

**AN ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES IN THE SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH IN ZAMBIA: A CASE STUDY OF TWASHUKA
CONGREGATION IN LUSAKA**

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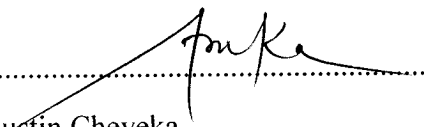
I, Victor Hachimbi, do hereby declare that the contents of this thesis represent my original work and that this thesis has never been submitted before for a degree at this University or indeed at any other similar institution.

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This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as University supervisor

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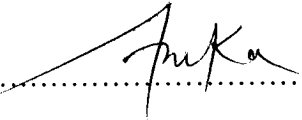
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This thesis of Victor Hachimbi has been approved as fulfilling the requirements for the award of the Masters' Degree in Peace, Leadership and Conflict Resolution by the University of Zambia in collaboration with Zimbabwe Open University.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to you my best friend, supportive wife, Winnie M. Hachimbi who has always believed in and encouraged me to soldier on with the research even when I felt I was too tired to continue due to pressure at my work place.

My children, Nsole, Nsako, Luyando and Lubono who prayed and gave encouragement. Lubono, the youngest boy (5 years old) always wondered why I usually came home late in the night and laughed at the idea of me being in school given my age.

My late grandmother and father, Timothy Kwaambwa and Martha Kwaambwa, respectively who introduced me to Christ and to love one another at an early stage in life.

I also dedicate my work to all those who value love, forgiveness, tolerance, meekness, peace and order in the church of God, which is the “body of Christ”.

ABSTRACT

This study analysed conflict resolution strategies at Twashuka SDA congregation in Lusaka to determine their effectiveness. Even if some conflicts are beneficial, others have the potential to divide the church, thereby threatening the unity and cohesion of the church which is considered as the body of Christ. Twashuka SDA congregation has seen some of its members leave the church as a result of unresolved conflicts. For those who are still in the church, conflicts have escalated to the level of heated exchanges of bitter words either among church members or between church leaders and ordinary members. In this study, the researcher, therefore, used qualitative research design where In-depth interviews and the Focus Group discussions were employed. To ensure validity and reliability of the research, the researcher also reviewed church literature such as the Church Manual, Seventh-day Adventists Believe and the Elder's Handbook. It should, however, be mentioned that these are not the only books on leadership in the church but this is what was available at the time. Purposive sampling method was used. Among the major findings was the lack of training among church leaders at Twashuka SDA congregation in peace, leadership and conflict resolution, lack of confidentiality among church leaders, marginalization of the youth in decision-making and inconsistent adherence to the biblical principles of electing people to higher church positions. Twashuka congregation is, therefore, urged to ensure that its leaders undergo training in peace, leadership and conflict resolution; elect youths to decision-making positions to have their voices heard; come up with clear guidelines on disciplining leaders who lack confidentiality; leaders to be elected based on biblical principles and not favouritism; and there should be promotion of love and unity in the church.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration.....	i
Approval.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of content	vi
List of abbreviations.....	vii
CHAPTER ONE: Introduction	1
1.1 Background to the study	1
1.2 Statement of the problem	5
1.3 Case Study: Twashuka SDA Congregation	5
1.4 Purpose of the study	6
1.5 Objectives of the study	6
1.6 Research questions	7
1.7 Significance of the study.....	7
1.8 Limitations of the study	7
1.9 Delimitations of the study.....	8
1.10 Definition of key terms	8
1.11 Conceptual framework.....	9
1.12 Theoretical framework.....	16
1.12.1 Functionalist theory.....	16
1.12.2 Human Needs theory	26
1.13 Biblical/theological foundation	28
1.13.1 God's Word	31
1.13.2 Order in the Church.....	32
1.13.3 Biblical Portrait of a Peacemaker	33
1.13.4 Church Conflict	35
1.13.5 Summary	35

CHAPTER TWO 37

2.1 Literature Review 37

2.2 Summary..... 46

CHAPTER THREE..... 47

3.0 Methodology 47

 3.1.1 Research design 47

 3.2 Sampling and Sample size..... 47

4.0 Data Collection methods..... 49

 4.1 Focus Group discussions..... 49

 4.2 In-depth face to face interviews..... 50

 Church literature..... 51

5.0 Analysis of interview data 51

 5.1 Editing..... 52

 5.2 Coding..... 52

6.0 Limitations of the methods 54

7.0 Ethical considerations..... 55

7.1 Summary..... 56

CHAPTER FOUR..... 57

4.0 Presentation of findings 57

 4.1.1 Participants 57

 4.1.2 Research situation..... 58

 4.1.3 Youths 58

 4.1.4 Single mothers 59

 4.1.5 Married women..... 60

 4.1.6 Men 62

 4.1.7 Review of Church literature 62

 4.1.8 Elders 63

 4.1.9 Deacons..... 65

 4.1.10 Summary 66

CHAPTER FIVE..... 67

4.0 Discussion of findings 67

5.1.1 Data Analysis Strategy..... 67

5.1.2 Data Analysis and Coding..... 67

5.1.3 Summary 70

CHAPTER SIX: Conclusion and Recommendations..... 71

6.0 Conclusion 71

6.1 Recommendations 72

Bibliography 75

Appendix 1..... 79

Appendix 2..... 81

Appendix 3..... 82

List of abbreviations

SDA	Seventh-day Adventist Church
USA	United States of America

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

Early Christian Missionaries

It is important to note that long before the Seventh-day Adventist Church set foot in Zambia, other Christian denominations had already entered the heart of Africa with the gospel. Matandiko (2001) points out that the first effort to evangelize Africa was by St. Mark who went to Alexandria in Egypt as a missionary and that when the age of discovery was born, Robert Moffat, a Scottish missionary, went to South Africa in 1817. He was sent by the London Missionary Society.

In 1821 Moffat settled among the Tswana people in Kurumane and opened up mission work, from which he visited various places including the Matebeleland in 1829.

Before the Adventists came into Zambia, two other missions had each established a station. The Dutch Reformed Church and Livingstonia Mission entered Northern Rhodesia from Nyasaland and in 1901, established their mission stations (Matandiko, 2001).

In 1841, the London Missionary Society sent David Livingstone to South Africa. After a few exploration in the south, he in 1849 made his first journey north to Barotseland which at the time was under the Kololo.

Although Livingstone began his work in the south with the motive of transmitting the Christian faith to villages in Africa, he later extended his vision and mission wide. In 1853, he entered the heart of Africa until his death on May 1, 1873 at Chitambo in Lala area of the present Zambia. According to Pachai (1973), David Livingstone paved a way for later missionaries, including Adventists.

