understanding, to change attitudes, and to assist in alleviating some of the serving-related conflict experienced within the congregation. 1 Peter 2:4, 5 lays a foundation for "*every member is a minister.*" A possible reason for the non-realisation of this may be that "…we may believe that every member is a minister, but if we haven't worked through the associated *why* and *how* of that belief, we will have a hard time fleshing out its reality" (Searcy & Henson, 2012a:40). To this end the authors propose eight scriptural principles, namely (i) Ministry is to serve (equating the terminology of ministry to service); (ii) Serving is the act of putting the needs of others before our own (Serving is an expression of selflessness); (iii) The goal of ministry (service) is to help people become Christ-like. (A question to ask: "How many of my people are more like Jesus because they are connected to serving?"); (iv)

You cannot become like Jesus Christ unless you learn to be a servant (Helping people learn to be servants is an essential part of discipleship); (v) Serving opens people's hearts to God and therefore is part of worship (Non-believers who find themselves in serving situations become receptive to God's work in their life much more readily than those who don't serve. For believers, service not only opens people's hearts to worship but also stands as an act of worship in and of itself); (vi) If people aren't serving, they are not truly worshipping and growing in their faith (Growth in a church correlates with the number of people serving); (vii) Mobilizing people for ministry is part of discipleship (people not serving share faith less, undertake spiritual disciplines less, grow less); and (viii) The role of the pastor is to equip people for ministry (Eph 4:1-6 in practice). The forgoing would provide clearer understanding for serving in a God-honouring way which may lower the frequency and levels of conflict experienced within ministries.

2.6.3.2   The ministry of leadership

Today's church needs missional thinkers and apostolic leadership who can relate the story of redemption to the human condition in its current, increasingly multicultural contexts influenced by global trends (Gibbs, 2005:24). It is plausible to suggest that the missional leadership required is aligned to Maxwell's (1999:17) view that "…leadership is influence – nothing more, nothing less." Leadership of this nature, according to Sanders (1994:51–65), requires essential qualities such as (i) *Discipline* – before we conquer the world, we should conquer self; (ii) *Vision* – those who have most powerfully and permanently influenced their generation have been 'seers' – people who have seen more and farther than others – persons of faith, for faith as in vision; (iii) *Wisdom* – the faculty of making use of knowledge, a combination of discernment, judgement, sagacity, and similar powers; (iv) *Decision* – when all facts are in, swift and clear decision is the mark of a true leader. A visionary may see, but a leader must decide. An impulsive person may be quick to declare a preference; but a leader must weigh evidence and make his or her decision on sound premise; (v) *Courage* – of highest order, always moral courage and often physical as well; that quality of mind which enables people to encounter danger or difficulty firmly, without fear or judgment; (vi) *Humility* – a hallmark of servant leadership in taking on the bearing of a servant, away from pompous attitudes; and (vi) *Integrity and Sincerity* – showing transparency of character, open and innocent of guile.

In moving from the 'what' of leadership, to the 'how' of leadership we discover that leaders are never responsible for filling anyone else's cup; rather it is "…to empty ours"

(Stanley, 2012:11). This emptying as 'serving' and 'service' is the biblical definition of leadership. It follows that servant-leadership is the identity of congregational leaders (Nel, 2015a:163). This leadership-identity perspective leads to the consideration of character. Lundy (2002:viii–ix) champions the view that the biblical presentation of a theory of leadership, of *servant-leadership,* is inimical to the world's definition of leadership. Biblical leadership emphasises the character of the leader and the importance of his or her working relationships — a style of leadership that was demonstrated and proclaimed by Christ Himself. Jesus' clearest statement of His theology of leadership was made when John and James were vying over who was to have the most status in heaven. Jesus' kingdom teaching reply was:

> *…you know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark10:42-45 NIV).*

In leading and serving, the functions of leadership and management often become blurred. Shawchuck (1999:21) emphasises the importance of understanding this difference. He explains that "…leadership and management can hardly be separated; yet, they are not the same. Broadly speaking*,* leadership is seeing to it that the right things are done; management, on the other hand, is concerned about doing things the right way," whereas, Bennis and Nanus (1985:21) clarify the difference explaining that "to manage" means "to bring about, to accomplish, to have charge of or responsibility for, to conduct." Shawchuck (1999:23) further observes that "…many congregations talk of wanting a leader but exert great pressure to make the pastor into a manager, because managers can be domesticated, but leaders have a vision and a passion that cannot be fully tamed." One can only imagine how the frustration created through this tension translates into a trigger for potential conflict.

The understanding that the church participates in God's mission provides an identity of being a "…sign that God's redemption is now present in the world, a foretaste of what that redemption is like, an instrument to carry out that message into every local context and to the ends of the earth" (Van Gelder, 2007a:19). This requires leadership to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit and discover ways to implement ministry within specific contexts. Van Gelder is careful to explain that

> *…anticipating and accepting change becomes a natural part of the unfolding journey for congregations as they seek to participate in God's mission in their*

context. Anticipating and addressing conflict constructively becomes a norm in congregational life, since congregations expect differences to emerge in the midst of the changes that are taking place.

There seems a danger in that servant-leadership could be construed as a meek form of leadership which could be used by congregations to nudge pastors toward managers who are more compliant with their collective and personal desires. Unfortunately,

…our leaders have short tenure in leadership roles. Most of the changes needed require facing critical controversies. Most leaders in our society – secular and religious – seem to want to leave the hard issues for the next generation. It is the Marie Antoinette version of leadership. Remember that the deluge did not wait until after Marie Antoinette! She lost her head. I am clear that the changes ahead will be hard to carry out. We have no chance if we do not have leaders who can look further down the road and make hard choices for the future" (Mead, 1996:viii).

Ford's observation that when you choose leadership, you choose conflict resurfaces in this discussion (See section 1.1.2, page 3). Van Yperen (2002:24) agrees that "… all church conflict is always about leadership, character, and community. Conflict reveals who we really are." He states that leadership is not the cause of all conflict, as conflict comes more from the pews than the pulpit. However, the way leadership, laity and clergy respond to the conflict will always determine whether, how, and when the conflict is reconciled. Most church leaders have little or no practical training in biblical conflict resolution which in itself is a problem (2002:25). "Leadership is an art, and it's more like a walk on the high wire than a march down a well-ordered path. A leader must always balance authority (meeting people's unspoken expectations), conflict (challenging those unspoken expectations), and change (helping people deal with loss)" (Ford, 2008b:138). Heuser and Shawchuck (2010:105) provide clarity, then sound a warning:

…[C]onflict is ultimately a gift to a leadership community when it helps clarify values, mission, or strategic direction. However, conflict can become a staging ground from which leaders play out their unresolved issues, stemming from hostility and fear of failure. Some leaders need conflict in order to define their success as winners (and perhaps as 'saviours'). Their motto is, "if you're not for me, you're against me." So fall in line with the winners, or else why do you stay?

2.6.4 *Koinonia:* The community or fellowship of believers

Howe (in Mead *et al.*, 1972:5) comments that "…men (that's how we spoke in that generation) have always congregated and always will" as it is a response to a need in all people. Mead *et al.* (1972:13) augmented this by professing that the congregation of a religious nature is by far the most important institution in the world apart from family. In a later writing, Mead (2015:3) states that "…the real church is the local church," and

adds that it is "…that place, those people you get together with on Sundays - that's what I mean by 'real'" – it is that tangible. That simple. Also, that preposterous."

2.6.4.1 *Koinonia* defined

Koinonia is "…an abstract and spiritual term for the fellowship of brotherly concord established and expressed in the life of the community" (Kittel and Friedrich, 1967). *Koinwniva (Koinonia)* is an "in-depth spiritual community" (Coleman, 1989:13).

2.6.4.2 Description of *koinonia*

The definition of *Koinonia* implies an intimate sharing that begins as fellowship with the Father and the Son (cf. 1 John 1:3, 6) which ushers in the family fellowship of believers (cf. 1 John 1:3, 7) (Kittel and Friedrich, 1967). Whitley (1969:56) elaborates as follows:

> …[M]ost contemporary discussion of the church among biblical and systematic theologians may be fairly characterised as a set of variations on the theme that the church is a koinonia. In classical Greek this word meant an association or partnership, and it was also used to refer to 'community'. The idea of koinonia suggests 'a close and intimate relationship into which people enter'.

Virgo (1985:71) provides a practical illustration by encouraging people to build something of genuine worth through deepening fellowship, quoting Schweizer "…a congregation which does not eat hotdogs in real fellowship is not able to celebrate the Lord's Supper in the right way." It is in this sense that Jones's (2010:72) explanation of *koinonia* provides perspective (See section 1.2.2, page 7).   Contemporary congregations do not appear to have the same perspective as described above. Ferguson (1989:67), a Scottish theologian commenting on Titus 2:14, says, "Paul emphasises here, and in many other places, that Christ wants to create 'a people', not merely isolated individuals who believe in him." Chester and Timmis (2007:37) also lean toward this concept and explain that

> …we are not saved individually and then choose to join the church as if it were some club or support group. Christ died for his people and we are saved when by faith we become part of the people for whom Christ died. The story of the Bible is the story of God fulfilling the promise: 'I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God' (Exodus 6:7; Revelation 21:3).

Christian community is central to Christian identity, in that "…God is persons-in-community" as is human personhood defined in relational terms. In becoming a Christ-follower, one belongs to God, and by implication, to all God's people. "It is not I that belong to God and then make a decision to join a local church. My being in Christ means being in Christ with those who are in Christ. This is my identity. This is our

identity" (Chester and Timmis, 2007:39). It is this identity that should permeate the Christ-follower's approach, leading and management of conflict within congregations.

Whitley (1969:56–57) explains that the images of the church are "…variations on the theme indicated by our word 'fellowship'" and states that

> *…the fellowship of which the New Testament speaks was characterised as one based upon common Christian knowledge (Acts 2:42; 2 Cor. 6:14; 1 John 1:3), as a practical material sharing (Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4; Heb. 13:16), as a partnership on the work of Christ (Phil. 1:5; 3:10; 1 Cor. 1:9), as being 'in the faith', for one is part of the company of believers (Eph. 3:9), as being under the guidance of the spirit (2 Cor. 13:4; Phil. 2:1), and as a fellowship with God, participated in by those who are children of light and not open to those who walk in darkness (1 John 1:3, 6). …Most of the images of the church, suggested in the New Testament are variations on the koinonia motif, or can be readily seen to be derivations from it. A plethora of images is certainly used, but they turn out in the end to be images that one would expect to find developing in a close-kit group. In such a group the language of a family quite conscious of its identity, united in common purposes, and maintaining its boundaries vis-a-vis the surrounding society, is readily employed. Diversity within unity there certainly was, but the unity suggested is clearly that of koinonia.*

Whitley continues, "…the most significant aspect of the characterisation of the church as *koinonia* is its applications for the moral life of the Christian." Citing Lehmann, as presented by Hutchison (1953:102), Whitely (1969:58) records: "Christian ethics is '*koinonia' ethics*. And this means that it is from and in *koinonia* that the will of God becomes the norm of Christian behaviour" (Lehmann, 1953:102) "Christian ethics", he continues with reference to Lehmann (1963), "…is concerned with 'what I, as a believer in Jesus Christ and as a member of His church, [am] to do', and it is only 'in the context of the concrete reality of the church' that what I am to do can be discovered" (Lehmann, 1963:47).

2.6.4.3   Developing *koinonia*

It is Jesus who calls individual people not to remain in isolation, but into a new community – the *ekklēsia* – of God's people (Watson, 1981:35). Coleman (1989:13) illustrates how to develop *koinonia* using the pattern of a baseball diamond. To experience true *koinonia* (represented by home base), the community, segments of the community, or small groups – wherever *koinonia* is sought to be established – must go through all three representations of the bases in Figure 2.7.

Figure 2.7: Developing *koinonia*: the baseball diamond representation
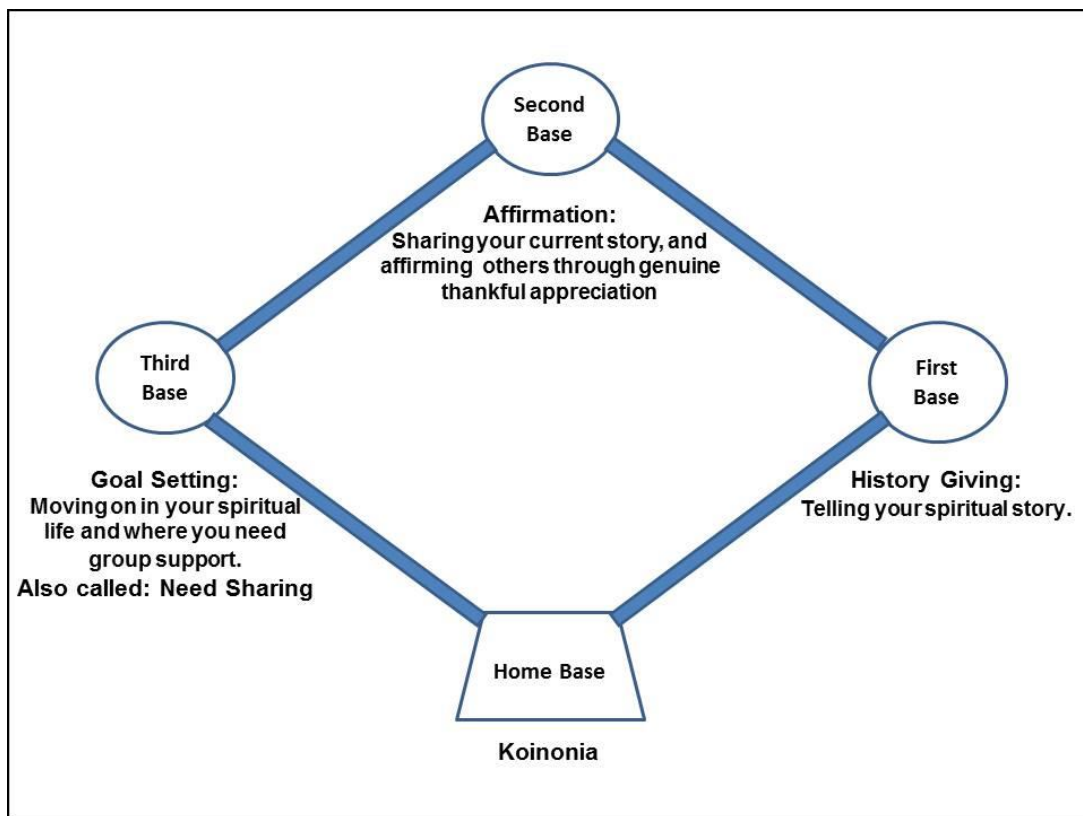
(Source, Coleman, 1989:13)

Only after a group has completed this process together can real community be experienced.

2.6.4.4   The purpose of *koinonia*

Developing a missional church "…assists the local community of Christian believers, as a matter of their own responsibility, to live toward a new faith community that is in closer harmony with the discipleship of Christ, and is open to the questions of modern people" (Van Hooijdonk in Heitink, 1999:286). Richards's (1970) research provided much focus in the search for church renewal and rediscovery by encouraging that

> *…churches today must rediscover the realities portrayed in the New Testament, but which are unrealised in their experience. Whatever structures the church of tomorrow does develop, these structures must permit and support the biblical (1970:51) distinctive of Christian community which are being rediscovered today (1970:39).*

Richards then states that the basic question in church renewal is: "How are the people of God to live together and to live out Christ's life in the world?" He identifies three areas of community, namely (i) *A body* so living together that it edifies itself and thus grows

through the contribution of every believer (cf. Ephesians 4:16); (ii) *A ministry of reconciliation*, not of professional quality, but personal sharing by every believer of the good news of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:8); and (iii) *Families* which will truly be the centre of Christian nurture, for which Richards gives no scriptural qualification. Richards (1970:51) then refers to the two concepts developed by German sociologist Tonnes "…which are helpful in understanding the church of *(the then)* today and of tomorrow." The first concept is gesellschaft (society) where "…individuals live peaceably with each other, but are separated by basic differences in spite of unifying factors." The second is "…*gemeinschaft* (community) where the group is family. This is a basic to the New Testament concept of church (cf. 1 Timothy)" where the "…members identify themselves by their basic role as member of the community, not by status."

Jesus builds his *ekklēsia* (Matthew 16:18) and calls on that community, according to Watson (1981:35), to

> *…share their lives both with Him and one another, losing their independence and learning interdependence, gaining new riches and strength as members of God's new society. They are to share everything together, their joys, their sorrows, their pains and their possessions, and in this way become the redeemed, messianic community of Christ the King.*

Girard's (1979:45) attempts to sharpen the vision of the church in its development by focusing on the vital relationship with which it is supplied by its Head, Jesus Christ. His thought on "body consciousness" is challenging:

> *The life of the body of Christ too is a conscious reality. The solid truth is that those who possess it in common with Christ, the life of the Holy Spirit, possess it in common with all others who have received Christ. And those who recognise the body are conscious of the corporate character of the life they share. The body is a true oneness, a demonstrable life. And having been paced into the body's life stream, it is natural, normal, to develop a growing consciousness of our interdependent relationship with each other … As the vision of the body grows, so does the sensitivity to what divides it. The Holy Spirit cannot be divided. Neither can the body be divided without causing destress. Whenever disharmony comes between Christians, it is consistent with membership in the one body that a longing arises, an ache develops to remove the obstacle and to get inside the walls and to crash the barriers. The body of Christ is like any physical body. While it has many members, it has only one life. It can live on if it has suffered a wound or amputation or surgery. But it suffers great distress and is left impaired. A spiritual vision of the body, an awareness of its real unity, a body consciousness, will result in a protective experience of pain and distress at the incision of any division.*

Koinonial understanding and focus as detailed above need to be infused into the lifeblood of local congregations for the effective maturing of Christ-followers. Although

conflict may not decrease or cease as a result thereof (cf. Shawchuck, 1983:9), it is possible that the leading and management of conflict toward resolution and reconciliation would improve.

2.7   The Concept of finding identity

"Remember, the Holy Spirit is present to identify us as God's own children.   He empowers us to be a revealing and reconciling community" (Wardle, 2010:58).   Rumble (1982:13) explains that

> *…because of the emphasis and glamour so often associated with the role of public ministry in the Church, I am impressed to establish a fundamental truth at the onset: greatness is not measured in what we do for God: it is based on what we are in God.   Nothing is greater than in becoming a son like Jesus; there is no higher personal goal than seeking to be conformed to His image, and each believer is given this privilege.*

2.7.1   Biblical metaphors for church identity

According to Kelly (2011:15–18), there are "…four essential elements of the church's identity and purpose" which Kelly calls …God's "brilliant ideas"…"to move toward expressions of the church" that are, "…in the words of missiologist Lesslie Newbegin, 'an explosion of joy in their community.'"   Firstly, *shine through them — "…'the people of God':* a collective noun represented in the New Testament by the Greek term *ekklēsia*.   The church exists because God has committed himself to work through people."   He continues, "…that the church is truly fulfilling this plan when it serves to equip God's people for the full diversity of their callings and vocations."   Secondly, *give through power* — "…'the community of the Spirit': a human community *indwelt* by the Holy Spirit."   He suggests that "…because it is a Spirit-driven movement, the church is always both established and emerging, taking shape around God's mission in the world."   In this sense a question would be: "What is God doing *in us* that will empower and resource what he plans to do through us?"   Thirdly, *help them love* — "Perhaps the New Testament's most dramatic metaphor for the church, is 'the body of Christ'" claims Kelly, then continues: "As individuals are drawn together into this one body, they become the new dispersed presence of the risen Jesus in the world, the new carriers of his words and works."   He sees the church's call "…to be a *transformant* task force, changing the world through acts of love and service."   Kelly poses two (rhetorical) questions: "How might a tidal wave of small acts of love change the direction of our over consuming culture?   What does it mean for us to incarnate anew the very life of Christ?"

Finally, *Make them one* — the idea "…of the church as the 'bride of Christ', a body resplendent with beauty reflecting the colours and contributions of every culture on every planet"…"…to truly celebrate diversity."

2.7.2   Congregation identity develops in context

Mann (2001:13) states that "…the notion that a congregation might choose or shape an identity intentionally would probably seem odd; its identity is more of a 'given' to be preserved and defended." McLaren (2006:10) presents his view on context as follows:

> …[T]housands of churches are going to find themselves asking questions about the postmodern transition in the next few decades. What is it? What do we do about it? Is it as horrific and evil as the radio preachers make it sound? Does it present opportunity along with challenge? Could the postmodern world be an improvement over the modern, ministry-wise? How will we change if we go with the transition (as opposed to resisting it, isolating from it, denying it)? Does the concept of the postmodern transition help make sense of our chaotic experience as committed Christians over the last few decades?

Decades before, Schaeffer (1970:81) predicted such change looming on the horizon and encouraged churches to prepare themselves by talking about issues of the future.

> …[I]f we found it tough in the last few years, what we are going to do when we are faced with the real changes that are ahead? …One of the greatest injustices we do to our young people is to ask them to be conservative. Christianity is not conservative, but revolutionary. To be conservative today is to miss the whole point, for conservativism means standing in the flow of the status quo, and the status quo no longer belongs to us.

Schaeffer emphasises that "…if we want to be fair, we must teach the young to be revolutionaries, revolutionaries against the status quo."

2.7.3   The importance of congregational identity

Nel (2015a:29) emphasises that the "…identity of the local church plays a major and determining role in the understanding and process of building up or developing missional congregations." Nel believes that a congregation should constantly ask the question: "Who am I and what is my purpose in life?" Identity affects both growing and declining congregations. When a congregation is in decline, Gaede (2001:152) explains that the greatest challenge "…is to face the possibility that the congregation's work is finished. This would possibly open the church to the possibility of framing a fresh mission based on its historic values." Nel (2015a:33) observes that

> …Mann (1998) urges churches to continuously go back to this identity search: 'No strategy, structure, or program will make much difference in the long term viability of

your church unless you go back to the fundamental question: How will we connect our deepest faith-identity to the realities of our context today?'

The church is much more than the programmes it provides in that "…what a church does is determined by its identity, not the other way round" (Dick & Burry, 2006:35).

2.7.3.1   Identity in being 'on mission' with God

Dutch theologian, Voetuis's "unparalleled" formulation of a threefold goal of mission (Bosch, 1991:256) is explained by Kritzingger *et al.* (1994:1) as "the glory and manifestation of God's divine grace" through "the planting of the church" for "conversion of 'gentiles.'" Armstrong (1979:47) uses a servant community identity, and asks "What, then, does it mean to be the servant church in the world today?" It means that (i) where there is conflict, there the church must be as an instrument of reconciliation; (ii) wherever there is injustice, there the church must be as an agent of reform; (iii) wherever there is suffering or want, there the church must be as a community of compassion, ministering to the needs of people in whatever ways are possible; (iv) wherever there is corruption, there the church must be as a symbol of God's judgement on the evils of society and as a witness to his truth; and (v) wherever person is separated from person, group from group, race from race, nation from nation, there the church must be as a demonstration of God's love and of our oneness in Jesus Christ. A people on mission with God is aligned to the divine purpose of God. This, Viola (2008:136) believes, is well documented by Paul throughout the letter to the Ephesians. God's greater purpose stretches beyond only redemption, as

> *…in eternity past, God the Father has been after a bride and a body for His Son and a house and a family for Himself. These four images – the bride, the body, the house, and the family – comprise the grand narrative of the entire Bible.*

Nel (2015a:44) suggests that the name God calls His people provides identity of (i) a community of faith; (ii) a confessing community; (iii) a servant community; (iv) the body of Christ; (v) a people cared for and for the sake of the world; and (vi) a people of God.

2.7.3.2   Relational aspects of identity

Sweet (2008:49) explains that Christianity is a relationship religion, and the

> *…core relationship is a relationship with Christ. Everything depends on the administration and management of that relationship. However, some of us are more careful about maintaining and managing relationships with our pets than our relationships with Jesus, God made flesh.*

Stanley (2012:12) suggests a litmus test whereby "…every church should be a church irreligious people love to attend. Why? Because the church is the local expression of the presence of Jesus." He believes that this would prevent the church from unintentionally becoming "…a church for 'churched people'" (Stanley, 2012:13).

2.8 A Concept of reformation

'Reformation' is the act or process of improving something or someone by removing or correcting faults, problems, and the like. 'Reform' as a intransitive verb means 'to become changed for the better'. The concept implies change, adaptation and not being satisfied with the status quo – all fertile terrain for various camouflages of conflict.

2.8.1 Re-envisioning the concept of reforming

Nel (2015a:205) is insistent that *reforming or reformation* is a process within the ministry of developing a missional local church and explains

> *…it is a ministry aimed at continuing reformation within the congregation. The congregation must constantly be in a process of becoming more of what 'we already are' in Christ. It is God who is at work with this on-going process of reformation. God's will for his congregation include reformation, growth, maturing, and self-reliant spiritual functioning.*

Similarly, Gibbs (2009:9) believes that the bigger picture is "…the need to re-envision a church that is significantly different from the church that has been shaped and subverted by modernity and the culture of Christendom." Church in the West "needs to be motivated and shaped by a missional commitment to a pluralistic world floundering in a sea of relativism." Barna (2005:37) had previously offered a similar sentiment,

> *…being in a right relationship with God and His people is what matters. Scripture teaches us that devoting your life to loving God with all your heart, mind, strength and soul is what honours Him. Being part of a local church may facilitate that. Or it might not. Sadly, many people will label this view 'blasphemy'. However, you should realise that the Bible neither describes nor promotes the local church as we know it today. Many centuries ago religious leaders created the prevalent form of 'church' that is so widespread in our society to help people be better followers of Christ. But the local church many have come to cherish – the services, offices, programs, building, ceremonies – is neither biblical nor unbiblical.*

2.8.2 What can be reformed

Some things are in constant flux, but never God's five purposes for his church, explains Kimball (2003:7). A church failing at "…worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism, is no longer a church." Kimball reminds us that

…the word 'contemporary' literally means 'with temporariness'. By nature, nothing contemporary is meant to last forever. It is only effective for a while, and it is only relevant in that particular moment. That's what makes it contemporary. What is considered contemporary and relevant in the next ten years will inevitable appear dated and tired in twenty.

Malphurs (2007:36) poses the question, "What can or must change, and what must never change?" The answer is found in a local church's theology of change:

…[T]his is the crux of the problem for all churches in general ….. the church can flex in its forms but not in its functions. Scripture dictates what the church must do (its functions, such as evangelism, worship, biblical teaching) but not how it does it (the forms, such as a contemporary or traditional worship style). The church must not change its message – if that message is based on the Bible – but the church must rethink how it communicates the biblical message.

2.8.3   Continually reforming congregations

Towns *et al.* (2007:13) relate the experience of a small congregation of a median age of 68 years, and accustomed to "…the pattern of the 1970s worship – two hymns, an offering, another hymn and possibly a chorus, followed by a certain style of preaching" visited churches of their choice which had proven to be effective in reaching younger adults through their worship services. The first comment at the report back "…was a classic – and everyone agreed with it: One of the older ladies stood up and announced almost indignantly, 'Preacher, the church has changed, and nobody told us!'"

Pope Paul VI called the Church "…a mystery. It is a reality imbued with the hidden presence of God. It lies, therefor, within the very nature of the Church to be always open to new and ever greater exploration" (Dulles, 1976:16). Following his research into changes that had taken place in churches of the late 1990s, Wagner (1998:17–19) utilised the descriptive term, 'wineskins' which he elaborates on in his textbook on the topic: *Churchquake! The Explosive Power of the New Apostolic Reformation* (1999). Wagner (1998:18) explains his reason for using the term "reformation":

…I use 'reformation' because, as I have said, these new wineskins appear to be at least as radical as those of the Protestant reformation almost 500 years ago. 'Apostolic' connotes a strong focus on outreach plus recognition of present-day apostolic ministries. 'New' adds a contemporary spin to the name.

Such reformation may not be simple and painless, as Mann (1998:8) illustrates:

Despite the clear vision of God's purpose given to Moses, the people were frequently confused, frightened, and angry. The experiences of slavery had been oppressive but predictable…Every new circumstance demanded of them a radical trust in God and a profound cooperation with their leaders.

Once formed, the church "…is always in the process of being reformed according to the Word of God," indeed, it may be of "…greater spiritual honesty if we were to describe ourselves as churches continually needing conversion" (Guder, 2000:150). Thus, "…the church-in-mission is always evolving as it responds to the challenge of the Word of God, both to its own internal life and to its engagement in an ever-changing world" (Gibbs and Coffey, 2001:58). In this regard, the resource, *Stories of Emergence: Moving from Absolute to Authentic,* edited by Mike Yaconelli (2003) with contributions by Spencer Burke, Tod Hunter, Tony Jones, Brian McLaren, amongst others, is a recurrence of the above narrative. This is best described through one of the subtitles: "Resignation and revision" (2003:44). It is an arrival at a point of revaluation where Tod Hunter aptly describes his experience:

> *…[D]uring this revisioning time, a key truism came back to into my life: 'Your systems are perfectly suited to yield the results you are now getting.' Ouch! The realisation that we were not in this state of affairs in spite of our best efforts but precisely because of them burst upon me like a foul refrigerator smell.*

Reformation is the work of God, and cannot be "…induced by formulated spiritual exercise" or programme (Nel, 2005:18). Nel (2005:65) explains firmly that

> *…when a church does not fulfil its calling and purpose on earth such a church is false and such a church urgently needs reformation. The history of the reformation in the sixteenth century proves that a church can live with deformation for quite some time without seeing any need for necessity of reformation.*

Least any reader of Nel's work gain the impression that reformation is a once-off, it is clearly negated by Nel's (2015a:205) latest work, namely

> *…developing a missional local church as a ministry is indeed a process of reformation. It is a ministry aimed a continuing reformation within the congregation. The congregation must constantly be in a process of becoming more of what 'we already are' in Christ. It is God who is at work with this on-going process of reformation.*

Guder (2000:150) previously explained that this happens "…as the congregation hears, responds to, and obeys the gospel of Jesus Christ in ever new and more comprehensive ways." McLaren (2006:26–28) illustrates this by defining three 'churches'. The *renewed church* is: "…an old church that, after having lost touch with its people, goes through a process of change in order to relate to them and better meet their needs again." The *restored church* "…looks at problems in the churches today and says: 'Aha! We've lost our way! We must go back to the New Testament to rediscover our original vibrancy'." While, McLaren's *New Church*

…undertakes a process of peripheral change similar to the Renewed and Restored Churches, a process of radical assessment, going back to roots, sources, and first things. But the New Church does not try to draft a new blueprint. Instead, it comes up with a new philosophy of ministry that prepares to meet whatever unforeseen changes are to come.

Using the metaphor of wineskins, McLaren (2006:28) explains that New Churches

…seek not only new wineskins (renewal), but new wine – which includes a new attitude toward wineskins in general. The church decides that it loves the new wine so much; it will never again be so attached to wineskins of any sort. Then, when the wineskins need to be discarded, they can be with minimum of anguish.

McIntosh (2009:107), in discussing church life cycles, says that the problem is that

…a church may have had a fruitful ministry in the early stages of its life cycle, but the leaders become attached to the methods, programs, procedures, and general ways of doing things. Yesterday's successes become tomorrow's (or today's) problems! The proclivity of church leaders is to try harder by working more at what they have always done, when, in truth, the need is to find, develop, and use new ministry capital. The old saying is true: it's best to work smarter not harder.

McIntosh (2009:108) defines this 'ministry capital' as (i) spiritual resources (doctrine, values, and beliefs); (ii) directional resources (quality and experience of the pastor and the leadership team); (iii) structural resources (organisational philosophy and ways of working together); (iv) physical resources (value, visibility and accessibility of facilities and property) and (v) relational resources (unity, fellowship, and community experienced). McIntosh concludes by stating that "…churches experiencing conflict tend not to grow as well as those that have loving relationships." Is it feasible to suggest that the above would impede the process of developing a missional congregation, and that the potential conflict areas in congregations so described become critical?

It is possible that in understanding and leaning toward Nel's (2015a:50–63) view on a *continual reforming* congregation, supported through the foregoing, one would avoid reaching the narrative of "refrigerator smell." Guder's (2000:151) original vision being that "…as the community is shaped by God's Spirit so that it risks being intentionally alternative to the dominant pressures of its cultural setting, then it is being converted." "The potential for conflict is always present in a church and can be triggered either by change or by a failure to change when change is needed" (McMullen, 2007:86).

2.8.4   Our calling toward Christlikeness (Transformation models)

Glover and Lavy   (2006:11–99) present a six-stage progressive path of spiritual development by means of an analogy of walking deeper into the ocean. The ocean being a perfect analogy of the ebb and flow of everyday life, and the deepening faith of a growing Christian. The image has six figures depicting distinct stages of developing a deeper trusting relationship with the Body of Christ, the church. "His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 3:10, NIV) is used to encourage everyone toward an intentional developmental path.

The authors identify five static primary elements present in each stage. In each stage there is (i) a *primary person*: the person on the spiritual journey, the traveller who is moving toward deeper water; (ii) a *primary question*: The conscious or subconscious question that resonates in the heart and mind of the traveller: however, the question changes from stage to stage. These are the questions the ministries of the church must recognise and seek to answer, if we are to become effective disciple makers; (iii) *primary relationships*: The person who has the most influence when it comes to helping the traveller move forward to the next stage. It is the responsibility of the church to identify and capitalise on the relationships by intentionally providing opportunities for them to develop; (iv) *a primary barrier*: Woven into the fabric of human nature are natural tendencies that guard us from the unknown. These tendencies, which can keep us from harm's way, can also act as barriers to our forward movement into God's unknown future for us. The purpose of the ministries of the church is to help the traveller overcome and move through these barriers; and (v) a *primary ministry:* There is a primary ministry that can have a significant, positive impact on the traveller at each stage of development. The job of the church is to place emphasis on the creation and ongoing maintenance of these ministries in order to have maximum impact.

The authors state that, "…to the unsuspecting traveller who rushes deep into the journey without first being properly equipped by the church, the results can be disastrous. It is the responsibility of the church to mark, maintain, and point the way" (2006:99). Table 2.6 below does not do justice to the depth, value and insight of the model. However, for the purposes of this study it does highlight a few questions and identifies a potential point of frequently experienced conflict. A question relating to this study arises regarding the travellers' willingness, loyalty and discipline in submitting themselves to the guidance of the church in today's consumeristic environment.

Table 2.6: Journey of progressive commitment

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6
Primary Elements	Life on the beach	Life on the shoreline	Life in the waves	Life when your feet come off the bottom	Life beyond the breakers	Life in the deep
Primary person	Unchurched	Curious	New or rededicated believer	Seasoned but restless believer	New paradigm follower	Fully committed follower
Primary question	Is this for real?	What am I going to do about this?	How can I help? (How can I fit in?)	Is there anything else?	Where has this been all my life?	What do you want me to do, Lord?
Primary relationship	An old, trusted friend	New acquaintance	Effective preachers, teachers, and small group leaders	Small group leader and emerging discipler	Discipler and the Holy Spirit	The Holy Spirit and the authentic spiritual community
Primary barrier	Cynicism	Heightened sensitivity	Comfort	Fear, confusion, questioning his or her value, lack of direction	Lack of focus and discipline and the misinterpretation of suffering	Isolation
Primary ministry	Came and see	Authentic, high-impact hospitality	Giving and receiving	God and see	Go and make	One-on-one discipling

(Source: Researcher's summary: Glover & Lavy, 2006:11–99)

The stage four primary question appears to be pivotal. Is it possibly at this point that an element of dissatisfaction becomes evident? Could such dissatisfaction be a catalyst for potential conflict: "I'm not being fed?"

Hawkins and Parkinson (2007:7) state that while their church, Willow Creek Community Church, was previously concerned with "how many" — baptisms, members , attendees, small groups, tithes and those serving, "..yet, when it comes to spiritual growth," Willow Creek realised they needed a way to "…get a glimpse of people's attitudes, thoughts, and feelings." They needed a means that could record the "…revealed the heart of each person" to understand "…what moves them at the deepest level." What follows does not do justice to the depth, value and insight of the findings as a whole. However, there are similarities to Glover and Lavy's work that not only suggest a progressive pathway, but also identify similar points of frequently experienced conflict. Hybels (in Hawkins and Parkins, 2007:3–4) comments that

> *...some of the data from the study revealed encouraging signs of vitality. For example, 50% of the congregation indicated they 'loved God more than anything else' and were expressing that love by reaching out to their unchurched friends and serving the poor on a regular basis. However, other parts of the research did not shine brightly on our church. Among the findings: nearly one out of every four people at Willow Creek was stalled in their spiritual growth or dissatisfaction with the church – and many of them were considering leaving.*

There were six major findings from the research (2007:33–47), namely (i) Involvement in church activities does not predict or drive long-term spiritual growth. But there is a "spiritual continuum" that is very predictive and powerful; (ii) Spiritual growth is all about increasing relational closeness to God;   (iii) Church is most important in the early stages of spiritual growth, then it shifts to a more secondary influence; (iv) Personal spiritual practices are the building blocks for a Christ-centred life; (v) A church's most active evangelists, volunteers and donors come from the most spiritually advanced segments; and (vi) More than 25 per cent of people in the two last segments describe themselves as spiritually "stalled" or "dissatisfied."

Two sectors of concern were identified, namely the "stalled segment" which wrestles with lost momentum in spiritual growth, and the "dissatisfied segment" which demonstrates all the signs of full devotion, but is unhappy with the church, feeling "the church has let me down." Hawkins & Parkinson (2011:22) identified three "spiritual movements" that may encourage spiritual growth continuity: (i) From exploring Christ to growing in Christ (Developing a firm foundation of spiritual beliefs and attitudes); (ii) from growing in Christ to close to Christ (Developing personal spiritual practices); and (iii) from close to Christ to Christ-centred (Replacing self-centeredness with Christlike self-sacrifice through spiritual outreach activities. These movements are fuelled by that which is displayed within each segment in Table 2.7 below.