Adventism in Zambia

The Seventh-day Adventist pioneers landed in South Africa in 1887. From down south, the missionaries trekked up to the present day Zimbabwe and established a mission station at Solusi in Zimbabwe in 1894. In July, 1895, a second group of missionaries arrived at Solusi, which included Mr. W.H Anderson. These missionaries had the initial task of establishing a farm to grow food. Second, they desired to establish a school (Matandiko, 2001).

None of the Advent pioneers had ventured beyond the Zambezi River before. Anderson, having been inspired by some bright students from beyond the Zambezi, decided to find out who lived across. Spalding (1962) says that on June 3, 1903, Anderson, accompanied by Jacob Detcha, a native who was able to speak several languages and other natives rode a train which went only up to Mabanje in the Southern Rhodesia. They then walked the rest of the way until they reached the capital of Northern Rhodesia, at that time Kalomo.

At Kalomo, Anderson consulted with the administrative official who advised him to go a hundred miles further north east, to the district of Chief Monze of the Tonga tribe. At last the group arrived in Monze and reported their presence to the area chief, where the chief who was a prominent rain maker, welcomed Anderson (Spalding, 1962).

Chief Monze was pleased to have missionaries come to establish a school among his people and the missionaries were given a 5, 436 acre plot that had a spring and fertile land. The place was initially called Muchelemba (name of the village where the land was located) but the name was too long and complicated for missionaries to pronounce. The place was therefore named after the trees that covered the area-lusangu but was instead pronounced as Rusangu (Matandiko, 2001). From here the Seventh-day Adventist Church spread to the rest of the country.

Conflicts in the Church

The Seventh-day Adventist church in Zambia, like any other religious organization cannot be said to be free from conflicts. From the outset, it is cardinal to point out that conflicts are inevitable. This is because people are inherently different and conflict simply happens when those differences come to light. Whether at home with our families, at work with our colleagues, and indeed in churches, conflict pervades our relationships.

The challenge, therefore, is not the elimination of conflicts but rather how to effectively address conflict when it arises. This research is, therefore, cognizant of the fact that conflicts in churches will always be there but what is important is how such conflicts are resolved to ensure they do not escalate into violence.

At this point, it is of paramount importance to define what “conflict” is before venturing into some of the conflicts that have bedeviled the SDA Church in Zambia, and thereafter narrowing down the study to the SDA congregation under study-Twashuka SDA Church in Lusaka.

A conflict has generally been defined as a situation in which two or more parties strive to acquire the same scarce resources at the same time (Wallensteen, 2002). Scholars generally agree that there needs to be more than one part to have a conflict, and that the time factor is important. What does cause concern is the term “scarce resource”. The central argument is scarcity, but resources need also be included in the discussion.

Wallensteen (2002) has pointed out that resources are not only economic in nature and that the terminology might miss conflicts involving economic orientation, human security, environment, historical issues, etc. Such conflicts are not necessarily about resources, and when they are, these resources are, more importantly, not necessarily scarce. A conflict is, moreover, in many cases based on perceptions, rather than on attitudes or behavior as it has generally been defined.

When discussing the concept of conflict, perception should be included as a central concept since the conflicts and the opponent’s intentions are often defined according to subjective perceptions. There could be an abundance of space for agreement in a conflict, but if the parties perceive the conflict as being impossible to resolve or the opponent to be untrustworthy, this might not help in resolving the conflict. Such disputes involve religion, values and beliefs.

In light of the aforementioned and also in accordance with this study, conflict can be defined as “perceived differences in issue positions between two or more parties at the same moment in time” (Swanstrom and Weissmann, 2005).

With regard to some of the conflicts that emerged with the introduction of SDA in Zambia, Matandiko (2001) observes that after the Zambia Union was formed in 1972, there arose conflicts

over leadership of the Union as each tribe wanted to be represented at the national office. So tribal conflicts crept in.

Soon after leadership was put in place in the North Zambia Field, which composed of Copperbelt, Central, Luapula and Northern Provinces, a conflict arose over where to place the headquarters. According to Matandiko (2001), the establishment of the headquarters brought financial and material benefits thereby creating job opportunities for the unemployed, brought prestige to the area in which the headquarters was placed and it also meant that the tribe in whose territory the headquarters was found, was perceived to be more powerful and respected.

Matandiko (2001) further observes that when people on the Copperbelt realized that the headquarters were not going to be their area, they began to incite churches to withhold tithes and offerings to the field office. This was interpreted by the Union in Lusaka as rebellion against the organization and therefore, measures were taken to discipline those whom opposed the church.

When it became evident that no amicable solution would be reached, the church disbanded the congregations that were known to be rebellious. The disbanded members sued the church and when they lost, they formed a church known as Seventh-day New Gospel Church and labelled the SDA church as Babylon.

The introduction of the Women Ministries in 1995 during the General Conference to replace the Dorcas Mothers was also a source of conflicts in the church as this was seen as maneuvers by the church leadership to work with the Catholic Church considered by the SDA church as the mark of the beast. This conflict continues to this day (*Ibid*, 175).

Conflict resolution

Since the focus of this study is on the analysis of the conflict resolution strategies in the Seventh-day Adventist church, it is vital that the concept “conflict resolution” be defined to make the study clear and easy to understand.

Conflict resolution can be both formal and informal. It can either aim at resolving or terminating conflicts in an open and predictable process in accordance with legal principles (Kirgis, 2000). However, Wallensteen (2002) defines conflict resolution as the resolution of the underlying incompatibilities in a conflict and mutual acceptance of each party's existence.

For Lund (1997), conflict resolution are efforts to increase cooperation among the parties to a conflict and deepen their relationship by addressing the conditions that led to the dispute, fostering positive attitudes and allaying distrust through reconciliation initiatives and building or strengthening the institutions and processes through which the parties interact.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Despite the SDA church having conflict resolution mechanisms in place, starting at the local church, conference, division and finally at the general conference levels, conflicts that threaten the unity of the church have continued. Several studies have also been done by scholars and recommendations have since been made to enhance conflict resolution in the church but to no avail. Since the focus of this study is on Twashuka congregation in Lusaka, once this problem is not resolved peacefully, the congregation will continue to lose its members who have opted to join other churches or form their own. There is also a likelihood that some of those who opt to remain in the church will be involved in bitter exchanges with church leaders, leading to violence, thereby threatening the unity and cohesion of the body of Christ-the church.

1.3 Case Study: Twashuka Seventh-day Adventist Congregation

Twashuka SDA congregation is situated about ten kilometers south-west of Lusaka, along Los Angeles Road in Kanyama Constituency. The church started as a branch at Twashuka Basic School in 2006 and it was under the supervision of Sunrise SDA Church based in Kanyama Constituency for two years until it was ordained as a church in 2008 by pastor Chibala, who was in charge of Kanyama Mission District.

In 2009, the church found its own plot, one kilometer west of Twashuka Basic School where it currently congregates. The church has a membership of about 150 baptised members. It has about 100 non baptized members. In short, the church has 250 members. Currently, the church has four deacons, four deaconesses and seven elders, among other church officers, who are running the affairs of the church such as providing spiritual guidance and counselling.

This researcher, therefore, picked Twashuka SDA church because it is a composition of members from both low density areas such as Makeni and high density areas which are Kanyama, John Laing, among others.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The Bible does not teach that conflict is bad. Instead, it teaches that some differences are natural and beneficial. Since God has created us as unique individuals, human beings will often have different opinions, convictions, desires, perspectives, and priorities. Many of these differences are not inherently right or wrong; they are simply the result of God-given diversity and personal preferences. When handled properly, disagreements in these areas can stimulate productive dialogue, encourage creativity, promote helpful change, and generally make life more interesting.

Therefore, although we should seek unity in our relationships, we should not demand uniformity. Instead of avoiding all conflicts or demanding that others always agree with us, we should rejoice in the diversity of God's creation and learn to accept and work with people who simply see things differently than we do.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to analyze conflict resolution strategies at Twashuka SDA congregation, which will lead to the formation of effective conflict resolution strategies to be used by church leaders to resolve conflict.

1.5 Objectives of the study

1.5.1 General Objective

The main objective of this study is to analyse conflict resolution strategies at Twashuka SDA congregation in Lusaka.

1.5.2 Specific Objectives

1.5.2.1 To assess the nature of the conflict resolution strategies put in place by the Twashuka SDA congregation to resolve conflicts.

1.5.2.2 To establish whether gender is considered in decision-making at Twashuka congregation.

1.5.2.3 To determine whether church leaders are trained in conflict resolution.

1.5.2.4 To assess the role of church leaders and members in conflict resolution.

1.6 Research questions of the study

1.5.1 What conflict resolution mechanisms has Twashuka congregation put in place to resolve conflicts?

1.5.2 Are both males and females involved in decision-making at Twashuka congregation?

1.5.3 What role do church leaders and members have in conflict resolution at Twashuka congregation?

1.5.4 Are church leaders at Twashuka congregation trained in conflict resolution?

1.7 Significance of the study

It is hoped that the results of this study would help Twashuka SDA congregation in enhancing its conflict resolution strategies so as to minimize conflicts that threaten the unity and cohesion of the church congregation. Although the findings may not be generalized to other SDA congregations, this does not stop anyone from using the findings in other SDA congregations or even other churches.

1.8 Limitations of the study

(i) The findings of this study may not be generalized to other SDA congregations because this is a case study. However, this does not stop anyone from using the findings in other congregations and/or churches.

(ii) Being a qualitative study, the findings of the study based from interviews may introduce some bias in the results on the part of this interviewer because of becoming too personally involved with the interviewees.

(iii) In this qualitative study, like Kunes (1991:21-22) observes, the findings could be subjected to other interpretations.

1.9 Delimitation of the study

(i) This study will confine itself to the use of non-probability sampling method called “purposive sampling”. But Phiri (2006) as quoted by Ng’andu (2013) observes that although this sampling method does not produce a sample that is representative of a larger population, it helps to study organisations such as the one under study because elements are selected purposively to obtain valid data. Hence, sampling methods such as availability, quota and snowball sampling will not be used because they will not yield valid data for this type of study.

(ii) This study will also confine itself to interviewing church leaders and ordinary members. It will also have focus group discussions with different groups of people in the church to get their feelings on the mechanisms for conflict resolution in the church and whether these mechanisms are effective or not.

(iii) The study will focus on one SDA church- one in which people of different classes congregate together. That church is Twashuka congregation, where people from Makeni residential area (a low density area of Lusaka where mostly the affluent people reside) and Kanyama, Jogn Laing high density areas, mostly occupied by poor and less educated people. This will give a better representation of how the church perceives and resolves conflicts as it captures the different social classes of people who are found in this congregation.

1.10 Operational definition of terms

SDA-this is a Christian church that observes Saturday as the day of worship.

Conflict Resolution-measures attempting to resolve the underlying incompatibilities of a conflict, including attempts to get the parties to mutually accept each other’s

Church-A group of worshipers who share the same faith and beliefs.

Conflict- Perceived differences in issue positions between two or more parties at the same moment in time.

Church Conflict in the congregation- A situation in which two or more members or factions struggle aggressively over what is, or appears to be mutually exclusive beliefs, values, assumed powers or goals.

Church leaders- In this case this refers to such positions as deacons and elders in the SDA church.

Deacon- the name comes from the Greek diakonos, meaning servant or helper.

Elder- this is an overseer of the church or one chosen to shepherd the church of God.

1.11 Conceptual framework

Conceptual Framework is an explanatory device which explains either graphical or in narrative form key variables of the study and the presumed relationship among, (Reichel & Ramey, 1987).

Conflict is not necessarily wrong or destructive. Some differences are simply the result of God-given diversity. When handled properly, conflict can result in significant benefits. It can stimulate productive dialogue; encourage a healthy re-examination of assumptions and preconceptions; lead to the discovery of new ideas, approaches, and methods; and stimulate personal growth (Sande, 1997).

But conflict is not necessarily neutral or beneficial. When conflict is not handled properly, which is the focus of this study, or when it is the result of sinful attitudes and desires (James 4:1-2). It can lead to alienation, anger, pain, humiliation, defensiveness, physical illness, and can lead to broken families, friendships, and businesses, and drastically diminish the witness and outreach of the church. Even if a conflict is caused or aggravated by sin, it is never too late to start doing what's right. With God's help, people can change their approach at any time and change disruptive conflict into constructive conflict which can benefit everyone involved (Leas and Kittlaus, 1973).

Sande (2003) states the following as reasons that cause conflict:

1. Misunderstandings (poor communication, or inaccurate or insufficient information)
2. Differences in values, goals, priorities, expectations, perceptions, or opinions. (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).
3. Limited resources (Genesis 13:1-2)
4. Sinful attitudes and desires that lead to sinful words and actions (James 4:1-3). These are the leading causes of conflict in the church.

Within church conflict, causes of conflict can be for different reasons. In order to deal with conflict one must develop the ability to recognize the general and specific causes of conflict. Conflict resolution is based—to some degree—on what is happening within the particular conflict situation.

According to Sheffield (2003), the following are actual causes of conflict in the church: stress, confusion, use of misuse of power, change, diverse membership, unmet needs, and fear. It is easy to see that the actual causes of conflict can be overlapped in any life situation.