Table 2.7: Spiritual continuum

Framework	Exploring Christianity (40%)	Growing in Christ (30%)	Close to Christ (20%)	Christ-centred (10%)
Personal	I believe in God, but I'm not so sure about Jesus. My faith is not a significant part of my life	I believe in Jesus, and I'm working in what is means to get to know Him	I feel really close to Jesus and depend on Him daily for guidance	God is all I need in my life. He is enough. Everything I do is a reflection of Christ.
Description	These people are taking the first steps in spiritual growth and are marked by significantly lower levels of agreement with belief statements such as: 'I believe salvation come only through Jesus Christ'	These early believers are growing in their faith through church experiences and are also starting to incorporate personal spiritual practices into their normal routine outside of church	These believers report much higher levels of personal spiritual practices than earlier segments. Serving emerges as an important expression of their faith. Whole their devotion to Christ is growing, they still hold back form full commitment	These people have fully surrendered their lives to Jesus, demonstrated by their dramatically higher levels of spiritual behaviours and attitudes across the board. They 'very strongly agree' that they seek God in every area of their lives – at twice the level of any other segment
Attitudes &behaviours	• Do not involve God in their daily lives • View the bible as irrelevant • Need others to help them interpret spiritual issues • Seek God's guidance only in times of need • They do not serve in the church	• Are discovering their faith • Need others to help them interpret spiritual issues • Willingly participate in small groups • Sometimes read the bible or Christian books	• Bible provides direction for their lives • Prayer is central to their lives • Have not surrendered everything to Jesus • Small groups are less important to them • They serve regularly • Weekend services decline in importance	• Love God more than anything • For them, prayer is constant conversation with God • They help to mentor others • Service to others is a way of life • Serving the poor is significant
Needs	• Seeker services • Opportunities to connect with others	• Small group opportunities • Basic personal spiritual practices	• Serving opportunities • Advance personal spiritual practices	• Mentoring opportunities • Wide range of serving opportunities
Stalled or Dissatisfied		I believe in Christ, but I haven't grown much lately		My faith is central to my life and I'm trying to grow, but my church is letting me down

(Source: Hawkins and Parkins, 2007:37–39)

2.9 Planning process

Searcy and Thomas (2006:56) point out that in their experience,

> *…in developing your strategy, it is going to get very complex before it gets any easier. There is an old saying among strategists that first you must get crazy, then get focused and then get done. So get ready to be a little crazy. Brainstorm like it's going out of style. Use lots of paper. Keep following the process and everything will start becoming clear.*

No path, process, or strategy will lead to a perfect plan. Approaching planning as a technical, present process of following predetermined steps is to arrive at the destination predetermined by the creator, the one who designed the steps (Rendle and Mann, 2003:xiii). Bullard (2009:16) expressed similar sentiments in congregations being "reimagined" in the image of the latest church growth, health, faithfulness, or transformation process of humankind, and not being re-imagined in the image of God.

A congregation that understands and appreciates its identity, will evaluate its ministry, formulate objectives for consolidation and mission simultaneously, and discern its path to reach these objectives (Nel, 2015a:342). Planning needs to be conversational where stakeholders explore their difference, perceptions, tell stories and express hopes. Conversations addressing the congregation's identity, its sense of purpose, and relationship to God can be deemed "holy" (Rendle and Mann, 2003:xiii–xiv). Appropriate planning would originate from an accurate description of the history, capacity, and context of the congregation in question (Rendle and Mann, 2003:11).

2.9.1 Definition: Strategic planning

Rendel and Mann (2003:3).define strategic planning as "…a structured conversation about what a group of people believe God calls them to be or to do. The goal of the planning process is to structure the conversation people need in order to shape agreement and enthusiasm to pursue what they believe God calls them to be or do."

2.9.2 Preparation principles

Preparation draws the understanding that developing a missional church is a process through which the congregation should fully realise its potential in becoming more of "…what we already are in Christ." Thus it is God working through His spirit toward the congregation's "…reformation, growth, maturing, and self-reliant spiritual functioning," amongst others. In so doing, what the congregation "…*becomes*, it *becomes* by means

of the on-going work of the same God in Christ and through the Spirit" (Nel, 2015a:205). Dever and Alexander (2005:24) encourage leaders to "…teach people the biblical principles behind the practical methods, and intentionally cultivate unity around that teaching. Then take corporate action and lead for change together in a wise, patient, and winsome way." Leadership needs to ensure that sufficient training is undertaken, the selection of a guiding committee agreed and intervals identified for regular feedback within the process (Rendle and Mann, 2003:46–66).

2.9.3 Principles of understanding

Nel (2015a:208–210) states that congregational reformation is not simply the result of a change process with its methodological phases, but comes from God who, "…when and as it pleases Him, causes the reformation to happen – that is often His method in today's society." Such change, or reformation, is not manipulation as the whole ministry is aimed at actively involving the congregation in the "…intentional guidance" which Firet (1977:298) understands as "…the change in the spiritual functioning of a person in order to actively involve that person in the constant process of reformation." Those engaged in the planning process become changed through "…the conversation of people with one another and with God" (Rendle and Mann, 2003:xviii).

Analysis, planning and drafting of statements within a planning process may sometimes be carried out by the executives of an organisation: however, this cannot, may not, and should not happen in the congregation (Nel, 2015a:213). The congregation as an organism are "…people bound to God in Christ and thus to one another" (Nel, 2015a:217). Strategic planning is a structured conversation whereby a congregation is assisted in making important choices. These choices will not stick if members are taken by surprise, or choices finalised prematurely without full congregational engagement (Rendle and Mann, 2003:163).

Callahan (1987:107–121) identifies the following four dynamics within a reformative planning process: (i) *Memory* — which needs to be unpacked, examined for pastoral attention, confession, mourning amongst others; (ii) *Change* — in and through internal and external dimensions; (iii) *Conflict* — warning of a 'dislocation of power' of which apathy and rage are symptoms, especially the way every day conflict is handled associated with change in congregational life without their necessary inclusion and consultation; and (iv) *Hope* — the strongest, yet often least developed of all*,* in taking God seriously even when there are no signs of His presence.

The fact of a congregation being an organism, consisting of people God has drawn into relationship with himself (Nel, 2015a:218), may prove to be an important factor regarding conflict within congregations. Organisms consist of mutually connected and communicating members that seek and repair balance and equilibrium through an interaction between their parts and the whole (Hopewell, 1987:17; Stoppels, 2009:46; Nel, 2015a:218).

2.9.4   Process identification and selection

After evaluating the processes of Seifert and Clinebell (1969:83), Linder (2000), Ten Have (1973:106–107), Lissenburg (1975:86–87), Hendriks (1992:129), and Malphurs (2007:163–181), Nel (2015a:222) proposes the following phases and terminologies:

- ***Motivation, unfreezing, and developing a mission statement:*** This phase is important, indispensable and crucial as congregations are responsible for their own building up. "Members who are not sufficiently motivated for being a congregation according to God's will, will usually have little or no taste for developing a missional local church" (Nel, 2015a:223).   Motivation is essential in guiding people toward recognising their corporate identity in Christ. It needs to be understood that motivation accompanies and forms part of every phase in the overall process (Nel, 2015a:226).

- ***Analysis of the congregation:*** This phase addresses the central questions of identity and function.   It is looking in the mirror – not merely to see who the congregation is and where it exists, but to see how the congregation is doing. Focal elements are (i) the development and maintenance of a congregational profile; (ii)) a diagnosis of the situation and the surrounding community (context); and (iii) a congregational diagnosis and evaluation by the congregation itself (Nel, 2015a:256). Clarity and honesty in describing the history and current status of the congregation before planning new directions (Rendle and Mann, 2003:3).   The inability of congregations "…to see and interpret themselves, their context, their traditional texts, and the presence and movement of the Holy Breath, assume[s] shapes and practices that too often run counter to God's grace" (Nel, 2015a:260).

- ***Planning a strategy:*** Two questions arise in this phase. Purpose: "What does the congregation believe they are to do and how they are to develop and mature? Context: Where do they live in time and space and identify their neighbour? (Rendle and Mann, 2003:4–5). Once the direction is determined, it is important to remain focused on the vision and values; to clarify the message and ask: "…[D]oes this fit in with the aims and

objectives of the vision God has for us?" (Neill, 2006:17). Congregational planning, therefore, is about discerning together as a body and emerging with a theologically cognizant and comprehensive strategic plan (Nel, 2015a:306). Nel believes that Schaller (1975:118) correctly highlights that the ministry of planning in itself is educational, constructive and motivating. Planning, executed well, will result in points of disagreement and competing preferences. This is not a failure of planning but rather its object in that structured conversation over important things is a way to agreement toward shaping, and reshaping their faith into the future.

- *Implementing the strategic plan and reaching objectives:* Although principles of organisation and management are applied, it is imperative to understand that the congregation is not a business with managers at the top, but a living organism under the Headship of Christ. Ephesians 4:1-16 is an indication that a congregation is a relational organism and relationships are essential when it comes to the congregation's need to build itself up (Nel, 2015a:333). It is these very relationships that have the potential to break down and degenerate into undesired conflict.

- *Evaluating, stabilising and repeating the process:* This is to determine the effectiveness of the programme of action, establish the attainability and realisation of discerned objectives and make need-related and defined adjustments. Stabilisation is directed toward ensuring that effective planned ministry takes root and becomes firmly established (Nel, 2015:343-344).

2.9.5   Continual process of development

Congregations should be informed that the process of developing a missional congregation, focused on continued reformation, growing faithfulness and effectiveness in fulfilling its God-given mission, is a never-ending journey of change. Without predetermined periodic evaluation, review and realignment, all other work for which the congregation has prayed, and worked on, hangs in the air (Nel, 2015a:345). An outcome of the forgoing process is change and in developing a safe environment in the midst of change, Rendle (1998:165) believes that congregations need

> *…to recognise and honour the value that conflict holds. In the idealized congregation, there is no conflict. But in the healthy congregation, there is. One of the realities leaders need to accept is that without healthy conflict in their congregation – without conflict in their board meetings, in the relationships between clergy and laity, between staff and volunteers, between long-term and short-term members – there is no life or energy.*

2.10 Challenges in developing a missional congregation

The challenge of conflict permeates the ministry of developing a missional local church and needs to be understood and handled theologically. Expectations that tensions will arise through the continued process of reformation within congregations could translate into conflict. Yet at the same time there is a feeling that the presence of conflict is inappropriate (Nel, 2015:234-235). Congregations which do not possess a healthy intensity of conflict do not have passion around their mission, purpose, and vision. Their beliefs and values are vague and there is a predominant avoidance lifestyle. Decisions demonstrate a shallow, group-think eminence with little evidence of risk taking. "Every congregation needs a little conflict" (Bullard, 2008:8). Conflict will be addressed in more detail in the chapter following. Suffice it here to note its presence as a challenge in developing a missional congregation, yet a necessity in a congregation pursuing its kingdom potential as identified in this chapter. Congregations without conflict (i) lack passion and direction; (ii) refuse to clearly define their beliefs and values for fear of conflict; (iii) avoid substantive issues because they are afraid of conflict; (iv) make shallow decisions from a group-think mentality; (v) have ill-developed decision-making skills over complex issues because they have historically avoided conflict; (vi) lack the ability to keep conflict from escalating to an unhealthy intensity; and (vii) do not take risks. Being able to identify the various factors in a reformation process is critical to its success, and the management of tensions and resulting conflict.

2.10.1   Why developing a missional church may fail

"Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18, KJV). Vision leaks! People's 'vision bucket' requires constant refilling. Every means of communication available should be utilised to continually sketch the picture of the future that fills everyone with passion. Simultaneously, progress on the vision's achievement needs constant communication (Hybels, 2008:52). Stanley (2007:19–54) proposes the following for vision retention, recalling and 'making vision stick': (i) *State the vision simply* — make it memorable; (ii) *Cast the vision convincingly* — vision must be formulated for easy communication in a way that motivates action; (iii) *Repeat the vision regularly* — vision casting needs to be built into the rhythm of the congregation; (iv) *Celebrate the vision systematically* — celebrating wins does more to clarify the vision than anything else; and (v) *Embrace the vision personally* — living out the vision establishes credibility in congregational leadership.

In their work *How to Change Your Church (without killing it)*, Appel and Nelson (2000:59-62) list ten "Primary reasons church improvement measures fail", each of which carries the potential for conflict: (i) *Inadequate leadership:* Leadership is about changing organisations, while management is about maintaining them; (ii) *Lack of compelling, defining vision:* People cannot be expected to travel where they cannot see; (iii) *Failure to address biblical essentials:* Improvement is not just change for change sake. If improvement is not based on biblical values and ministry essentials for impacting current culture for Christ, then the primary motivation for change is lost; (iv) *Unwillingness to confront ailing issues:* Fear of conflict and rejection are basic human nature responses. They are the primary reasons behind the practice of not identifying practices in churches that are ineffective; (v) *Poor grasp of timing (too fast or too slow):* When improvement initiatives move too fast or too slowly, it is apt to get stuck; (vi) *Lack of team development:* Effective improvement requires a team of people working together through vision casting, participant ownership, and adequate team development; (vii) *Overly divided people groups:* People enjoy listening to those who say what they want to hear and naturally gravitate toward those who think the way they do; (viii) *Carnality:* A spirit of pride or self-centredness. While some pastors might jump quickly to this conclusion, the reality that selfish, flesh-controlled individuals derail many church improvement initiatives cannot denied; (ix) *Poor understanding of the change process.* (x) *Poor handling of conflict:* Conflict is part of any healthy relationship. Where no conflict exists, people are either trampled on or controlled.

2.10.2   Handling of conflict, or the lack thereof

Harnish (2004:54) comments on areas where he "blew it" by not always "going to the source," and confesses:

> …[P]art of the dysfunction in our congregational system was that we did not deal with conflict directly. My most vocal critics never came directly to me. I would get wind of the criticism second hand or when an unexpected letter of complaint turned up in a committee meeting. One person would tell me something they had received 'in confidence' from someone else, which meant that they would not divulge the name of the person offering the criticism. Simply to break through the camouflage and model a healthier way of dealing with conflict, I wish I had been more direct in calling those persons and saying, 'heard on the grapevine that you are unhappy with me. Let's get together to talk about it.' My guess is that some of the conflict would have disappeared if we had faced it directly.

London *et al.* (2002:129) speak of ten myths within the church of which one is "conflict must be avoided at any cost." Church is the "…only organization committed to loving acceptance of everyone" and therefore there are some people who focus on their

understanding of peace and avoid conflict. Congregational conflict should not surprise us, as even the disciples argued about greatness in the presence of Jesus (cf. Mark 9:34). A church culture of conflict avoidance will not benefit the Kingdom as progress requires change, which invariably generates resistance, and resistance often means conflict. Complete conflict avoidance can only be achieved through everyone working and living in isolation - an impossibility because church, by its essence, necessitates people to serve together. Democratic principles invite conflict as diversity creates richness within the group, but patience is required in learning to work together. London and Wiseman (2002:130) conclude:

> *Conflict in the church, then, must be viewed as an inescapable fact of life. The objective is to manage conflict so it is creative and useful - not destructive. In the church, this means allowing, or even expecting and encouraging, people to share their best thoughts on a subject. There should always be room for people to stand up for what they believe, providing it is done in humility and with respect for others. Pastors are often disheartened when people do not speak their minds in a meeting. He is frustrated by those who have their own way at any cost. And he is grievously disappointed by those who speak freely outside formal meetings but silent inside meetings. You can aid the progress of your Church by leading an effort to accept the fact that conflict is real that it can be useful.*

One of the basic principles of conflict management is to separate the people from the issues and to teach them how to talk about and address change focused on the issues, not on the people. Congregations find this difficult as they want to know 'what is wrong' and 'who is responsible'. Not always equipped to do this, congregations commonly blame leadership for not solving problems that have no clear and direct solution and if solutions are not found and implemented, then 'someone' is to blame! (Rendle, 1998:34).

Mann (1998:68) warns that where unhappiness is experienced, leaders should be discouraged from normative reaction in wanting to "…'fix' their congregation, meaning correcting complaints and making it 'perfect' for everyone." Mann suggested that "…a healthier repose: to work toward faithfulness rather than happiness" be followed. Leaders need to revisit their mission statement and develop decisions that support it. Mann's observation is that "…[P]aradoxically, when leaders try to fix everything they hear complaints about, they actually stimulate new objections from the opposite direction."

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter addressed a broad spectrum of principles, practices, procedures and processes in developing a missional church and identifying areas of potential and possible conflict. It is important to ascertain where conflict may arise so that leadership is prepared to address conflict the moment it begins to emerge. It may even be prudent for leadership to acknowledge and communicate when and where conflict may arise in all processes followed. It is valuable to heed Van Yperen's (2002:21) view that "…conflict reveals our faith and character: our willingness or refusal to be the body of Christ."

The following chapter explains concepts of the theory of conflict. It needs to be appreciated that this theory, in totality, covers an extremely wide spectrum. This study will consider some of the major concepts as they relate to conflict resolution and reconciliation in congregations.

Peace is not the absence of conflict
but the presence of creative alternatives
for responding to conflict –
alternatives to passive or aggressive responses,
alternatives to violence.

Dorothy Thompson
Chief Economist: Google
(New York Times, August 6, 2009, p. A1)

CHAPTER 3   THEORY OF CONFLICT

This chapter introduces the theory of conflict, providing insight, terminology and principles as they relate to Christian and other contexts.

> *How we view conflict will largely determine our attitude and approach to dealing with it. Conflict may be viewed as a feeling, a disagreement, and a real or perceived incompatibility of interests, inconsistent worldviews, or a set of behaviours. If we are to be effective in handling conflict, we must start with an understanding of its nature (Mayer, 2010:3).*

Kraybill (2001:3) contends that, as life is full of conflict, constructive handling thereof and not avoidance are necessary for just and life-giving change to be realised. Choices made within a conflict shape reflect who we are as a community and as individuals. The Chinese paradox of *wei-ji* (Madarin for 'crisis' or 'conflict') is composed of the characters for 'danger' *(wei)* and 'opportunity' *(ji).* Similarly, our response to conflict impacts our limitations, potential resourcefulness and abundance.

Conflict is ambivalent in nature: on the one hand is its capacity to generate creative change and high levels of personal and collective integration, and on the other, its more malign consequences when conflict becomes vicious and violent (Cheldelin *et al.*, 2003:11). Some responses to conflict cause devastation: however, when armed with appropriate skills, we discover that conflicts may strengthen communities, ushering in increased involvement, fresh awareness, heightened levels of relationships and introducing justice itself (Kraybill, 2001:4).

Organisationally, to grow, change and survive, an organisation must manage both cooperation and competition among stakeholders who have goals and interests which overlap because of the common interest in the survival of the organisation. These goals and interests are not identical, and conflict arises when own interests are pursued at the expense of others' (Jones, 2010:394). Viewing such conflict along cognitive (perception), emotional (feeling) and behavioural (action) lines may provide a better perspective of the conflict, claims Mayer (2010:4). Van Slyke (1999:5) expands on this view by pointing out that competition, interdependence, and perceived incompatibility are integral elements of a conflict.

The sections that follow address these key concepts from various perspectives to the order of cognitive, emotional, competition, interdependence, perceived incompatibility, and behavioural. The headings used do not necessarily identify with one of these particular concepts as more than one of these concepts may be applicable at the time.

3.1 Concepts, definitions and descriptions

The concepts, descriptions and definitions in this section may be augmented with other terminologies when discussed. Where possible, concepts of differing context and perspective are presented to provide a broader understanding. Terms such as interests, values, actions, direction, goals, scarce resources, interference, opinion, purpose, attitudes, desires, expectations, fears, wants, competition, and interactive are used to provide greater context and content.

3.1.1 Conflict

No one definition covers all contexts and possibilities of conflict; therefore a variety of definitions and descriptions are presented to gain a better understanding. An early definition in Boulding (1962:5) suggests that conflict is intentional and people are conscious of the fact that they disagree and want it that way when stating that

> …*conflict may be defined as a situation of* **competition** *in which the parties are aware of the* **incompatibility** *of potential future positions and in which each party wishes to occupy a position that is* **incompatible** *with the wishes of the other (Researcher's emphasis).*

Similarly, defining conflict as "…the *competition* between *interdependent* parties who perceive that they have *incompatible* needs, goals, desires, or ideas," Van Slyke (1999:5) identifies three important elements (Researcher's emphasis):

- *Competition* – the process of striving for an objective, which may not always be conscious and driven by stated objectives; but unconscious and difficult to detect;

- *Interdependence* – implying that people depend on one another at some level, which creates a dependence that may become frustrating and produces a desire for independence; and

- *Perceived incompatibility* – suggesting that the complexity of the communication process interferes with each party's ability to interpret the goals and objectives of the other; and implying that many factors, most significantly our own biases, establish obstacles that make even obvious common ground and agreement difficult to establish.

To varying degrees, these three elements provide a foundation for understanding the nature of conflict, and are implicit in the descriptions that follow.

Galvin and Brommel's (1982:176) definition has a similar stance and is grounded in a family context

…in which two or more members of a family believe that what they desire is incompatible with what the other wants…Conflict may also develop over a difference in attitudes or values...Finally conflict may emerge when one person's self-esteem is threatened.

Simply defined, conflict is "the struggle of two objects seeking to occupy the same space at the same time" (Bullard, 2008:10). A timing dimension was introduced by Thomas (in Dunnette, 1976:891) in defining conflict as "…the process which begins when one party perceives that another has frustrated, or is about to frustrate, some concern of his." Reflecting on his 1976 work, Thomas (1992:265) later explains that "this definition was broad enough to include a wide variety of conflict phenomena, but specified a beginning point for the conflict process – i.e. the point when other social processes (e.g. decision-making, discussion) 'switched-over' into conflict." De Bono (1986:5) describes conflict as "…a clash of interests, values, actions or direction" and explains that the word 'conflict' refers to the existence of a 'clash' and is applicable from the instant that the clash occurs simultaneously providing a timing factor. De Bono concludes that stating there is a potential conflict implies "…a conflict of direction even though a clash may not yet have occurred."

Proposing a starting point for this timing and identifying conflict as a process, mediator Bernhard Mayer (2010:5) states that he finds it useful

…to think of conflict as existing if at least one person believes it to exist. If I believe us to have incompatible interests, and act accordingly, then I am engaging you in a conflict process whether you share this perception or not.

The concept in Mayer's statement, namely of conflict as a process, is not original. McSwain and Treadwell (1981:26) explain the usefulness of conceiving conflict as a component or aspect of decision-making. As decisions are made, differences in the participating parties' objectives, values, and interests are clarified which heightens the potential for disagreement to usher in conflict. Consequently, it may be expedient to consider conflict as a process rather than as a discrete event. In so doing, one can understand that the nature and meaning of a given conflict can change and evolve over time. Rahim (2001:18–19) defines this process as "…an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities (e.g. individual group or organisation)," and is experienced only when one exceeds one's threshold level of intensity, with the level of tolerance being unique to each individual. Focusing on the interactive aspect, Hocker and Wilmot (2013:6) take an economic stance in defining conflict as

> *…an expressed struggle between at least two independent parties, who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals.*

Conflict as movement or process is captured by Lederach's (1997:63–464) description, namely that conflict is

> *…expressive, dynamic, and dialectical in nature. Relationally based, conflict is born in the world of human meaning and perception. It is constantly changed by ongoing human interaction, and it continuously changes the very people who give it life and the social environment in which it is born, evolves, and perhaps ends.*

Simplistically, conflict has been described as "…what happens when two pieces of matter or objects try to occupy the same space at the same time" (Leas & Kittlaus, 1973:28; Bullard, 2008:10). More broadly, Sande (2004:29–30) describes conflict as "a difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone's goals or desires." This definition is broad enough to include innocuous variations in taste, such as one spouse wanting to vacation in the mountains while the other prefers the waterfront, as well as hostile arguments, such as fights, quarrels, lawsuits, or church divisions.

Poirer (2006:29–30) points out that *conflict* conjures all sorts of connotations. Hence, he seeks simplicity in using Sande's definition and qualifies it by stating that "conflict results when my desires, expectations, fears, or wants, collide with your desires, expectations, fears, or wants." Poirer clarifies his position by saying

> *...take special note that this definition does not automatically equate conflict with sin. Conflict is not necessarily a consequence of sin, though it is assuredly a frequent occasion for it.*

In a more recent attempt to ease the complexity in gaining perspective on conflict, Mayer (2010:4–5) suggests that "conflict may be viewed as occurring along cognitive (perception), emotional (feeling), and behavioural (action) dimensions," where this three-dimensional perspective can help in understanding the complexities of conflict and why a conflict sometimes seems to proceed in contradictory directions. As a set of *perceptions*, conflict is a belief or understanding that one's own needs, interests, wants, or values are incompatible with someone else's. There are both objective and subjective elements to this cognitive dimension. Conflict as *feeling* involves an *emotional* reaction to a situation or interaction that signals a disagreement of some kind. The emotions felt might be fear, sadness, bitterness, anger, or hopelessness, or some amalgam of these. When we experience these feelings concerning another person or situation, we feel that we are in conflict. Conflict also consists of the *actions* that we can take to express our

feelings, articulate our perceptions, and get our needs met in a way that has potential for interfering with someone else's ability to get their needs met. This *conflict behaviour* may involve a direct attempt to make something happen at the expense of someone else. Conversely, this behaviour may be conciliatory, constructive, and friendly. Ultimately, the purpose of conflict behaviour is to express the conflict or get one's needs met.

3.1.2   Resolution

Resolution has to do with issues and is associated with solution, accommodation, or settling of a problem, controversy, or dispute (Moeller, 1994:134). Such terminology that dominates a discipline evolves as practitioners develop their conceptual processes. The concept and areas of conflict resolution are no exception, claims Lederach (1995:16), and explains that resolution

> *…was an early (and still dominant) concept describing the more academic field of study and its practical application. The concept indicated a need to understand how conflict evolves and ends. It encouraged the development of strategies and skills for dealing with the volatile and too often destructive outcomes of conflict. At times, however, resolution made conceptually and subtly the impression that conflict is undesirable and should be eliminated or at least reduced.*

Tidwell (2001:3) observes that the available literature on conflict resolution focuses on

> *…'how to do it', with scant attention paid to situation and contextual issues. Yet a more textured and mature approach to conflict resolution demands examination of these contexts and situations. Without an examination of those factors that constrain resolution, there can be no effective, long-term effort to resolve the more difficult social conflict that face us today.*

Tidwell further explains that problem-solving and conflict resolution cannot be removed from the social environment. For example, when scholars recommend that those seeking resolution of conflict focus on the problem and not the person with whom one is in conflict, they are making some very real and unhealthy assumptions about the nature of conflict. "We can preliminarily define conflict resolution as a situation where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solves their central incompatibilities, accept each other's continual existence as parties and cease all violent action against each other," writes Wallensteen (2002:8) regarding escalated levels of conflict requiring serious intervention.

Conflict resolution interventions occurs through "…bringing together the various sides of a conflict in order to resolve their differences" (Cheldelin *et al.*, 2003:190) and is

directed toward the issues or problem and not at the persons involved, explains Tidwell (2001:2). However, full resolution of conflict only occurs when there is resolution along cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions, without exception (Mayer, 2010:108).

In the above, resolution is focused toward the issues, whereas authors such as Ramsbotham *et al.* (2011:31) describe conflict resolution as an over-arching term that incorporates conflict management together with peace-making, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. In this context, conflict resolution would fill the spectrum from prevention to reconciliation. The term 'resolution', for the purpose of this research, is directed toward issues and is associated with solution, accommodation, or settling of a problem, controversy, or dispute.

3.1.3   Reconciliation

Reconciliation has to do with relationships and is "…the restoration of friendship and fellowship after estrangement" (Moeller, 1994:134). The original word for 'reconciliation' in Greek (καταλλάσσω) was to 'change' or 'exchange'. In New Testament terms then, people exchange a relationship of hostility for one of friendship in becoming reconciled (Arndt & Danker, 2000:521). Lederach (in Crocker *et al.*, 2001:842) recognises reconciliation to be "dynamic, adaptive and healing," and "a process of change and redefinition of relationships" (2001:847). The thought of reconciliation as a process of restoring and developing relationships is becoming more prevalent (Abu-Nimer, 2001:13).

There is no clear methodology as to how to attain reconciliation. Galtung (in Abu-Nimer, 2001:4) admits this in stating: "Reconciliation is a theme with deep psychological, sociological, theological, philosophical, and profoundly human roots – and nobody really knows how to successfully achieve it." From a Christian perspective, Poirier (2006:11–12) asserts that this Gospel of Jesus Christ is the engine that drives the train of reconciliation. Bercovitch and Jackson (2009:29) champion that restorative reconciliation is the convergence of truth, mercy, justice, and peace:

> **Truth** is the longing for acknowledgement of wrong and the validation of painful loss and experience, but it is coupled with **Mercy**, which articulates the need for acceptance, letting go, and a new beginning. **Justice** represents the search for individual and group rights, for social restructuring, and for restitution, but linked with **Peace**, which underscores the need for interdependence, well-being, and security.

Mayer (2010:231) indicates that such restoration is mostly reliant on the effectiveness of conflict resolution:

> *Often conflict resolution processes focus on the behavioural dimension and do not address the emotional or cognitive dimensions. Yet, unless there is also progress on these dimensions, it is unlikely that fundamental changes in the relationship among disputants will occur. Although most conflict resolution efforts can contribute to a broad approach to resolution, individual efforts are often limited in how far they can go.*

"Reconciliation is viewed in the scripture as the apex of God's desire for a world that has ignored, rebelled against, and turned away from him" (Newberger, 2011:21). Paul reminds the people of Corinth that, despite the rebelliousness and turning away, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (NLT 1 Corinthians 5:19), hence, reconciliation is at the heart of Christianity (Guthrie, 2013:486). The term 'reconciliation' is totally focused on the relational rebuilding during and after any conflict occurrences.

3.1.4   Conflict management

Very much Western in conception, conflict management champions the idea that conflict follows certain predictable patterns and dynamics that could be understood and regulated. Lederach (1995:16–17) states that the evolving concept of conflict management presupposes that conflict is natural and normal, and should be managed. Management as a concept recognises that conflict is not resolved in the sense of getting rid of it, but rather emphasis is placed on affecting the destructive consequences and components.

Conflict management "…involves designing effective strategies to minimize the dysfunctions of conflict and maximize the constructive functions of conflict in order to enhance learning and effectiveness in an organization" (Rahim, 2000:5). Rahim's view encompasses three aspects: (i) Affective conflict, such as personal attacks or racial disharmony that should be reduced; (ii) Substantive conflict in moderation, such as healthy disagreements concerning issues or tasks should be allowed to exist; and (iii) people should learn "…how to use different conflict-handling styles to deal with various situations effectively" in order be effective in handling disagreements (Rahim, 2000:6). As opposed to conflict resolution, conflict management is the practice of restraining the unhealthy, while improving the healthy aspects of conflict (Rahim, 2002:208).

Wallensteen (2002:23) emphasises the containment function of conflict management "…bringing the fighting to an end, limiting the spread of the conflict and, thus, containing

it" whereas, "…conflict resolution is more ambitious, as it expects the parties to face jointly their incompatibility and find a way to live with or dissolve it." The focus of this research is on conflict resolution, which incorporates a solution to the conflict and not only restraining or containing conflict as in conflict management.

3.1.5   Conflict transformation

Conflict transformation surfaced during the emergence of post-modernism which ushered in a relational worldview that impacted the discipline of conflict resolution, particularly in the mediation processes and methods as related in Bush's work (1994). Over the same time line

> *…the idea of conflict transformation emerged in search for an adequate language to describe the peace-making venture.   Transformation provides a more holistic understanding, which can be fleshed out at several levels.   Unlike resolution and management, the idea of transformation does not suggest we simply eliminate or control conflict, but points descriptively towards its inherent dialectic nature (Lederach, 1995:17).*

The purpose of conflict transformation therefore goes beyond a commitment of parties to seek peace. It necessitates that parties foster respect toward each other and amend what is necessary to incorporate others into a peaceful climate. Sustaining this requires the transformation of the culture and climate in which the parties exist (Schrock-Shenk & Ressler, 1999:52). The more peace-seeking approach of collaborative mediation, owing to its relational aspect, sought not "…resolution but consensus, recognition of the other party's views, and negotiated future procedures for addressing issues" (Claremont & Davies, 2005:19).

Porter (2010:7) uses the term 'art of improvisation' to describe the work of conflict transformation as human interaction cannot be programmed. He suggests that one would need to be "…fully present and attentive to the moment, being agile, creative, and spontaneous, willing to take risks" as there is no script for conflict transformation although it is "…built on structure, skills, and disciplines that will free us to improvise as we find our own authentic style of doing this work." It is possible that this research, in focusing on both resolution and reconciliation, can be seen as leaning toward a transformative outcome.

3.2 Dimensions of conflict

3.2.1 Types of conflict

There is no exact agreement among conflict specialists as to the number of types of conflict observed or experienced. Richard and Olsen (1976:7) differentiate between the following three types or kinds of conflict:

> There are of course, various kinds of conflict. Basically it can be resolved into three categories: (1) intrapersonal conflict, (2) interpersonal conflict, (3) intergroup conflict. Intrapersonal conflict refers to conflict existing within the individual because of unresolved competing needs, values, etc. Interpersonal conflict refers to conflict which exists between individuals because of differing goals or differing viewpoints on how similar goals should be achieved. Intergroup conflict occurs when two relatively homogenous groups select competing goals or differ on how to achieve similar goals.

Everist (2004:14–25) broadens an understanding on the above and identifies seven types of conflict. Two are presented, commented on, and then followed by the remaining five:

- *Intrapersonal conflict:* This occurs within a person, particularly over matters of conscience, choice, and well-being. Admitting that no-one is perfectly healthy, well-adjusted, or mature, people hide, or blame in shame and self-doubt. Anxiousness sets in. No matter what other types of conflict are going on, attending to the conflict within us is important, because even though we may not be to blame for the particular conflict, intrapersonal conflict contributes to the relational and communal conflict.

- *Interpersonal conflict:* This is the story of human history! Some congregational conflict is really a personal issue between people, although it may be played out through issues, mission, or ministry. This type of conflict tends to create sides and triangulations often result. The preceding discussion has focused on individuals, yet one finds similar distinctions between *intragroup conflict* (within one group) or *intergroup conflict* (between and among groups).

Everist's next five types of conflict are not directed at people, individuals and groups of people, as the above but more toward faith intangibles:

- *Conflict over issues - Beliefs:* Our beliefs shape the issue, e.g. if the issue is worship style, the congregation's beliefs regarding what worship is, what the nature of the church is, what they believe about God – their differing beliefs on these aspects create further controversy to navigate toward final solution.

- *Conflict over facts - Truth:* This entails reaching reality beyond perception. If the worship music decided upon in the example of conflict mentioned above was reported as "People don't appreciate the change and are leaving." The questions to ask is: "How many have left owing to the change in music?" and "How many have been attracted by the change in music?" Careful dialogue includes not just saying what one believes or perceives is true, but joining differing perspectives into a more holistic picture so that all can move forward together with greater communal understanding.

- *Conflict over values - Worth:* Remaining with the music scenario, conflict may arise over the way people value different kinds of music. Values permeate the way people interpret life and relate with one another. Not all people who have the same faith, believe it the same God, and are part of a distinct community have the same values.

- *Conflict over goals - Mission:* In the music example, the congregation may have conflicting ideas about the goal of worship: the praise of God, filling the pews, or being 'inspired.' The question of 'What is mission?' arises and needs some agreement and possible definition to enable the congregation to move forward.

- *Conflict over means - Ministry:* Does the congregation serve the community by employing only excellence in the music example (musicians need to pass a test), or to minister by using the gifts of all, whatever they may be? Ministry is not merely a means to a goal; ministry is a gift of God, a way of living and serving in relation to the community.

More recent writings on types of conflict confirm the discussion thus far regarding these categories: "Conflict can occur at the intrapersonal level, the interpersonal level, the inter-group or subsystem level, and at the organism, organisation, or system-wide level" (Bullard, 2008:10).

3.2.2 Progression of conflict

Once begun, conflict progresses through defined, linear stages. Something in the system ignites conflict and eventually ends conflict. "It is certainly true that in any conflict progression specific decisions are made and expressions of conflict may end. But if there is an ongoing relationship, conflict remains" (Lederach, 1995:16). Conflict often catches people off guard despite the emergence of warning signs of the impending conflict. Evidence of early warning signs for congregations such as environmental factors (declining population base), special congregational factors (history, pastoral transition), rumours, reduced participation, decline in attendance and

giving, changes in lay leadership (young people), the emergence of "hardliners", and changes in pastor's behaviour exist (Leas, 2012:13–16).

3.2.2.1   Organisational perspective

Pondy (1967:296–320) presents an organisational perspective for identifying conflict sources and process along five (5) sequential episodes or stages. Despite its being an organisational model, similarities with Shawchuck's Conflict Cycles (Figure 3.2) can be identified. Pondy's model is summarised in the following Figure 3.1:

Figure 3.1: Pondy's model of organisational conflict
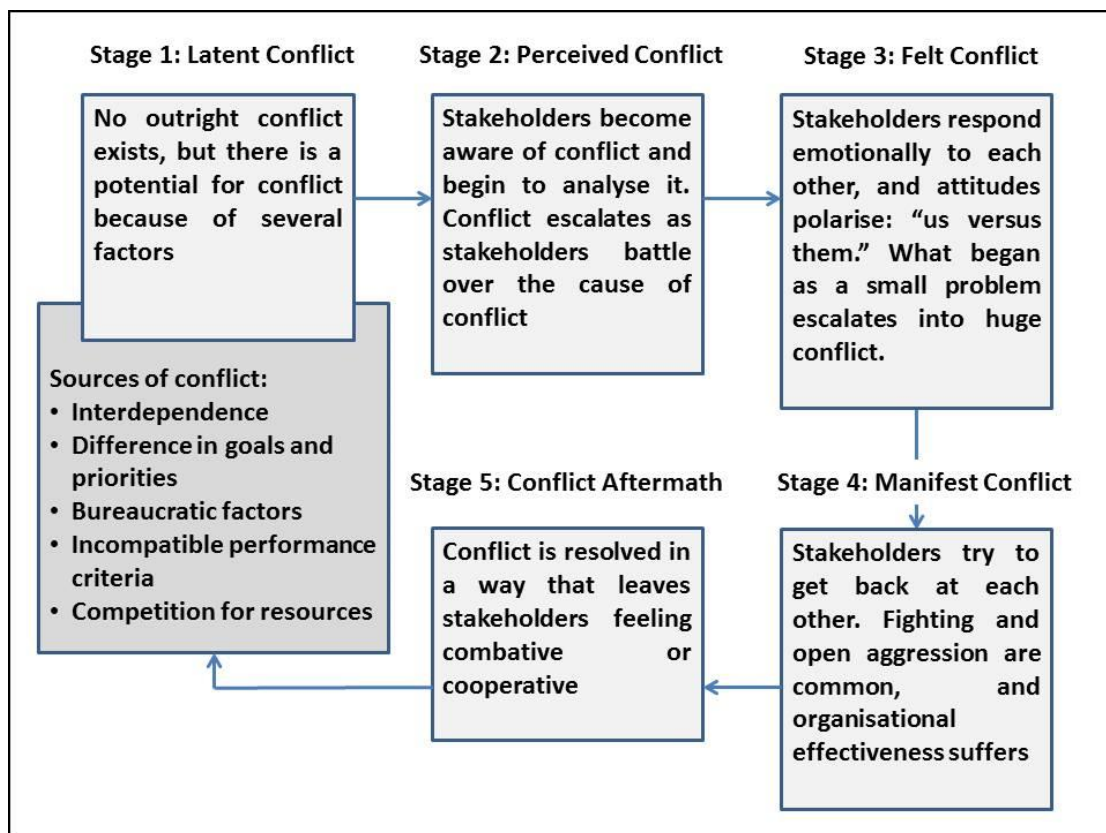
(Source: Pondy, 1967:302)

Jones (2010:396–401) provides further insight into the model:

- *Stage 1: Latent conflict:* All stakeholders are interdependent, and any desire for autonomy and pursuance of own goals and interests that are valued come into conflict with the stakeholders within the wider organisation's desire for coordination.