In their book, *Conflict Ministry in the Church*, McSwain and Treadwell (1981) help us understand how stress relates to conflict. When stress becomes dysfunctional for a person, it has effects upon other persons. The pressures of life spill from the lives of those stressed to others closest to them...Stresses lead to conflict with those held most dear and love most deeply...Often the church is the first social grouping to experience the dysfunctions of persons living with unconquered stress.

Behaviors of anger, hostility, frustration, hurt, and distance are signals of need that call for response and care. Too often the response is rejection and disassociation because we do not understand the needs of the person who seems always to be instigating 'fires of destruction' which someone must extinguish.

McSwain and Treadwell pointed out the connection between the stresses that pastors and other church leaders experience and conflict within the church. Overstress among the clergy is a major source of the conflicts churches experience. The role expectations of laity toward ministers are often so naïve they do not allow ministers to experience the same stresses as others.

Conflict, according to Sheffield (1987), is the state of being unclear about the underlying problem. While this may seem simple to recognize, it is not simple in actual experience. Since most people have to admit they are confused, pride becomes involved and the conflict is deepened.

Use or misuse of power in the church by pastor, staff, deacons, or members can be very damaging to the church. "When power is used as a manipulative device, a way to dominate people or a situation, and to control a group for selfish purposes, power is being misused." This can be done by the pastors, deacons, staff, and members of the church.

Sometimes a congregation allows the power to reside in the hands of one group or one person. At other times power is simply assumed without formal or informal permission by anyone...Just as damaging, however, is the person who assumes power and then by whatever means available seeks to keep it...Sometimes a staff member either in competition with the pastor, another staff member, or in the absence of a pastor attempts to assume control of a congregation (*Ibid*, 7).

Change is another area of conflict. Faulkner (1986) gives us several ways that change can be the cause for potential conflict: conflict is always a possibility when change occurs in the organizational structure of the church, change that involves the physical facilities of the church produces the possibility for conflict, and the possibility for conflict also exists when the church membership begins to change. Diverse membership in the church is another cause of conflict in the church. Churches have gift differences, age differences, and length of membership differences, but also we are all just different.

Poor communication within the church leads to conflict. Members must learn to communicate with each other and understand what each is saying and meaning. Robert Dale's list shows several reasons people have trouble hearing what is communicated:

- (a) Emotional factors—stereotypes and personal insecurities hinder us from accurate hearing.
- (b) Audio factors—noise distractions, like background conversations or street sounds, affect ability to take in information.
- (c) Visual factors—detracting mannerisms, such as yawning or clearing a desk, block good listening.
- (d) Pace factors—we speak at a rate of about 120-155 words per minute. Our minds, however, can process 400 to 800 words per minute. The time gap between how fast we send information and how fast we receive information encourages us to 'wool gather' and to fill our minds with our own concerns. These random thoughts lessen our concentration on others' communications.
- (e) Rebuttal factor—most of us listen with some idea of countering the other's viewpoint. So we tune out and construct our own argument. The unfortunate result is simultaneous monologues, two folks who are talking without either of

them listening.

- (f) Advice-giving factors—few of us enjoy or even use the advice others give us so freely. We prefer our own solutions and filter our advice (unless we're in a very dependent state of mind).

Unmet needs are another reason for conflict in the church. Sheffield (1987) says he has known people to become upset to the point of not coming back to church because they felt, whether rightly or wrongly, that their needs were not being met. This may mean that no one visited them during an illness, not enough attention was given during a crisis experience, or someone failed to minister to a family member who was a shut-in.

Fear is another cause of conflict in the church. Leas (1973) says that “fear is what you experience emotionally when you perceive that you are being threatened by danger or evil and you feel incompetent to manage it.”

According to Sheffield (1987), fear leads to all kinds of results both internally and outwardly that produces the potential for conflict in our lives. Our stress level is heightened and can actually lead us to a state of distress unless it is brought under control very quickly. It also leads us to a state of irrational thinking.

Sheffield (*Ibid*) states that since the church by nature is an organization as well as a body, conflicts sometimes arise because of organizational structure. It is safe to say that the more complex the organizational structure, the more the chances are multiplied that conflict can occur.

This, however, does not mean that organizational structure should be shunned, but it does mean that potential trouble areas within the church organization should be recognized. The following is a list of conflict possibilities within the church organization: between individual staff members, between pastors and the congregation, between pastors and church leaders, between members of the congregation, a church in a changing neighborhood, differences in priorities among church leaders, inadequate understanding of the nature of the church, and failure to follow good organizational skills.

Whenever conflicts ravage societies or countries, people mainly, Christians seek the intervention of the church to resolve such conflicts because churches are deemed to be beacons of peace. In the wake of rising levels of violence as Zambia is heading to the 2016 tripartite elections, people have called upon the church to help political parties avoid violence. Even the head of state, President Edgar Lungu, according to the *Times of Zambia* (Monday, March 14 edition) urged the church to employ its mediatory role to end political violence in the country.

The preaching of peace has and continues to be paramount among Christian congregations and churches worldwide. This is because Jesus Himself preached love, compassion and forgiveness while here on earth. Catholic Cardinal Sodano (2004) states that even if peace will be complete in the Messianic Kingdom (Isaiah 9:5-6; 11:6-10), which is a kingdom of justice, love and peace, Christians should work harder here on earth in their commitment to justice and peace.

The Church has, therefore, always been committed, both as an institution and through her faithful, to the promotion of justice and peace. Hence, it is the responsibility of the Church to continue along this path, proclaiming the Gospel of Christ, which is the Gospel of justice and peace.

The goods concerning social relationships are part of the goods belonging to humanity. They are goods frequently referred to in Sacred Scripture to show their connection with the work of Redemption. In fact, the first duty in the temporal order that the Creator entrusts to man is that of cultivating and developing the goods of the earth, so that they may provide growth and fullness for the human family (Genesis 1:28; 2:15).

As far as the values of justice and peace are concretely concerned, it must be emphasized that Sacred Scripture applies a very broad meaning to these, expressed by concepts that we commonly intend in using these words and by concepts that refer to the supernatural order, such as sanctity and fullness of life.

The Old Testament often recalls the need to practice justice in relation to one's neighbour (Deuteronomy 24:14-15; Ps 106:3; Proverbs 11:1, 6), and teaches that worshiping God, fasting and all other religious practices are not pleasing to the Lord unless they are accompanied by justice

and mercy, particularly towards the neediest (cf. Sir 5:6, 8; Is 58:6-10; Am 5:21-24). Fidelity to this divine plan will be a source of enduring tranquility because God will remove evil and make it possible to live in peace (cf. Ps 85:9, 11; Zephaniah 3:13, 14, 18); a peace that will embrace all the peoples of the earth (Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-4).

Peace will be complete in the Messianic Kingdom (Isaiah 9:5-6, 11:6-10; Zechariah 9:10), which is a Kingdom of justice, love and peace; it will be definitive only in the world to come. This, however, must not lead to discouragement; on the contrary, it should be an incentive to work even harder in our commitment to justice and peace.

The teachings of the Ancient Law are taken up and brought to perfection by Jesus. At the beginning of his preaching the Lord teaches that with his coming the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled:

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the Sabbath day. And he stood up to read; and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord'. And he closed the book and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing (Luke 4:16-21).

The Incarnation of the Son of God produces effects not only in the spiritual and transcendent realm, but also in the social and material sphere. Jesus, when he speaks of the final judgment, plainly states that this will depend on what each of us has done for those who are neediest (Matthew 25:31-46).

This teaching finds clear confirmation in the controversy concerning the payment of taxes to Caesar (Matthew 22:15-21). Here, Jesus indicates the relation that exists between social-political

actions and supernatural life: they are two distinct levels, which also explains the impossibility of attaining perfect justice and definitive peace on this earth.

Between the two levels, however, there exists a mutual dependence, which shows the need for social commitment arising also from religious motivations. Therefore, the Lord commands not only to give to God what is God's (that is, everything), but also to give to Caesar what is Caesar's, that is to say, to live completely the requirements of justice and peace in social relationships.

This doctrine has been developed further by the Apostles; St John writes, "By this it may be seen who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not do right is not of God, nor he who does not love his brother" (I John 3:10).

Benefits of Responding to Conflict Biblically

There are benefits to responding to conflict Biblically. The Institute for Christian Conciliation (Training Manual, 54) identifies some that are a great place to start: 1.) erring believers are restored to usefulness in the church; 2.) Families are strengthened and protected from divorce; 3.) members enjoy better relationships and more productive activities; 4.) the purity of the church is maintained; 5.) the likelihood of fatal divisions within the church is reduced; 6.) less exposure to lawsuits; 7.) respect and appreciation for leadership grows; 8.) members are maturing in their faith and life; 9.) resources (time, energy, money) of the church and members are protected from waste; 10.) New members are attracted and church growth is stimulated; 11.) And the peace of knowing that you are being obedient to God (Isaiah 48:18).

Every pastor and church must struggle with issues, and the question comes, what issues are worth battling over – what are the majors and minors? The following are four issues worth battling over in the church:

1. Biblical fidelity. No discounting the teachings of Christ
2. Living out what we believe. Biblical teaching must affect daily lives
3. Our church's unity. All members must support this, divisiveness is sin
4. Verbal integrity. Remaining truthful in confrontation or conflict (Ibid).

It is important that Christians understand that conflict is not bad, but if not handled biblically it can become destructive and hurt the church and the ability for churches to reach people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

1.12 Theoretical framework

1.12.1 Functionalist theory

The research used the structural functionalist and human needs theories to explain the ways social institutions fill community needs, especially social stability.

Sociological perspectives on religion such as functionalism, aim to understand the functions religion serves, the inequality and other problems it can reinforce and perpetuate and the role it plays in our daily lives (Emerson, Monahan and Mirola, 2011).

Functionalism, or functionalist theory, deals with the structures and workings of society. It is centered on the belief that all of society is made up of components that are needed to help make that society function. If a society is functioning properly, it is attributed to the components that make up that society.

There are many viewpoints on the definition of the functionalist theory. The researcher will use the definition found in *The Sociological Approach to Social Problems* stating: a society from a functionalist perspective is to visualize society as a system where all parts act together even though each part may be doing different things (Giddens, 1972).

Functionalism, is a framework for building theory that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. This approach looks at society through a macro-level orientation, which is a broad focus on the social structures that shape society as a whole, and believes that society has evolved like organisms (Macionis, 2010).

This approach looks at both social structure and social functions. Functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements; namely norms, customs, traditions,

and institutions. A common analogy, popularized by Herbert Spencer, presents these parts of society as "organs" that work toward the proper functioning of the "body" as a whole (Urry, 2000).

In the most basic terms, it simply emphasizes "the effort to impute, as rigorously as possible, to each feature, custom, or practice, its effect on the functioning of a supposedly stable, cohesive system".

Functionalist thought, from Comte onwards, has looked particularly towards biology as the science providing the closest and most compatible model for social science. Biology has been taken to provide a guide to conceptualizing the structure and the function of social systems and to analyzing processes of evolution via mechanisms of adaptation ... functionalism strongly emphasises the pre-eminence of the social world over its individual parts (i.e. its constituent actors, human subjects) (Giddens, 1984).

With regard to the relationship between functionalism and conflict resolution in the church, functionalists believe that religion is beneficial for both society as a whole and its individual members, for example it unifies society, which in turn gives each individual member a source of support when they need it. However some theorists disagree with the functionalist ideology.

Firstly, functionalist such as Frank (1989) claim religion benefits society in a number of ways, they say it creates a sense of social solidarity, meaning a shared sense of identity, history, norms and values (a collective conscience). Functionalists explain that if all of a society's members are part of the same religion then they all share the same belief system, resulting in consensus between all of its members.

The religious institution will teach its members the norms and values of the society they are in and the collective worship will bind societies members closer together, for example, people in Muslim countries who are part of the faith of Islam, understand it is normal to stop and pray 5 times a day and also that no-one should work on Friday however people in Christian countries understand the day of rest to be Sunday. Functionalists therefore claim members of a society have a collective conscience, they think in the same way, due to their shared norms and values.

Functionalists also believe that religion unifies people, the functionalist Emile Durkheim studied a clan society called the Arunta, and he explain that the collective worship of the sacred totem by the Arunta united society. He explained their totem is sacred, it inspires feelings of wonder and awe due to the fact it is different to every other normal, profane item. Their totem is a symbol that makes them different to other clans so in effect it is like they are worshipping a symbol of their society even though they are unaware of this. They worship their society because they are completely dependent upon it, they are utterly dependent upon each other and their religion unifies them.

From a functionalist perspective religion helps individual members of society in a number of ways. Firstly it provides a sense of being part of something greater than just yourself, for example in the Christian faith, when someone becomes a Christian they are then part of a bigger Christian family. This can also provide support for an individual in times of trouble (Colbert (1978).

Also religion provides answers to ultimate questions such as ‘where do we come from?’ ‘Why are we here?’ or ‘what happens to you when you die?’ Malinowski (1996) says that religion helps individuals deal with emotional stress that has the potential to undermine social solidarity; it acts as an emotional crutch. He says religion helps to minimise disruption in life crises, for example when someone dies it gives people an answer for where they’ve gone and why they died, e.g. they’ve gone to a better place.