- *Stage 2: Perceived conflict:* Stakeholders perceive their goals are being thwarted by the actions of others. All parties begin to define why the conflict emerged, start to analyse events leading up to its emergence, and conflict escalates as they begin to battle over the causes thereof.

- *Stage 3: Felt conflict:* Blame is apportioned to the other party, escalation ensues, cooperation falls, and organisational effectiveness wanes. A danger is that minor conflicts escalate vastly if not resolved in this stage.

- *Stage 4: Manifest conflict:* Passive aggression and frustration of goals of the deemed opposition through the suspense of action is often experienced. If conflict is not resolved, communication may cease to exist between stakeholders.

- *Stage 5: Conflict aftermath:* Normally, resolution materialises at some stage. However, if the sources of the conflict have not been fully addressed and resolved, the conflict may reappear in another context. There is the danger of souring future working relationships, poisoned culture, and permanently uncooperative relationship becoming entrenched. Every episode of conflict leaves a conflict aftermath that affects the way all parties perceive and react to future episodes. When resolution materialises before the manifest stage, the aftermath normally promotes good future working relationships.

3.2.2.2 Family perspective

Galvin and Brommel (1982:178–180) presents a family-centred and less technically defined progression:

- *Stage 1: Prior conditions:* Conflict requires some prior reason or relation of the present event to the past experiences in the family.

- *Stage 2: Frustration awareness:* Where one or more family members become frustrated at being blocked from satisfying a need or concern.

- *Stage 3: Active conflict stage:* Conflict manifests through a series of verbal and non-verbal messages.

- *Stage 4: Solution stage:* A devolution toward a position where resolution becomes a reality.

- *Stage 5: Follow-up stage:* Sometimes called the 'aftermath' because of post-solution reactions and its impact and effect on future interactions such as re-emergence of the same conflict, or possibly conflict avoidance.

3.2.2.3 Generic perspective

According to Shawchuck . (1983:36),

> *…conflict is born in the changes within one person's attitude or actions which prevents, blocks, interferes with, injures, or in some way makes the achievement of another person's less likely. Once begun, conflict follows as a five stage*

progression. The length of time for any stage may be very short (a few minutes) or very long (several months), but no stage is missed

Shawchucke's conflict cycle is presented in Figure 3.2 with an explanation following:

Figure 3.2: Shawchuck's conflict cycle
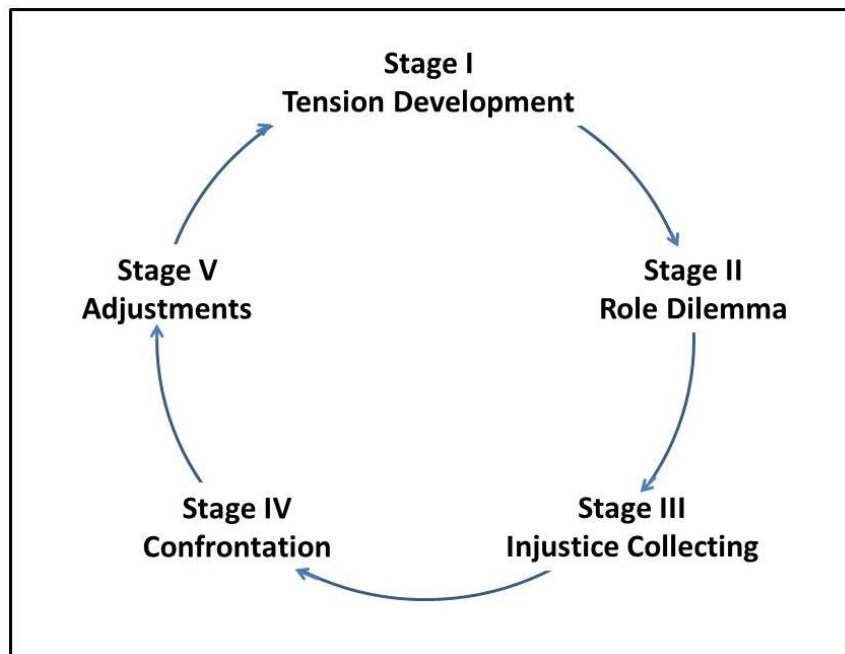
(Source: Shawchuck, 1983:36)

- *Stage I: Tension development:* The tension signals that someone is experiencing a sense of loss of freedom within a relationship which sets the stage for a conflict situation. Harmony and productivity give way to role dilemma which begins to consume person's time and energies.

- *Stage II: Role dilemma:* Few persons or groups openly discuss the disruptive influences at the tension development or the role dilemma stages. Tension increases to the point that communications are beginning to break down and persons are actively blaming one another, opening the door to injustice collecting.

- *Stage III: Injustice collecting:* Entering the dangerous, blaming stage of battle preparation, parties justify their own positions, creating energy. The focus shifts from the conflict issue to being personal where the 'other' is the problem, and reason gives way to anger.

- *Stage IV: Confrontation:* Communication becomes hostile, argumentative, 'clearing the air' to outright violence; the fight or 'contact' stage. Poorly managed conditions give

way to a more fearful situation than could be imagined, with less-than-desirable alternatives.

- *Stage V: Adjustments:* Changes are made to end the confrontation. Adjustments made in poorly managed confrontation take such forms as avoidance, divorce, domination, or cold war. Adjustments made in well managed confrontations will take the form of re-negotiated expectations and freely made commitments to honour the expectations.

 "The conflict may be handled at any stage," states Shawchuck (1996:36), "if it is not, it will progress to the next stage."

3.2.3   Levels of conflict

Conflict progression is the route or path a conflict follows from inception to, hopefully, conclusion. Levels of intensity are found in different contexts and severities. Conflict differs in intensity from a trivial disagreement to all-out war. It can be healthy, transitional, or unhealthy. Discerning what dimension or intensity of conflict is being experienced in a given situation can be difficult. Speed Leas's study of conflict levels contributes toward the understanding of positive, proactive actions best suited for each level (Bullard, 2008:14). Leas's (2012:19–24) five (5) levels of conflict, originally published in 1985, are presented in the table following.

Table 3.1: Five levels of conflict

Level	Aim	Communication	Tone	Approach
Problem to Solve	To fix what's wrong	Clear, open, specific, direct. Problem confronted, not related persons	Optimistic, problem can be solved	Often not see it as 'conflict' but a 'problem. Collaborative problem solving, negotiation, voting
Disagreement	Solve the problem, not getting hurt, self-protection	Shifts from specific to general for personal protection. Withhold information that may serve other's cause	Cautious, confusion surrounding the issue	Seek advice from outsiders.
Contest	To win	Distortion (Higher level of emotions)	Combative	
Crusade	To injure or be rid of the opposition, or flee if can't win		Righteous, punitive	
World War	Destroy the opposition	Ballistic		Conflict is out of control, life threatening. There's no resolution possible and combatants should separate

(Source: Leas, 2012:19)

The entire conflict progression remains mostly at one level and does not normally progress through these levels. However, there are occasions when conflict at one level does escalate in intensity and becomes re-positioned on a higher level.

Over a period of twenty years Bullard developed seven (7) levels of conflict based on Leas's five (5) levels, which Bullard believes has "…taken it to a different, but related, dimension of understanding and application" as shown in the following Table 3.2:

Table 3.2: The Intensities of Congregational Conflict

Intensity Level	Intensity One	Intensity Two	Intensity Three	Intensity Four	Intensity Five	Intensity Six	Intensity Seven
Experiences	Healthy	Healthy	Healthy	Transitional	Unhealthy	Unhealthy	Unhealthy
Theme	Getting to Yes!	Getting to Yes!	Getting to Yes!	Getting past No!	Getting to Neutral	Getting to Neutral	Getting to Neutral
Description	Identifiable Task-Orientated Problems with Many Solutions	Relationship-Oriented Disagreements over Multiple Issues	Competition within a Group or Between Groups	Congregational-Wide Competition with Voting	Congregational-Wide Combat with Organisational Casualties	Pursuit of people Beyond the Congregation Focused on their Integrity	Intentional Physical Harm to People or Congregational Facilities
Sort Outcome	Win-Win	Win-Win	Win-Lose	Win-Lose	Lose-Leave	Lose-Lose	Lose-Lose
Strategy	Conflict Resolution	Conflict Resolution	Conflict Mediation	Conflict Mediation	Conflict Management	Conflict Management	Conflict Management
Pastor	Chaplain or Personal Coach	Chaplain or Personal Coach	Team Coach or Mediator	Organisational Coach, Mediator, or Consultant	Consultant or Arbitrator	Arbitrator or Attorney	Law Enforcement
Approaches, or Leadership Styles	------ ------ Collaborate Persuade Accommodate Avoid Support	------ ------ Collaborate Persuade Accommodate Avoid Support	------ Negotiate Collaborate Persuade ------ ------ Support	Compel Negotiate Collaborate ------ ------ ------ Support	Compel Negotiate ------ ------ ------ ------ Support	Compel Negotiate ------ ------ ------ Avoid Support	Compel Negotiate ------ ------ ------ Avoid Support

(Source Bullard, 2008:17)

Bullard (2008:4) tells of when he and Speed Leas

> *…spent an evening in dialogue about my seven intensities, and he agrees they were faithful to his five levels. I pray it honours his ground-breaking work that has influenced so many congregations and their leaders. One significant difference, though, in our work is that many of Speed's consultations were in mainline denominations, and most of mine have been in evangelical denominations.*

3.2.4   Emotional dimension of conflict

Despite the normalcy of conflict, the experience thereof varies in intensity and level. People's emotional state, not only their differing opinions or viewpoints, can trigger conflict. Situations of conflict tend to bring out the worst in people. People do what they would not normally do and then justify it. How, or if people engage with or fight in conflict is generally determined by how empowered they feel. "As contradictory as it sounds at first, the weaker the people perceive themselves to be, the more likely they will fight dirty or use violence" (Leas, 1982:29). All grave issues or problems bring an emotional dimension of personal offence or estrangement, irrespective of whether the subject matter is predominantly 'impersonal' or 'technical' or 'objective' (Yoder, in White & Blue, 1985:214).

Not everyone has the ability to face conflict rationally. The emotional dimension has the potential to cloud logic and good sense in conflict-related decision making. Neither would good sense and logic guarantee the resolution of conflict. Therefore, it would be naive to assume that all parties locked in conflict can be thought to approach the conflict situation rationally and logically. An admission by Haugk and Perry (1988:32) is worth noting:

> *Too often it was assumed that all parties involved in conflicts were mentally healthy, responsible, rational, and willing to compromise. Experience has shown that such assumptions, while applying to the great majority of individuals, overlook a very notable, vocal, and disruptive majority.*

There is hesitancy in Christian circles to identify and deal with trouble makers, or identify 'antagonists'. Yet, it is necessary to recognise that there are individuals who initiate and thrive on unhealthy conflict, persons who have no desire whatsoever to see conflict resolved. "Antagonism is unhealthy conflict, however, and antagonistic behaviour is not honourable" (Haugk & Perry, 1988:21). Conflict is normal and can be healthy, whereas characteristics of antagonism include personal attacks on individuals who are mostly in leadership. Antagonists can be defined as

…individuals who, on the basis of non-substantive evidence, go out of their way to make insatiable demands, usually attacking the person or performance of others. These attacks are selfish in nature, tearing down rather than building up, and are frequently directed against those in a leadership capacity (Haugk & Perry, 1988:21–22).

To varying degrees, feelings and emotions are invested in most conflicts. People deal with their emotions when involved in conflict in various ways such as letting feelings and emotions become the primary determiners in dealing with a conflict. Conversely, parties try to ignore feelings and emotions out of a fear that expression thereof may portray the perception of being out of control or may obscure the core issues.

In yet other cases, people acknowledge that feelings and emotions are involved, yet try to intellectualise them to the point that the other party never realises the intense feelings a particular conflict is causing. All of these approaches to dealing with feelings and emotions can cause and exacerbate conflict (Weeks, 1994:55).

Humans have two different ways of processing information. The first mode is rational – the mode of our conscious – and is thoughtful, analytical, and reflecting. Operating simultaneously and mostly independently is another mode that is impulsive and often illogical. This emotional mode is quicker and more powerful than the rational mind. The emotional mind takes on whole chunks of information and acts immediately without thinking. It determines such primitive reactions as whether we should fight or flee. The emotional mind associates current information with the feelings or moods of the memory and reacts to the current situation without distinguishing it from the past (Van Slyke, 1999:35). People whose emotions were severely wounded when they were children will tend to express emotions either by great explosions of anger, or by turning the anger in upon themselves. As children they learned that this is what they must do to survive. When emotionally damaged people come into the church, they bring their hurt, fear, and rage with them. "Unless these persons are healed, they are prime candidates for joining into series [sic] relationships, becoming a timid, or an antagonistic loner, filing co-dependant roles for addictive persons or processes in the congregation, or they will seek an identified patient upon whom they may transfer their own symptoms" (Shawchuck, 1996:47).

The argument that 'the end justifies the means' is often used, for example, when torturing terror suspects. It is argued that information extracted can save lives. That may make sense in certain contexts but Huttenlocker (2008:25) argues that that kind of thinking is foreign to scripture. "The fallacy of the mentality of conflict is the conviction that the end justifies the means. This belief is never true; it is antithetical to the tenor of

the Bible." Such is the case when congregants feel their only way forward is to move away from their current church. Putman's words (2008:217) to church leaders on this are sobering, bearing in mind the focus of this study:

> *Whatever you do, the church is not your church; it belongs to God. You don't have the right to split His church. If you've done all you can to change the church, but there's a significant number of leaders opposed to the direction you feel led to take, be careful. God's reputation is at stake, and when Christians fight, it causes unbelievers to reject Jesus. No matter what, always honour the church leadership. Never allow those who work with you (who agree with you) to gossip about those who don't.*

> *Of course, change can't be implemented when a leadership is divided in purpose and direction. But you have a choice to make. You can decide to focus on what is not happening, or you can be joyful that you are creating disciples in the areas where you work. You may have to leave because your principles do not allow you to be involved in a church that is not strategically doing what they should be. Just remember, those who oppose you may be wrong in their direction (or lack thereof), but it does not mean they are not fellow believers. If you decide to leave the church, leave in love and honour knowing that God will not bless you if you hurt His body and reputation.*

A common thread in defining conflict is the incompatibility of interests. "When we feel our interests threatened, our biological and neurological systems kick in and help us prepare to meet the threat before devising approaches to help manage emotions" (Runde & Flanagan, 2010:33–34). Conflict also involves an emotional reaction to the situation or interaction that signals a disagreement of some kind:

> *The emotions felt might be fear, sadness, bitterness, anger, or hopelessness, or some amalgam of these. If we experience these feelings in regard to another person or situation, we feel that we are in conflict – and therefore we are. As a mediator, I have sometimes seen people behave as if they were in great disagreement over profound issues, yet I have not been able to ascertain exactly what they disagreed about. Nonetheless, they were in conflict because they felt they were. And in conflicts, it does not take two to tango. Often a conflict exists because one person feels in conflict with another, even though those feelings are not reciprocated by or even known to the other person. The behavioural component may be minimal, but the conflict is still very real to the person experiencing the feelings (Mayer, 2010:5).*

One of the common emotional threads is hurt. "All of us have been hurt by people who all were hurt by other hurt people. In turn, we – as hurt people – all have hurt other people to some degree or another. And on, and on, it goes!" (Wilson, 2010:1). These hurts take the form of actions, words, and attitudes that are intentional or unintentional, visible or invisible, hands-on or hands-off, other-perpetrated or self-inflicted, and barely survivable to hardly noticeable. Hurt people usually hurt those nearest and dearest to them. Virtual strangers may superficially or profoundly wound by their disrespectful

rudeness, their unprovoked violence, or in other ways. But the deepest wounds come at the hands of those loved and trusted (Wilson, 2010:2). People sometimes hurt, not by having been hurt, but as a result of their own psychological needs not being met. Such hurt could translate into

> *…conflict which is related to our personal history yet is part of our emotional being rather than the cognitive and perceptual side of us. This has to do with whether certain important needs have been met and are being met. Some of these needs which psychologists have identified are physiological (food, shelter, health), social affiliation (to love and to be loved), personal security (I am an OK person), personal growth (meaning and direction in life), personal autonomy (I have some power) (Richard & Olsen, 1976:7).*

The needs above parallel with Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, developed in 1954. Maslow "…developed the idea of a hierarchy of needs starting from the physical needs and continuing onto less tangible and more intrinsic concepts to do with emotional fulfilment and achievement." The lower level would need to be fulfilled before satisfaction at the next level would be realised. The levels in ascending order are: physiological (food, shelter, clothing, and other bodily needs); safety, social (acceptance, friendship); esteem (feeling of self-worth and respect from others); and self-actualisation (full achievement of one's full potential). The more levels are reached, the more fulfilled and empowered one feels (Crowther & Green, 2004:39).

3.2.5   Boundaries in conflict

Conflicts revolve around relationships and their associated boundaries. During times in congregational life when conflict is absent, communication will flow more effectively as relational boundaries become opened. When conflict arises, walls are erected and communication is limited. To understand conflict, one has to appreciate boundaries and how to respond to them. Conflict arises within a definable system. A characteristic of system components is that

> *…they have permeable boundaries that allow information and material to flow in and out. The degree of permeability varies from system to system; some are relatively closed, whereas others are extremely open. However, all biological and social systems require some degree of permeability to survive. Permeability refers both to the system as a whole - which must be open to its environment – and to the components within the system (Miller, 2014:62).*

The church is, by God's design, an open system. It has boundaries, but they are permeable (Stevens & Collins, 1993:144). Cosgrove and Hatfield (1994b:116) observe that

> *…although healthy communication (a porous boundary) admits conflict, people generally throw up a wall if conflict persists, especially when nothing requires them to keep communicating. It is wise to assume that as conflict escalates rigid boundaries will be forming. When this happens the most important thing to remember is that the problem is not the conflict but the rigid boundaries. Those who try to smooth over or repress conflict rather than let it come to the surface only add bricks to the walls that begin forming when conflict is present. Building rigid boundaries will not make conflict go away. It will only suppress some of the immediate symptoms.*

"When boundaries become unclear, shifting identities can result in the escalation of conflict" (Rothman, 1997:134). In addressing groups and associated boundaries, Iverson in Everist (2000:163–164) advocates the demarcation of clear boundaries in congregational work and ministry for reasons of safety, policy, and conflict. From an individual perspective, the constant struggle in establishing boundaries and related connections is a source of much personal conflict. The challenge of these boundaries is also at the heart of many interpersonal conflicts (Mayer, 2010:21).

It is very difficult to resolve conflict when boundaries are rigid. As Cosgrove and Hatfield (1994a:130) note, many people respond to conflict by trying to smooth things over. This in turn only strengthens the boundaries that are already in place. Resolving conflict requires that boundaries between people be opened but it is very difficult for boundaries to remain open during times of conflict because forming rigid boundaries is a type of defence mechanism. They continue by stating that

> *…handling conflict openly often does not last very long because people find it easier psychologically to mask the real issues, to fight through third parties, to shut down communication when things get too heated, and so on. Boundaries may open up in the midst of a conflict only to close down all over again because people cannot tolerate the tension of an open fight. If open disagreement over the real issues feels too painful, people will resort to underground and indirect forms of conflict, all of which encourage rigid boundaries to form all over again.*

One aspect that causes ridged boundaries to form is triangulation. This needs to be identified and broken for the resolution and prevention of conflict spreading. Continual and consistent communication through healthy porous boundaries is critical to the prevention and resolution of conflict through healthy porous boundaries. To this end Cosgrove and Hatfield (1994a:173) relate that

> *…teaching and reinforcing the rules of good communication is the basic strategy for dismantling triangles and eliminating family switchboard functions. In the case of invitations to triangulation, this means teaching family members a strategy of response such as the following: (1) refuse to take a message from one person to another; (2) tell those who share the 'problems' they are having with others to go*

speak to the other person directly; and (3) refuse to listen to them if they don't practice this form of direct communication.

It is more prudent to enlarge the scope or boundaries in understanding important problems to ensure inclusiveness, prevent a narrow perspective, and "…broaden the scope of every important problem up to and just beyond your comfort zone" (Mitroff, 1998:29). However, there are occasions when conflict escalates and becomes distorted and exaggerated and this requires someone to call "Stop!" and draw firm boundaries. Pro-actively set boundaries, that is "…drawing boundaries (i.e. saying "no" or "not me"), separating, asserting, and expressing anger responsibly can help solidify identity and healthy relationships" (Halstead, 1998:77).. The energies of constructive anger and aggression channelled profitably "…help us mark our boundaries, define our identities, motivate our action, and assert ourselves. As such they pay a crucial role in our emotional health and maturation" (Halstead, 1998:78).

Conflict between two people or groups has the ability to draw in other uninvolved parties through a process called triangulation. This shifts the focus to a third party which in turn lowers the anxiety of the two persons in the original relationship. In a congregation, gossip is a universal form of triangulation that focuses on the faults of a third party and therefore takes the focus off the persons engaged in the gossip conversation (Shawchuck, 1996:35).

Bullard believes that those who promote unhealthy conflict as righteousness needs should be confronted and dealt with before they destroy churches (Bullard, 2008:10). In conflict resolution, lines of communication are best 'kept open', individuals involved should avoid triangulation, and be direct by practising confrontation.

3.2.6   Causes of conflict

"Conflict happens when you are at odds with another person over what you think, want, or do" (Sande & Johnson, 2011:14). The consideration of a few scriptural illustrations and situational causes of conflict follows:

3.2.6.1   Scriptural illustrations

Sande (2004:30) lists a few occasions recorded in scripture when conflict occurred. Disputes arose over

> *…misunderstandings resulting from poor communication (Joshua 22:10-34). Differences in values, goals, gifts, calling, priorities, expectations, interests, or opinions can also lead to conflict (Acts 15:39; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31). Competition*

over limited resources, such as time or money, is a frequent source of disputes in families, churches, and businesses (Genesis 13:1-12).

and many conflicts are "…caused or aggravated by sinful words and actions (James 4:1-1)" Sande (204:31) further explains that many causes or reasons for conflict are not "wrong or right" but "simply the result of God-given diversity and personal preferences (1 Corinthians 12:21-31)."

3.2.6.2   Relationship between change and conflict

Amongst the common causes, the type or source of conflict listed in most resources is change (Cheldelin *et al.*, 2003; Everist, 2004; Free, 2013; Halverstadt, 1991; Kale & McCullough, 2003; Lang, 2002; Poirier, 2006; Ramsbotham *et al.*, 2011; Sandole *et al.*, 2010; among others). Resistance to change seems normal and even threatening to some. Change challenges people's preferences and they respond emotionally (Appel & Nelson, 2000:7):

When you suggest a change of habits, environment, relationships, or even spiritual direction, you are questioning each individual's personal preferences and beliefs that back them. Even as Christ followers, we try to spiritualize our preferences, believing that God is on our side and certainly supportive of our opinions-otherwise we wouldn't have them. It is important to remember that those of us who receive change well tend to be a minority; the majority of people resist change because of the way they are emotionally wired, not because they are negative, bad, or faithless.

Periods of change are frequently followed, or accompanied, by seasons of conflict.

One of the things learned early in life is that change equals conflict. Likewise, any change, any growth in ministry, can result in negative comments and a chance for conflict because we generally feel out of control when something that is comfortable and familiar suddenly changes, a change in the congregation, especially in its worship life, can produce conflict (Lang, 2002:22).

Brubaker's (2009:4) work, *Promise and Peril*, is a published resource focused on his doctoral thesis primarily to "…provide insights and tools for congregational leaders, both lay and clergy, to be more effective change agents and conflict managers." In this work, Brubaker devotes a chapter each for the two congregational changes with the highest correlation to conflict: Firstly, changes to decision-making structure, and secondly, adding or deleting a worship service. His research also disproved the common belief that building campaigns or congregational size transitions are accompanied by, or result in conflict.

The research produced the following four principal conclusions (Brubaker, 2009:120): Firstly, change is inevitable in religious congregations, and conflict is virtually so. Secondly, what congregations say they fight about (the identified issue) may be less significant than the underlying organisational factors (the systemic issues). Thirdly, knowing that conflict correlates with structural, cultural and leadership changes is of value for leaders, not so that they can avoid making such changes but so that they can prepare for the resistance and conflict that is likely to result. Finally, effective congregational leaders will use the tools of their own tradition – including Scripture and ritual – to facilitate the change process.

Lang's (2002:22) earlier statement that "…one of the things we learn early in life is that change equals conflict," is challenged in Brubaker's (2009:110) work. He contends that "'Where there is change, there is conflict' may be too simple a description. Where there are insufficiently planned changes to the core meaning-making functions and power relationships of the congregation, there is likely to be conflict may be a less memorable phrase…," which Brubaker believes "…to be a more accurate conclusion." It is not so much the "What" but the "How" of change that creates conflict.

3.3   Normalcy and necessity of conflict

Hands are clapped to give praise to God (healthy), to attract people's attention (grey area), or as an indication of an intent to hit someone (unhealthy). The action of bringing hands together is the same. Only the force and intent varies. So it is with conflict. Conflict is all around us, and is necessary (Bullard, 2008:11–12).

3.3.1   Conflict is normal

Conflict affects all relationships as "…no individuals living closer together in a close and intimate relationship can expect a conflict-free existence" (Galvin & Brommel, 1982:177). The first recorded conflict can be found in Genesis 3, which Palmer (1990:5) claims as the origin of conflict and "…is a natural part of our personal, professional and congregational lives" (Nuechterlein, 2000:144). "Conflict is part of the human predicament. It is real and seemingly endless. Even the most calm congregation and caring relationship may have conflict brooding just beneath the surface" (Everist, 2004:vii).

Any thought that Christian congregations should not experience conflict is a misconception and was refuted by Cosgrove and Hatfield (1994b:42): "Conflict is

unavoidable in church families. In this sense it is natural." This was substantiated through research by Gangel and Canine (2002:129) who identified common misconceptions of what conflict is, one of which is:

Conflict is abnormal. Some people seek to completely rid relationships of all struggle. They consider it improper, if not deviant, to expect conflict to be part of human experience. "Normal people do not fight." Unfortunately, life does not agree with this viewpoint. As long as we live in this earthly body conflict must be considered as a normal part of our day-today living. To expect otherwise demonstrates an unrealistic view.

Congregants often become anxious when conflict is experienced as they are oblivious of its potential and purpose in the life of the church. "Believers in churches often demonise conflict. They view it as the great destroyer of unity when, in fact, it is a normal part of the family experience" (Quick, 2003:64). This confirms an earlier contention by Cosgrove and Hatfield (1994b:19–20) that

…conflict is normal in family life, and the emotions that go with it (anger, frustration, exasperation) are also normal. It is impossible to give a simple definition of conflict, except to say, that it is the expression (in words and actions) of disharmony between different opinions and desires present in all human systems.

Differences should be expected since people come into churches from a wide variety of backgrounds that have determined their attitudes, beliefs, and values and meaning of church (Kale & McCullough, 2003:13). These differences are not of a sinful nature in themselves: They relate to differences in culture, worship style, use of technology, and missional focus, amongst a myriad of others. Despite the reasoning in the foregoing arguments, in accepting conflict as normal without any reference to sin, there are authors who declare that

…church conflict should not surprise us. We are sinners. We do not do what we know to be right, because we have competing desires caught up in a cosmic battle. We want to love God, but our love of self is strong. We want to be good shepherds, but we are not good. We are, all of us, conflicted. Rebellion flows through our veins (Van Yperen, 2002:102).

Poirier (2006:14) leaves no room for misunderstanding his perspective in stating that

…as a church we must learn to view parties to a dispute not simply as individuals with competing interests. We must see them as who they are: brothers and sisters in the body of Christ who are caught in the rebellion and bondage of sin, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and called to love and serve one another in the community bounded by gospel, sacrament, and discipline.

Although conflict is normal,

…not all conflict is healthy: Conflict is normal in family life, but the repetition of the same conflict (or the same sorts of conflict) over and over without resolution suggests a problem in the congregational family – a problem that can be treated only if the system is treated as a whole. A systems approach means viewing so-called problem people as likely signs of wider un-health in the church family (Cosgrove & Hatfield, 1994a:20).

Congregations can be the best of places, or the worst. "Congregations are the sites of not only regular praise and worship but also persistent social conflict. Conflict in congregations appears to be nearly as ubiquitous as congregations themselves" (Brubaker, 2009:1).

3.3.2 Conflict is necessary

We could not live our lives without conflict: it is necessary for life. It is also a very "…necessary part of the Christian experience, as the old self comes in conflict with the new self. Daily we are in conflict to become Christlike" (Bullard, 2008:12). Congregations should not avoid confronting their challenges for fear of creating conflict. Rather they should embrace them, journey with them, in order to become conflict literate. Such is Bullard's (2008:12) conviction.

Social conflict is a phenomenon of human creation, launched naturally in relationships. It is a phenomenon that transforms events, the relationships in which conflict occurs, and indeed its very creators. It is a necessary element in transformative human construction and reconstruction of social organisation and realities. As such, transformation more closely acknowledges what social scientists have been suggesting for some time about the role and dynamics of social conflict: it moves through certain predictable phases transforming relationships and social organisation (Lederach, 1995:17).

Bullard (2008:12) sternly states that a person in a congregation

…in which no conflict exists is probably in a congregation without strong Kingdom commitments. The book of Acts details how conflict was a necessary ingredient in the spread of the gospel. Conflict is a necessary part of the Christian experience, as the old self comes in conflict with the new self. Daily we are in conflict to become more Christlike. Therefore, we should not be afraid of healthy conflict. Rather, we should welcome it as an opportunity to bring forth positive spiritual and social change to the love of Christ, and the fellowship of the congregation.

The first thee of Bullard's levels of conflict, as summarised in Table 3.2 on page 114, represent typical healthy conflict. The themes are all 'Getting to yes!' where the focus of these is to find agreement or attaining resolution. It is therefore helpful to be reminded that there is nothing wrong with Christians experiencing disagreement or being passionate regarding beliefs. Strauch (2011:3) clearly supports this by explaining that

…this is how we learn, how we sharpen and correct our thinking, and how we help others to improve. The Holy Spirit often uses the emotional upheaval that accompanies disagreement and conflict to get our attention and drive us to make necessary changes in our families, churches, and personal lives. Conflict can help us to discover our character weaknesses, correct mistaken theological ideas, sharpen our beliefs, refine our plans, grow in wisdom and life experience, learn to trust God during difficult times, and deepen our prayer life.

Conflict is also necessary to engage injustices, oppression, and evil and is a source of energy to do so, writes Porter (2010:11). "In this regard, when we experience conflict, one of our first responses can be, 'Congratulations! You are alive and dealing with an important issue'."

3.4   Conflict and systems theory

The dominant world view in Western society, writes Halstead (1998:26)

…leads us to break reality into pieces, to focus on isolated individuals and on linear cause/effect explanations to gain understanding and control. Consequently, we have trouble seeing the larger picture and perceiving the interrelationships in the whole. This fragmented way of thinking blinds us to feedback loops, especially to the way we participate in and reinforce the very system we want to change…

whereas "…system concepts are windows to a whole new way of thinking and seeing at all levels of life" (Halstead, 1998:40). In pastoral practice, this means that our most productive direction will be to work with the culture and systemic organisation of the church rather than to deal with individuals (Stevens & Collins, 1993:xviii).

Interpersonal or intergroup conflict occurs within a social environment and context such as an organisation, a social or sports club, a workplace, a church or a family. To understand the organisational perspective, it is best viewed through the lens of a system, explain Crowther and Green (2004:21) and define a system as

…a set of components or activities related in such a way that the behaviour of any component will affect the status of the system. By thinking of the organisation as a system we can see that we can effect change in the organisation by affecting one part of that organisation.

A relational system could be a social system or a family system, which can be described as a group of people working toward the accomplishment of common goals. Within such systems, theorists have identified "...technical terms for describing the three principles of a living system: holism, open synergy, and isomorphism" (Pattison, 1977:6). *Holism* means that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. *Open synergy* refers to the parts of the whole working together and reinforcing one another.

Isomorphism is the systemic purpose shared by all the subsystems. Similarly, Lang (2002:40) states that systems theory "…looks at groups, including congregations, as complex emotional systems in which all the people involved are independent yet interconnected." However, people are often reluctant to identify themselves as having a group identity or mentality in today's individualistic culture. The above confirms Pattison's (1977:4) statement that life must be understood as both individualistic and group rather than one or the other. Pattison continued by explaining that

> *…when we individualist — people of our time — deny that we have a group identity we deny a central dimension of ourselves. For human existence is rooted in two sources. Individual identity and group identity are both necessary. They are vital, reciprocal to each other. Life is not individual or group but both, and identity must be seen also in its systemic dimensions.*

Although a congregation may be viewed as an organisation, the outcome of Friedman's work based on the systems theory of Dr Murry Bowen, as explained in Papero (1990), concluded that "…the same process was often the story of churches and synagogues," namely that system theory, specifically family systems theory, is applicable to congregations (Friedman, 1985:x). Cosgrove and Hatfield (1994:5) concur by indicating that "…behind the official systems of the local church, its offices, boards, committees, etc., there is another system, a *familylike system,* which powerfully determines the way that church members relate to one another, do business together, care for one another, and fight with one another." A decade earlier, Friedman (1985:19–39) had determined that a family system (or model) comprised five interrelated concepts which distinguished it from the individual model as follows:

- *The idea of the identified patient -* the person in the family that displays the obvious symptom. However it is understood that it is the whole family that is sick and not just the one individual. The purpose of the term 'identified patient' is to avoid isolating the 'problemed' family member from the overall relationship system of the family;

- The concept of *homoeostasis* (balance) – the tendency of any set of relationships to strive perpetually, in self-corrective ways, to preserve the organising principles of its existence. Thus conceptualising conflict within a family system as the outcome of imbalance that occurred in the network of previous relationships;

- *The differentiation of self* – the capacity for some awareness of an individual's own position in the relationship system, how it is affected by balance forces, and how changes in each individual's functioning can in turn influence that homeostasis;

- *The extended family field* – refers to one's original nuclear family plus one' relatives. It considers all members of the family, not only parents (individual theory) as important factors and part of the system; and

- *The emotional triangle* – formed by any three persons or issues. When any two of these become uncomfortable with one another, they will 'triangle in' or focus upon a third person, or issue, as a way of stabilising their relationship with one another.

The concepts and understanding gained through the above contribute to appreciating family systems that exist within a congregation.

"The family systems lens allows us to view congregations as interconnected emotional systems with particular attention to patterns of anxiety and the critical role of congregational leaders" (Brubaker, 2009:4).

Unfortunately, systems are not always as unified or harmonious as advocated by Pattison's principles. Systems can be unhealthy and dysfunctional sanctioning abuse and

> *…tolerate troublemakers not only to avoid open conflict but also because the group perceives that it derives some benefit from the offending persons and perhaps even from the 'unacceptable' behaviour. Troublemakers are sometimes tolerated because they serve a function in the system (Cosgrove & Hatfield, 1994:96).*

For example, wealthy troublemakers are often tolerated because of their financial support to the church. Founding families are sometimes tolerated more than others.

A method of conflict analysis related to family systems is called mapping (Cosgrove & Hatfield, 1994:101–122). Mapping assists in identifying the various aspects of the system, especially the relationship between (a) the participants, (b) family rules, and (c) the goals of those involved. "It is usually most helpful to begin by mapping a typical moment of conflict in the life of the congregation" (Cosgrove & Hatfield, 1994:101). Mapping has the following five principal categories:

- *Narrative* – describing the story that includes the conflict, within the congregation;

- *Players* – drawing in the major characters, subsystems or families, affiliations and coalitions;

- *Boundaries* – identifying principal subsystems, and determining where the various players reside;

- *Goals and rules of the family game* – clarifying the dynamics and inner logic of the family system observed and experienced through the interactions of players; and

- *Tests of when mapping is complete* – determining whether the big picture is evident, together with an understanding of how the various parts of the system relate.

The authors warn that "mapping is not enough" and

> *…by keeping in mind that a map is only one way of looking at the church, you will probably avoid using its symbols as pigeonholes, as if you had sufficiently comprehended individuals or groups of people as human beings and children of God merely by defining them as 'parents' or 'independent children' (1994:122).*

When conflict erupts in a family system, "…there's no room for blaming individuals because if something unhealthy is going on in a family or congregation, all the participants are letting it happen" (Lang, 2002:41).

Brubaker (2009:4) warns about glibly applying family systems theory and utilises general system theory in his research and analysis of change and conflict:

> *An FST (family systems theory) lens alone is insufficient to understand complex congregational systems. While FST has great explanatory value for single-cell systems such as family sized congregations, it does not fully explain the complex organisational dynamics of larger congregational systems.*

General systems approach treats the organisation as an organic, interconnected system that includes particular components such as structure, culture, leadership, and environment. Where family systems theory perceives the congregation as an emotional system, the general systems theory offers language and concepts to understand the congregation as a social system as well (Friedman, 1985, in Brubaker, 2009:5). The concepts within the general systems theory, as a social system, identified by Brubaker (2009:4–18) are the following:

- *Structure:* This includes organisational structure (defined in bye-laws), decision-making structure (range from congregational to episcopal), physical structure (layout of buildings, worship spaces, fellowship areas, amongst others), and influence of congregation's age and size;

- *Culture:* While embracing individuals from multiple cultural contexts, congregations develop their own unique cultures. Culture is observed through rituals (practices that a congregation undertakes on a regular basis to express its fundamental beliefs), and artefacts (physical symbols that represent a deeper meaning, such as a crucifix on the wall, a pulpit, and an altar). Rituals and artefacts symbolise deeper values and norms that are important to organisational members;

- *Environment:* All organisations are immersed in social, cultural, legal, political, economic, technical, and physical environments. As congregations adapt to changes in any of these environments to remain relevant, they experience internal changes;
- *Change:* This may occur for whatever reason (environmental adaptation, physical necessity, among others), and in any area of the organisation and affects the whole;
- *Leadership:* This carries symbolic importance of power and authority, and a significant role as change agent within the organisational system; and
- *Conflict:* Establishing timeframes and causal direction of conflict - when it is an effect of other organisational changes and when it is a cause of such change - is essential.

Systems theory teaches us that churches are systems with interconnected parts. Within this framework there are a few basic concepts that affect conflict in the church. Firstly, the closer the conflict is to the centre of the church, the greater the impact on the church as a whole. Secondly, all systems serve some purpose, whether or not the people in the system know what the purpose is – confusion of purpose is fertile ground for conflict.   Thirdly, systems achieve their purpose by giving balance and order to the work of the church.   Fourthly, systems have 'rules' that govern how people communicate in the network. Fifthly, almost all systems are made up of a collection of smaller groups or cliques. And finally, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Kale & McCullough, 2003:75–78).

3.5   Predispositioned responses to conflict

When a conflict exists, a problem exists, and a problem exists because of a real or apparent incompatibility of parties' needs or interests. The ideal response to conflict is taking collaborative steps to solve identified problems. Addressing conflicts means finding solutions that meet the needs of all involved parties to the greatest possible degree, and thus maximising joint satisfaction (Bush & Folger, 1994:56). At the outset, all approaches attempt to "…end something destructive and build something desired" (Lederach, 2003:33).

Communicative responses to conflict "…begin with our attitude toward conflict, the way we look at conflict and respond to conflict. Our attitude frames our responses to conflict and determines whether it becomes destructive or constructive" (Porter, 2010:11). Communication is central to conflicts, be that of a verbal and/or action nature. Styles of communication "…exhibit predispositions or tendencies regarding the way conflict is managed in groups. Individual group members may exhibit a specific style or an entire

group may adopt a normative preference for a certain style of conflict management" (Kuhn & Poole, 2000 in Rothwell, 2015:350). These communication styles are known by different terminologies of which "Conflict resolution behaviour" (Thomas & Kilman, 1974); "Approaches to conflict" (Katz & Lawyer, 1985); "Conflict styles inventory" (Kraybill, 2005) and "Styles of conflict management" (Rothwell, 2015) are the most prevalent.   Rothwell (2015:350) has an affinity for the term 'management' over 'resolution' in discussing conflict. This supports the approach that

> *…it is more appropriate for a systems perspective. Resolution suggests settling conflict by ending it, as if that is always desirable. Since conflict can be an essential catalyst for growth in a system, increasing conflict may be required to evoke change (Johnson and Johnson, 2000:128).*

3.5.1   Typical predisposition response models to conflict

We are all familiar with the 'fight-or-fight', or 'escape-or-attack' responses when our lives are threatened (Poirier, 2006:37). People use escape responses when they are more interested in avoiding a conflict than in resolving it. Conversely, attack responses are used when people are more interested in emerging as the victor in a conflict than preserving relationships (Sande & Johnson, 2011:38–39). These responses can be categorised into a number of grid models. The development of the five classical responses or approaches to conflict is rooted in managerial science, or leadership, to be exact. Miller (2014:48–50) provides an overview of the Managerial Grid established by Robert Blake and Jane Mouton (1964) and used to enhance organisational effectiveness and efficiency and stimulate the satisfaction and creativity of workers. The premise is that leaders would be most effective when they exhibit both concern for people and concern for production (tasks). "Blake and Mouton's (1964) Managerial Grid can be accurately described as the conceptual grandparent of conflict styles taxonomies in the field of communication" (Nicotera, 1995:25). Through their research, Blake and Mouton developed their five prototypical leadership or management styles which are represented in the following Figure 3.3:

Figure 3.3: Blake & Mouton's managerial grid
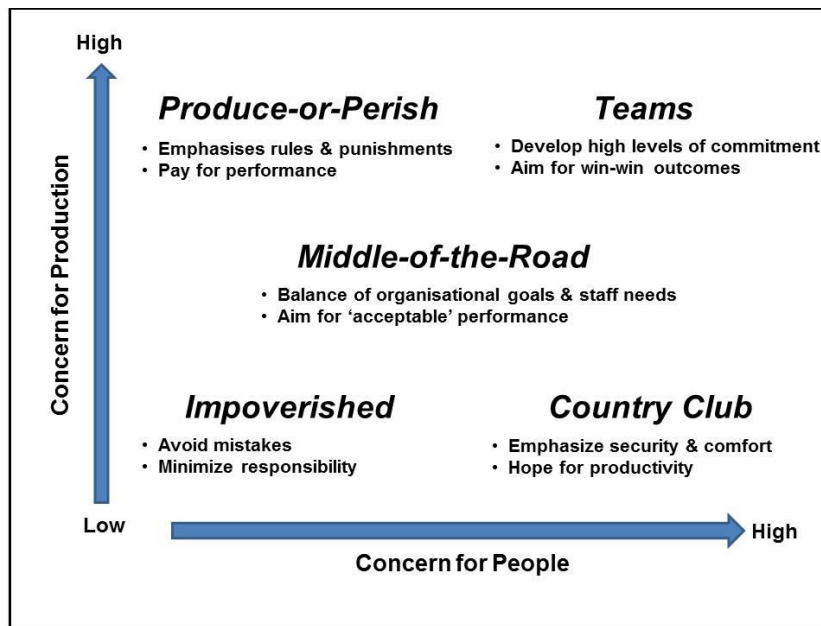
(Source: Nicotera, 1995:25)

In an edited publication by Nicotera (1995:24), we are informed of a

> *…large influential body of work that explicates predispositions for conflict management styles (Hall, 1969; Putnam and Wilson, 1982:629–652; Rahim, 1983:268–376; Ross and DeWine, 1982, 1987, 1988:389–413; Sternberg and Dobson, 1987:115–126; Sternberg and Soriano, 1984; Sternberg and Dobson, 1987:889–935; Thomas and Kilmann, 1974). The research identifies dominant orientations to conflict management as they are linked to a variety of predictor or outcome measures.*

Theorists studying organisational conflict have used the basic structure of the Managerial or Leadership Grid as a way of exploring the styles and strategies used when interpreting conflict. The analysis of conflict styles was further developed by Thomas during 1976 and reconceptualised the two dimensions as 'concern for self' and 'concern for others'. Thomas's five styles lie at various points of this conflict grid (Miller, 2014:162).

Thomas and Kilmann leveraged Blake and Mouton's framework to develop the renowned classical conflict modes, represented in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4: Thomas & Kilmann conflict modes
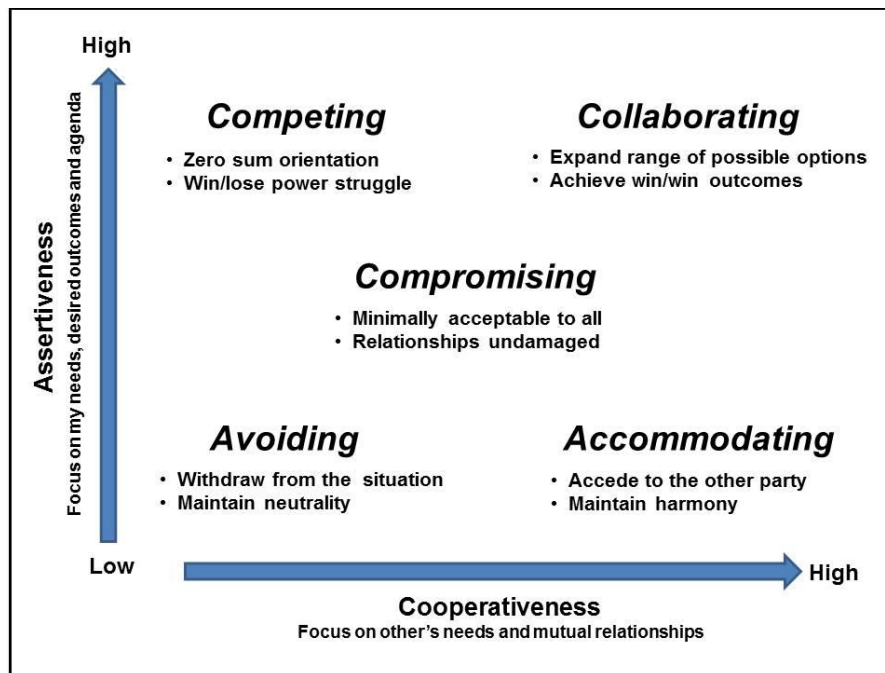
(Source: Rahim, 2001:30)

The stance of the high assertive, low cooperative competing mode is that there are only two possible outcomes: win-lose. This style is sometimes referred to as obliging, which "…is associated with attempting to play down the differences and emphasising commonalities to satisfy the concern of the other party". The avoiding mode attempts not to be identified with the 'other' in the conflict, thereby demonstrating a low concern for self and others, regarded as "…an unconcerned attitude toward the issues or parties involved in conflict" (Rahim, 2001:29–30). There is no initial intent to hurt others, or to damage the relationship. However, as the prime importance is to satisfy personal or organisational goals, there is a willingness to sacrifice the relationship in order to accomplish this (Shawchuck, 1983:27). The compromising mode or style of interpersonal conflict management signifies an intermediate concern for self and others which "…involves give-and-take or sharing whereby both parties give up something to make a mutually acceptable decision" (Rahim, 2001:30). The more cooperative collaborating mode seeks to get all stakeholders to work together in gaining an understanding of what is important to each party. Once this is established, a solution is then worked out (Shearouse, 2011:76–77). The accommodating mode yields to the concerns and desires of others, showing a vastly higher regard for social relationships than for task accomplishment. When necessary, personal concessions are made in order to achieve agreement (Rothwell, 2015:352).

Another well utilised model is that of Ronald Kraybill (2005), depicted in Figure 3.5, and developed during the 1980s and updated in 2004. Kraybill, too, utilised the Blake and Mouton grid as framework.

Figure 3.5: Kraybill's conflict style inventory
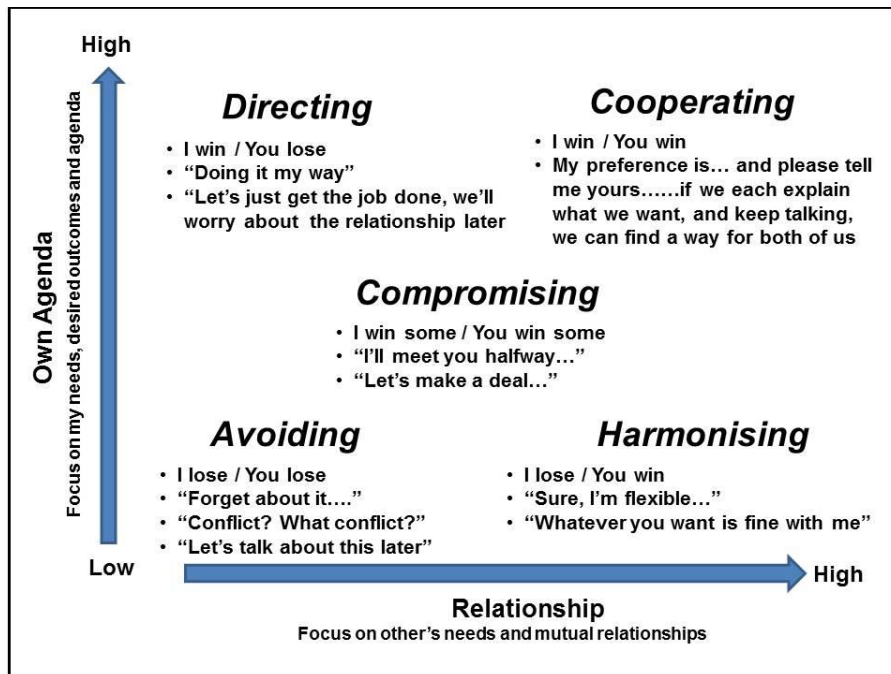
(Source: Kraybill, 2005:65)

Kraybill's directing and harmonising styles correspond to Thomas and Kilmann's competing and accommodating modes. Shawchuck (1983:`13-32), Weeks (1994:11–31), and Shearouse (2011:61–62) all utilise the Kraybill fundamentals, and in some cases, terminology. Shearouse parallels a 'Task' axis with Kraybill's 'Own Agenda', which she terms 'Self', and explains as follows:

> *The vertical axis represents concern or energy for one's own goals (wants, needs, expectations), or the goals of the group one belongs to. The horizontal axis represents concern for the relationship or for the other person (or people), his or her wants, needs, and expectations, while the figure helps to explain and understand these differences, bear in mind that there are no distinct between these approaches.*

Bullard (2008) and Everist (2004) extend the classical Kraybill model to seven (7) response categories, comparatively presented and interpreted by the researcher in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Comparative response categories

		Classic Model	Everist	Bullard
Fight	Contention		Confrontation	
		Direting	Competition	
			Control	Compel
----	Toward Collaboration	Compromising	Compromise	Negotiate
Flight		Avoiding	Avoidance	Avoid
		Harmony	Accommodation	Accommodate
				Support
				Persuade
		Cooperating	Collaboration	Collaborate

(Researcher's interpretation)

Each of the above has a technical, psychometric analysis which assists in defining a person, or group's predisposition under varying circumstances. These technicalities are not necessary, or fundamental to this research. Suffice it to understand firstly, the diagrammatical representations above; secondly, that there are no 'wrong' styles; and thirdly, that each style is relevant to varying and specific sets of circumstances or situations

3.5.2   Conditions for conflict management styles

Table 3.4 below displays the five (5) common classifications of responses to conflict and their suitability or unsuitable contexts suggested by Nicotera (1995), Rahim (2002), and Rothwell (2015). The styles are the following (i) *Avoidance* - to avoid conflict is to ignore it or pretend that it does not exist; (ii) *Accommodating* - to accommodate conflict is to allow it to happen, tolerate it or to accede to the demands of only one side of the conflict; (iii) *Competing (or coercion)* - as a response to conflict is manipulating the situation to one's own advantage. For the most part these first three responses to conflict are unproductive and may contribute to escalation. The final two response options of (iv) *compromise* and (v) *collaboration* are more productive and are aimed at using communication to solve the problem. The church, perhaps more than other institutions, avoids confrontation because "…many congregations operate with a rule that says 'Christians don't fight'." (Cosgrove & Hatfield, 1994:96).

Table 3.4: Conditions for suitability of styles

Suitable	Style	Unsuitable
Unsafe to confront Trivial issues	**Avoiding**	Issues are significant Relationships may be damaged if issues or disagreements are ignored
Issues are trivial Disagreements are significant only to one party Maintaining close relationships (Particularly in collectivist cultures) Large power imbalance	**Accommodating**	Complex issues Issues and disagreements are significant to all parties Social relationship are temporary Relatively equal power
Complex issues Approached for first time No time pressure	**Collaborating**	Issues are trivial Last resort! Time pressure
Time pressure Last resort Troublesome party unresponsive to alternatives	**Competing**	No time constraint First option Concern for positive social relations critical (Particularly in collectivist cultures)
Integrative solution not available Better to have a temporary agreement than nothing	**Compromising**	Initial goal Giving up too soon on critical issues

(Source: Shearouse, 2011:79–80)

3.5.3   Predisposed approach issues

Weeks (1994:11–32) cites the classical responses as "…popular (but ineffective) approaches to conflict resolution…" when used independently. Of these, "…the most frequent, the most commonly chosen, is avoidance" (Augsburger, 1992:234). However, issues of faith, doctrine, or theology cannot simply be avoided. Neither can they be solved by compromise. Heresy cannot exist on a middle ground, nor does a compromise on issues of sin and 'un-biblical' lifestyle. When issues in church conflicts are deemed to have a right and wrong, a black or white answer, compromise is just not an option. Church issues are often very sensitive and a lack of courage to address them, often out of fear of how the others may react, makes confrontation difficult. All people generally want to be accepted and included, and conflict has the potential for alienation. Awkwardness and fear cause us to avoid most of these difficult exchanges. Patterson *et al.* (2011:3) refer to these exchanges as crucial conversations:

> *By definition, crucial conversations are about tough issues. Unfortunately, its human nature to back away from discussions we fear will hurt us or make things worse. We're masters at avoiding these tough conversations.*

Avoiding conflict may come to us naturally, but is it helpful or does it make the situation worse? Failing to address conflict and simply wishing that it would resolve itself usually contributes to conflict escalating from a simple problem to solve, to possibly becoming a fight to win. "Most people, especially those in close relationships, fear conflict and seek ways to avoid it. But avoiding conflict can lead to further difficulties because the underlying problems causing it haven't been solved" (Galvin & Brommel, 1982:177). When conflict is avoided, and not addressed and resolved, it can have a devastating impact on institutions of all kinds, and most certainly in the church. Wakefield (1987:22–23) warns that

> *…when conflict erupts, be ready for six negative outcomes: (i) Watch valuable energy being wasted; (ii) Watch relationships being damaged or destroyed; (iii) Watch problems become enmeshed with complications, diversions, and roadblocks; (iv) Watch creativity waste away; (v) Watch self-confidence erode; and (vi) Watch God's honour be attacked by our unchristian behaviour.*

Hence, avoidance should not be an option. The church is no stranger to avoiding confrontation and often chooses to just live with the turmoil some people bring to the congregation. Members can often agree on the cause of the problem, but not on the solution:

> *...typically the congregation seems all too willing to tolerate troublemaking rather than to take concerted action against it. Some pastors may interpret this to mean that they and their congregations largely agree in the diagnosis of the problem ("It's so-and-so, who always does such-and-such") but not in its remedy: confrontation (Cosgrove & Hatfield, 1994a:96).*

Avoiding conflict may often provide short-term gain but is eventually replaced with long-term pain. There is usually a cost to taking the easy way out. "While many of us are afraid of 'real', it is the unreal conversation that should scare us to death. Whoever said talk is cheap was mistaken. Unreal conversations are incredibly expensive for organizations and for individuals" (Scott, 2002:7).

In additional to the denial-avoidance strategy, where any conflict is dealt with by denying it exists, Boulding (1962:309–325) includes a 'winning' conquest strategy, and a 'solving' confrontation–negotiation strategy. A winning strategy is where the purpose is to severely reduce the power and influence of one's opponent through manipulation or intimidation, or both. He views a solving strategy as most productive in that all parties openly, cautiously and respectfully approach each other with their differences in

search of a solution. Communication, particularly a willingness to listen to each other in an empathic manner, is key in this latter approach (Richard & Olsen, 1976:8).

"If all goes well, confrontations not only allow for exchange of essential information but also increase the authenticity of the relationship and the personal integrity experienced in the relationship" explains Walton (1969:145–146), and adds that

> …if they are not well managed, confrontations may further polarise the individuals, increase the costs of the conflict or discharge the principals from further efforts to resolve the conflict. One task of conflict management is to maximise the potential gains from a confrontation and to minimise the risks for the participants.

Confrontation is seen as essential in some cultures while not so in other cultures. "Confrontation, as a direct address between parties, is an optional step in conflict resolution and is rarely utilized in most of the world...In Western cultures it is viewed as the optimal, not optional, step for complete resolution and utilization of an interpersonal or group conflict" (Augsburger, 1992:239).

Confrontation is often viewed as something negative and an example of conflict rather than a means of resolving conflict. A confrontation, however, does not have to be negative.

> To confront means to hold someone accountable, face to face. Although the term can sound abrasive, that's not what we have in mind. In fact, when confrontations are handled correctly, both parties talk openly and honestly. Both are candid and respectful (Patterson et al., 2004:4).

3.6   Leadership and conflict

The dynamics of congregational conflict are pointedly different from secular disputes. Oftentimes, disputes between labour and management in secular environments are inspired and resolved through a greed incentive: 'What's in it for me?' Once parties are content with their achievement, an article of agreement is drafted, signed and productivity is normalised. Congregational leadership has a higher standard in conflict situations in that it seeks spiritual benefits for all stakeholders (Susek, 1999:136). George Verwer (2010:10), founder of Operation Mobilisation, strongly believes that

> …where there is genuine disagreement, let there be loving and constructive discussion and even, sometimes, loving and constructive confrontation. Let us be honest about our differences. As Christians with a commitment to take the gospel to the world, we will of course sometimes have genuine disagreements. On some occasions there will be the need to take a hard line.

3.6.1 Attitude

During conflict leadership should encourage an attitude and approach that seeks to keep the group in conflict healthy through (i) empowering individuals to use their best efforts in the conflict; (ii) arousing confidence in the group and its leadership; (iii) providing or helping the group discover common goals; and (iv) providing or helping the group discover the means of achieving the goals (Leas, 1982:29). At the same time, spiritual leaders need to care for themselves and are called to childlikeness, Shawchuck and Heuser suggesting (1999:31) that

> *… they may allow God to carry them through tough places to teach them the lessons they need to learn, and to imbue them with the playful creativity needed to lead the congregation into an unknown, and often uncertain, future.*

Susek (1999:125–126) provides a scriptural illustration in the context of leadership by cautioning that most people who appear problematic are not sheep in wolves' clothing. They are sheep in sheep's clothing that do not mean harm, but also do not know how to conduct themselves during times of trouble. "Be slow in your reaction to those who overreact. Don't be guilty of killing sheep for the sake of personal comfort. A sheep may need serious shearing, but not a throat slashing."

At the heart of effective resolution "…is a set of constructive attitudes and good communication skills. Repeatedly, I find our attitude toward conflict and communication determine the effectiveness of what we do" (Mayer, 2010:xii). Verwer (2010:10), while addressing the normal existence of disagreement, encourages people to keep the bigger picture in view through focusing on one of Christianity's central commissions in Matthew 28:18–20 (NLT):

> *Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

Verwer (2010:10–14) points to the records of conflict in the New Testament as evidence of the presence of conflict experienced in early Christianity in carrying out that Great Commission, wherein congregations too journey today. In doing so, Verwer indicates how leadership can change the world despite opposition, challenge and conflict. This can be effectively achieved through "…simple, truthful conversation where we each have a chance to speak, we each feel heard, and we each listen well. This is how great

changes begin, when people begin talking to each other about their experiences, hopes and fears" (Wheatley, 2002:159).

3.6.2   Approach

Leas (1982:28) distinguishes between two types of leaders, namely transactional and transformational. Transactional leadership is where goods or services or other items of value are exchanged, but "…there is not a joint effort of persons with common aims acting for the collective interests of all concerned," whereas transformational leadership is based on goals and purposes of common interest and "…evaluates those goals against standards of improvement rather than simply the satisfaction of needs." Leas further explains that

> *…empowering others means that transformational leadership is used to help them feel strong enough to deal with the issues and the relationships that are confronting the organization. Transactional leadership leaves everybody where they were when the conflict began (1982:30).*

People will engage in aggressive conflict more willingly when feeling weak. The role then, of a transformational leader is to empower people in such a way that issues can be addressed corporately without hostility. A transformational leader does not overpower or trade with the followers, but rather inspires and strengthens them. The leader guides the followers toward accomplishment of common goals through instilling confidence in them (Leas, 1982:32).

Leaders need to be peacemakers rather than just peace keepers, a distinction that becomes a hindrance as definition and identification escapes many. Peace keepers have a passive bias which tends to avoid conflict and which does not solve problems nor provide effective leadership amid conflict. Avoidance generally leads to anarchy, not peaceful resolution. On the other hand, peacemakers approach conflict front and centre, and are resolute to realise peace based truth, mutual understanding, even forgiveness. This is a difficult and painful task, yet executed with the necessary mix of justice, mercy, and grace, is the only hope for making peace. In summary, peacekeepers attempt to sweep things under the carpet, while peacemakers endeavour to sweep issues out the door (Susek, 1999:126).

What many think is peacemaking, Poirer (2006:38) actually calls "peace-faking." Most, including leaders who avoid addressing conflict, assume peace is established, whereas it is an avoidance measure. This responsive action may imitate peacemaking, but it is

not. In demonstrating avoidance behaviour, the person or leader removes him- or herself "…from the responsibility to respond to conflict biblically. There are three categories of escape responses: denial, flight, and suicide." Denial pretends that conflict does not exist, where the leader needs to guide the parties toward facing the conflict. Flight is simply running away from the conflict, where the leader needs to focus on bringing the parties together in facing the problem issues. Suicide is the ultimate escape route of which leaders are not immune to having to deal with (Poirier, 2006:39).

A sound approach to leadership in a congregation is necessary in order to take up the challenges it demands. Shawchuck and Heuser (1999:48–55) propose the leader develop a spirituality for leadership (and ministry) comprising the following: (i) *A spirituality of waiting* "…in loving attentiveness to the loving Lord," wherein scripture is vital and central for effectiveness; (ii) *A covenantal, communal spirituality* as "…the community does your faith when you cannot do for it for yourself" in helping leaders to risk gazing into their real selves; (iii) *A holistic life-style of spirituality* where spirituality is not "…separated from all human experience" and "…stresses the connections among the leaders' varied interests, responsibilities and experiences"; and (iv) *The examen of consciousness* – that is "…noticing how God is moving and affecting us…" through enlightenment seeking prayer, reflective thanksgiving, evaluation of actions, contrition and sorrow, and hopeful resolution for the future, ushering in greater faith and trust in God.

3.6.3   Influence and authority

"Leadership is influence. That's it. Nothing more; nothing less…that is, the ability to get followers…" (Maxwell, 2005:1).

A congregational leader who is able to influence a conflict process positively would need to have earned leader acceptance (Stevens & Collins, 1993:10). There are numerous ways in which this can be achieved. Two are discussed in this section before addressing authority challenges. Credibility and acceptance are cultivated through supporting people to ask the right questions through listening (Rendle, 1998:17). Leaders who lead people to ask questions, and sensitively ask questions themselves, drop their protective barriers, are more open, more vulnerable, and by just being who they really are, strengthen relationships and build acceptance (Marquardt, 2014:240).

Another way this is achieved, although it takes more time, was identified by Tuckman (2001:66–79), who suggested five movements of a group in accepting its leadership.

These are (i) *Forming* – a time of orientation to the task, testing and dependence; (ii) *Storming* – a resistance to group influences and task requirement which could usher in intragroup conflict; (iii) *Norming* – openness to other group members is experienced. This builds cohesiveness and intragroup feeling. New standards evolve, roles are developed; (iv) *Performing* – constructive action develops with more flexibility and functionality. Group energy is channelled toward the task. The final movement is when the group is to be terminated, which is not relevant for this research, called *adjourning* – disengaging, which brings anxiety and even sadness. Once the initial four movements have systematically evolved, the leader has gained leader acceptance.

Despite gaining leader acceptance, there are times when leaders are prohibited from leading in conflict. Poirer (2006:31–32) suggests three classifications of authority issues that impact leader effectiveness. "The first is the challenge over the right of authority, which may be related to the allegiances Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians..." where people pick and choose whom they will follow: in this case, Peter, Apollos, or Paul. This is very evident even in today's congregations. The second authority issue "…is the abuse of authority. Our Lord Jesus frequently emphasises the temptation that church leaders face when given authority." This refers to the temptation to "…lord it over others" by, but not limited to, promoting one's own agenda, ignoring accountability, and being legalistic. The third category is abdication, "the failure to exercise authority." This is not an abuse, but a failure to act, such as neglecting to delegate, as illustrated by Moses' father-in-law's advice in Exodus 18:19-22 and the Hellenistic widows' complaint in Acts 6. In addition, failure to act occurs when leaders are not given the necessary guidelines.

3.6.4   Factors that impact conflict management

There are many factors leadership needs to consider that could have a marked impact on conflict management or resolution. There is no value, or space in this research for an intensive, and detailed exploration of all such factors. The aim of this section is to provide some illustration of such factors as an indication that each instance, episode, or situation regarding conflict has its own context, environment and factors of impact. However, during the literature research, the following were seen to be prevalent:

- **Relational factors** relate to characteristics such as power, or hierarchical position. Miler (2014:170) states that there is a preference toward the competitive style when dealing with subordinates. Conversely, subordinates tend toward accommodating or

avoidance style regarding superiors, according to Putman and Poole (in Jablin, 1987:448).   Miller cites Gayle and Preiss (1998) whose research confirmed an emotional characteristic in resolving conflict where there are relational factors present.

- *Cultural factors* cover organisational, national, or ethnic culture. Citing the work of Brett and Okumura (1998), Miller indicates that national conflict has found different countries to be working from different conflict scripts. Ethnic and racial culture impacts conflict negotiations, explains Miller, referring to Turner and Shutter (2004). Organisations too, have diverse cultures within their personnel that impact conflict management. A classic business school case study refers to a Disneyland situation where labourers argued: "This is no way to treat family," while management's view was "The show must go on," writes Miller (2014:70) referring to Smith and Eisenberg (1987).

- *Communication styles* reflect the specific differences in communicating patterns of individualist and collective cultures,   states Rothwell (2015:364).   Referring to Hall (1981) and Griffin (1994), Rothwell writes that USA and Western European countries typically employ low-context communication whereas collectivist countries such as Latin America and Asia use a high-context communication. "In low-context communication, the listener knows very little and must be told practically everything. In high-context communication, the listener is already 'contexted' and does not need to be given much background information" (Hall & Hall, 1987:183).

3.6.5   Benefits of conflict

Some communities seem to be predisposed to resolve conflict by ending it as soon as possible, rather than to view conflict as an opportunity for personal and communal transformation. Lederach (2003:6), a pioneer in the field of conflict studies, observes

> *...where there are significant past relationships and history, where there are likely to be significant future relationships, where the episodes arise in an organizational, community, or broader social context – here the narrowness of resolution approaches may solve problems but miss the greater potential for constructive change.*

It is important for leadership to communicate that not all conflicts are negative as has been evident in this chapter thus far. However, it is the commonly witnessed ungodly behaviour of believers embroiled in the conflict that is problematical. Even in conflict resulting in a church split, it was

> *…not the disagreement but the nasty politics that accompanied it – the mean words expressed, the angry attitudes and childish behaviours, the awful displays of pride*

and selfishness, the backbiting, the minimising of sin and outright disobedience to God's Word, and lack of forgiveness or interest in reconciliation (Strauch, 2011:3).

Strauch supports the view that the negative side of unresolved conflict has "…less to do with people being skilful than with them being sinful. And that is where the pastor comes in, for Christ has ordained us to be preachers of the gospel of peace – a gospel that alone can uproot the sins of bitterness, envy, pride, and covetousness" (Poirier, 2006:12).

The oftentimes experienced destructive results of conflict have greatly biased many Christians toward viewing conflict within a congregation as a demon, similar to a spreading cancer, to be excised. On the contrary, conflict being correctly handled through good leadership has the possibility to be key "…to new growth and at the cutting edge of positive human development" (Richard & Olsen, 1976:7). Properly managed conflict is a genre of problem solving. Systems do not function *ad infinitum* without encountering problems which need to be solved for the good of the system.

> *Problem solving is a constructive process; conflict is a destructive process. Ideally, problem solving is a commitment by two or more individuals to work together in a positive spirit towards a solution that benefits all...The outcome is healthy, beneficial, and constructive. Not so with conflict. Conflict destroys, tears down, wastes (Wakefield, 1987:22).*

Hence, it is imperative that leadership should be aware of, identify and communicate the benefits that can be gained through the pending conflict. Additional benefits to those argued regarding the 'necessity of conflict' in section 3.3.2 on page 125, are discussed herein. Conflict can have destructive consequences, yet it can have positive outcomes. The consequences of conflicts can be modified or transformed so that "…self-images, relationships, and social structures improve as a result of conflict instead of being harmed by it. Usually this involves transforming perceptions of issues, actions, and other people or groups" (Burgess, 1997:1).

Leas (2012:9–12) identifies numerous practical and positive goals that can be realised through the correct management of conflict. These include, but are not limited to, fear reduction, clear decisions, opportunities for members to influence decisions, the development of individual conflict management skills, the development of guidelines for managing conflict, and learning about issues. In an earlier work, resolution (solve), management (minimise), transformation (change in people and relationships) were framed on a similar list by Schrock-Shenk (1999:35).

Conflict can be both crisis and opportunity for transformation, depending on the approach taking in responding to the conflict. For example, Bush's (1994:83) approach is more ideological and values-driven than a pragmatic settlement-driven mediation mode:

> *…the view that fostering moral growth should be a primary goal of social processes like mediation rests on a belief, grounded in what can be called a Relational vision of human life, that compassionate strength (moral maturity) embodies an intrinsic goodness inherent in human beings. Bringing out that goodness is itself a supremely important human enterprise, because it is the surest if not the only way to produce a truly decent society and because it embodies and expresses the highest and best within us as human beings.*

The benefit is for the individuals involved and lies in harnessing conflict situations for greater empowerment and recognition. Each conflict is an opportunity for personal growth in these two areas. Self-empowerment comes "…through realising and strengthening one's inherent human capacity for dealing with difficulties by engaging in conscious and deliberate reflection, choice and action" (Bush & Folger, 1994:81). There is strengthening of one's capacity in compassionately reaching out to others, particularly those where differences exist. Similarly, Lederach (2003:38) holds relational priorities in high regard irrespective of the type and range of processes applied during the different stages of the conflict: "We must conceptualize multiple change processes that address solutions for immediate problems and at the same time processes that create a platform for longer-term change of relational and structural patterns."

3.7   Approaches to resolving conflict

In addition to the responses in handling conflict discussed in section 3.5, namely 'Predispositioned responses to conflict' on page 130, there are other related measures that have developed over time. The adversarial route used the legal court system which was often a lengthy process which produces winners and losers and mostly failed to address root causes. Resolution came through the application of rights, regulations and rules through presenting argument (Bush & Folger, 1994:15).

The Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) movement was spawned out of the negatives experienced in utilising the adversarial route (Jeong, 1999:165). ADR includes, but is not limited to negotiation, mediation and arbitration. Similarly, the Methodist Church's disciplinary process (section 11.4.2 in the Methodist Book of Order, 2014:137), stipulates that "…in the case of disputes between individuals or groups, all means of pastoral intervention and/or mediation and/or any other appropriate responses have

been exhausted…" before any form of disciplinary hearing or legal alternative be pursued. The application of ADR seeks a conflict that is resolved where the outcome fully meets the needs and interests of all the parties concerned. Such outcome is realised when the parties agree to exploit and share a resource in such a way so as to completely satisfy everyone's values and interests (Burton, 1984:143).

3.7.1 Negotiation

Negotiation can be defined in two ways: (i) a discussion set up or intended to produce a settlement or agreement; and (ii) the act or process of negotiating (Merriam-Webster, 2003). Negotiation is the process, according to Mehnert (2008:2), of making joint decisions when the parties involved have different preferences, gaining what they want in the process. "It is especially significant in today's work settings, where a larger number of people is being offered opportunities to be involved in decisions affecting them and their work than, say a decade ago." Negotiation is a fact of life, according to Fisher and Ury (2012:xxvii) who concur with Mehnert in that

> …more and more occasions require negotiations; conflict is a growth industry. Everyone wants to participate in decisions that affect them; fewer and fewer people will accept decisions dictated by someone else. People differ, and they use negotiation to handle their differences. Whether in business, government, or the family, people reach most decisions through negotiation.

There are two primary kinds of negotiation: distributive and integrative. Distributive negotiation is when there is competition between the parties over a fixed value issue or item where a gain by one side results in a loss by the other. Integrative negotiation finds the parties cooperating to achieve maximum benefit through a contractual integration of interests (Harvard Business School, 2013).

3.7.2 Mediation

Mediation is defined as follows: (i) the act of mediating; intercession; (ii) international law, an attempt to reconcile disputed matters arising between states, esp. by the friendly intervention of a neutral power; and (iii) a method of resolving an industrial dispute whereby a third party consults with those involved and recommends a solution which is not, however, binding on the parties (Merriam-Webster, 2003). Mediation "…can facilitate collaborative, integrative problem solving rather than adversarial, distributive bargaining" (Bush & Folger, 1994:16) and allow parties more "…leverage to argue for their interests than they might in formal legal processes" (Bush & Folger, 1994:18).

3.7.3 Arbitration

Arbitration has two applications: (i) law, the hearing and determination of a dispute, especially an industrial dispute, by an impartial referee selected or agreed upon by the parties concerned and (ii) international law, the procedure laid down for the settlement of international disputes (Merriam-Webster, 2003). Essentially, a "…third party reviews the evidence in the case and imposes a decision that is legally binding on both sides and enforceable in the courts" (O'Sullivan, 2003:324).

3.7.4 Fundamental strategies

The five- (5) level conflict model of Leas referred to on page 114 is used in this explanation. In designing strategies, it is imperative that these are founded on the understanding that "…the level of conflict increases as the emotional involvement goes up and as the trust goes down" and strategies need to be built on managing those changes as follows (Shearouse, 2011:55-58):

- Level 1: *Problems to solve:* This approach begins with clearly stated issues or problems to solve, requires clear communication skills and collaborative solution-seeking approach and relies on good listening skills and ability to identify interests.

- Level 2: *Disagreement:* Guidelines for communication need to be agreed upon so that a common goal can be clarified around which a solution is established. The process attempts to decrease the rising anxiety and difficulty of the necessary conversations.

- Level 3: *Contest:* Fears, distrust and anxiety rise amidst a drive 'to be right'. Clarity of process is essential with the necessary ground rules, identification of required information, and future meetings planned.

- Level 4: *Fight:* External assistance is required from trusted quarters to the satisfaction of all parties. Although conflict may be resolved on all issues, ground rules for future interaction are necessary along with an agreed process of constant monitoring, evaluation and correction.

- Level 5: *Intractable conflict:* External adjudication is required to arrive at a clear decision for implementation and means of monitoring as the power difference between parties may be too great, or there may be serious threats of harm to the parties.

In applying the relevant strategy, it is best to concentrate on interests instead of positions, which is the solution one party seeks to impose on another in finding resolution (Wertheim *et al.*, 2006:98).

3.7.5 Conflict resolution processes

Van Yperen (2202:28) addresses an important concept in finding resolution:

People complain a lot about the roads and those who crew them. But the real problem is underneath. And that's the way it is in most churches. The real conflict lies beneath the surface. What is presented as the 'problem' is usually a symptom of what lies underneath. As long as we treat the symptom, not the underlying problem, the conflict will return. It may lie dormant for a time, but it always comes back. Always.

A sampling of the numerous available resources was investigated that suggest between two (2) to eight (8) tasks or steps need to be taken to attain resolution when conflict occurs. These range from those developed for schools through to large corporations, including the United States Government (USG) departments.

3.7.5.1 Two- (2) task process

A United States Government approach: The *Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework* (Department Of State: Bureau of Public Affairs, 2012) can be applied to multinational corporations, provincial government, local government and organisations that have branches or agencies. The first task is focused on analysing the conflict through evaluating the context of the conflict, seeking an understanding of the core grievances and social/institutional resilience, identifying drivers of conflict and mitigating factors, and describing opportunities for increasing or decreasing conflict. The second task focuses on the activities associated with the conflict, assessing their impact on any drivers of conflict and identifying windows of opportunity for resolution and reconciliation.