Much of the work of Émile Durkheim (1903) stressed the functions that religion serves for society regardless of how it is practiced or of what specific religious beliefs a society favors. Durkheim’s insights continue to influence sociological thinking today on the functions of religion.

First, religion gives meaning and purpose to life. Many things in life are difficult to understand. That was certainly true, as we have seen, in prehistoric times, but even in today’s highly scientific age, much of life and death remains a mystery, and religious faith and belief help many people make sense of the things science cannot tell us (Fish, 2005).

Second, religion reinforces social unity and stability. This was one of Durkheim's most important insights. Religion strengthens social stability in at least two ways. First, it gives people a common set of beliefs and thus is an important agent of socialization. Second, the communal practice of religion, as in houses of worship, brings people together physically, facilitates their communication and other social interaction, and thus strengthens their social bonds.

The communal practice of religion in a house of worship brings people together and allows them to interact and communicate. Steven (1985) concurs with Durkheim saying in this way religion helps reinforce social unity and stability. This function of religion was one of Émile Durkheim's most important insights.

A third function of religion is related to the one just discussed. Religion is an agent of social control and thus strengthens social order. Religion teaches people moral behavior and thus helps them learn how to be good members of society. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Ten Commandments are perhaps the most famous set of rules for moral behavior.

A fourth function of religion is greater psychological and physical well-being. Religious faith and practice can enhance psychological well-being by being a source of comfort to people in times of distress and by enhancing their social interaction with others in places of worship.

Many studies find that people of all ages, not just the elderly, are happier and more satisfied with their lives if they are religious. Religiosity also apparently promotes better physical health, and some studies even find that religious people tend to live longer than those who are not religious (Moberg, 2008).

Another function of religion is that it may motivate people to work for positive social change. Religion played a central role in the development of the Southern civil rights movement a few decades ago. Religious beliefs motivated Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights activists to risk their lives to desegregate the South. Black churches in the South also served as settings in which the civil rights movement held meetings, recruited new members, and raised money (Morris, 1984).

This study is, however, not suggesting that the theory being used has no critics. Religion has all of these benefits, but, according to conflict theory, it can also reinforce and promote social inequality and social conflict. This view is partly inspired by the work of Karl Marx, who said that religion was the “opiate of the masses” (Marx, 1964). By this he meant that religion, like a drug, makes people happy with their existing conditions.

Marx (1964) repeatedly stressed that workers needed to rise up and overthrow the bourgeoisie. To do so, he said, they needed first to recognize that their poverty stemmed from their oppression by the bourgeoisie. But people who are religious, he said, tend to view their poverty in religious terms. They think it is God’s will that they are poor, either because he is testing their faith in him or because they have violated his rules. Many people believe that if they endure their suffering, they will be rewarded in the afterlife. Their religious views lead them not to blame the capitalist class for their poverty and thus not to revolt. For these reasons, said Marx, religion leads the poor to accept their fate and helps maintain the existing system of social inequality.

Associated with the system is structure. In society, institutions, such as family, education, and religion are the parts of the social system. They are structures in society that social activity is organized around. The overall of the various structures (parts) is to maintain order in society.

The structures in society, according to Ernest (1972) promote integration, stability, consensus, and balance in society. A change in one part of society can impact the total society. Some of the “functional prerequisites” that a social system must meet to survive include developing routinized interpersonal arrangements structures, defining relations to the external environment, fixing boundaries, and recruiting and controlling members.”

Though many have used functionalism as a means of class domination. Functionalism was never intended to be used as a tool of oppression. Kitano (1995) states, “Inequalities were attributed to differences in ability and talent, and the notion that one group could use its power to dominate another group was never central to Durkheim’s analysis.”

According to the theory of functionalism, “tasks should be carried out and those tasks should be consistent with the structures and norms of society . . . When there is a disturbance in the social world, the various roles and organizations have means to return the society to a more normal state of affairs.” Functional analysis does not emphasize conflict, does or consider conflict to be an integral part of the social world, and generally does not consider change to be dramatic but rather to be evolutionary (Skocpol, 1992).

At the same time, the structural functional approach is in the tradition of western liberalism — arguing for equality of opportunity, a liberal democracy, and social reforms that would encourage these.’ In addition, some Christian sociologists indicate that functionalism would lack an emphasis upon change, which is perceived as central to the Christian message.’

Bellar (1959) posits that the early components of the functionalist theory come from Emile Durkheim positing that the interrelations between the parts of society contribute to social unity. A social influence that is studied from group to individual supplies the framework for a new science of sociology that would be later coined as “functionalism.”

Talcott (1975) is one of the major contributors to the functionalist approach. This approach began to dominate schools of sociology in the 1950s. Parsons contributed to the modification of functionalism by establishing the functional prerequisites needed for any social system of action: adaptation, goal attainment, integrative system, and latency, or pattern maintenance.

Functionalism studies the roles of institutions and social behavior in society, the way these are related to other social features, and developed explanations of society in social terms. Functionalism was one of the theories of classical sociologists, however, its emphasis centers around function, interdependence, consensus, equilibrium, and evolutionary change. Macro sociology, institution and structures in a whole society, is the focus of functionalism (Jeffrey, 1988).

Functionalism explains the relationship of different parts of the system to each other. Every social institution is working together moving towards equilibrium. Changes inside of functionalist

societies appear orderly and evolutionary as opposed to the revolutionary change of the conflict theory.

Each society has certain needs in that there are a number of activities that must be carried out for social life to survive and develop. Goods and services must be produced and distributed in order for people to survive, there must be some administration of justice, a political system must exist, and some family structure must operate to provide a means to reproduce the population and maintain social life on a daily basis.

In the structural functional model, individuals carry out each of the tasks in various institutions and roles that are consistent with the structures and norms of the society. A change in one part of the society causes other parts to modify to this evolution. This concept is the significance of interdependence (Colbert, 1978).

So long as roles are performed, the structures function smoothly. Disturbances from a normal state of affairs, from outside of the society, affect the social system because the different parts are not operating properly.

Functionalist theory is based upon three major concepts. The first concept is that society is a set of interdependent parts that are working towards equilibrium. Secondly, there are functional requirements that must be met for a society to survive. Lastly, events are seen to exist because they serve a function. The inter-related social institutions that make up a society include education, governments, families, economic systems, religions, etc. All of these institutions function together in order to maintain social stability (Skocpol, 1992).

Functionalism is the theory that has been used to explicate this research, because it views religious organizations, such as the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as social institutions and explains their purposes as an interrelated part of a society. While in this position, it is required to meet the needs of society. These needs include the right to freedom, justice, and equality (Bellar, 1959).

Therefore, functionalist theory explains how the SDA Church, in this case Twashuka congregation, like any other institution, helps society maintain a level of stability. The theory helps society maintain or restabilize itself after a social revolution that leads to a breakdown in religious and governmental institutions.