3.7.5.2 Four- (4) step process

Derived from family conflict (Crawford & Bodine, 1996:10–11) and workplace conflict, (Saylor Foundation, 2002), the initial emphasis is on separating people from the problem, then identifying and clarifying the root problem and focusing on interests, not positions. The final step is establishing a monitoring procedure on the agreed resolution.

3.7.5.3 Six- (6) step process

This process addressed interpersonal conflict in high schools (McDonald, 2000). In addition to those steps identified in 3.7.5.2, the process is painstakingly explained,

discussed and associated ground rules are introduced. Resolution is found through the inclusion of the parties through brainstorming.

3.7.5.4   Eight- (8) step process

Dr. Weeks (1994:70–234) developed the *Eight Essential Steps to Conflict Resolution* to preserve relationships at work, at home and in the community. Weeks emphasises the need for an effective atmosphere, clarifying perceptions, focusing on both individual and shared needs, and leveraging people's ideas, convictions, outlooks, and actions. He encourages looking toward the future, then learning from the past. Common needs are identified, followed by creating stepping stones to action through developing 'do-ables'. Written mutual benefit agreements which can be monitored should be established.

3.7.6   Biblical approaches

Recognised biblical steps regarding conflict resolution and reconciliation are presented.

3.7.6.1   Reflection on the Matthew 18 principles

Arguably the most frequently quoted biblical passage regarding conflict is Matthew 18: 15-17:

> *If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.*

An appreciation of the layout of Matthew 18 is necessary to understand the application of the three verses above.

- *Matthew 18:1-5* - The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven emphasising the attitude of *humility* (Carter, 2005:362–363).

- *Matthew 18:6-9* - Causing others to stumble. "…it is a serious matter to cause another believer to stumble because of our poor example (Romans 14:13ff; 1 Corinthians 8:9ff)" (Wiersbe, 1996:65).   Bruner (2004:213–214) emphasises the seriousness of this irresponsibility by drawing attention to the 'millstone'.

- *Matthew 18:10-14* - The Parable of the Wandering Sheep. Plural pronouns and verbs are used indicating a corporate call to *caring* for one another as the right conduct in the church (Hagner, 1995:525).

- *Matthew 18:15-20* - The three attitudes above of humility, responsibility and caring are addressed preceding these verses on handing conflict.

- *Matthew 18:21-35* - The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant highlights the importance of displaying a *merciful* attitude toward others; adding a fourth attitude.

Newman and Stine (1992:569) suggest a more appropriate description as being: "What to do (to help) a brother who has sinned" or "How to help an erring brother." In this act, there is no harbouring of a grudge against the offender, nor is there any action in the presence of the unbelieving. Rather, the offender is taken aside, shown his fault, and if he owns and makes reparation for it, greater service is given to the offender than even justice to the offended (Jamieson *et al.*, 1961:50). The second phase, when necessary, is founded on Deuteronomy 19:15: "Every accusation may be upheld by the testimony of two or more witnesses." The presence of one or two witnesses is for the protection of the sinner as the admonisher could well be wrong (Newman & Stine, 1992:569). The church, when brought in to play, facilitates an opportunity for the offender to seek forgiveness which the congregation has granted him by accepting his repentance and assuring him of pardon (Lenski, 2008:701). Lastly, if even this fails, "…regard him as no longer a brother Christian, but as one 'without' — as the Jews did Gentiles and publicans" (Jamieson *et al.*, 1961:50). Matthew 18:17b suggests "and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector" (NIV 1984). Lenski (2008:702) describes the probable action and outcome of this final stage as follows:

> *Through refusing to hear even the church, either refusing to face the church, or facing it and the testimony of the witnesses with an impenitent heart. For we must note throughout that the sinful act, which calls for all this action, is in truth sinful and can be convincingly shown to be such. If all the brotherly effort of the church fail, then the church must consider the sinner self-expelled and must take due note of the fact and act accordingly. This is the so-called ban or excommunication—the man's membership ceases.*

Matthew 18: A claim of misinterpretation and misapplication

Despite the reasonable, seemingly logical presentation above, other commentators and authors do not support these views. Consideration is given to the work of Newberger (2011:299–309). Although Newberger agrees that "…Mathew 18 is a critically important passage that instructs the church," he is clear that its application is purely "…on how to deal with 'sin' on an interpersonal level that is serious enough to remove an unrepentant member from fellowship" (2011:309). His argument rests on two aspects of the

passage: "if your brother sins against you" (v15), and that "every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses" (v16). Newberger points out that the entire passage is conditional, an 'if then' process, and believes that the text only applies when two conditions exist, namely the charge of sin and the presence of eyewitnesses.

Regarding the charge of sin, Newberger cites Wallace (1996:647, 680–711) in explaining that the verse 15a statement in the Greek is a third-class conditional sentence. This means that for the second part of the sentence to be fulfilled ('go and tell him his fault'), the first part must occur ('your brother sins against you). Hence, if there is no charge of identifiable sin in one person doing wrong against another, the imposition of the Matthew 18:15-20 passage for any other condition would be to misapply it.

The word 'witnesses' in 'two or three witnesses' in verse 16 is used in its legal sense (Newberger in Brown, 1986:1043) in testifying during judicial, legal proceedings (Kittel, 1985:489). Thus it negates claims by a variety of resources that the verse could mean the witnesses are mediators, intercessors, conveners, facilitators, referees, generators of alternatives, comforters and exhorters, proclaimers of forgiveness, and witnesses to the conversation (Newberger, 2011:306).

Newberger (2011:310) is very passionate regarding his view, which comes through in the conclusion of his comments on Mathew 18:

> *Matthew 18 is not applicable for resolving differences of opinion and other kinds of problems. When judicial, church discipline process is inappropriately applied, for example, for differences of opinion over church goals, policies, allocations of resources, building projects, and the like, expect an escalation of conflict, even a church split. Using Matthew 18 for the majority of conflicts that typically emerge in a church is like trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. It is the wrong process.*

Matthew 18: Conclusion

These two approaches to the same scripture provide an opportunity for investigation whether Newberger's (2011:310) views are conclusive: firstly, whether this passage is indeed a purely judicial application, and secondly, if applying the passage in the manner outlined in section 3.7.6.1 on page 149 in "…resolving differences of opinion and other kinds of problems" leads to "…an escalation of conflict, even a church split." It seems that both approaches may have value, depending on the situation in question.

3.7.6.2   Peacemaker Ministries' approach

Peacemaker Four G's: (i) How can one focus on God in this situation? (ii) How can one own one's part of this conflict? (iii) How can one help others own their contribution to this conflict? (iv) How can one give forgiveness and help reach a reasonable solution?

Each question focuses on a specific desired outcome. (i) *To Glorify God* – which emphasises that "…conflict is an opportunity to solve common problems in a way that honours God and offers benefits to those involved" that can "…transform the way you respond to conflict" (Sande, 2004:22). (ii) *Get the log out* – focusing on taking responsibility for one's contribution to the conflict prompted through Matthew 7:3-5:

> *And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye (NLT, 2004).*

Sande and Johnson explain that the purpose here is

> *to serve the other person, not to get comfort ... showing God's love to the person … keep your commitment to repairing any damage you have caused and to changing your choices in the future…And once you take the log out of your own eye, you are better prepared to gently correct and restore others (Sande & Johnson, 2011:69).*

(iii) *Gently restore* – moving toward lovingly serving others by helping them take responsibility for their contribution to this conflict (Sande, 2004:139). Christ calls His people to "…go and gently restore our erring brothers and sisters in the hope that they will confess their sin to God and to the one they have offended" (Poirier, 2006:133), similar to Paul encouraging the Galatians, "If someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently" (NLT 6:1, 1984). (iv) *Go and be reconciled* – through the motivating scripture of Matthew 5:24: "First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift" (NIV, 1984) in order to demonstrate the forgiveness of God and encourage a reasonable solution to this conflict (Sande, 2004:201). Sande suggests that Paul's writing to the Colossians (3:12-14) guides this process.

> *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

Geisler in Walvoord and Zuck (1985:682) commentating on Colossians 3:12-14 points to several virtues which include compassion (*splanchna oiktirmou*, literally 'tender sympathy of heartfelt compassion' — an unusually touching expression; in Phil. 2:1 Paul joined these two nouns with "and"); kindness (benevolence in action; cf. 2 Cor. 6:6); humility (a lowly attitude toward God; cf. Phil. 2:3; 1 Peter 5:5), gentleness (*prautēta*); meekness, a lowly attitude toward others, *and* patience (*makrothymian)*; self-restraint, a steady response in the face of provocation (cf. Col. 1:11). The last three of these are mentioned in Greek in the same order in Ephesians 4:2 and Galatians 5:22–23 includes three of them, namely patience, gentleness and kindness. Furthermore, believers are to bear with each other (i.e. put up with each other) with the attitudes just mentioned in verse 22. In addition, they are to forgive whatever grievances (complaints) they may have against others. How? By forgiving as the Lord forgave them, graciously and freely (Eph. 4:32). Grudges have no place in a Christian's life for they may lead to the sins mentioned in Colossians 3:8–9. But over all these virtues Christians are to put on love. As Paul wrote elsewhere, "The greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13). In one's catalogue of virtues love should be the cover, because it is of supreme importance and is the perfect bond, holding them all together in perfect unity. God calls His people to forgive others in exactly the same way that He has forgiven them.

These concepts are mostly overlooked in handling conflicts, but their application allows for periodically stepping back from a conflict and determining whether all is being done to take a positive advantage of the situation so that God may be glorified.

3.7.7   Osmer's approach

Osmer's (2008) work, introduced in Section 1.5.3 on Page 14 of the introduction to this thesis, constitutes four core tasks that form the basic structure of practical theological interpretation. These are: firstly, the descriptive-empirical task which asks, "What is going on?" Secondly, the interpretive task asking: "Why is it going on?" Thirdly, the normative task seeking "What ought to be going on?" and finally, the pragmatic task which asks, "How might we respond?" This section will not expand on Osmer's approach but serves as a reminder of its value to handling difficult issues which may, or may not, contain conflict and lead to resolution and reconciliation.

3.7.8   Intentional Interim Ministry

"The 'Intentional Interim Ministry' is a specialized ministry which combines an apostolic function with proven consulting experience designed for churches in transition or crisis" claims Richardson, in Susek (1999:224).   The person leading this ministry as the 'intentional interim pastor', "is a change agent charged with the specific, temporary task of guiding a church through a season of healing, reconciliation, and systematic change" (Van Yperen, 2002:13).   During or post-trauma, conflict or grief, congregations need to be cared for. One way to do this is through the Intentional Interim Ministry.

Interim Ministry is needed when a congregation cannot continue its mission as usual because of circumstances inside or outside the congregation when: (i) major changes occur in the surrounding community (e.g. Loss of an industry, dramatic population shifts); (ii) major changes occur in the congregation, (e.g. declining membership or financial resources); (iii) conflict or serious trauma arises in the congregation (e.g. removal of a minister for misconduct, splitting of the congregation after a bitter fight); (iv) the congregation is grieving the loss of a minister due to retirement, disability, or death; (v) the end of a long pastorate makes it difficult for another minister to bond with the congregation (United Church of Canada, 2012). In addition to those listed by the United Church of Canada, Interim Ministry is necessary when (vi) there is a need for staff changes; (vii) clear-cut divisions in the congregation, unhealthy conflict; (viii) antiquated systems of governance; and (ix) congregational volunteers who hold decision-making positions but have done nothing for some time (Oswald *et al.*, 2003:20–21).

In many cases, the role of the interim pastor is to help resolve some past conflicts and wounds so that the new pastor has a more even playing field when she/he arrives. In doing so, a congregation can examine its ministry and consider whether there are some new directions the congregation wants to consider (McCutchan, 2014:Introduction). The value in the Intentional Interim Ministry is the training, aptitude; skills and passion that specially trained interim pastors possess (Bendroth, 2015:4–6). Wagner (1984:117) states that "…there is no question that at times a church needs a period of healing, and during that time not much growth can be expected. An interim pastor is often very helpful to a church which has been hurt."

In supporting a congregation's healing there are goals that need to be met by the Intentional Interim Ministry initially called development tasks (Nicholson, 1998:165–173).

However, Bendroth (2015:53) explains the recent shift from these development tasks to focus points.

> *…interim ministry has moved away from the language of diagnosis and pathology, with the characterisation of the interim as an outside interventionist embracing modern, even postmodern, organisational development and strategic planning. Rather than using a problem-oriented approach, we have turned toward the basic affirmations that form the foundations of appreciative inquiry.*

The original 'development tasks' were: (i) *Coming to terms with history:* A lot can be learned by who or what we are by listening to each other tell the story of the church – past stories, both positive and negative, covering members, major events, ministers and more (Nicholson, 1998:65–74). (ii) *Discovering a new identity:* Congregations need not be subject to their past in a negative way. They can discover and celebrate a new identity, and disclaim negative elements of their past (Nicholson, 1998:75–86). (iii) *Leadership changes during an interim:* Leadership needs to be nurtured and liberated through recognising and celebrating leaders who are moving out of office and working deliberately to establish conditions that allow new leadership to emerge, namely leadership that is visible, convenes regularly, and keeps correct records (Nicholson, 1998:87–98). (iv) *Renewing denominational linkages:* Often there is resistance to anything perceived as interference from the outside. These linkages need to be re-built toward an understanding that the local congregation is not alone, need not be alone, but has resources beyond their direct means (Nicholson, 1998:99–107). (v) *Commitment to new directions in ministry:* All previous tasks build toward this final task. New directions recognise shared ministry and qualities within leadership in developing a firm vision for a church which has been somewhat fractured and somewhat disheartened to come together. A vision of the church that is energetic and focused toward achieving spiritually discerned goals needs to be created. Thereby a commitment is made to the core values of Christian faith and a strong vision of the community they can become (Nicholson, 1998:108–118).

The "focus points," with the associated development tasks in brackets, are as follows (Bendroth, 2015:53–60): (i) *Heritage* (coming to terms with history): In place of the "…underlying sense of conflict, guilt, and remorse implied in the development task, heritage begins with recognition and awareness, and moves to affirmation and embrace of the paths that have brought the congregation to the present" (Bendroth, 2015:55). (ii) *Mission* (discovering a new identity): A few congregations may "…need to develop and commutate a whole new identity, but most congregations require not a new identity, but an affirmation and behavioural continuation of the sense of direction that arose through engagement with the heritage focus point" (2015:56). (iii) *Connections* (renewing

denominational linkages): This extends well beyond denominational linkages as it attempts to encourage a congregation to discover "…all relationships a faith community builds outside of itself" and affords the congregation opportunity "…to update its technology and communications processes, to build or refine web pages, and to explore various other social media and networking options" (Bendroth, 2015:57). (iv) *Leadership* (leadership changes during an interim): Through attention to the focus points already discussed, "…the congregation and its leaders have the opportunity to discern the kinds of leadership required for the congregation and its members to move toward fulfilment of its Mission, in light of its unique Heritage and Connections" (Bendroth, 2015:58). (v) *Future* (commitment to new directions in ministry): Many congregations do not require a new direction, but "…may acknowledge that a faithful response to the call of mission and the reality of their connections may require them to be innovative, but they commit themselves to a future that is rooted in a deep understanding of their heritage" (Bendroth, 2015:59).

There are a few important aspects of the Intentional Interim Ministry about which Bendroth (2015:59–60) is clear. Firstly, the process takes time even for very skilled interim ministers. Secondly, there are no predetermined outcomes from the process. "The congregations' work within the focus points is an explicitly emergent process, shaped by the members' exploration of their core values and deepest concerns, by their commitments and aspirations" (Bendroth, 2015:59). Thirdly, the engagement of the focus points is

> *…ultimately the work of the congregation. The interim minister is responsible for the process, while the discernment and articulation of the outcome, together with its ultimate implementation is, and must be, the responsibility of the congregation, which will be called upon to embody it as it moves into the future (Bendroth, 2015:60).*

Painful experience in many congregations has shown that "unless conflict is resolved and healthy communication restored prior to the calling of a new pastor, the chances for success of the new pastorate are substantially educed" (Nicholson, 1998:7).

3.7.9 Wesley's sermon: The Catholic Spirit

Published in 1755, the sermon, The Catholic Spirit, portrays Wesley's view that "…there are significant differences between Christians," and, despite existing conflict, "they must not be weapons of division" (Harrison, 2005:52). Wesley's crucial pivot in this sermon was that "…he and the Calvinists may differ in their intellectual explanations of the

nature of justifying faith, and yet still share the common 'experience' of their hearts cleaving to God through the Son" (Maddox, 1992:67). The unity of the faith was more important to Wesley than the elevation of one person's opinion over another. These differences are areas of conflict. Wesley lays a foundation of God's call to unconditional love when approaching such conflict.

> *It is allowed even by those who do not pay this great debt, that love is due to all humankind, the royal law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," carrying its own evidence to all that hear it: and that, not according to the miserable construction put upon it by the zealots of old times, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour," thy relation, acquaintance, friend, "and hate thine enemy;" not so; "I say unto you," said our Lord, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children," may appear so to all humankind, "of your Father which is in heaven," who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust (Wesley, 1944:442–443).*

Nevertheless, Wesley acknowledges that the call of Matthew (Matthew 5:44; 22:39) in his statement above is difficult to find as there are "…two matters which stand in the way. The first is that Christians cannot all think alike; and in consequence the second is that they cannot all act alike" (Holway, 1987:391). In the face of these conflict issues, Wesley first calls for introspection quoting 2 Kings 10:15: "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart" and "If it be, give me thine hand" (KJV, 1981).

> *But what is properly implied in the question? I do not mean, what did Jehu imply therein? But, what should a follower of Christ understand thereby, when he proposes it to any of his brethren? The first thing implied is this: Is thy heart right with God? (Wesley, 1944:448; II-12).*

This does not imply Christians must come to an agreement about differences first, and then love. Rather, first of all, love each other because Christians love God despite any differences. The application is that people in conflict should work through the conflict from the common foundation of their relationship with God and love for all (Davis, 2004).

Wesley clearly indicates that by agreeing on the foundation of love ("Give me thy hand") he does "…not mean 'Agree with me on everything', I do not want it or expect it. Nor do I mean 'I will agree with you on everything' because I cannot" and later, "I don't mean 'worship my way', or do I mean 'I will worship in your way'?" and that, "I have no desire to agree with you over these points. If 'you and I think alike' and you love God and all humankind, then I ask no more, 'Give me your hand.'" (Holway, 1987:396–397).

Although the issues of conflict permeate the entire sermon, and the congregation hearers, or readers, are encouraged to work out their opinions and actions and "…keep to your opinion" and "…as steadfastly as ever" (Wesley, 1944:450; II-1), sections III-1 to III-3 bring them into final focus. Here it becomes clear that there may not be any capitulation by one party to another's opinions or actions, yet despite this, Wesley calls for common ground of loving God and loving one's neighbour – all humankind. The aim is that where the issues remain unresolved, and many times they will be so, there needs to be conciliation within the love of God.

3.8   Education and training

There is no doubt that the need for education and training on the understanding and handling of conflict is necessary and would be beneficial to life in general, not only congregational life. The need for such education is emphasised by the following, amongst others: Halverstadt (1991:13), Susek (1999:13), Van Yperen (2002:13), Sande (2004:12), Poirier (2006:3), Bullard (2008:3) and (Porter, 2010:2).

Callahan (2010b:150) observes that "Perception yields Behaviour yields Destination." Perception is the means by which one's sense or mind interprets and organises to comprehend, understand or interpret in order to realise a meaningful experience (Lindsay & Norman, 1977:3).   Similarly, Mattox (1998:10) observed that "…a relationship is determined by three factors which operate in a cycle. These factors are attitudes, actions, and circumstances." There is an intrinsic association between these two scenarios. Attitudes are developed through perception; behaviour relates to action, and destiny relates to circumstances.

Allport (in Murchison, 1935:790) defines attitude as a neural or mental state derived through experience and exerting an influence on one's response to objects or situations. "We face a circumstance, form an attitude about it, and that attitude in turn governs what we do – our actions. Such action in turn produces another circumstance, either for ourselves or others" (Mattox, 1998:10). Mattox explains that this new circumstance triggers a further unhealthy or healthy attitude, depending on one's experience thereof.   If the resulting circumstances or situations *(or destiny)* are unhealthy or undesirable, the process has the potential to spiral toward increased unhealthy conflict (Researcher's insert).

Figure 3.6: Mattox cycle
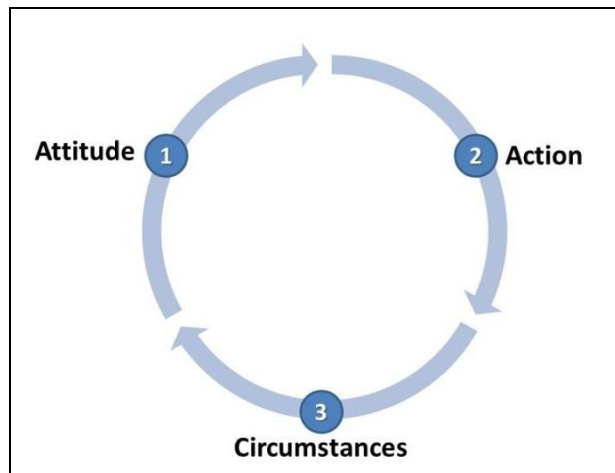
(Source: Mattox, 1998:10)

Mattox (1998:26) further explains that in order to effect a positive change, one's attitude needs to change. This change in attitude affects our actions which now have a greater opportunity of resulting in a more improved set of circumstances. Mattox claims that such improvement is realised through a scriptural educational intervention between "circumstances" and "attitude."

In "seeking new learnings," Rendle (1998:19) explains that "…adults learn best when they pause after *doing* something to *reflect* on what they just did and what they learned from it. This new learning is enriched when they *connect* their new learning with previous experiences and insights that can help to inform their reflection on what they just did. Then with this new learning in place, they make a decision about the next steps and then implement *(do)* those steps" upon which reflection follows, thereby producing a continual learning process.

Education and training directed toward the understanding and handling of conflict could be programmatic to influence and change attitudes (Mattox, 1998:26) before conflict situations arise, or experiential (Rendle, 1998:19) as part of the discipleship journey. Conflict in the congregation is always an opportunity for discipleship (See section 2.6.2.4, page 70).

3.9   Conclusion

Conflict is an extremely wide topic covering an array of ideas, opinions and thoughts. This chapter addressed some key concepts, opinions and processes in attempting to attain resolution and reconciliation regarding conflict. As Burton (cited in Tidwell,

2001:9) argues, resolution between two parties in conflict can only occur when "…relationships have been re-examined and realigned," inferring reconciliation.

Those concepts addressed provide the background, or foundations upon which an investigation into 'the pew', the congregation's perceptions and views, responses or reactions, and steps toward reaching an outcome is based. The process and results of such exploratory investigation are detailed in the next chapter.

The sexy job in the next ten years will be statistics

Hal Varian
Chief Economist: Google
(New York Times, August 6, 2009, p. A1)

CHAPTER 4   EMPIRICAL STUDY

This chapter describes the procedures and decisions taken during the quantitative research process.   The data relevant to the defined problem of this research is presented and reflected on together with the analysis thereof.

4.1   Quantitative research

Quantitative research seeks "…to understand the actions and practices in which individuals and groups engage in everyday life and the meaning they ascribe to their experience" through the gathering and analysing of information (Osmer, 2008:49–50). The information is either received in, or transcribed into numerical data format (Witte & Witte, 2010:9).

4.1.1   Research preparation

A feasibility study was undertaken with the support of the Bishop of the Limpopo District at the February 2015 Ministers Retreat, Roman Catholic Retreat Centre, Hartbeespoort Dam (See section 1.4.1, page 10).   The ministers assured their support of the project and obtained the necessary approval from their leadership for their congregations to be surveyed.

Specific areas for research were identified during the drafting of the theory of developing the local church (Chapter 2), and conflict (Chapter 3).   At this point, the Statistical Department of the University of Pretoria was approached for assistance.   Dr. Liebie Louw, research statistician, and Andries Masenge, research consultant, were assigned to assist and provided guidance and input to the quantitative research.

4.1.2   Sample population profile

Information was sourced from all of the twenty-four (24) congregations (Methodist Societies) within the Pretoria Metropolis.   The preliminary information obtained recorded the circuit, society, number of members, average Sunday attendance, and race classification.

To ensure that a reasonable and effective sample size could be drawn from these congregations, only those with two hundred (200) or more members were selected. The investigation into the race distribution profile showed that congregations fell into one of three main classifications.   Firstly, there were congregations that comprise eighty

per cent (80%) or more White and twenty per cent (20%) or less of other races. Secondly, some congregations consist of less than 60 per cent White congregants, and more than 40 per cent other races. Thirdly, there were those congregations consisting of one (1) race only - either Black or Coloured. For the purpose of identification, these three categories were assigned the category codes: 'A,' 'B' and 'C' respectively.

4.1.3   Stratified sampling

Categories A, B and C qualified as *strata* as they are homogeneous within themselves, exhibit greater variability among them, and samples of suitable sizes can be selected independently from each (Gupta & Kabe, 2011:41). Sample sizes were defined as a percentage of the sample population of each stratum. The method of simple random sampling was used to ensure "…that each different possible sample of the desired size has an equal chance of being the one chosen" (Peck *et al.*, 2015:38).

4.1.4   Designing the questionnaire

The research title and research problem statement provided the lenses through which relevant sections of chapter 2, and particularly chapter 3 of this thesis were identified as themes to be explored. Five section headings were designed to guide the respondents in contextualising the questions and statements within the questionnaire. These groups were not designed to measure any intrinsic relationships. The questionnaire is available on Annexure A, on page 228.

Section A: Demographic variables: These are to ensure qualification and reasonable representation. Demographic data was collected through categorical variables (Hastie *et al.*, 2013:1) and continuous variables (Witte & Witte, 2010:15). The categorical variables recorded (i) gender, and race (representation); (ii) leadership, small group participation and mission or ministry groups (qualification); and (iii) training or education received (dependency). The continuous variable recorded (i) age (representation); and (ii) Sunday attendance frequency as well as years in congregation (qualification).

Sunday worship frequency is an important qualifier as it offers an idea of how integrated each respondent is into the life of his or her congregation. Church leaders have observed that there are congregants who only attend Sunday worship when they have a ministry duty to fulfil.

Section B: Experiences, perceptions and understanding: These determine how well the respondents understand and appreciate conflict. This section measures whether conflict is understood to be a normal and necessary part of Christian living, congregational life, and hence everyday life. Secondly, it measures whether conflict is perceived as sinful, wrong, or experienced negatively and whether respondents recognise the possibility that God sometimes initiates conflict. Finally, it is a measure on any perceived relationship between spiritual maturity and frequency of conflict.

Section C: Responses, reactions and views: These determine whether direct, indirect or no responses prevail. They also establish the mind-set regarding opportunities arising from conflict and what happens to one's relationship with God during a conflict situation.

Section D: Perceptions, observations and views toward an outcome: These establish whether resolution and reconciliation are/have been reached. They also determine how churches respond to conflict and whether discipleship may have any impact.

Section E: Steps taken in reaching an outcome: This is establish which positive or negative steps in resolving conflict are the norm, and how many address the problem directly. Finally, these steps offer respondents the opportunity to forward ideas that could have benefitted a recent conflict situation.

Response requirements in section A and section E were specific (e.g. Age, Years in congregation) or a categorical 'Yes' / 'No' choice (e.g. "I ignored the conflict"). Responses for section B to section D were collected through a series of statements or questions on a seven-(7) point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly agree* to *Strongly disagree* (Vogt, 2007:88). The items of measure under each heading, B through to D, included a few negatively phrased questions and statements to counter acquiescence bias (Biemer & Lyberg, 2003:124) which is the tendency for respondents to agree rather than disagree with statements (Brace, 2008:75).

The questionnaire was drafted in MS Word 2010 with a restricted editing format. This afforded the respondents the opportunity to complete the questionnaire electronically, or alternately print and complete it in handwritten form. Returns could therefore be submitted via a dedicated email address, fax number or church office. A pre-survey quality check on the questionnaire was performed by giving it to ten people of different language groups, ethnicity and levels of education to test the simplicity of language, and

clarity and ease of completing the questionnaire. The average time for completion was nineteen (19) minutes with a maximum of thirty-one (31) minutes.

4.2 Empirical analysis

Data analysis is the "…process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to a mass of collected data" and can be messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative and fascinating (Marshall & Rossman, 2010:207). Such an exercise of analysis and interpretation requires the application of deductive and inductive logic (Best & Kahn, 2013:283). This section displays the data per category, per question or per statement, both descriptively and inferentially as it relates to the purpose of this research.

4.2.1   Evaluation and interpretation

An explorative-descriptive research is applied. Descriptive research provides a systematic description of the data from which the explorative research can undertake its explanation, interpretation and formulation of theory or presuppositions where possible (Heitink, 1999:229–230). This is aligned to Osmer's (2008:x) method of practical theology. Firstly, there is the descriptive-empirical task: Priestly listening, which asks the question: "What's going on?" (Osmer, 2008:31–78). Secondly, is the interpretive task: Sagely wisdom, exercised through qualities of thoughtfulness, theoretical interpretation and wise judgement, guided the researcher's interpretation and reflection (Osmer, 2008:81–86).

To describe, examine, explain, and interpret the data (Struwig & Stead, 2001:168), the presentation of descriptive statistics is followed by inferential statistics to determine differences, associations, and relationships (Witte & Witte, 2010:5).

4.2.2   Descriptive statistics

The descriptive results provide meaning to the quantitative information obtained through summarisation and description (Kumar, 2002:102), on condition that a satisfactory sample percentage return and size is obtained. A satisfactory percentage return with a total sample size of ninety-five (95) was realised. The return on Strata was: A (59%), B (49%) and C (36%).

4.2.2.1   Demographic information

Section A of the questionnaire collected the demographical data for each respondent [See Annexure A, page 228]. These were recorded as either *categorical* or *discrete variables* which "…place cases into groups of one or more predefined categories" (Lock *et al.*, 2012:5), or *continuous variables* whereby responses are recorded on an infinite continuum (Hastie *et al.*, 2013:14).

Item V1: *What is your gender?*

Table 4.1: Gender

V1	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Male	44.2	(42)	40.5	46.3	50.0
Female	55.8	(53)	59.5	53.7	50.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100

Gender distributions for the participating congregations are not representative of the sample population as they were not predetermined and used in characterising the sample size. Generally, congregations consist of more females than males (Patrick, 2010:17). The ratio of 44.2 per cent (male) to 55.8 per cent (female) is observably quite normal.

Item V2: *What is your age in years?*

Table 4.2: Age

V2	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
<41	17.9	(17)	11.9	22.0	25.0
41-50	17.9	(17)	16.7	12.2	41.7
51-60	32.6	(31)	40.5	29.3	16.7
61-70	23.2	(22)	28.6	19.5	16.7
71[+]	8.4	(8)	2.4	17.1	0.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100

The age range recorded (32 years to 84 years) is divided into five (5) age segments. A total of 64.2 per cent of all respondents, 71.5 per cent of A and 65.9 per cent of B, are above the age of fifty, whereas C shows that 66.7 per cent are fifty years old and younger.

Table 4.3: Age: Measures of central tendency

V2	ALL %	A	B	C
Mean	54.2	54.7	55.3	48.2
Median	56.0	55.3	57.9	47.0

The A and B distributions are negatively skewed (mean < median) (Witte & Witte, 2010:64), indicating that these congregations are of older generations.   Conversely, the C congregations are slightly younger as the distribution is positively skewed (mean > median) (Witte & Witte, 2010:65)..

Figure 4.1: Age profile
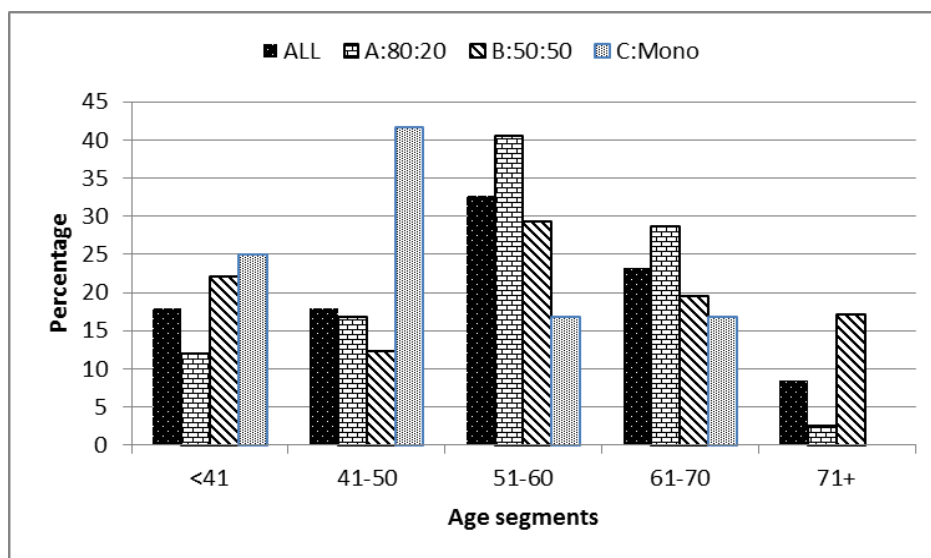
Item V3: *Of which race classification are you?*

This question was included to test the classification of the strata.

Table 4.4: Race classification

V3	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
Indian	1.0	(1)	0.0	2.4	0.0
Coloured	11.6	(11)	2.4	17.0	25.0
Black	22.1	(21)	7.1	22.0	75.0
White	65.3	(62)	90.5	58.6	0.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100

The data presented in Table 4.4 above is further categorised into *white* to *non-white* ratios overall, and per strata in the table below.

Table 4.5: Strata ratios

Ratios: Strata validation				
	All	A	B	C
White: Other	65:35	90:10	59:41	0:100

The ratios validate the strata definitions and are an indication that leadership, people in mission and ministry and small groups are closely representative of the estimated race profiles.

Figure 4.2: Race profile
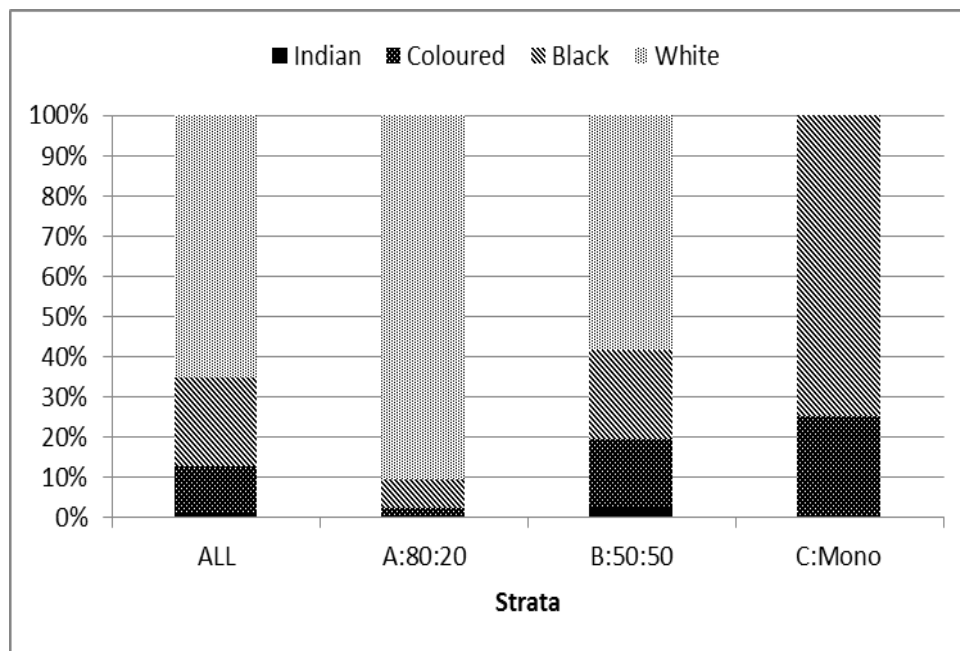
Item V4: *How many years have you been in your current congregation?*

The question tested whether respondents had spent sufficient time in the congregation to have observed or experienced conflict.

Table 4.6: Years in current congregation

V4	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1-5	26,4	(25)	14.3	34.1	41.7
6-10	27.4	(26)	33.3	22.0	25.0
11-15	18.9	(18)	26.2	9.8	25.0
16-20	16.8	(16)	16.7	19.5	8.3
21 plus	10.5	(10)	9.5	14.6	0.0
Total	73.6	(95)	100	100	100

Fewer than 75 per cent of the respondents have spent six or more years in their congregations. The data shows that 65.9 per cent have been in their congregation for six years or more. This is sufficient time for congregants to have noticed or experienced conflict within their congregation.

Table 4.7: Years in congregation: Measures of central tendency

Measures of central tendency				
	All	A`	B	C
Mean	12.0	12	13.2	7.8
Median	10.0	11	8	7.5

Despite the B strata being positively skewed (mean > median), indicating that most respondents from the B strata have been in their congregations for thirteen or less years, the means and medians of the other strata are sufficiently close enough to suggest a symmetrical distribution (cf. Witte and Witte, 2010:64).

Figure 4.3: Years in congregation
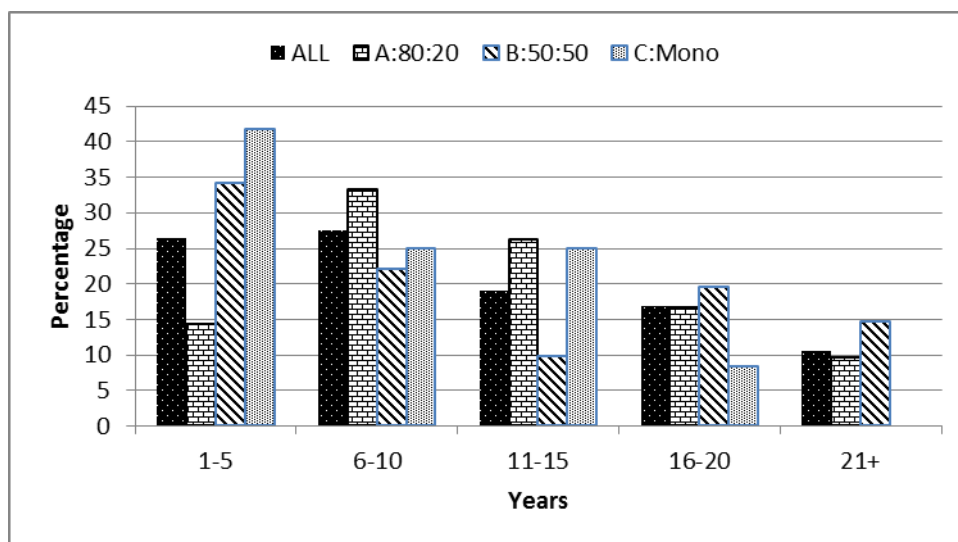
Item V5: *How often do you worship in your congregation each month?*

The higher the frequency attendance of worship, the greater the probability that congregants may have opportunity to experience or observe conflict in their congregations.