The first concept of the functionalist theory is to ensure that all parts of society realize that they are interdependent with each other. Using this theory, Twashuka congregation cannot exclude itself from the community. Also, this theory compels Twashuka congregation to work alongside other social institutions in order to bring about significant change in society.

The second concept is that all social institutions have functional requirements that must be met for the people involved to survive. This means that Twashuka congregation not only needs the people in the community, but the community needs the Church to fulfill its societal requirements. The functionalist theory gives religious denominations a social purpose for its existence, thus allowing them to function in society by serving the people that make up society's institutions.

The final concept of the functionalist theory is that events exist due to the functions social institutions serve in society. This theory alludes to the idea that Twashuka church is responsible for the positive and negative events that occur in communities. There is no one institution that should be praised or blamed for the events that take place in a community.

All social institutions should be held accountable for social stability or lack thereof. Therefore, since Twashuka SDA Church exists in a particular area, then that institution shares communal responsibility with all the social institutions in that vicinity.

The second theory that this study will use is the human needs theory. Unlike other theories, which point to inherent aggressiveness as the source of conflicts, the basic human needs theory grounds violence, social instability and conflicts on unmet basic human needs, and it focuses on peaceful resolution of conflicts. This paper, therefore, will also employ the human basic needs theory for understanding the role of the church in conflict resolution.

However, justice will not be done if this paper does not define what conflict is. Since the beginning of time, mankind had been enmeshed in countless conflicts. Conflict is not only part and parcel of the social, political, economic and religious life of humans but an inevitable aspect of human interaction in every society though every human society strives to achieve peace.

However, conflict becomes a thorny issue if it is poorly handled, that it can degenerate into crises and can subsequently turn out to be violent, inflicting severe damages which can result into loss of life and properties, disunity, wasting away development, use of resources on conflict/crises management, suspicion that could lead to further crises, damage to environment, and the disruption of the social systems etc.

The term conflict has been defined variously by different scholars. According to Ugwu (2011: 64), the word conflict is coined from a Chinese word *Conflictus* which means to strike together. Though the concept of conflict in peace literature has gone beyond the physical content usage to include moral connotations, Ugwu (2008:24) defines conflict as a social situation in which incompatible goals and activities occur between two parties who hold antagonistic feelings towards each other and attempt to control each other. Writing in the same line, Folger (2002:5) described conflict as the interaction of interdependent people who perceived incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving those goals.

From the moral angle, Imhabekhai (2009:103) observed that conflict connotes disagreement, imbalance or distortion in beliefs and values and situations within, between or among individuals, persons, groups, communities, states, tribes or countries. To him conflict results from changes in perception and subsequent reaction to such changes depending on which side of the divide individuals or groups belong.

Similarly Mereni (1991: 203) opined that it is the perception of existence of the incompatible preferences, the desire to achieve these preferences and the behavior expanded in the direction of gaining and protecting such preferences that essentially characterizes a state of conflict. According to Imhabekhai (2009: 53), conflict is the interaction of inter-dependent people or groups who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving these goals.

Conflict as a phenomenon, is an attendant feature of human interaction and cannot be eliminated; however, its proper management and transformation are essential for peace and progress in human society. It is pertinent to note that since the end of the Cold War, concerns have heightened about sustained violent conflicts in Africa. Conflict mitigation and resolution has become the dominant governance activity in almost every part of Africa. Many of these conflicts seem intractable; conflict mitigation and resolution initiatives are at best yielding modest successes.

Even so, such successes typically provide peace in the short-term but hardly lay foundations for the reconstitution of order and the attainment of sustainable peace. Part of the problem is the failure to acquire a deep understanding of conflict challenges and to fashion out appropriate responses (Sawyer, 2003: 29).

The focus of this study, therefore, is on how the church resolves conflicts. An example of how the structural functionalist theory fits in well with this study is highlighted on how the church in Zambia facilitated a peace indaba on 29th March, 2016 at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross Church with political party leaders, including the republican president Edgar Lungu (Zambian Daily Mail, 29th March, 2016).

Fearing that political violence could threaten the peace of all Zambians, the church felt it was its responsibility to invite all political party leaders to a round table meeting to try and resolve the violence that was going on in the country. This is what the structural functionalist theory advocates. It is based on a theory of harmony, where all sectors in society play a pivotal role in ensuring peace. It does not however, eliminate the possibility of conflicts but believes that amidst conflict, solutions are possible to bring about a peaceful atmosphere where people can live in harmony and peace.

The church, therefore, is alive to the fact that conflicts will always be there wherever people come to worship their lord. It is also aware that people who attend church come from different backgrounds, and that as a result, conflicts will always ensue. This is why the church's message is love and respect for one another just like Jesus Christ loved the world, despite its wickedness by giving up His life on the cross to save mankind.

Even as messages of love and forgiveness are preached, it sometimes takes long for some Christians to change for the better but such people who harbor hatred against others are not removed from the church. The church will always preach patience and the role of the Holy Spirit in transforming “evil” people in the church to become righteous.

To foster peace among the congregants, the churches have conflict resolution mechanisms, where those involved in conflict are brought together to try and resolve the differences. This way of resolving conflicts is in tandem with the structural functionalist theory.

1.12.2 Human Needs theory

The human needs theory provides a framework of analysis that centers on the unmet human needs. The theory that unmet human needs are the remote source of conflict and violence in every society is a well-established idea in the fields of politics, international relations, and development studies particularly in the specialism of peace and conflict resolution (Marker, 2003: 43; Burton, 1990a: 16, 1990b: 82; Coate and Rosati, 1988: 30).

Human needs theory stipulates that there is more likelihood of conflict and violence occurring as a result of unmet human needs, psychological and physiological, rather than that of interest, as people strive to fulfill their needs (Burton, 1990a: 18). Both Maslow and Burton (in Marker, 2003: 43) viewed these needs as not limited to food, shelter, and water, but rather extend to include nonphysical elements needed for human growth and development, participation, control over their own life, as well as all those things human beings are innately driven to attain.

For Burton (1997: 56), the concept of basic human needs offered a possible method of grounding the field of conflict analysis and resolution in a defensible theory of the person. In Burton’s view, the needs most salient to an understanding of social conflicts were not only material (food and shelter), but also included needs of identity, recognition, security, spiritual and personal development. Over time, however, he tended to emphasize the failure of existing state systems to satisfy any of these needs, which is the primary source of modern ethno-nationalist struggles.

However, he pointed out that the level of importance of any or a combination of these needs depends on the socioeconomic, cultural, and political development of a country (Burton, 1990a: 57). Burton (2009: 71) points out that aggressions and conflicts are the direct result of some institutions and social norms being incompatible with human needs. His submission is that aggression and antisocial behaviors are stimulated by social circumstances.