Table 4.8: Frequency of worship participation

V5	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
Just once	2.1	(2)	4.8	0.0	0.0
Once or twice	3.1	(3)	7.1	0.0	0.0
Just twice	15.8	(15)	31.0	2.4	8.3
Two or three times	5.3	(5)	7.1	4.9	0.0
Just three times	19.0	(18)	7.1	34.2	8.3
Three or four times	13.7	(13)	7.1	19.5	16.7
Every Sunday	41.0	(39)	35.7	39.0	66.7
Total	100	(95)	5	100	100

Of all respondents, 94.8 per cent normally attend worship two or more times a month, with 73.7 per cent normally attending at least three or more times per month. These high attendance levels indicate that the respondents are well qualified to have observed or experienced conflict.

Figure 4.4: Worship attendance
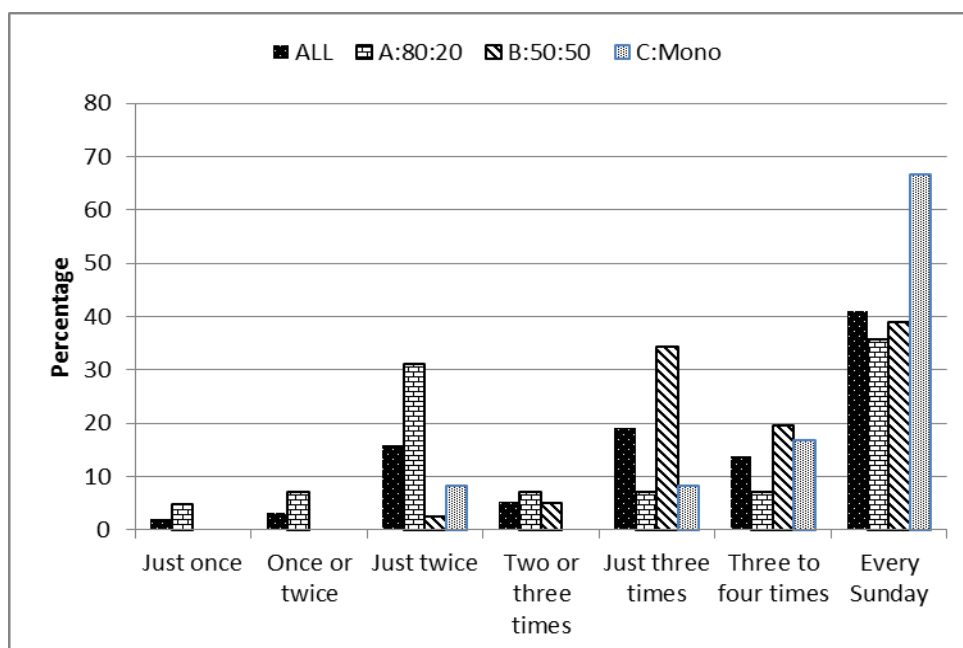
Qualification criteria:

Participation in small groups, leadership or ministry and mission groups, where most conflict is observed, was used as qualification criteria.

Item V6: *Are you a regular member of a Bible Study, Home Group, Fellowship Group, Class?*

Table 4.9: Bible Study, Home Group, Fellowship Group, Class participation

V6	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
Yes	77.9	(74)	66.7	85.4	91.7
No	22.1	(21)	33.3	14.7	8.3
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100

Item V7: *Are you in a leadership position?*

Table 4.10: Leadership

V7	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
Yes	41.1	(39)	54.8	29.3	33.3
No	59.9	(56)	45.2	70.7	66.7
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100

Item V8: *Are you in any ministry or mission group in your church?*

Table 4.11: Ministry or mission group participation

V8	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
Yes	68.4	(65)	78.6	53.7	83.3
No	31.6	(30)	21.4	46.3	16.7
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100

A statistical query revealed that 28.4 per cent of the respondents are active in only one of the qualification groups, and 28.4 per cent are found in all qualification groups. The remaining 43.2 per cent specified that they were active in two of the groups. As 28.4 per cent of the respondents are active in only one of the groups, 71.6 per cent of are active in more than one group.

Received education on conflict

Two questions queried whether the respondent had received any education or training regarding conflict. Only those who had received education or training through a church entity were asked to describe the education received.

Item V9: *Have you ever received any form of training, or education regarding conflict outside of the church?*

and

Item V10: *Have you ever received any form of training, or education regarding conflict as part of a church-provided programme or course?*

Table 4.12: Education received in conflict

Only outside of a church entity		Outside & inside of a church entity		Only inside of a church entity		Did not receive education		Total	
%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
31,3	(30)	6.3	(6)	0	(o)	62.4	(59)	100	(95)

The data indicates that conflict education in church environments is minimal compared to those educated through non-church entities. Almost two-thirds (62.4%) of the respondents had not received any form of education through church or outside entities. Respondents who had received education through a church entity cited a marriage and parenting course and a Willow Creek Global Leadership Summit on the survey questionnaire as the source of their education in conflict.

Summary

Random stratified sampling was applied in which gender and age were not predetermined as this would have compromised the integrity of the survey.

Age: Overall only 35.8 per cent were found to be under the age of fifty years. However, 66.7 per cent of the C congregations' respondents were under the age of fifty.

Race: These results confirmed the approximations made when defining the profile of the various congregations which defined the three strata (See 4.1.2, page 162).

Years in congregation: A total of 96.8 per cent of the respondents have been in their congregations for two to five years or more.

Attendance frequency: The B and C congregations reported above 90 per cent for attendance frequencies of three or more a month while the A congregations only measured 49.9 per cent.

Observation: Table 4.6, on page 168, and Figure 4.3 on page 169 indicate that while the predominantly white A congregations retain membership longer than the others, their frequency of attendance is much lower than the B and C congregations (See Table 4.8, page 170).

Leadership, small groups, and ministry and mission: All respondents fell into one or more of these qualifying categories. A total of 33.7 per cent recorded a combination of two categories, while 28.4 per cent were found in all three.

Education: At least 37.9 per cent had been instructed in conflict education through a non-church entity, while only 6.3per cent had been trained through a church entity. However, a statistical query reported that all who had been educated through a church entity also received training through secular organisations. The 'church entity' education covered a marriage and parenting course where the education was limited to preventative measures (e.g. listening and reflective exercises), and a Willow Creek Global Leadership Summit where input is limited to a forty-five (45) minute presentation. These talks are described by the Willow Creek Association as helpful but not sufficient and act as a catalyst for the identification of additional education requirements. It is clear that congregations are not being sufficiently educated, if at all, in the understanding and handling of conflict.

4.2.2.2 Results: Univariate items V11 through V34

Univariates V11 to V34 measure personal action, observed action, experiences, perceptions, and the understanding of conflict on a Likert scale, 1 to 7.

Item V11: *For me, facing conflict is a negative experience*

This item, directed toward the individual, measures *negative experience in the face of conflict* which has the propensity to impede organisational development (Wakefield, 1987:22), hence would include the missional development of the local church.

Table 4.13: Conflict experienced negatively

V11	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Strongly agree	2.1	(2)	4.8	0.0	0.0
2. Agree	11.6	(11)	14.3	12.2	0.0
3. Somewhat agree	23.2	(22)	23.8	19.5	33.3
4. Neither agree nor disagree	15.8	(15)	9.5	19.5	25.0
5. Somewhat disagree	22.1	(21)	23.8	19.5	25.0
6. Disagree	17.9	(17)	14.3	22.0	16.7
7. Strongly disagree	7 3	(7)	9.5	7.3	0.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	36.9	(35)	42.9	31.7	33.3

The data indicates that 36.9 per cent of all respondents experience conflict negatively. All three strata display similar negative experiences. These results are alarming as they indicate that roughly one-third of any congregation experiences conflict negatively.

There are numerous dimensions to developing a missional church that has conflict potential as discussed in Chapter 2. Wakefield (1987:22) warns that such negative experience and outcomes often cause leadership to be hesitant in investigating areas of concern or implementing the necessary change, alignments or principles for the development of a missional church. People who have had negative experiences when facing conflict will seek to avoid or ignore conflict in the future. Such practices have a negative impact on the development of the missional church.

Item V12: *Conflict is a normal part of everyday life*

The item measures whether respondents see themselves as part of every life's conflict formula, and the formula as part of life (Sande & Johnson, 2011:14–15).

Table 4.14: Conflict is normal in everyday life

V12	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Strongly agree	3.2	(3)	7.1	0.0	0.0
2. Agree	47.4	(45)	35.7	61.0	41.7
3. Somewhat agree	33.7	(32)	40.5	24.4	41.7
4. Neither agree nor disagree	11.6	(11)	14.3	7.3	16.6
5. Somewhat disagree	1.0	(1)	2.4	0.0	0.0
6. Disagree	2.1	(2)	0.0	4.9	0.0
7. Strongly disagree	1.0	(1)	0.0	2.4	0.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	84.2	(80)	83.4	85.4	83.4

Most respondents (84.2%), across all strata, favour the view that conflict is indeed a normal part of everyday life and appear to understand that "conflict is inescapable" (Osterhaus *et al.*, 2005:14). (See section 3.3.1, page 123)

Item V13: *If people were more spiritually mature there would be less conflict in churches*

This measured the support for the commonly-observed view that a church either tries "…to ignore or avoid conflict; or attributes the conflict to a lack of spirituality among its members and then tries to preach and pray it away" (Shawchuck, 1983:12).

Table 4.15: Perceived influence of spiritual maturity

V13	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Strongly agree	7.4	(7)	11.9	4.9	0.0
2. Agree	25.3	(24)	21.5	26.8	33.3
3. Somewhat agree	33.7	(32)	35.7	31.7	33.3
4. Neither agree nor disagree	17.8	(17)	16.7	17.1	25.0
5. Somewhat disagree	7.4	(7)	7.1	9.8	0.0
6. Disagree	7.4	(7)	7.1	7.3	8.4
7. Strongly disagree	1.0	(1)	0.0	2.4	0.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	66.4	(63)	69.1	63.4	66.6

The data supports the belief or expectation that conflict should decrease in congregations with higher levels of spiritual maturity. This is the understanding of 66.4 per cent of all respondents, with B (63.4%) the lowest and A (69.1%) the highest. Conversely, this implies that where there is little or no conflict, the level of spiritual maturity is more mature, which is highly debatable.

Item V14: *Conflict is wrong, and should not exist in a congregation*

The item seeks to determine whether the respondents view conflict as 'wrong' and that it should not exist in a congregation against the theological argument that conflict is often "…the result of God-given diversity and personal preferences" (Sande, 2004:30).

Table 4.16: Conflict is wrong

V14	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Strongly agree	2.1	(2)	2.4	2.4	0.0
2. Agree	14.7	(14)	9.5	19.6	16.7
3. Somewhat agree	27.4	(26)	26.1	22.0	50.0
4. Neither agree nor disagree	17.9	(17)	19.1	19.5	8.3
5. Somewhat disagree	17.9	(17)	19.1	14.6	25.0
6. Disagree	13.7	(13)	16.7	14.6	0.0
7. Strongly disagree	6.3	(6)	7.1	7.3	0.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	44.2	(42)	38.0	44.0	66.7

Overall, 44.2 per cent of respondents believe that conflict is wrong, and should not exist in congregations. Unfortunately, this statement contains duality and, with hindsight, should have been two separate statements in the questionnaire:

(i)   conflict is wrong

(ii)   conflict should not exist in a congregation

The data displays a significant difference between the C (Mono) congregations result against the others. The duality of the statement of measure disqualifies any attempt at a simple explanation of this variance.

Item V15: *Conflict is a normal part of Christian living*

This element sought to test whether respondents agree that conflict is natural, normal and unavoidable in Christian life, family experience, and church families (Cosgrove & Hatfield, 1994:20; Gangel & Canine, 2002:129; Quick, 2003:64).

Table 4.17: Conflict is normal in Christian living

V15	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Strongly agree	1.0	(1)	0.0	2.4	0.0
2. Agree	13.7	(13)	7.1	17.1	25.0
3. Somewhat agree	33.7	(32)	50.0	19.5	25.0
4. Neither agree nor disagree	8.4	(8)	9.5	7.3	8.3
5. Somewhat disagree	33.7	(32)	28.6	43.9	16.7
6. Disagree	9.5	(9)	4.8	9.8	25.0
7. Strongly disagree	0.0	(0)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	48.4	(46)	57.1	39.0	50.0

Overall, 48.4 per cent agree with the hypothesis. The A strata record 57.1 per cent, whereas, only 39.0 per cent of the B respondents agree that conflict is normal in Christian living.

Item V16: *Some conflict is God influenced, given or created*

This statement tested whether respondents entertained a belief in the possibility that God could be behind some conflict.

Table 4.18: Sometimes God initiates conflict

V16	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Strongly agree	2.1	(2)	2.4	2.4	0.0
2. Agree	11.6	(11)	14.3	12.2	0.0
3. Somewhat agree	28.4	(27)	28.6	26.8	33.3
4. Neither agree nor disagree	27.4	(26)	28.6	22.0	41.8
5. Somewhat disagree	12.6	(12)	7.1	19.5	8.3
6. Disagree	12.6	(12)	14.2	12.2	8.3
7. Strongly disagree	5.3	(5)	4.8	4.9	8.3
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 4 to 7 (shaded area)	42.1	(49)	45.3	41.4	33.3

The data indicates that between 54.7 per cent (A) and 76.7 per cent (C) across the strata do not agree that *some conflict is God influenced, given or created.* While 42.1 per cent of the overall respondents agree, the C stratum recorded a lower 33.3 per cent.

Item V17: *All conflict, even among Christians, is due to sin of some nature or another*

The statement was specifically worded to ensure that there could be no distinction between sin outside of the Christian community and sin within the Christian community. Sin needed to be seen in its totality when completing the questionnaire.

Table 4.19: Conflict is due to sin

V17	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Strongly agree	2.1	(2)	2.4	2.4	0.0
2. Agree	13.7	(13)	11.9	14.7	16.7
3. Somewhat agree	30.5	(29)	28.6	29.3	41.7
4. Neither agree nor disagree	19.0	(18)	11.9	24.4	25.0
5. Somewhat disagree	13.6	(13)	16.7	14.6	0.0
6. Disagree	15.8	(15)	19.0	14.6	8.3
7. Strongly disagree	5.3	(5)	9.5	0.0	8.3
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	46.3	(44)	42.9	46.4	58.4

The data shows that in total 46.3 per cent agree that *all conflict is due to sin of some nature or another.* A higher percentage of C stratum respondents view all conflict as due to sin. Poirier's (2006:14) view is that parties to a dispute are caught "…in the

rebellion and bondage of sin." Conversely, Sande (2004:30) believes many causes or reasons for conflict are "not wrong or right" but "simply the result of God-given diversity and personal preferences (1 Corinthians 12:21-31)."

Item V18: *Conflict is a necessary part of everyday living*

The test seeks to determine whether respondents understand how necessary conflict is deemed to be, given that conflict is a component of continual transformation in personable, social and organisation environments (Lederach, 1995:17).

Table 4.20: Conflict is necessary in life

V18	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Strongly agree	2.1	(2)	2.4	2.4	0.0
2. Agree	21.1	(20)	21.4	24.4	8.3
3. Somewhat agree	31.6	(30)	40.5	24.4	25.0
4. Neither agree nor disagree	12.6	(16)	7.1	9.8	41.7
5. Somewhat disagree	14.7	(29)	9.5	17.1	25.0
6. Disagree	14.7	(18)	16.7	17.1	0.0
7. Strongly disagree	3.2	(4)	2.4	4.8	0.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	54.8	(28)	64.3	51.2	41.7

There is a range of 22.6 percentage points between the highest and lowest rated strata measuring those who agree, even somewhat, with the hypothesis. A measured 64.3 per cent while C is at 41.7 per cent, with the B stratum roughly midway at 51.2 per cent. Although it is encouraging that the majority understand the necessity for conflict, it is cause for concern that the C respondents measure a lower 41.7 per cent in comparison.

Item V19: *Conflict is a necessary part of congregational life*

 This item measured whether respondents viewed conflict as necessary in congregational life, as propagated by Strauch (2011:3) for transformation, and Lederach (1995:17) for attaining spiritual maturity and becoming Christlike.

Table 4.21: Conflict is necessary in congregational life

V19	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Strongly agree	2.1	(2)	2.4	2.4	0.0
2. Agree	6.3	(6)	9.5	4.9	0.0
3. Somewhat agree	21.0	(2)	26.2	19.5	8.3
4. Neither agree nor disagree	16.9	(16)	14.3	12.3	41.7
5. Somewhat disagree	30.5	(29)	28.5	26.8	50.0
6. Disagree	19.0	(18)	16.7	26.8	0.0
7. Strongly disagree	4.2	(4)	2.4	7.3	0.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	29.8	(28)	38.1	26.8	8.3

A range of 29.8 percentage points separate the A and C strata measuring those who agree, even somewhat, that conflict is a necessary part of congregational life.

Item V20: *When I have a problem with someone I take my concerns to that person*

Some congregants 'do face-to-face' in potential conflict situations despite the norm that the church avoids conflict (Cosgrove & Hatfield, 1994:96).

Table 4.22: Direct approach

V20	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Yes, always	3.2	(3)	2.4	0.0	16.7
2. Usually	26.2	(25)	26.2	29.3	16.7
3. Sometimes	34.9	(33)	38.1	34.2	25.0
4. Neutral	16.8	(16)	14.3	19.5	16.7
5. Infrequently	9.5	(9)	11.9	7.3	8.2
6. Seldom	8.4	(8)	7.1	7.3	16.7
7. Never	1.0	(1)	0.0	2.4	0.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	64.3	(61)	66.7	63.5	58.4

It is encouraging that 64.3 per cent do, even sometimes, *take their concerns to the person with whom they have a problem.* Only 3.2 per cent 'always do' while 9.4 per cent 'never' or 'seldom' do.

Item V21: *Do you see conflict as something to avoid, to escape from?*

This question seeks to establish the percentage of respondents who may follow the very commonly observed congregational trend of perceiving conflict as something to be avoided (Augsburger, 1992:234).

Table 4.23: Conflict avoidance

V21	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Yes, always	2.1	(2)	4.8	0.0	0.0
2. Usually	7.4	(7)	7.1	9.8	0.0
3. Sometimes	37.9	(36)	38.1	43.9	16.7
4. Neutral	13.7	(13)	14.3	14.6	8.3
5. Infrequently	14.7	(14)	16.7	9.8	25.0
6. Seldom	15.8	(15)	7.1	19.5	33.3
7. Never	8.4	(8)	11.9	2.4	16.7
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	47.4	(45)	50.0	53.7	16.7

The data indicates that 47.4 per cent of all respondents prefer avoiding conflict, at least sometimes, which is the most frequent and commonly exercised response (Augsburger, 1992:234). Ignoring the neutral category result of 13.7 per cent, there are 38.9 per cent who are not avoidance averse. The C stratum is an exception with only 16.7 per cent preferring avoidance while 75.0 per cent do not.

Item V22: *Do you see conflict as an obstacle to conquer?*

When conflict is perceived as an obstacle to conquer, it often translates into a 'fight' approach which does not easily facilitate resolution and reconciliation (Haugk & Perry, 1988:26).

Table 4.24: An obstacle to conquer

V22	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Yes, always	6.3	(6)	4.8	9.8	0.0
2. Usually	14.7	(14)	19.0	9.8	16.8
3. Sometimes	34.8	(33)	*38.1*	*31.7*	*33.3*
4. Neutral	12.6	(12)	11.9	17.1	0.0
5. Infrequently	25.3	(24)	21.4	26.8	33.3
6. Seldom	4.2	(4)	2.4	4.8	8.3
7. Never	2.1	(2)	2.4	0.0	8.3
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	55.8	(53)	61.9	51.3	50.1

It is somewhat concerning that more than half of the respondents perceive conflict as an obstacle to conquer. However, 62.3 per cent of those who do are recorded under 'sometimes.' The data indicates that there is reasonable consensus across the strata on either side of the 55.8 per cent mean.

Item 23: *Do you see conflict as an opportunity to do good?*

Wesley exhorted followers to "Do all the good you can, By all the means you can, In all the ways you can, In all the places you can, At all the times you can, To all the people you can, As long as ever you can" (Water, 2001:941). This question sought to determine whether respondents saw conflict as an opportunity to do good (Sand & Johnson, 2011:112)

Table 4.25: Opportunity to do good

V23	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Yes, always	9.5	(9)	7.1	7.3	25.0
2. Usually	20.0	(19)	21.4	17.1	25.0
3. Sometimes	42.1	(40)	45.3	43.9	25.0
4. Neutral	11.6	(11)	9.5	9.8	25.0
5. Infrequently	12.6	(12)	14.3	14.6	0.0
6. Seldom	4.2	(4)	2.4	7.3	0.0
7. Never	0.0	(0)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	71.6	(68)	73.8	68.3	75.0

A high percentage of all respondents align themselves with the hypothesis. There is a little variance between a low of 68.3 per cent for B and a high for C at 75.0 per cent. What the data does not answer is an explanation of the definition for 'good' that each respondent envisaged.

Item 24: *In our church we try to avoid dealing with conflict*

The respondent's personal stance was measured under item V21 on page 178. Here the observed action of the church, the congregation, as a whole is measured.

Table 4.26: Conflict avoidance in congregations

V24	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Yes, always	1.1	(1)	0.0	2.4	0.0
2. Usually	25.2	(24)	23.7	24.4	33.3
3. Sometimes	24.2	(23)	31.0	17.1	25.0
4. Neutral	36.8	(35)	26.2	48.8	33.3
5. Infrequently	5.3	(5)	9.5	2.4	0.0
6. Seldom	4.2	(4)	4.8	4.9	0.0
7. Never	3.2	(3)	4.8	0.0	8.4
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	50.6	(48)	54.8	43.9	58.3

The result shows that half of all respondents state that their *church tries to avoid dealing with conflict.* This is aligned to Shawchuck's (1983:12) observation that congregations try "…to ignore or avoid it." Avoidance is observed to be slightly higher among the C respondents.

Item V25: *When conflict comes into the church, I am not afraid to address it*

Given the observed norm of conflict avoidance, this statement measured whether the respondents are afraid to address conflict in a congregational context.

Table 4.27: Unafraid to address conflict

V25	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Yes, always	6.3	(6)	9.5	2.4	8.3
2. Usually	20.0	(19)	16.7	22.0	25.0
3. Sometimes	34.8	(33)	26.2	41.5	41.7
4. Neutral	16.8	(16)	21.4	12.2	16.7
5. Infrequently	16.8	(16)	16.7	19.5	8.3
6. Seldom	4.2	(4)	7.1	2.4	0.0
7. Never	1.1	(1)	2.4	0.0	0.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	61.1	(58)	52.4	65.9	75.0

There is no consensus across the strata that when there is conflict in their church, the individuals are not afraid to address it, with a difference of 22.6 percentage points between the A and C strata.

Notwithstanding little consensus, the response can be deemed positive in that overall 61.1 per cent are not afraid to address conflict in the congregation. It is imperative to understand that this statement asks the respondents to evaluate their own personal behaviour in responding to conflict when it arises in their congregation.

Item V26: *When conflict comes into the church I prefer to be a peacemaker*

The statement does not seek to determine whether people understand what a peacemaker is, but whether this is a preferential role they see themselves playing. Peacemakers, within the church context, are people who breathe grace, bringing God's love, mercy, forgiveness, strength, and wisdom to the conflicts of daily life (Sande, 2004:11)

Table 4.28: Peacemaker preference

V26	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Yes, always	3.1	(3)	4.8	2.4	0.0
2. Usually	41.1	(39)	38.0	44.0	41.6
3. Sometimes	28.4	(27)	26.2	31.7	25.0
4. Neutral	17.9	(17)	16.7	19.5	16.7
5. Infrequently	5.3	(5)	11.9	0.0	0.0
6. Seldom	3.2	(3)	0.0	2.4	16.7
7. Never	1.0	(1)	2.4	0.0	0.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	72.6	(69)	69.0	78.1	66.6

This statement asks the respondent to evaluate their behaviour when responding to conflict that arises in their congregation. A high percentage of all respondents indicate a preference toward peace-making.

Item V27: *When I have a problem with someone I talk to someone else about it*

This statement was included to determine whether there is conversation outside of the conflict situation without attempting to determine the purpose of such conversation.

Table 4.29: Talking to others regarding a relational problem

V27	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Yes, always	1.0	(1)	0.0	2.4	0.0
2. Usually	31.6	(30)	26.2	34.1	41.8
3. Sometimes	31.6	(30)	35.7	29.3	25.0
4. Neutral	11.6	(11)	7.1	17.1	8.3
5. Infrequently	8.4	(8)	9.5	7.3	8.3
6. Seldom	13.7	(13)	19.1	9.8	8.3
7. Never	2.1	(2)	2.4	0.0	8.3
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	64.2	(61)	61.9	65.8	66.8

There is reasonable consensus across the strata with almost two-thirds indicating that when conflict arises, they *speak to someone else about it*. This measurement does not disclose whether respondents also address the person(s) with whom they have a problem. However, it is possible that those who do not speak to a third party may not address the person with whom they are in conflict. This is deemed unhealthy behaviour

which is either conflict avoidance, or internalisation through "…telling ourselves a story about *why* he or she did it, which leads to a feeling…" (Patterson *et al.*, 2013:50) that could translate into rising stress and conditions such as depression (Carlsson *et al.*, 2012:120).

Item V28: *Do you find it difficult to trust God when you are in a conflict situation?*

Our attitude toward conflict is a matter of faith, believing God is present with us in our conflict (Porter, 2010:16).

Table 4.30: Difficulty in trusting God during conflict

V28	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Yes, always	1.0	(1)	0.0	2.4	0.0
2. Usually	5.3	(5)	0.0	12.2	0.0
3. Sometimes	30.5	(29)	26.2	36.6	25.0
4. Neutral	11.6	(11)	16.7	4.8	16.7
5. Infrequently	13.7	(13)	14.3	12.2	16.7
6. Seldom	21.1	(20)	23.8	22.0	8.3
7. Never	16.8	(16)	19.0	9.8	33.3
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	36.8	(35)	26.2	51.2	25.0

Only 1 per cent of all respondents categorically stated that they always experience difficulty in trusting God when in a conflict situation. Overall, 36.8 per cent experience even somewhat difficulty in trusting God in a conflict situation. The Psalmist celebrated the fact that God was inescapable, that God was everywhere (Psalm 139:7-12).

The author of Proverbs exhorted God's people to "trust in the Lord" and not only rely on their own strength or insight (Proverbs 3:5-6). Jesus encouraged his disciples, saying "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20, NIV) and "Do not let your hearts be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1, NIV). Christ-followers are encouraged to trust God and follow His ways instead of only relying only on their own ideas and abilities in responding to people who differ from them, or oppose them (Sande, 2004:31).

Item V29: *We do not confront problem people in our church*

The focus in this statement is to establish whether respondents have observed whether people who are deemed to be difficult are approached and confronted.

Table 4.31: Not confronting problem people

V29	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Strongly agree	8.4	(8)	7.2	4.9	25.0
2. Agree	20.0	(19)	21.4	19.5	16.7
3. Somewhat agree	36.9	(35)	38.1	41.5	16.7
4. Neither agree nor disagree	22.1	(21)	21.4	24.4	16.7
5. Somewhat disagree	2.1	(2)	0.0	4.9	0.0
6. Disagree	6.3	(6)	7.1	2.4	16.7
7. Strongly disagree	4.2	(4)	4.8	2.4	8.2
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	65.3	(62)	66.7	65.9	58.4

The result indicates that almost two-thirds of the overall responses agree, even somewhat, that they *do not confront problem people in their church*. All (65.3%), A 66.7%) and B (65.9%) show much similarity, while the C strata has a different distribution.

In all, 22.1 per cent of all respondents were not sure whether problem people were confronted in their congregations or not. The church, perhaps more than other institutions, avoids confrontation because "…many congregations operate with a rule that says 'Christians don't fight.'" (Cosgrove & Hatfield, 1994:96)

Item V30: *The way people handle conflict can prove they are His disciples*

The test through this statement is to determine whether there is any expectation or opportunity in the manner in which Christ-followers handle conflict, or can demonstrate or live out their faith recognisably.

Table 4.32: Disciples handle conflict differently

V30	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Strongly agree	16.8	(16)	16.7	17.1	16.7
2. Agree	46.4	(44)	40.5	58.5	25.0
3. Somewhat agree	28.4	(27)	33.3	24.4	25.0
4. Neither agree nor disagree	5.3	(5)	7.1	0.0	16.7
5. Somewhat disagree	2.1	(2)	2.4	0.0	8.3
6. Disagree	1.0	(1)	0.0	0.0	8.3
7. Strongly disagree	0.0	(0)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	91.6	(87)	90.5	100	66.7

There is much agreement, despite the lower measure found in the C stratum, that *the way people handle conflict can prove that they are Christ's disciples*. This implies that when there is conflict in the congregation, there is an expectation that the way people handle conflict is a witness to their relationship to, and discipleship of Christ.

Items V31 through V34, form a set and are concluded with a summary analysis.

Two sets of paired statements were presented to respondents that effectively measure the same aspect, namely how many conflicts are observed to have reached resolution and realised reconciliation. Items V31 and V32 measure resolution and reconciliation from a resolution perspective, and items V33 and V34 from a reconciliation perspective.

Item V31: *My experience is that conflict issues at church are normally resolved*

Table 4.33: Are conflicts normally resolved?

V31	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage ditribution					
1. Strongly agree	1.0	(1)	2.4	0.0	0.0
2. Agree	14.7	(14)	16.7	12.2	16.7
3. Somewhat agree	13.7	(13)	14.3	9.8	25.0
4. Neither agree nor disagree	13.7	(13)	14.3	17.0	0.0
5. Somewhat disagree	32.7	(31)	35.7	34.2	16.7
6. Disagree	22.1	(21)	16.7	21.9	41.6
7. Strongly disagree	2.1	(2)	0.0	4.9	0.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	29.4	(28)	33.4	22.0	41.7

Overall 29.4 per cent indicated that conflict is normally resolved, more so in the C than in B congregations. The concern is that 70.6 per cent have not, even somewhat, witnessed resolution.

Item V32: *My experience is that when conflict issues are resolved at church, the relationships are not reconciled*

Table 4.34: Resolution without reconciliation

V32	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Strongly agree	0.0	(0)	0.0	0.0	0.0
2. Agree	22.1	(21)	19.1	26.8	16.8
3. Somewhat agree	39.0	(37)	45.3	34.2	33.3
4. Neither agree nor disagree	22.1	(21)	16.7	24.,4	33.3
5. Somewhat disagree	8.4	(8)	7.1	9.8	8.3
6. Disagree	7.4	(7)	9.5	4.9	8.3
7. Strongly disagree	1.0	(1)	2.4	0.0	0.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	61.1	(58)	64.4	61.0	50.1

A total of 61.1 per cent indicate, even somewhat, that *when conflict issues are resolved at church, the relationships are not reconciled.* Although the A and B congregations are near the overall rating, the C congregations are a full ten percentage points below the overall rate.

Item V33: *My experience is that in conflict situations in church, relationships are normally reconciled*

Table 4.35: Relationships normally reconciled

V33	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Strongly agree	1.0	(1)	2.4	0.0	0.0
2. Agree	19.0	(18)	16.7	14.7	41.6
3. Somewhat agree	30.5	(29)	30.9	34.2	16.7
4. Neither agree nor disagree	20.0	(19)	16.7	26.8	8.3
5. Somewhat disagree	21.1	(20)	28.6	14.6	16.7
6. Disagree	7.4	(7)	4.8	7.3	16.7
7. Strongly sisagree	1.0	(1)	0.0	2.4	0.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	50.5	(48)	50.0	48.9	58.3

The data indicates that half of the responses agree that *relationships are reconciled*. The C congregations are 7.8 percentage points above the overall rating which suggests that these congregations carry a higher rate of reconciliation after conflict. The A and B congregations' measurements are nearer the overall percentage rating.

Item V34: *My experience is that in conflict situations in church, although relationships may be reconciled, the issues causing the conflict remain unresolved*

Table 4.36: Relationships reconciled, but no resolution

V34	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Strongly agree	2.1	(2)	0.0	4.9	0.0
2. Agree	22.1	(21)	19.0	31.7	0.0
3. Somewhat agree	35.8	(34)	42.9	26.8	41.7
4. Neither agree nor disagree	20.0	(19)	16.7	19.5	33.3
5. Somewhat disagree	11.6	(11)	11.9	9.8	16.7
6. Disagree	7.4	(7)	7.1	7.3	8.3
7. Strongly disagree	1.0	(1)	2.4	0.0	0.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100
Cumulative percentages: categories 1 to 3 (shaded area)	60.0	(57)	61.9	63.4	41.7

The result supports the statement that *in conflict situations, although relationships may be reconciled, the issues causing the conflict remain unresolved.* Overall 60.0 per cent agree with the hypothesis, with the A congregations slightly above and B congregations 3.4 percentage points above. The C congregations measure 18.3 percentage points below the overall 60.0 per cent which is significant as it indicates that in most cases, when the relationships are reconciled, the issues are also resolved.

Summary analysis: Items V31 through V34

Only 29.4 per cent of respondents observed conflict resolution (V31). A total of 61.1 per cent reported that reconciliation is not realised when issues are resolved (V32). From this it can be reasoned that, when the focus is from a resolution perspective, only 11.4 per cent observed resolution and reconciliation. Similarly, 50.5 per cent observed that reconciliation is realised (V33), and 60 per cent recorded that, despite the reconciliation, the issues were not resolved (V34). It can be inferred that, when the focus is from a reconciliation perspective, 20.2 per cent observed reconciliation and resolution. Although there is a difference of 12.4 percentage points between the two perspectives,

it is a good indication of how few conflict situations find closure in both resolution and reconciliation

4.2.2.3   Steps in reaching an outcome

Statement*: In a conflict situation in church that you experienced or were associated with, mark the actions you took: "YES" and those actions you did not take: "NO."*

The main purpose of this section is to determine whether congregants believe that their actions at the time of conflict were honouring God, or not.   The questions and statements lead up to item V35_8: *"In your mind, were all the actions you took in 35.1 to 35.7 above God honouring in the way they were carried out?"*

Secondly, this section endeavoured to determine whether there was any consistency in the overall results with related items already covered.   The results are presented without individual comment, and concluded with a summary analysis.

Table 4.37: I Ignored – did nothing

V35_1	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Yes	48.4	(46)	42.9	56.1	41.7
2. No	51.6	(49)	57.1	43.9	58.3
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100

Table 4.38: Asked for audience with the person(s) who, in your mind, was/were responsible

V35_2	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Yes	49.5	(47)	61.9	29.3	75.0
2. No	50.5	(48)	38.1	70.7	25.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100

Table 4.39: Approached an office higher up the organisational hierarchy regarding the conflict

V35_3	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Parentage distribution					
1. Yes	47.4	(45)	45.2	39.0	83.3
2. No	52.6	(50)	54.8	61.0	16.7
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100

Table 4.40: Left the church for another

V35_4	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Yes	11.6	(11)	16.7	9.9	0.0
2. No	88.4	(84)	83.3	90.1	100
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100

Table 4.41: Had an audience with the person(s) who, in your mind, was/were responsible

V35_5	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Yes	49.5	(47)	61.9	39.0	41.7
2. No	50.5	(48)	38.1	61.0	58.3
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100

Table 4.42: Participated in a facilitated mediation, conflict resolution, or reconciliation process

V35_6	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Yes	41.0	(39)	45.2	26.8	75.0
2. No	59.0	(56)	54.8	73.2	25.0
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100

Table 4.43: I pushed as hard as I could for someone to listen to me

V35_7	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Yes	27.4	(26)	33.3	17.1	41.7
2. No	72.6	(69)	66.7	82.9	58.3
Total	100	(95)	100	100	100

Table 4.44: In your mind, were all the actions you took in 35.1 to 35.7 above, God-honouring in the way they were carried out?

V35_8	ALL		Strata		
	%	(n)	A	B	C
Percentage distribution					
1. Yes	51.6	(49)	54.8	41.5	75.0
2. No	48.4	(46)	45.2	58.5	25.0
	100	(95)	100	100	100

Summary analysis: V35_1 to V35_8 - 'Steps in reaching an outcome'

In addition to the descriptive presentation, a few queries were conducted to compare some of the actions and comment on these.

(i) Thirteen per cent (13%) of all respondents indicate that they had *ignored, did nothing* (V35_1) in the conflict situation and judge their actions as God honouring (V35_8).

(ii) In all, 5.3 per cent of respondents that *ignored, did nothing* (V35_1), had also left the church (35_4).

(iii) A query identified that 14.5 per cent of the white segment respondents and 3 per cent of the non-white segment had left the A and B congregations. Interestingly, no respondents of the black race, or C strata respondents had left their church because of conflict.

(iii) The results of item V35_2: *asked for audience*, are dissimilar to item V25: *being unafraid to address conflict in church* (Table 4.27, page 183) although 75 per cent of the C strata respondents provided a positive response for both items.

(iv) Respondents of the C congregations are far more (V35_3) inclined to involve organisational hierarchy, or escalate the situation to higher authority.

(v) Of the 11.6 per cent of respondents who had left the church, 90.9 per cent believed their action was God-honouring. (See Putman's statement, page 118)

(vi) A higher percentage of the A congregations held audience with persons they believed were responsible for the conflict.   The responses from the B and C congregations are 20 percentage points lower (V35_5).

(vii) There is more evidence, namely 75 per cent of C congregations' respondents, of active conflict handling participation in C congregations (V35_6).

(vii) Apart from the B (41.5%) strata, the other respondents are more than 50.0 per cent confident that their actions were God-honouring, with C strata at 75.0 per cent.

4.2.3   Open questions:

Think of a conflict situation in a recent church that was of reasonable dimension. Briefly suggest what could have been done to ensure that there was a) resolution of the conflict issue(s), and b) reconciliation between the conflicting parties.

In all, 34 per cent of responses contained suggestions to the open questions.

4.2.3.1   Resolution

Five prominent themes are identified which stress earlier action be taken (ASAP), thorough clarification of the issues, sufficient detail or information on the issues to be obtained, an explanation of the process toward resolution for all stakeholders, and monitoring of the implementation of the agreed resolution(s).

Figure 4.5: Aids to resolution
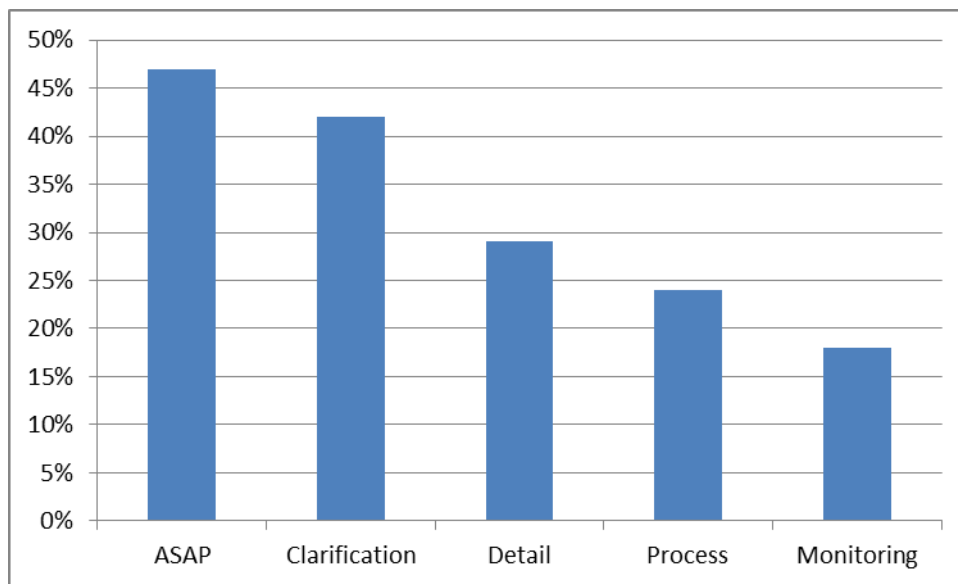
ASAP refers to action that should have been taken much earlier to lessen the possibility of an escalation of intensity. (See section 3.2.3, page 113)

Clarification of the conflict and related issues to alleviate confusion would aid resolution. Problems the conflicting parties referred to seemed more like symptoms than root causes of the conflict.

Detail entails not only focusing on the issues the conflicting parties mention, but going deeper to identify the stakeholders' needs and uncover the root of the conflict.

Process –The planned process to be followed should be explained so that all parties understand the stages toward resolution and reconciliation. The changes to the planned process need to be communicated timeously, and reason(s) should be given. (See section 3.7, page 145)

Monitoring of the agreed outcome and associated behaviour or actions of the parties is necessary. There is no resolution of issues without the necessary behavioural change.

4.2.3.2   Reconciliation

The responses centred more on resolution issues already identified above and provided aids toward reconciliation. Only 10 per cent of the returns addressed reconciliation. Three themes were evident covering the need for resolution, practising patience, and ensuring that parties are physically brought together through the process.

Patience - entails not seeking reconciliation too early, or forcing the process.   The parties need to be allowed to reach reconciliation as part of the process. It is also necessary to ensure all parties are given equal opportunity to table their case: "Go slow to go fast" (Shearouse, 2011:198).

Resolution – It is easier to move toward reconciliation when resolution is achieved. Parties need to be given more time and opportunity to listen to one another and understand the other party's perceptions, opinions and understanding.   Common ground must be found from which to move toward resolution. (See 3.7.4, page 147).

Face-to-face communication is necessary. In some cases parties were not physically brought together which is a necessity for reconciliation. Although parties could be heard independently, there should be a point, especially in church settings, where conflicting parties are brought together.

4.2.4   Inferential statistics

Although the "…description of a univariate or multivariate raw data set already provides valuable information when presented in a contingency table," as in section 4.2.2, "…it is usually only the first step in a statistical analysis of the data. The purpose is to draw certain justified conclusions about the population from which the data set is derived. In this regard the chi-squared distribution plays an important role" (Steyn *et al.*, 1994:549).

The bi-variate chi-square test for independence (Sandblom, 1983:193) is used to determine the strength of "…association between two quantitative variables" (Lock *et al.*, 2012:107).

This test is applied to four categorical variables (See section 4.2.4.1, page 195) and the univariates V11 through V34.

4.2.4.1   Selection of categorical variables to test for relationship

The descriptive analysis in section 4.2.2 commencing on page 165 periodically indicates that the C stratum is the more dominant exception rather than A or B.

For this reason, Strata (V0_1) was selected as the initial categorical variable to test for independence. The results are displayed in in Table 4.46, on page 196 with associated comments and explanations.

Race (V3) was selected as the second categorical variable to test for independence as the respondents from C congregations, which have no white members, show some differences to the overall responses. (See Table 4.50, page 198 with commentary).

In line with the principal role that leadership plays throughout the development of a missional congregation (See section 2.1, page 18), and given Bullard's comment (See section 1.4.4, page 11), leadership (V7) and education (V9) were selected. These results are displayed with commentary in Table 4.51 on page 199 and Table 4.52 on page 200 respectively.

The Likert scale 1 to 3: 'Strongly agree', 'Agree' and 'Somewhat agree' are grouped together as 'agree.' The scale 4 to 7: 'Neutral', 'Somewhat disagree', 'disagree' and 'Strongly disagree' are grouped as 'neutral_disagree'. The 'neutral_disagree' group may also be referred to as 'not agree' in the reporting. These groupings were formed to increase the probability that all cross tabulation cells for the calculated expected counts consisted of five or more responses. Where the expected numbers are less than five the Fischer's exact test would need to be applied (Yates *et al.*, 1998:367).

4.2.4.2   Chi-squared test for independence

Results that identify associations between two variables, one that is specifically selected and the other from questionnaire items V11 to V34 (see survey questionnaire on annexure A, page 228) are presented.

Formally, the chi-squared is a hypothesis test with the following null and alternative hypotheses:

H_o: No relationship exists between the two factors
H_1: A relationship exists between the two factors

The hypotheses testing will be performed on the 5 per cent level of significance. The p-value of the chi-square test will be interpreted in the following way:

Table 4.45: P value of Chi Square test on 5% level of significance

P-value	Decision	Conclusion
< 0.05	H$_o$ is rejected	Significant association
0.05 < P Value < 0.10	It seems that H$_o$ can be rejected	A tendency for an association
< 0.01	H$_o$ is rejected	Highly significant association
> 0.10	H$_o$ is not rejected	No significant association

(Source: Researcher's Tabulation of Sandblom, 1983:193)

4.2.4.3   Chi-squared test for independence results

Results that identify associations between categorical variables selected and questionnaire items are presented.

Detailed chi-square results for these items are tabulated on Annexure B, on page 231.

Table 4.46: Chi-square test on V0_1_Strata

	Item	P-value	Result
V21	Do you see conflict as something to avoid; to escape from?	0.0705	A tendency for a relationship to exit
V28	Do you find it difficult to trust God when you are in a conflict situation?	0.0405	H$_o$: is rejected; A significant relationship does exist
V30	The way people handle conflict can prove we are His disciples	0.0012	H$_o$: is rejected; A highly significant relationship exists

A detailed report on the association between the selected variable Strata (V0_1) and the survey items per Table 4.46 is provided. Three (3) possible scenarios of association are provided. The remaining variables are presented in summary form.

Table 4.47: Cross tabulation table (V0_1 Strata & V21)

V0.1_Strata	VV21(Do you see conflict as something to avoid, to escape from?)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7	Total
Stratum A	21 (22%) 19.895	21 (22%) 22.105	42 (44%)
Stratum B	22 (23%) 19.421	19 (20%) 21.579	41 (43%)
Stratum C	2 (2%) 5.6842	10 (11%) 6.3158	12 (13%)
Total	45 (47%)	50 (53%)	95 (100%)

The first entry in a cell is the observed frequency, followed by the row percentage in brackets. The second entry is the frequency that was expected under H$_o$, the null hypothesis of no association.

The results of the chi-square test are:

Statistical test	Degrees of Freedom	Test statistic value	P-value
Chi-Square	2	5.3044	0.0705

The p-value of the test is 0.0705, which implies a tendency for an association between the selected variable: *(V0_1) 'Strata'* (See section 4.1.3, page 163; and section 4.2.4.1, page 195) and survey statement: *(V21) Do you see conflict as something to avoid; to escape from it?*

The observed frequency (10) reported in the cell: Stratum C, 'Neutral_No' is much greater than the expected frequency of 6.3158.

The conclusion can be drawn that the respondents in the C congregations tend to be less conflict avoidant than those in the A congregations and B congregations.

Table 4.48: Cross tabulation table (V0_1 Strata & V28)

V0.1_Strata	VV28(Do you find it difficult to trust God when you are in a conflict situation?)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7	Total
Stratum A	11 (12%) 15.474	31 (33% 26.526	42 (44%)
Stratum B	21 (22%) 15.105	20 (21%) 25.895	41 (43%)
Stratum C	3 (3%) 4.4211	9 (9%) 7.5789	12 (13%)
Total	35 (37%)	60 (63%)	95 (100%)
Statistical test	Degrees of Freedom	Test statistic value	P-value
Chi-Square	2	6.4134	0.0405

The test p-value is 0.0405, which infers a significant association between the selected variables. The observed frequency (21) reported in the cell: Stratum B, 'Yes' is much greater than the expected frequency of 15.105.

This indicates that the respondents in the more homogeneous *A and C congregations* display significantly less difficulty in trusting God during conflict than their counterparts in the *B congregations*.

Table 4.49: Cross tabulation table (V0_1 Strata & V30)

V0.1_Strata	VV30(The way people handle conflict can prove we are His disciples)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7	Total
Stratum A	38 (40%) 38.463	4 (4%) 3.5368	42 (44%)
Stratum B	41 (43%) 37.547	0 (0%) 3.4526	41 (43%)
Stratum C	8 (8%) 10.989	4 (4%) 1.0105	12 (13%)
Total	87(96%)	8 (8%)	95 (100%)
Statistical test	Degrees of Freedom	Test statistic value	P-value
Chi-Square	2	13.4934	0.0012

The test p-value is 0.0012, which indicates a highly significant association between the selected variables. The observed frequency (4) reported in the cell: Stratum C, 'Neutral_No' is much greater than the expected frequency of 1.0105. This shows that the respondents in the homogeneous *C congregations* are very significantly less inclined to agree with the hypothesis.

Table 4.50: Chi-square test on V3_Race

Item		P-value	Result
V11	For me, facing conflict is a negative experience	0.0633	A tendency for a relationship to exits
V16	Some conflict is God influenced, given or created	0.0892	A tendency for a relationship to exits
V21	Do you see conflict as something to avoid, to escape from?	0.0151	H_o: is rejected; A significant relationship does exist
V22	Do you see conflict as an obstacle to conquer?	0.0557	A tendency for a relationship to exits

The test on *race* revealed a relational predisposition from the *white segment* of respondents. This segment represents the *white* sector of A and B congregations.

The *white segment* of these congregations exhibit a tendency towards:

(i) experiencing conflict negatively,

(ii) envisaging some conflict as influenced or created by God,

(iii) envisaging conflict as something to be avoided, and

(iv) being inclined to view conflict as an obstacle to be conquered.

This segment clearly possesses a lower threshold of conflict avoidance than *non-white* congregants.

Table 4.51: Chi-square test on V7_leadership

	Item	P-value	Result
V11	For me, facing conflict is a negative experience	0.0452	H_o: is rejected; A significant relationship does exist
V16	Some conflict is God influenced, given or created	0.0055	H_o: is rejected; A highly significant relationship exists
V19	Conflict is a necessary part of congregational life	0.0393	H_o: is rejected; A significant relationship does exist
V20	When I have a problem with someone I take my concerns to that person	0.0851	A tendency for a relationship to exits
V22	Do you see conflict as an obstacle to conquer?	0.0024	H_o: is rejected; A highly significant relationship exists
V23	Do you see conflict as opportunity to do good?	0.0187	H_o: is rejected; A significant relationship does exist
V25	When conflict comes into the church, I am not afraid to address it	0.0396	H_o: is rejected; A significant relationship does exist
V26	When conflict comes into the church I prefer to be a peacemaker	0.0857	A tendency for a relationship to exits

Leadership displayed various degrees of relationship with more items than did s*trata, race,* or *education*.

People in *leadership*:

(i) experience conflict as negative significantly more than those not in leadership positions do,

(ii) are very much more inclined to view God as having a hand in some conflict. A very significantly higher degree of non-leaders do not share the same view, and

(iii) show significantly more bias toward the necessity of conflict than people not in leadership,

(iv) have a tendency to address people with whom they have a problem directly,

(v) are significantly biased toward the view that conflict is an obstacle to be conquered,

(vi) have a considerable higher regard for the potential opportunity of leveraging good out of times of conflict,

 (vii) are significantly afraid to address conflict that comes into the church than those not in leadership, and

(vii) have a preference to be peacemakers in times of conflict.

Table 4.52: Chi-square test on education (V9)

	Item	P-value	Result
V14	Conflict is wrong, and should not exist in a congregation	0.0363	H_o: is rejected; A relationship does exist
V15	Conflict is a normal part of Christian living	0.0054	H_o: is rejected; A significant relationship exists
V28	Do you find it difficult to trust God when you are in a conflict situation?	0.0060	H_o: is rejected; A significant relationship exists
V33	My experience is that in conflict situations, relationships are normally reconciled	0.0040	H_o: is rejected; A significant relationship exists
V34	My experiences is that in conflict situations, *although relationships may be reconciled*, the issues causing the conflict remain unresolved	0.0044	H_o: is rejected; A significant relationship exists

Congregants, who have been *educated* in conflict, be it from a non-church entity:

(i) do not view conflict as wrong and that it should not exist in congregations,

(ii) have a significantly high appreciation that conflict is normal in Christian living,

(iii) have considerably less difficulty in finding it difficult to trust God during times of conflict.

More people *educated* in conflict have observed a higher degree of reconciliation following conflict than those not educated in conflict. Significantly more of those *educated* in conflict do not agree that causational issues remain unresolved although reconciliation having been realised.

NOTE: The table that follows is presented so that the reader can have a visual of the overall Chi-square result indicating with which of the items it has / has no association.

Table 4.53: Chi-square on Items with relational results

	Item	V0_1_ Strata	V3_ Race	V7_ Leadership	V9_ Education
V11	For me, facing conflict is a negative experience		(0.0633) T	(0.0452) *	
V14	*Conflict is wrong, and should not exist in a congregation*				(0.0363) *
V15	Conflict is a normal part of Christian living				(0.0054) **
V16	Some conflict is God influenced, given or created		(0.0892) T	(0.0055) *	
V19	Conflict is a necessary part of congregational life			(0.0393) *	
V20	When I have a problem with someone I take my concerns to that person			(0.0851) T	
V21	Do you see conflict as something to avoid, to escape from it?	(0.0705) T	(0.0151) *		
V22	Do you see conflict as an obstacle to conquer?		(0.0557) T	(0.0024) **	
V23	Do you see conflict as opportunity to do good?			(0.0187) *	
V25	When conflict comes into the church, I am not afraid to address it			(0.0396) *	
V26	When conflict comes into the church I prefer to be a peacemaker			(0.0857) T	
V28	Do you find it difficult to trust God when you are in a conflict situation?	(0.0405) *			(0.0060) *
V30	The way people handle conflict can prove we are His disciples	(0.0012) **			
V33	My experience is that in conflict situations, relationships are normally reconciled				(0.0040) **
V34	My experiences is that in conflict situations, *although relationships may be reconciled*, the issues causing the conflict remain unresolved				(0.0044) **

Legend: (P-value)
T: A *tendency* for a *relationship* to exits
*: H_o is rejected; A *significant relationship* does exist;
**: H_o is rejected; A *highly significant relationship* does exist

Table 4.53 provides an opportunity to view the chi-square results from a 'per item' perspective, horizontally and per the selected categorical items, vertically.

From a 'per item' view, it is noted that items are only influenced by one or two of the selected categorical variables. It is further observed that only five items are influenced

by more than one of the selected categorical variables (V11, V16, V21, V22 & V28). None of the items are relationally affected by both V7_Leadership and V9_Education. Only item 28 is influenced by both V9_Education and V0_Strata, while three items are relationally affected by V7_Leasership and V3_Race (V11, V16 & V22).

4.3 Examination and reflection of the statistics

The examination is undertaken through an observational study which Lock *et al.* (2012:34) describe as "…a study in which the researcher does not actively control the value of any variable but simply observes the values as they naturally exist." This section examines the outcomes of the descriptive statistics (See section 4.2.2, page 165), open questions (See section 4.2.3, page 192) and inferential, chi-square, statistics (See section 4.2.4, page 194) for further understanding and interpretation (Kumar, 2002:170). The sections following conclude with an evaluation which makes inferences or draws conclusions about the population (*congregation or congregants*) that the data set (*statistical sample*) represents (Steyn *et al.*, 1994:549). *(Italics, researcher's emphasis)*

4.3.1 Differences between A and C strata

There are five (5) demographic records (Table 4.54) and seven (7) univariate records Table 4.55) where significant differences between responses of non-white C congregations and the predominantly white, A congregations were identified. The B congregation responses vary between leaning toward the A or C congregations, but do not show significant differences from those of A and C.

Table 4.54: Significant demographic recorded differences between A and C strata

		Categorical or Continuous variables			
		ALL	A	C	Difference
V3	*Percentage of non-white respondents*	34.7	9.5	100.0	A<C: 90.5
V5	*Worship three (3) or more times a month*	73.7	49.9	91.7	A<C: 41.8
V2	*Age above 50 years*	64.2	71.5	33.3	A>C: 38.2
V6	*Do participate in small groups*	77.9	66.7	91.7	A<C: 25.0
V7	*Those who are in leadership*	41.1	54.8	33.3	A>B: 21.5

The *percentage of non-white respondents (V3)* is what classifies the A and C strata or congregations (See 4.1.2, page 162). The measure of *frequency of worship (V5)* and *participation in small groups (V19)* were among the data recorded to ensure that

respondents were sufficiently active in their congregations to witness or experience conflict. *Age (V2)* is not used as a qualifier or a variable to test for independence or relationship (chi-square test), whereas *leadership (V7)* is used in the test for independence.

Table 4.55: Significant univariate recorded differences between A and C strata

		'Agree' responses %			
		ALL	A	C	Difference
V14	*Conflict is wrong, and should not exist in a congregation*	44.2	38.0	66.7	A<C: 28.7
V17	*All conflict is due to sin of some nature*	46.3	42.9	58.4	A<C: 15.5
V18	*Conflict is a necessary part of everyday living*	54.8	64.3	41.7	A>C: 22.6
V19	*Conflict is a necessary part of congregational life*	29.8	38.1	8.3	A>C: 29.8
V21	*Do you see conflict as something to avoid, to escape from?*	47.4	50.0	16.7	A>C: 33.3
V25	*When conflict comes into the church, I am not afraid to address it*	61.1	52.4	75.0	A<C: 37.0
V30	*The way people handle conflict can prove they are His disciples*	91.6	90.5	66.7	A>B: 23.8

Compared to the A congregants, the respondents of C Congregations are less conflict averse (V21) and less afraid to address conflict (V25). This is an indication that C congregants would be more inclined to address conflict. This deduction is strengthened by a significant majority of C congregants indicating that they view conflict as wrong and that it should not exist in congregations (V14). The C congregants have significantly less appreciation for the necessity of conflict (V18 & V19) and are less inclined to believe that the way people handle conflict can prove that they are Disciples of Christ (V30). These differences may be of value when handling or mediating conflict, and when developing an educational resource on conflict for the South African context.

The chi-square test for independence on *Strata* shows a tendency for relationship with V21 measuring conflict avoidance, confirming the observation that the higher the number of the white segment, the higher the avoidance of conflict will be experienced or observed. A significant relationship with V30 is reported which measures whether respondents envisaged that the way people handled conflict could prove their discipleship of Christ, where again the A congregants responded exceptionally positively.

This explorative research has identified various differences between responses from A and C congregation respondents. There is sufficient evidence in these discoveries to warrant further research specifically focused on the comparative differences between A and C type congregations on handling conflict.

4.3.2 Pertaining to the research problem

The research problem:

> *The management and processes of conflict resolution and reconciliation within congregations are neither well led nor well managed.*

The problem is deemed to exist owing to perceptions, views and understanding of conflict which influence the reactions or responses to conflict situations impacting the outcome. As Callahan (2010:150) observes, "Perception yields Behaviour yields Destiny." This section follows Callahan's observation in presentation as follows: Firstly, (i) personal *perceptions* and views, and (ii) actions and responses *(behaviour)* of both an individual and corporate nature are considered. Although *destiny* was not specifically measured, (iii) personal experiences in a conflict situation were. Osmer and Bullard's comments on education (See section 1.4.4, page 11) influence the final groupings: (iv) the understanding of sociological aspects, and (v) the understanding of theological aspects. The related items are presented followed by an inferential evaluation and conclusion.

4.3.2.1 Personal perceptions and views

Related items

Item V21	*Do you see conflict as something to avoid, to escape from?*
Item V22	*Do you see conflict as an obstacle to conquer?*
Item V23	*Do you see conflict as an opportunity to do good?*

Evaluation

Overall there is a predisposition to avoid conflict (See Table 4.23, page 180); see conflict as an obstacle to be conquered (See Table 4.24, page 181); yet view the situation as an opportunity to do good (See Table 4.25, page 181).

The *white sector* (See Table 4.50, page 198 and related comment) and A and B congregations (See Table 4.23, page 180) are more biased toward conflict avoidance

than those in the *non-white sector* and C congregations. (See Annexure B, page 232).
Avoidance does not lead to peaceful resolution (Susek, 1999:126). To attain peaceful
resolution, constructive handling of conflict and not avoidance is necessary (Kraybill,
2001:4).

There is a greater tendency to view conflict as an obstacle to be conquered within the
white sector (See Table 4.50, page 198 and related comment) and more significantly
within those in leadership (See Table 4.51, page 199 and related comment. See also
Annexure B, page 233). Unfortunately, some people treat conflict as an obstacle that
should be conquered regardless of the consequences (Sande, 2004:22).

Congregants in leadership have greater belief that that conflict situations are an
opportunity to do good (See Annexure B, page 233). Bullard (2008:12) supports such
an outlook by encouraging congregations not to be afraid of healthy conflict, but
"…welcome it as an opportunity to bring forth positive spiritual and social change to the
love of Christ, and the fellowship of the congregation".

Conclusion:

Notwithstanding the view that conflict is an opportunity to do good, the presence of
conflict avoidance and the view that conflict is an obstacle to be conquered would not
contribute positively toward conflict resolution and reconciliation within congregations.
Unhealthy perceptions and views negatively influence behaviour (actions and
responses) which in turn affects the outcome (Callahan, 2010:150).

4.3.2.2   Behaviour: individual and corporate

Behaviour (i.e. actions and responses) from an individual, personal perspective, and
those observed corporately within congregations are addressed in two subsections.

4.3.2.2.1 Actions and responses: Personally

Related items

Item V20	*When I have a problem with someone I take my concerns to that person*
Item V25	*When conflict comes into the church, I am not afraid to address it*
Item V26	*When conflict comes into the church I prefer to be a peacemaker*
Item V27	*When I have a problem with someone I talk to someone else about it*

Evaluation

Most congregants are not afraid to address conflict (See Table 4.22, page 179); take their concerns directly to the person(s) concerned (See Table 4.27, page 183); prefer being a peacemaker (See Table 4.28, page 184); and converse with a third party regarding the situation (See Table 4.29, page 184). The chi-square test for independence on this section returned varying degrees of relationship with *leadership* only (See Table 4.51, page 199).

There is more of a tendency for those in leadership to take their concerns directly to the person with whom they have a problem, yet show a bias toward conflict avoidance (Table 4.51, page 199 and related comment; and also Annexure B, page 233). Paul encourages the Galatians to restore gently those in conflict with them (Galatians 6:1), and that "…getting face to face is the best way to go to others" (Sande & Johnson, 2011:80). A high percentage of both those in leadership and those not in leadership demonstrate a preference for being a peacemaker in times of conflict. (See Annexure B, page 233). Peacemakers do not avoid conflict, do not see conflict as an obstacle to be conquered, and rather "…dissipate anger, improve understanding, promote justice, and encourage repentance and reconciliation" (Sande & Moore, 2005:19). The possibility when a direct approach is not taken is that a third party is drawn into discussion. The danger is that when such a person is not totally independent, triangulation may result (Lang, 2002:49–50)**.**

Conclusion

Being in leadership influences in the way congregants respond to conflict. The data tends to indicate that when congregants become leaders, their responses to conflict change and become more conservative.

4.3.2.2.2 Actions and responses: Corporately

Related items

Item V24	*In our church we try to avoid dealing with conflict*
Item V29	*We do not confront problem people in our church*

Evaluation

Corporately, there is a tendency to avoid conflict (See Table 4.26, page 182), further evidenced through problem people not normally being confronted (See Table 4.31,

page 186). Keller (2006:2) encourages leaders to be brave enough during conflict to lead and to confront difficult members, in spite of fear, rejection and the unpleasantness involved.

Such unpleasantness is but one of many principal motives that fuel an unwillingness to identify practices in our churches that are ineffective (Appel & Nelson, 2000:59–62) in developing missional congregations.

Conclusion

The allegation that congregations avoid conflict (Shawchuck, 1983:12) and do not confront problem congregants is confirmed.

4.3.2.3   Comparative observation

There is a notable dissimilarity between the experiences, perceptions and actions or behaviour of congregants personally and independently, and those collectively as a congregation. Section 4.3.2.1, on page 204 records that fewer respondents believe that conflict is something to be avoided (Item V25) than in both the corporately observed congregational bias for avoidance (Item V24), and the corporate observation that problem people were not confronted (Item V29). It is therefore evident that the observed corporate practice of conflict avoidance is higher than the individual's personal view and practice. This is appreciably apparent in C congregations where:
 (i) only 16.7 per cent of respondents believe that conflict is something to be avoided (See Table 4.23, page 180);
(ii) it is significant that 58.3 per cent observe a corporate practice of conflict avoidance (See Table 4.26, page 182), and
(iii) 58.4 per cent observe that problem people are not confronted (See Table 4.31, page 186).

It is therefore apparent that in contrast to the willingness of individual congregants in general to address conflict (Table 4.27, page 183), as a collective, as a congregation, conflict avoidance is more widely practised. This is not surprising as those in leadership are less inclined to address conflict (Section 4.3.2.2.1, page 205). These observations are aligned to the general consensus that congregations historically prefer to avoid conflict (Bullard, 2008:8–9).

4.3.2.4　Destiny: experiences and observed outcomes

Destiny is seen through the experiences of individuals and observed outcomes of conflict within congregations.

4.3.2.4.1 Personal experiences in a conflict situation

Related items

Item V11	*For me, facing conflict is a negative experience*
Item V28	*Do you find it difficult to trust God when you are in a conflict situation?*

Evaluation

During a conflict situation just over one-third of all respondents either experience conflict negatively (See Table 4.13, page 173) or find difficulty in trusting God (See Table 4.30, page 185). However, a data query disclosed that 10.5 per cent experience both. Hence, almost two-thirds place themselves in a combination of experiencing conflict negatively and finding difficulty in trusting God during conflict. Conflict experienced negatively, is "…a short step to making it imperative to subdue conflict at all costs" (Gangel and Canine, 2002:130). This tendency toward a negative experience is mainly within the A congregations (See Table 4.13, page 173)) and the white segment (See Table 4.50, page 198 and see also Annexure B, page 232).

Conflict is experienced negatively more by those in leadership than those who are not in leadership (See Annexure B, page 233). When leaders experience conflict negatively, it adversely impacts attempts at handling conflict and negatively impacts the development of a missional church.

Congregants who have received education in conflict find significantly less difficulty in trusting God during a conflict situation (See Annexure B, page 235).

Conclusion

It is mostly those in leadership and the white sector who experience conflict negatively. This seems reasonable as it is those in leadership who face, and deal with conflict situations more frequently than other congregants. It is also evident that conflict education, prior to experiencing conflict, catalytically assists in sustaining one's trust in God during a conflict.

4.3.2.4.2 Observed corporate outcomes

Related items

Item V31	*My experience is that conflict issues at church are normally resolved*
Item V32	*My experience is that, when conflict issues are resolved at church, the relationships are not reconciled*
Item V33	*My experience is that in conflict situations in church, relationships are normally reconciled*
Item V34	*My experiences is that in conflict situations in church, although relationships may be reconciled, the issues causing the conflict remain unresolved*

Conflict issues are not normally resolved within congregations (See Table 4.33, page 187) and when they are, relationships are not normally reconciled (See Table 4.34, page 188). Although half of conflict situations tend to produce reconciliation (See Table 4.35, page 188), where they do, the conflict issues mostly remain unresolved (See Table 4.36, page 189). Resolution has to do with issues and reconciliation with relationships (cf. Moeller, 1994:134). Conflict resolution, in turn, is described by Ramsbotham *et al.* (2011:31) in terms of peace-making, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. This leans toward an understanding that conflict is not fully resolved unless the relationships are restored, and if the relationships are not restored, the initial conflict could resurface.

When viewing conflict from a resolution perspective, only 11.4 per cent of respondents witnessed both resolution and reconciliation. Conversely, when viewing conflict from a reconciliation perspective, only 20.2 per cent observed both reconciliation and resolution. The difference of 8.8 per cent between these two perspectives requires additional research as it cannot be explained through the data at hand. The low percentages which indicate that only 11.4 per cent to 20.2 per cent of the respondents observed both resolution and reconciliation are understandable when half of the responses indicate that corporately, conflict avoidance is common (See Table 4.26, page 182).

Education was found to be the only factor returning relational association through the chi-square test (See Table 4.52, page 200 and Annexure B, page 235). A significant relationship was measured on only two items. Despite observing a high degree of reconciliation, congregants who received education in conflict noted that in these cases, the issues remained mostly unresolved.

Conclusion:

The variances identified between items V31 to V34 could be an indication that not all congregants fully understand when causal issues are resolved, and reconciliation realised. For many, a rule of thumb is that "Christians don't fight" (Cosgrove & Hatfield, 1994:96), yet such continual, unqualified proclamation can send the message that there is little concern for the issues or parties involved in conflict (Rahim, 2001:29–30).

Notwithstanding the above, the low outcomes or destinies identified in this section of when both conflict issues are resolved, and reconciliation is realised within congregations, supports the research problem statement of this study:

> *The management and processes of conflict resolution and reconciliation within congregations are neither well led nor well managed*

4.3.2.5 Understanding: sociological and theological aspects

This section considers how integrated congregants view their every life, everyday living and Christian living, congregational life. Two divisions, namely sociological and theological with two and seven items respectively provide input to this section.

4.3.2.5.1 Sociological aspects

Related items

Item V12	*Conflict is a normal part of everyday life*
Item V18	*Conflict is a necessary part of everyday living*

Evaluation

The normalcy of conflict in everyday life is supported by a sizeable majority across all congregations (See Table 4.14, page 174). In a community, one finds opinions differ, and actions are not always appreciated by all: it is a wonder there is actually not more conflict than we already experience (Osterhaus *et al.*, 2005:15). Conflict as necessary is supported by slightly more than half of all congregants, mainly from the A congregations and least by the C congregations (See Table 4.20, page 178). "Conflict is both good and necessary because it elicits different points of view, clears the air, and makes it possible to resolve extraordinarily complex issues" (Osterhaus *et al.*, 2005:14). The chi-square test on the selected categorical variables (Section 4.2.4.1) did not measure any form of relationship with the items in this section.

Conclusion

Sociologically, most congregants view conflict as normal and necessary in their everyday life.

4.3.2.5.2 Theological aspects

Related items

Item V13	*If people were more spiritually mature there would be less conflict in churches*
Item V14	*Conflict is wrong, and should not exist in a congregation*
Item V15	*Conflict is a normal part of Christian living*
Item V16	*Some conflict is God influenced, given or created*
Item V17	*All conflict, even among Christians, is due to sin of some nature or another*
Item V19	*Conflict is a necessary part of congregational life*
Item V30	*The way people handle conflict can prove they are His disciples*

Evaluation

A higher spiritual maturity is believed by most, across all strata, to be a catalyst in lowering the occurrence of conflict in churches (See Table 4.15; page 175). This is not consistent with conflict defined as normal and necessary (See section 3.3, page 123), and the observation through scripture that inside the church one finds the "…very pillars of the church; Peter, Paul, Barnabas, Jesus, and many others disagreeing, and experiencing conflict in their relationships" (Shawchuck, 1983:9).

Although the majority do not view conflict as wrong, and should not exist in a congregation, two-thirds of C congregants support such a view (See Table 4.16 page 175). However, more than two-thirds of the congregants who had received education in conflict do not agree that conflict is wrong and should not exist in congregations.

Of those who did not receive education, slightly more than half view conflict as wrong and that it should not exist in congregations (See table Table 4.52, page 200 with commentary; and Annexure B, page 235). This latter view is contrary to the scriptural understanding that "…differences in values, goals, gifts, calling priorities, expectations, interests, or opinions differ, and may lead to conflict (cf. Acts 15:39; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31)" and are "…simply the result of God-given diversity and personal preferences" (Sande, 2004:30). .

Slightly under half of the all congregants, inclusive of two-thirds of those who had received education in conflict, agree that conflict is a normal part of Christian living (See Table 4.17, page 176, and Annexure B, page 235). Jesus' statement that "It is impossible that no offences should come" (Luke 17:1:NIV) is an indication that conflict is inevitable (See section 3.3.1, page 123). In Lang's (2002:69) words, "When we recognise and accept that conflict is a natural event in the life of the congregation, we can learn how to better navigate it."

Somewhat more than half of all the respondents, inclusive of slightly above two-thirds of the non-white segment and a little over two-thirds of those not in leadership, are not aligned to the possibility that some conflict could be God influenced, given or created. Slightly more than half of those in leadership do believe that some conflict is God inflicted, given or created. (See Table 4.18, page 177 and Annexure B, page 233). The hypothesis that *some conflict is God influenced, given or created* though, is founded on the following:

▪ *God influenced*: Mary falling pregnant with Jesus (Matthew 1:18) caused Joseph to "…resolve to divorce her quietly" (Mathew 1:19 NIV), (Jamieson *et al.*, 1961:Vol. 2, 6).

▪ *God given*: In Genesis, Adam and Eve had a conflict of choice in whether or not to "…eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:17, NIV) which God had prohibited (Jamieson *et al.*, 1961:Vol.1, 19).

▪ *God created*: Jesus' actions in healing people on the Sabbath caused conflict with the religious rulers, and for his disciples (Mark 1:21-26; 3:1-5; 6:2-5; Luke 4: 31-35; 6:6-10; 14:1-6; John 5:5-9; 9:14), (Jamieson *et al.*, 1961:Vol. 2, 69).

Although the majority do not agree that conflict is due to sin, more than half of the C congregants do (See Table 4.19, page 177). The data trend indicates that the higher the percentage of the white segment that forms part of the congregation, the lower the belief that all conflict stems from sin.

Paul understood that that there could be conflict without sin and he encouraged the people of Ephesus to "…be angry and do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26, NKJV). However, one view is that sin is at the root of conflict (Poirier, 2006:14) while another sees conflict through the lens of God-given diversity and individual preferences (Sande, 2004:30). Taking these two views into account, it is not surprising that there are mixed results displayed through the data.

What is significant is that most authors do not view conflict as sinful, or sin *per se*. It is rather that "…sinfulness in conflict results from the way we behave in conflict, not from the disagreement or tensions between us" (Shawchuck, 1983:9).

Conflict is not viewed as necessary for congregational life, especially by C congregations (See Table 4.20, page 178). Slightly over one-third of those in leadership agree that conflict is necessary in congregational life while somewhat more than two-thirds of those not in leadership do not agree that conflict is a necessary part of congregational life (See Annexure B, page 233). In contrast, the book of Acts details how conflict was a necessary ingredient in the spread of the gospel. Such conflict refocuses the church toward a clearer understanding of God's will and in more effective ministries (Shawchuck, 1983:9).

The expectation that the way people handle conflict is a witness to their relationship to, and discipleship of, Jesus Christ is exceptionally high with almost one hundred per cent of the A and B congregants supporting the hypothesis (Table 4.32, page 187). It is significant that these congregations consist of a high percentage of the white segment. In contrast, a lower two-thirds of the C Congregations, which have no white segment, agree. Paul encourages a way to handle difficult situations through his letter to the people of Colossae:

> *Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others (Colossians 3:13, NLT).*

Similarly, John Wesley, one of the founders of the Methodist Movement, reminds Christ-followers of their "…common 'experience' of their hearts cleaving to God through the Son" (Maddox, 1992:67), and encourages them to give one another their hands (2 Kings 10:15) and work through the conflict from the common foundation of their relationship with God and love for all (Davis, 2004).

Conclusion

Different theological understandings and views are observed in congregants who are in leadership, have received some education in conflict, and are of different race segments. The non-white C congregations are frequently at variance with the A and B congregations which constitute a white segment. Congregants in leadership mostly agree that some conflict can be God influenced, given or created; and are more inclined

to appreciate conflict as necessary in congregational life than those not in leadership. Those who have received education in conflict are more appreciative of conflict being normal in congregational life and do not see it as wrong, or that it should not exist.

A comparative data query between (V16): *Some conflict is God influenced, given or created*, (V14): *Conflict is wrong, and should not exist in a congregation*, and (V17): *All conflict, even among Christians, is due to sin of some nature or another* revealed that: 12.6 per cent of all respondents agreed with all three of the above hypotheses.

The query also reported that of the 42.1 per cent that agreed that (v16): *Some conflict is God influenced, given or created*, 18.9 per cent indicated that (V17): *All conflict, even among Christians, is due to sin of some nature or another;* and 20.0 per cent indicated that (14): *Conflict is wrong, and should not exist in a congregation.* This raises a theological question: 'If (V17): *All conflict, even among Christians, is due to sin of some nature or another*, and (V14): *Conflict is wrong, and should not exist in a congregation*, can it still be that (V16): *Some conflict is God influenced, given or created*? This question would best be answered through further research. (cf. Section 5.8, page 226).

4.3.2.6   Socio-theological comparatives

This section has two pairs (four items) to compare.

Item V12	*Conflict is a normal part of everyday life*
Item V15	*Conflict is a normal part of Christian living*

Item V18	*Conflict is a necessary part of everyday living*
Item V19	*Conflict is a necessary part of congregational life*

There is a significant difference between the paired items above. In all, 84.3 per cent of respondents agree, even somewhat, that conflict is a part of *everyday life*. All strata are within a percentage point of the overall 84.3 per cent recorded (See Table 4.14, page 174). In contrast, only 48.4 per cent agree, even somewhat, that conflict is a normal part of *Christian living*. There is no consensus among the A (57.1%), B (39.0%) and C (50.0%) congregations, with a range difference of 18.1 percentage points (Table 4.17, page 176). The range between these two responses is 35.9 per cent.

Similarly, 54.8 per cent agree, even somewhat, that conflict is a necessary part of *everyday life.* The associated individual strata are not consistent with A (64.3%), B (51.2%) and C (41.7%) resulting in a range of 22.6 percentage points (See Table 4.20,

page 178). In comparison, only 29.8 per cent agree, even somewhat, that conflict is a necessary part of *congregational life.* The associated strata, too, have a significant range of 29.8 percentage points. The lowest is C (8.3%), followed by B (26.8%) and A, the highest at 38.1 per cent. The range between these two responses is 25.0 per cent.

Conclusion

There is a section of the respondents that does not appear to view *Christian living* as part of *everyday life*, and vice versa. Similarly, everyday *living* and *congregational life* cannot be separated.

A reasonably high percentage of the aforementioned appear to envisage life as segmented between *everyday life* and *everyday living*, and that of *Christian living* and *congregational life.* Theologically, the measure of the two responses should be the same in each case. The moment a congregation envisages its life, congregational life, as separate from normal life it loses its incarnational dimension and potential (Nel, 2015:99–106)

It is important to note that the sample population consists of prominent and visible people in the congregation, namely leadership, people in ministries and mission, and congregants in small groups. These would be congregants who would have a reasonable amount of influence over others – especially, those within small groups.

4.4   Concluding remarks

The views, perceptions and understanding of conflict and subsequent responses of congregants to conflict will be influenced by their socio-theological understanding of incarnational Christian living. Such living does not segregate an individual's life and being into labelled 'segments' which would see a person's Christian living as separate from ordinary, everyday life.

It is also apparent that as individual congregants, they experience, view, approach, handle and respond to conflict differently to that which is observed corporately within the congregation. People in leadership seem more cautious when handling conflict and develop a different outlook on conflict than others. However, such caution should not delay any addressing and handling of conflict.

It is also evident that there is a difference in experiences, perceptions and understanding of conflict, subsequent responses and the working toward an outcome

between the C congregations and also the non-white sectors of other congregations to that of congregations with a majority of white congregants.

There is also evidence that it is most beneficial to be educated in the area of conflict from both a personal and congregational perspective. In providing an understanding of the conflict process, and management thereof, such education should contribute to conflict resolution, and reconciliation within congregations.

The low percentages (11,4% & 20.2%) of success in resolving conflict and realising reconciliation within congregations (See 4.3.2.4.2, page 209) can be raised significantly through the improvement of people's perceptions of conflict, their responses and their handling of conflict, especially within an ecclesiastical context.

Research is formalized curiosity

It is poking and prying with a purpose

Zora Neale Hurston
Dust tracks on a road
Autobiography
(1942:143)

CHAPTER 5   TOWARD A NEW PRAXIS

"Practical theology engages the complex interplay of theory and practice…" through which they "…imply and shape each other. Practice gives rise to theory, while theory often has practical implications" (Cahalan & Mikoski, 2014:2). This chapter needs to be read from a hermeneutical perspective where all that is explained, suggested and encouraged needs to be regarded as interplay of theory and practice. In Osmer's (2008:11) terminology, an interplay comprises four interconnected tasks, namely a descriptive-empirical task, an interpretive task, a normative task, and a pragmatic task.

5.1   Brief overview of study

The explorative approach and application of the research are discussed in the sections that follow. Firstly, a few aspects in developing a missional church relative to conflict, as identified through the exploration of relevant literature, are addressed. The limitations of the study, confirmations of and contributions to the field of practical theology, the theory of conflict, and suggestions of ministerial value are presented. Finally, identified knowledge vacuums are detailed which the researcher proposes for further research.

"Conflict is inevitable" (Mayer, 2010:3) and "…how it is handled is important," as conflict can be "threat producing" (Shawchuck, 1983:31), hence, it requires careful attention. Without readily available research specifically focused on resolving conflict in a congregation, as well as reconciliation between parties, this research needed to take an explorative approach.

Various questions led the researcher to conclude that the management and processes of conflict resolution and reconciliation within congregations are neither well led nor well managed (See 1.2.3, page 7). Furthermore, resolving conflict in congregations and realising reconciliation are dictated by the congregation's perceptions, views and understanding of conflict. It is these understandings, perceptions, and views that influence the responses and are the cause of subsequent observations of conflict in the congregations surveyed.

The explorative approach first provides theory on the context of the research: developing a missional church. This is followed by a discussion on the subject field of the research: interpersonal conflict or intrapersonal conflict. The empirical work sought

to identify value-adding lessons within the limitations of this research, and ascertain what additional research could follow.

The context for study is the development of a missional congregation and is discussed in chapter 2. The subject matter of the study, interpersonal or intrapersonal is discussed in chapter 3. The empirical study which addresses the central descriptive-empirical practical theological task, described through the question, "What's going on here?" (Osmer, 2008:31) is presented in chapter 4.

The empirical study explored how people experience, perceive, view, understand, and respond to conflict, both personally and corporately, in congregations. The interpretation of the empirical work provides the foundation for addressing Osmer's other practical theological tasks through related questions such as "Why is this going on?" (2008:79), "What ought to be going on?" (2008:129), and "How can we respond?" (2008:175).

Information, insight and conclusions relating to how conflict is understood, experienced and responded to are collated through this study. It provides a contribution to the field of practical theology as well as the subject matter of conflict and offers contributions to ministry within the church. These contributions influence and impact the development of a missional church.

5.2 Developing a missional church

On reading the available literary resources through the lens of Osmer's hermenutical spiral (2008:8), the potential for conflict in most of the facets when developing a missional church was identified. Translating Roberts' (1983:6) Afrikaans work, Nel (2015:20) states that

> …in the New Testament the one nation of God is seen to be in a process of becoming — a process determined both Christologically and pneumatologically, qualitatively and quantitatively.

Yet, it is in building toward this growth that conflict is both latent and active. Barna (2002:106) observes that people have different tastes, needs and expectations which may negatively impact missional church growth despite the diligence of leadership (McMullen, 2007:87). The following should be added to the above sociological aspects which, the researcher suggests, should be taught and explained to congregational leadership and influential congregants:

- Shifts from a 'we/us' to an 'I / me' paradigm (Section 2.3.1.2, page 25).
- Consumerism (Section 2.3.1.3, page 26).
- Culture war (Section 2.3.1.6, page 29).
- Culture and church health (Section 2.3.1.7, page 29).
- Paradigms, expectations, obstacles and criticisms (Section 2.3.1.8, page 30)
- Images of the church (Section 2.5.1, page 49).
- Three necessary directions of love (Section 2.5.2.7, page 57).

Inherent, seasonal and practical aspects of developing a missional church in which church leadership and influential congregants need to be educated were identified. A deeper understanding of these identified aspects would contribute towards a decrease in unhealthy conflict. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- Fading denominationalism (Section 2.3.1.5, page 28).
- Life cycle stages (Section 2.3.2, page 34).
- Church sizes, particularly transitions (Section 2.3.3, page 38).
- Paradigms for continual reformation toward being missional (Setion 2.5.2, page 52).
- Concept of reformation (Section 2.8, page 83).
- Planning process (Section 2.9, page 91).

In all of the above, the one word that comes to the fore in this process is 'change'. Change is tough; opposition to change is common (Bullard, 2013:356/518), and conflict can even be expected because there is change (Nel, 2015:235). These will always be present through the encouragement and practice of congregational redevelopment (Mann, 2000:8–12), congregational reformation (Nel, 2015:205), or the continual conversion of the church (Guder, 2000:150) — whichever terminology is preferred.

Paradoxically, Lang's (2002:22) observation that "change equals conflict" is challenged in Brubaker's (2009:110) work as too simple a conclusion and suggesting the 'how' of change creates conflict and not so much the 'what.' In meeting the challenge of this 'how', Osmer (2008:194) observes that it needs to be appreciated that "the process of leading change involves learning new skill sets that stretch leaders beyond their comfort zones."

The value of such conflict, Rendle (1998:165) believes, needs to be recognised and honoured. It would be helpful for leaders to understand and appreciate that conflict is normal (Gangel & Canine, 2002:129), exists all around us, and is necessary (Bullard, 2008:11–12) for the discernment process of developing a missional church.

With the presence of conflict being so prevalent in many facets and phases of developing a missional church, the opportunity exists for the field of practical theology to study these, provide a biblical perspective and guidance in mission-critical phases or steps. Such resources would be expected to weigh up current practices, views, and perceptions against new insights. For example, the work *Promise and Peril* (Brubaker, 2009) challenges various common understandings, perceptions and views, simultaneously confirming some long-held perspectives.

Bullard believes that those who promote unhealthy conflict as righteousness should be confronted and dealt with before they destroy churches (Bullard, 2008:10). This study established that most congregants believe that their actions or responses to conflict are God honouring, even though they could be destructive to the development of a missional church. This is important from a ministry perspective. Hence, the researcher suggests congregational leadership with its conflict avoidance tendency would do well to undertake the following:

- Conflict-handling programmes
- Studying biblical passages which contain or address conflict situations
  - especially the actions and experience of Nehemiah (White, 1986; Fields, 2002), and
  - working together to apply these.

The difficulties inherent in the above summary confirm Ford's (2008:251) comment that to choose leadership is to choose conflict. Therefore, the researcher proposes that church leaders and influential congregants should be educated in the related theories and practice of developing a missional church as well as in the understanding and handling of conflict (cf. Osmer, 2008:10).

5.3 Limitations

There are no readily available articles, studies or work that has been done within the South African context related specifically to conflict in congregations. Most of the resources utilised in this study are from a United Kingdom and United States of American perspective or research. Although this study has confirmed that South Africa is similar to the foreign countries' studies in some regards, it would have been advantageous to have had indigenous resources from which to work.

This study was limited to Methodist congregations in the wider Pretoria area. The possibility of undertaking a similar study in a coastal region or the very rural regions of the county is encouraged by the researcher, as it may well deliver dissimilar results on some aspects of this study. The research population could also be expanded to other denominations or networks of congregations to determine whether there are further differences. It is possible that differences may be found in the more theological questions of the survey.

The explorative nature of the study through a quantitative survey is limiting in itself. The consumption of available resources required by the quantitative study did not leave sufficient time for a qualitative study to be initiated. At the outset, it was appreciated that a study of this nature may not provide clear definitive answers to the research problem, but would rather identify focus areas for continued research.

5.4   Confirmations

This study confirmed that conflict carries a negative connotation and is mostly avoided in congregations despite its being normal and necessary. As a result, when conflict arises, resolution and reconciliation are not always realised.

Almost twice the number of congregants who indicated that conflict is normally resolved claimed that relationships were normally reconciled. Of those who indicated that reconciliation was 'normally reached', just under two-thirds claimed that resolution was not obtained. This is in line with the general observation that churches are predominantly biased toward reconciliation (Prager & Govier, 2010:92).

The research also confirmed Bullard's email comment (Section 1.4.4, page 11) and Osmer's (2008:10) statement that congregations are not being taught how to resolve differences or implement practices of reconciliation.

This is compounded by the evidence that there is little, if any, theological or scriptural understanding of conflict in congregations. Church-based education relating to conflict is mostly found to be a small niche-focused aspect within a larger programme or course. Hence, any church-related education reported is very limited and very narrow, and received by very few, whereas, just over one-third of the congregants received conflict-related education outside of the church. This implies that a much more significant amount of education received is not from a Christian, scriptural or theological base. From a Methodist perspective, the Wesleyan Quadrilateral (Outler, 1985) is not

fully utilised in conflict situations. The quadrilateral uses a hermeneutical approach through 'scripture', 'tradition', 'experience' (of the assurance of one's sins forgiven) and 'reason'. 'Reason' alone would dominate a non-Christian education while scripture, tradition, and experience would unfortunately take a back seat.

It is also confirmed that education on conflict understanding and handling, as well as leadership plays a significant role in the area of conflict in congregations, even though such education may not be from a scriptural or theological perspective.

5.5   Strategic suggestions: Practical Theology

Continual study of the church in all its complexities is encouraged by Van Gelder (2007a:26). Such studies would, amongst others, cover aspects of developing a missional church, some of which are described in this thesis in the second chapter.

The challenge is for the church to "…continually change its mode of expression, for it is historically orientated to a constantly changing world" (Van Engen & Glasser, 1991:74). The possibility and potential of conflict in discussing and evaluating the theory from such study, and especially the praxis thereof, require attention.

This study established that although a reasonable number of respondents were educated on conflict handling, it was only from a sociological, secular perspective. When such approaches are taken in congregations without the theological and scriptural foundations, they leave out the very foundation upon which a congregation exists. Therefore, a strong theological foundation is needed for the understanding and perception of and responses to handling conflict which is identified as normal (Sande & Johnson, 2011:14–15) and necessary (Strauch, 2011:3).

Koinonia, one of the central expressions of a congregation, most effectively describes the essence of Christian community from a biblical perspective. The underlying theological problem of this study is ecclesiastical in nature, and relates to the communion, fellowship, and partnership of the Christian community. Study from a practical theological perspective pertaining to the above is invaluable to the development of a missional church and potential conflict.

5.6   Strategic suggestions: Conflict as subject

Resources referred to in this work do not specifically address conflict within different environments or especially, cultures.   This study has established that there is a difference in how predominantly non-white South Africans understand, perceive and respond to handling conflict as opposed to the white segment. It is possible that in our "constantly changing world" (Van Engen & Glasser, 1991:74), resources may need to be categorically defined to be culturally appropriate.

There is a tendency for individuals, in their personal capacity, to address conflict much more positively, more directly, and with less avoidance than corporately, as a group of affiliated people.   The researcher did not find that students and authors of conflict handling identify or address this phenomenon in any way.   Further understanding of this behaviour would be most helpful in all spheres of life.

The monitoring of conflict resolution or subsequent reconciliation was not specifically referred to in the resources reviewed and studied.   This study identified that there is a call for the monitoring of the agreed outcome and associated behaviour or actions of the parties related to, or directly involved in a conflict to ensure that the necessary behavioural changes are realised.

5.7   Strategic suggestions: Ministry

Although ministers were not included in the main quantitative survey, they did provide important input to the feasibility study.   The reality is that ministers play a major role in the education and encouragement of congregations.

The researcher therefore proposes that ministers utilise their learned skills in unpacking scripture passages that contain elements of or stories about conflict and extracting valuable lessons.   The ministries of *kerugma* (preaching) and *didache* (teaching) in congregations can be leveraged to:

- teach the integration of everyday life and Christian living: that our lives are not segmented into independent compartments, but integrated;

- encourage congregants to view conflict in a more positive light, not to avoid conflict, but to look for the good that conflict could produce;

- be enlightened as to what God-honouring behaviour encompasses;

- be equipped to continually trust God, follow His ways and not rely on own ability (Sande, 2004:31); and

- be educated in a more practical interpretation of scriptures that appear to imply a passive stance and unrealistic expectations of conflict-free congregations that encourage simply 'love one another', 'turn the other cheek' or 'do not judge'.

The researcher suggests that congregations, and in particular their leaders, be fully aware that non-white and white congregants view and respond to conflict differently. Such differences may become less polarised during and after educating a congregation on handling conflict.

The research indicated that people in leadership experience, view and respond to conflict differently to those not in leadership. The responses tend to characterise leaders as more conservative than those not in leadership when responding to, and handling conflict. The researcher recommends that leadership training, development and mentorship include theory and praxis to address this tendency.

Conflict occurrences should be welcomed as opportunities for discipleship rather than obstacles to be overcome or avoided. The researcher advocates that congregants be encouraged to approach everyday life, inclusive of congregational living, as a journey of discipleship where conflict is normal and necessary. Furthermore, spiritual maturity should be developed and evidenced through the way conflict is handled (Shawchuck, 1983; Palmer, 1990; Kale & McCullough, 2003; Unice, 2012; Free, 2013), and not the absence thereof.

The research highlighted theological problems (e.g. section 4.3.2.5.2: Theological aspects, last paragraph) which the researcher acknowledges require additional research. However, the identified theological problems emphasise the need for any education in conflict for a Christian community to be from both a theological and sociological perspective. The education sometimes received in Christian contexts from specialised non-ecclesiastical organisations does not include the fundamentals that are important to the conflict encountered, and handled when cultivating a missional church (cf. Nel, 2015:234).

In all of the above, the researcher suggests that leaders "…teach people the biblical principles behind the practical methods, and intentionally cultivate unity around that teaching" (Dever & Alexander, 2005:24). Leaders of congregations would do well to learn and utilise the practical theological tasks identified by Osmer (2008) in dealing with conflicts as they arise in their congregations.

5.8 Knowledge vacuums identified for future study

The explorative nature of this study identified a number of vacuums in our knowledge of resolving conflict and realising reconciliation in congregations. Further research on these is recommended together with, where possible, further testing of the researcher's conclusions and suggestions. These opportunities include, but should not be limited to the following:

(i) a further investigation into the various differences identified between responses from A (80:20) and C (Mono) congregations with special reference to the comparative differences between these congregations on the understanding (e.g. conflict is necessary), theological perspective (e.g. conflict is due to sin of some nature) and responses (e.g. conflict is something to be avoided) to conflict;

(ii) a study into the reasons why individual congregants indicate that they are willing to address conflict, that they go directly to the persons concerned, and view conflict as an opportunity to do good, yet in their congregations conflict is avoided and problem people are not confronted. If congregations constitute the aforementioned people, why the avoidance?

(iii) an investigation into socio-theological issues where congregants view conflict as normal and necessary in everyday living, and yet not in congregational life. A study in this regard would be helpful to other aspects of Christian life, and not just those which are conflict related;

(iv) a study where gender, age, or other univariates are used to test for independence through tests such as the chi-square test. These may need to be grouped according to categorical variables toward being 'strata' and 'race' specific to be of more value; and

(v) further study is required of the process, or steps that are generally taken by congregants that are of value against those which are not. This is necessary as there are a fair number of congregants who believe that their actions and responses, no matter what these were, are God honouring.

5.9   Concluding remarks

The context of this study in congregational studies is the development of a missional church; the process thereof consists of various phases. Conflict arising from this phased process must be dealt with theologically (Nel, 2015:234).

The underlying theological problem of this study is ecclesiastical in nature, related to the communion, fellowship, and partnership of the Christian community.   Biblically, *koinonia,* or common as it may be described (Jones, 2010:266) most effectively describes the essence of Christian community.

Within this context conflict can become "…the important, healthy and normal field of tension between people who love each other, who do not want to and cannot lose one another, and in this way love serve the Kingdom together" (Nel, 2015:236).

In this regard, it would be prudent for those "who love each other" to develop healthy perceptions of conflict so that their behavioural responses would contribute toward resolving issues and realising reconciliation within congregations. This can be achieved through education and training in conflict, from both a sociological and particularly a theological perspective, to ensure that the management and processes of conflict resolution and reconciliation are well led and well managed within congregations.

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ANNEXURE A: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY FORM DOCUMENT   ONLY use the **GREYED SHADED AREAS**

There are THREE ways in which to COMPLETE and RETURN this survey questionnaire before **10 June 2016**:

1) **PRINT** the **FORM, complete** by **hand,** and **hand it** in at your **church**
2) **PRINT** the **FORM, complete** by **hand, FAX to: 012 662 4271 OR SCAN** and **EMAIL to** **T16013PHD@gmail.com**
3) **SAVE** the **FORM** (to your PC)**, Click** on **GREY SHADED AREAS to complete,** and **RETURN email** **T16013PHD@gmail.com**

SURVEY: CONFLICT IN CONGREGATIONS			For Office Use Only	
Respondent Number			**VAA**	

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1   What is your gender?

Male	☐	1	**V1**	
Female	☐	2		

2   What is your age in years?

Click here to enter text.		**V2**	

3…Of which race classification are you?

Indian	☐	1	**V3**	
Coloured	☐	2		
Black	☐	3		
White	☐	4		
Other (Specify)	☐	5		

4   How many years have you been in your current congregation?

Click here to enter text.		**V4**	

5   How often do you worship in your congregation each month?

Click here to enter text.	**V5**	

6   Are you a regular member of a Bible Study, Home Group, Fellowship Group, Class?

Yes	☐	1	**V6**	
No	☐	2		

7   Are you in a leadership position?

Yes	☐	1	**V7**	
No	☐	2		

8   Are you in any ministry or mission group in your church?

Yes (Specify)	☐	1	**V8**	
No	☐	2		

9   Have you ever received any form of training, or education regarding conflict outside of the church?

Yes	☐	1	**V9**	
No	☐	2		

10 Have you ever received any form of training, or education regarding conflict as part of a church provided program or course?

Yes (Specify)	Click here to enter text.	☐	1	**V10**	
No		☐	2		

SECTION B: EXPERIENCES, PERCEPTIONS AND UNDERSTANDING									
First read all the statements in this section before indicating whether you agree with each statement.	Strongly Agree 1	Agree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Neither 4	Somewhat Disagree 5	Disagree 6	Strongly Disagree 7		
11	For me, facing conflict is a negative experience	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V11	
12	Conflict is a normal part of everyday life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V12	
13	If people were more spiritually mature there would be less conflict in churches	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V13	
14	Conflict is wrong, and should not exist in a congregation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V15	
15	Conflict is a normal part of Christian living	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V16	
16	Some conflict is God influenced, given or created	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V17	
17	All conflict, even among Christians, is due to sin of some nature or another	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V18	
18	Conflict is a necessary part of everyday living	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V18	
19	Conflict is a necessary part of congregational life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V19	

SECTION C: RESPONSES, REACTIONS AND VIEWS									
Please indicate how you respond in the following	Yes, always 1	Usually 2	Sometimes 3	Neutral 4	Infrequently 5	Seldom 6	Never 7		
20	When I have a problem with someone I take my concerns to that person	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V20	
21	Do you see conflict as something to avoid, to escape from?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V21	
22	Do you see conflict as an obstacle to conquer?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V22	
23	Do you see conflict as opportunity to do good?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V23	
24	In our church we try to avoid dealing with conflict	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V24	
25	When conflict comes into the church, I am not afraid to address it	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V25	
26	When conflict comes into the church I prefer to be a peacemaker	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V26	
27	When I have a problem with someone I talk to someone else about it	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V27	
28	Do you find it difficult to trust God when you are in a conflict situation?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V28	

SECTION D: PERCEPTIONS, OBSERVATIONS AND VIEWS TOWARD AN OUTCOME									
Please indicate whether you agree with the following statement.	Strongly Agree 1	Agree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Neutral 4	Somewhat Disagree 5	Disagree 6	Strongly Disagree 7		
29	We do not confront problem people in our church	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V29	
30	The way people handle conflict can prove we are His disciples	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V30	
31	My experience is that conflict issues at church are normally resolved	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V31	
32	My experience is that, *when conflict issues are resolved* at church, the relationships are not reconciled	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V32	
33	My experience is that in conflict situations, relationships are normally reconciled	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V33	
34	My experiences is that in conflict situations, *although relationships may be reconciled*, the issues causing the conflict remain unresolved	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	V34	

SECTION E: STEPS TAKEN IN REACHING AN OUTCOME					
In a conflict situation in church that you experienced or were associated with, mark the actions you took: "YES" and those actions you did not take: "NO"	**YES 1**	**NO 2**			
35.1	I Ignored – did nothing	☐	☐	35_1	
35.2	I **asked** for audience with the person(s) who, in my mind, were responsible for the conflict situation	☐	☐	35_2	
35.3	I approached an office of the church higher up the organisational hierarchy regarding the conflict	☐	☐	35_3	
35.4	I left the church for another church	☐	☐	35_4	
35.5	I **Held audience** with the person(s) who, in my mind, were responsible for the conflict situation	☐	☐	35_5	
35.6	I participated in a facilitated mediation, conflict resolution, or reconciliation process	☐	☐	35_6	
35.7	I pushed as hard as I could for someone to listen to me	☐	☐	35_7	
35.8	In your mind, were **ALL** the actions you took in **35.1 to 35.7 above**, *God honouring* in the way they were carried out?	☐	☐	35_8	

37. Think of a recent conflict situation in a church that was of reasonable dimension. Briefly suggest what could have been done to ensure that there was:

a) Resolution of the conflict issue(s):
(Do not be concerned if an additional page is formed as you type)
Click here to enter text.

b) Reconciliation between the conflicting parties:
(Do not be concerned if an additional page is formed as you type)
Click here to enter text.

ANNEXURE B: CHI-SQUARE RESULTS

V0_1_Strata

Table of V0_1 by VV21			
V0_1_Strata	VV21(Do you see conflict as something to avoid, to escape from it?)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7)	Total
A **Frequency**	21	21	42
Expected	19.895	22.105	
Percent	22.11	22.11	44.21
Row Pct	50.00	50.00	
Col Pct	46.67	42.00	
B **Frequency**	22	19	41
Expected	19.421	21.579	
Percent	23.16	20.00	43.16
Row Pct	53.66	46.34	
Col Pct	48.89	38.00	
C **Frequency**	2	10	12
Expected	5.6842	6.3158	
Percent	2.11	10.53	12.63
Row Pct	16.67	83.33	
Col Pct	4.44	20.00	
Total	45	50	95
	47.37	52.63	100.00
Statistic	**DF**	**Value**	**Prob**
Chi-Square	2	5.3044	0.0705

P-value: 0.10 > *0.0705* > 0.05
Tendency for a *relationship* between factors

Table of V0_1 by VV30			
V0_1_Strata	VV30(The way people handle conflict can prove we are His disciples)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7)	Total
A **Frequency**	38	4	42
Expected	38.463	3.5368	
Percent	40.00	4.21	44.21
Row Pct	90.48	9.52	
Col Pct	43.68	50.00	
B **Frequency**	41	0	41
Expected	37.547	3.4526	
Percent	43.16	0.00	43.16
Row Pct	100.00	0.00	
Col Pct	47.13	0.00	
C **Frequency**	8	4	12
Expected	10.989	1.0105	
Percent	8.42	4.21	12.63
Row Pct	66.67	33.33	
Col Pct	9.20	50.00	
Total	87	8	95
	91.58	8.42	100.00
Statistic	**DF**	**Value**	**Prob**
Chi-Square	2	13.4934	0.0012

P-value: *0.0012* < 0.01
Very significant relationship between factors

Table of V0_1 by VV28			
V0_1_Strata	VV28(Do you find it difficult to trust God when you are in a conflict situation?)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7	Total
A **Frequency**	11	31	42
Expected	15.474	26.526	
Percent	11.58	32.63	44.21
Row Pct	26.19	73.81	
Col Pct	31.43	51.67	
B **Frequency**	21	20	41
Expected	15.105	25.895	
Percent	22.11	21.05	43.16
Row Pct	51.22	48.78	
Col Pct	60.00	33.33	
C **Frequency**	3	9	12
Expected	4.4211	7.5789	
Percent	3.16	9.47	12.63
Row Pct	25.00	75.00	
Col Pct	8.57	15.00	
Total	35	60	95
	36.84	63.16	100.00
Statistic	**DF**	**Value**	**Prob**
Chi-Square	2	6.4134	0.0405

P-value: *0.0405* < 0.05
Significant relationship does exist between the factors

V3_Race

Table of VV3 by VV11			
VV3(Of which race classification are you?)	VV11(For me, facing conflict is a negative experience)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7	Total
Non-White Frequency	8	25	33
Expected	12.158	20.842	
Percent	8.42	26.32	34.74
Row Pct	24.24	75.76	
Col Pct	22.86	41.67	
White Frequency	27	35	62
Expected	22.842	39.158	
Percent	28.42	36.84	65.26
Row Pct	43.55	56.45	
Col Pct	77.14	58.33	
Total	35	60	95
	36.84	63.16	100.00

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	3.4498	0.0633

P-value: 0.10 > *0.0633* > 0.05
Tendency for a *relationship* between factors

Table of VV3 by VV21			
VV3(Of which race classification are you?)	VV21(Do you see conflict as something to avoid, to escape from it?)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7	Total
Non-White Frequency	10	23	33
Expected	15.632	17.368	
Percent	10.53	24.21	34.74
Row Pct	30.30	69.70	
Col Pct	22.22	46.00	
White Frequency	35	27	62
Expected	29.368	32.632	
Percent	36.84	28.42	65.26
Row Pct	56.45	43.55	
Col Pct	77.78	54.00	
Total	45	50	95
	47.37	52.63	100.00

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	5.9067	0.0151

P-value: *0.0151* < 0.05
Significant relationship does exist between the factors

Table of VV3 by VV16			
VV3(Of which race classification are you?)	VV16(Some conflict is God influenced, given or created)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7	Total
Non-White Frequency	10	23	33
Expected	13.895	19.105	
Percent	10.53	24.21	34.74
Row Pct	30.30	69.70	
Col Pct	25.00	41.82	
White Frequency	30	32	62
Expected	26.105	35.895	
Percent	31.58	33.68	65.26
Row Pct	48.39	51.61	
Col Pct	75.00	58.18	
Total	40	55	95
	42.11	57.89	100.00

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	2.8893	0.0892

P-value: 0.10 > *0.0892* > 0.05
Tendency for a *relationship* between factors

Table of VV3 by VV22			
VV3(Of which race classification are you?)	VV22(Do you see conflict as an obstacle to conquer?)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7	Total
Non-White Frequency	14	19	33
Expected	18.411	14.589	
Percent	14.74	20.00	34.74
Row Pct	42.42	57.58	
Col Pct	26.42	45.24	
White Frequency	39	23	62
Expected	34.589	27.411	
Percent	41.05	24.21	65.26
Row Pct	62.90	37.10	
Col Pct	73.58	54.76	
Total	53	42	95
	55.79	44.21	100.00

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	3.6620	0.0557

P-value: 0.10 > *0.0557* > 0.05
Tendency for a *relationship* between factors

V7_Leadership

Table of VV7 by VV11			
VV7(Are you in a leadership position?)	VV11(For me, facing conflict is a negative experience)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7）	Total
Yes — Frequency	19	20	39
Expected	14.368	24.632	
Percent	20.00	21.05	41.05
Row Pct	48.72	51.28	
Col Pct	54.29	33.33	
No — Frequency	16	40	56
Expected	20.632	35.368	
Percent	16.84	42.11	58.95
Row Pct	28.57	71.43	
Col Pct	45.71	66.67	
Total	35	60	95
	36.84	63.16	100.00

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	4.0101	0.0452

P-value: *0.0452 < 0.05V*
Significant relationship does exist between the factors

Table of VV7 by VV19			
VV7(Are you in a leadership position?)	VV19(Conflict is a necessary part of congregational life)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7）	Total
Yes — Frequency	16	23	39
Expected	11.495	27.505	
Percent	16.84	24.21	41.05
Row Pct	41.03	58.97	
Col Pct	57.14	34.33	
No — Frequency	12	44	56
Expected	16.505	39.495	
Percent	12.63	46.32	58.95
Row Pct	21.43	78.57	
Col Pct	42.86	65.67	
Total	28	67	95
	29.47	70.53	100.00

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	4.0101	0.0393

P-value: *0.0393* < 0.05
Significant relationship does exist between the factors

Table of VV7 by VV16			
VV7(Are you in a leadership position?)	VV16(Some conflict is God influenced, given or created)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7）	Total
Yes — Frequency	23	16	39
Expected	16.421	22.579	
Percent	24.21	16.84	41.05
Row Pct	58.97	41.03	
Col Pct	57.50	29.09	
No — Frequency	17	39	56
Expected	23.579	32.421	
Percent	17.89	41.05	58.95
Row Pct	30.36	69.64	
Col Pct	42.50	70.91	
Total	40	55	95
	42.11	57.89	100.00

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	7.7234	0.0055

P-value: *0.0055 < 0.01*
Very significant relationship between factors

Table of VV7 by VV20			
VV7(Are you in a leadership position?)	VV20(When I have a problem with someone I take my concerns to that person)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7	Total
Yes — Frequency	29	10	39
Expected	25.042	13.958	
Percent	30.53	10.53	41.05
Row Pct	74.36	25.64	
Col Pct	47.54	29.41	
No — Frequency	32	24	56
Expected	35.958	20.042	
Percent	33.68	25.26	58.95
Row Pct	57.14	42.86	
Col Pct	52.46	70.59	
Total	61	34	95
	64.21	35.79	100.00

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	2.9651	0.0851

P-value: 0.10 > *0.0851* > 0.05
Tendency for a *relationship* between factors

Table of VV7 by VV22			
VV7(Are you in a leadership position?)	VV22(Do you see conflict as an obstacle to conquer?)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7	Total
Yes — Frequency	29	10	39
Expected	21.758	17.242	
Percent	30.53	10.53	41.05
Row Pct	74.36	25.64	
Col Pct	54.72	23.81	
No — Frequency	24	32	56
Expected	31.242	24.758	
Percent	25.26	33.68	58.95
Row Pct	42.86	57.14	
Col Pct	45.28	76.19	
Total	53	42	95
	55.79	44.21	100.00

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	9.2496	0.0024

P-value: *0.0024* < 0.01
Very significant relationship between factors

Table of VV7 by VV25			
VV7(Are you in a leadership position?)	VV25(When conflict comes into the church, I am not afraid to address it)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7	Total
Yes — Frequency	19	20	39
Expected	23.811	15.189	
Percent	20.00	21.05	41.05
Row Pct	48.72	51.28	
Col Pct	32.76	54.05	
No — Frequency	39	17	56
Expected	34.189	21.811	
Percent	41.05	17.89	58.95
Row Pct	69.64	30.36	
Col Pct	67.24	45.95	
Total	58	37	95
	61.05	38.95	100.00

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	4.2332	0.0396

P-value: *0.0396* < 0.05
Significant relationship does exist between the factors

Table of VV7 by VV23			
VV7(Are you in a leadership position?)	VV23(Do you see conflict as opportunity to do good?)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7	Total
Yes — Frequency	33	6	39
Expected	27.916	11.084	
Percent	34.74	6.32	41.05
Row Pct	84.62	15.38	
Col Pct	48.53	22.22	
No — Frequency	35	21	56
Expected	40.084	15.916	
Percent	36.84	22.11	58.95
Row Pct	62.50	37.50	
Col Pct	51.47	77.78	
Total	68	27	95
	71.58	28.42	100.00

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	5.5270	0.0187

P-value: *0.0187* < 0.05
Significant rlationship does exist between the factors

Table of VV7 by VV26			
VV7(Are you in a leadership position?)	VV26(When conflict comes into the church I prefer to be a peacemaker)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7	Total
Yes — Frequency	32	7	39
Expected	28.326	10.674	
Percent	33.68	7.37	41.05
Row Pct	82.05	17.95	
Col Pct	46.38	26.92	
No — Frequency	37	19	56
Expected	40.674	15.326	
Percent	38.95	20.00	58.95
Row Pct	66.07	33.93	
Col Pct	53.62	73.08	
Total	69	26	95
	72.63	27.37	100.00

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	2.9532	0.0857

P-value: 0.10 > *0.0857* > 0.05
Tendency for a *relationship* between factors

V9_Training or Education

Table of VV9 by VV14			
V9(Have you ever received any form of training, or education regarding conflict outside of the church?)	VV14(Conflict is wrong, and should not exist in a congregation)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7	Total
Yes Frequency	11	25	36
Expected	15.916	20.084	
Percent	11.58	26.32	37.89
Row Pct	30.56	69.44	
Col Pct	26.19	47.17	
No Frequency	31	28	59
Expected	26.084	32.916	
Percent	32.63	29.47	62.11
Row Pct	52.54	47.46	
Col Pct	73.81	52.83	
Total	42	53	95
	44.21	55.79	100.00

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	4.3821	0.0363

P-value: *0.0363 < 0.05*
Significant relationship does exist between the factors

Table of VV9 by VV28			
V9(Have you ever received any form of training, or education regarding conflict outside of the church?)	VV28(Do you find it difficult to trust God when you are in a conflict situation?)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7	Total
Yes Frequency	7	29	36
Expected	13.263	22.737	
Percent	7.37	30.53	37.89
Row Pct	19.44	80.56	
Col Pct	20.00	48.33	
No Frequency	28	31	59
Expected	21.737	37.263	
Percent	29.47	32.63	62.11
Row Pct	47.46	52.54	
Col Pct	80.00	51.67	
Total	35	60	95
	36.84	63.16	100.00

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	7.5402	0.0060

P-value: *0.0363 < 0.05*
Significant relationship does exist between the factors

Table of VV9 by VV15			
V9(Have you ever received any form of training, or education regarding conflict outside of the church?)	VV15(Conflict is a normal part of Christian living)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7	Total
Yes Frequency	24	12	36
Expected	17.432	18.568	
Percent	25.26	12.63	37.89
Row Pct	66.67	33.33	
Col Pct	52.17	24.49	
No Frequency	22	37	59
Expected	28.568	30.432	
Percent	23.16	38.95	62.11
Row Pct	37.29	62.71	
Col Pct	47.83	75.51	
Total	46	49	95
	48.42	51.58	100.00

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	7.7265	0.0054

P-value: *0.0054 < 0.01*
Very significant relationship between factors

Table of VV9 by VV33			
V9(Have you ever received any form of training, or education regarding conflict outside of the church?)	VV33(My experience is that in conflict situations, relationships are normally reconciled)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7	Total
Yes Frequency	25	11	36
Expected	18.189	17.811	
Percent	26.32	11.58	37.89
Row Pct	69.44	30.56	
Col Pct	52.08	23.40	
No Frequency	23	36	59
Expected	29.811	29.189	
Percent	24.21	37.89	62.11
Row Pct	38.98	61.02	
Col Pct	47.92	76.60	
Total	48	47	95
	50.53	49.47	100.00

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	8.2992	0.0040

P-value: *0.0040 < 0.01*
Very significant relationship between factors

Table of VV9 by VV34			
V9(Have you ever received any form of training, or education regarding conflict outside of the church?)	VV34(My experiences is that in conflict situations, although relationships may be reconciled, the issues causing the conflict remain unresolved)		
	Yes (1-3)	Neutral_No (4-7	Total
Yes Frequency	15	21	36
Expected	21.6	14.4	
Percent	15.79	22.11	37.89
Row Pct	41.67	58.33	
Col Pct	26.32	55.26	
No Frequency	42	17	59
Expected	35.4	23.6	
Percent	44.21	17.89	62.11
Row Pct	71.19	28.81	
Col Pct	73.68	44.74	
Total	57	38	95
	60.00	40.00	100.00
Statistic	**DF**	**Value**	**Prob**
Chi-Square	1	8.1179	0.0044

P-value: *0.0044* < 0.01

Very significant relationship between factors

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