There are human limits to abilities to conform to or withstand such institutions and norms, since human beings are not wholly malleable. The needs that are frustrated by institutions and norms require satisfaction; they certainly must be pursued in one way or another. Denial by or inability of society or institutions to provide material basic needs, recognition, and identity would lead, at all social levels, to alternative behaviors designed to satisfy such needs, be it religious or ethnic conflict, street gangs, or domestic violence.

The great promise of human needs theory, in Burton's view, is that it would provide a relatively objective basis, transcending local, political, religious and cultural differences, for understanding the sources of conflict, or designing conflict resolution processes, and for founding conflict analysis and resolution as an autonomous discipline (Burton, 1990b: 72).

The implication is that the needs theory is particularly useful for understanding the causes, resolution, and management of conflict in the developing regions, such as Africa. This theory of understanding conflict in Africa is strikingly crucial because it moves beyond theories that blame conflicts in Africa on a primordial past, such as colonialism or neo-colonialism, global market or Africa's failure to follow Western development culture. It is also different from the theories that attribute the causes of conflicts to the inherent aggressiveness of man. In addition, it is different from the theories that see conflict causation as the natural instinct of human being to aggress and thus concentrate on using the police and other paramilitary agencies for controlling conflicts.

In Africa, the denial or neglect of the basic needs such as the material needs; religious identity and recognition, recognition of different ethnic groups, particularly the minority groups; neglect of certain identities, such as the human cost of unemployment to the youths seeking their identity in

society; and other needs constitute the major source of conflicts. Just as the theory stipulates, when such non-negotiable basic needs are unmet, conflict is inevitable.

The view, therefore, is that the sources of conflict concern the failure of some institutions and social norms, particularly the leadership institution, to satisfy the needs of the people. If this is the case, as this paper will reveal, then the solution may be to alter the system by addressing those aspects of the system that may impede the realization and sustenance of peace. According to this theory, the numerous conflicts in churches, in this particular case, the Twashuka SDA church today may have unmet needs implications.

1.13 Biblical/theological foundation

As the author of this paper has studied the Bible both informally, he has come to understand that the Bible has addressed conflict from Genesis to Revelation. Story after story in the Bible is about healthy and unhealthy conflict, and how to handle it with a Biblical solution.

The theories helped the researcher to understand whether conflicts at Twashuka are resolved using biblical principles. This was important in as far as findings were concerned because the researcher wanted to dig deeper as to why conflicts still happen despite these principles being in place, which are meant to unite the church.

The fact that it is possible to have conflict resolution mechanisms such as biblical principles which are not followed by church leaders, motivated the researcher to search the scriptures as to how conflicts were resolved in both the old and new testaments and also what the Bible says about the handling of disputes in the church.

Sande (1993) says that “many of the problems associated with the approaches to conflict can be prevented if we learn to look at conflict Biblically. God has explained in the Scriptures why conflicts occur and how we should deal with them. The more we understand and follow what he teaches, the more effective we will be in resolving disagreements with other people.”

Both the New and Old Testaments have examples of conflicts. Some Old Testament examples are:

Table 1: Old Testament Conflict

Tension in the Family	Cain and Abel
Focus on Self	Jacob and Essau
Power of Desire	David and Uriah
Seduction of Power	Saul and David

Table 2: New Testament Conflict

New Testament examples are numerous and include:

Religious Traditionalism vs. Christ	John 8:1-11
Struggle of Self-Interest vs. Servant Hood	Mark 10:35-45
Diversity in Membership and Prejudice	Acts 6:1-3
Partners in Ministry Split over Disagreement	Acts 15:36-40
Personal and Spiritual Immaturity	1 Corinthians 3:1-3
Churches Full of Cliques	1 Corinthians 1:10-12, 11:17-22
Individual Responses to Issues and Values	Galatians 2:11-12
Prominent Women Could not Get Along	Philippians 4:2-3
People Treat Rich Believers Better than Poor Believers	James 2:1-9
Self-Will Along with Rebellious Spirit	James 4:1-3

It is important for the Christian to study the Biblical view of conflict. Christians will handle conflict in the church similar to the way their family handles conflict in family and social environments.

Patterns of conflict can be either ongoing or isolated conflict. Ongoing conflict refers to issues that continue over a period of time, while isolated conflict means there are several distinct and separate issues over time. Some good examples of these are Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15), Paul and Peter (Gal. 2), and Paul and Alexander the metal worker (II Tim. 4).

The Bible does not teach that conflict is bad. Instead, it teaches that some differences are natural and beneficial. Since God has created us as unique individuals, human beings will often have different opinions, convictions, desires, perspectives, and priorities. Many of these differences are not inherently right or wrong; they are simply the result of God-given diversity and personal preferences.

When handled properly, disagreements in these areas can stimulate productive dialogue, encourage creativity, promote helpful change, and generally make life more interesting.

Therefore, although we should seek unity in our relationships, we should not demand uniformity. Instead of avoiding all conflicts or demanding that others always agree with us, we should rejoice in the diversity of God's creation and learn to accept and work with people who simply see things differently than we do.

There are certain truths about conflict that we cannot ignore. The truths of conflict are important in every area of our lives. We must remember that church conflict will not be any different. There are ten "Truths about Conflict:" (Training Manual, 2000).

1. Conflict is inevitable
2. Conflict is neutral
3. We need to confront conflict as soon as possible rather than deny or ignore it
4. You cannot have healthy change without conflict
5. If you do not manage the rate of change appropriately, you will produce destructive conflict
6. The pastor's leadership style is a key factor in whether conflict is constructive or destructive
7. God is not the author of chaos, but the provider of qualities that lead to peace
8. Prior unresolved church conflict exists as a key ingredient in most current

church conflict situations.

9. When people grow spiritually and emotionally they are less likely to be the initiator of destructive conflict
10. We need to pray more and talk less about issues for church approval. We should not seek an answer from our human reason but from the revelation of God.

1.13.1 God's Word

Conflict and Sin

A context of Christian perspectives on human sin suggests at least two faulty meanings for one's understanding of conflict. First, Christians believe that all human beings sin at times by seeking to "lord it over" others to control them.

Second, Christians believe that these sinful behaviors of parties in conflict create evil forces that both predispose parties to sin and hold them hostage to communal structures of deceitfulness, greed, tyranny, violence, exploitation, or injustice (Hugh F. Halverstadt, 1991).

Not all conflicts are neutral or beneficial. Ken Sande (2003) states, "The Bible teaches that many disagreements are the direct result of sinful motives and behavior." James 4:1-2 says, "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but you don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want...you quarrel and fight."

When a conflict is the result of sinful desires and actions that are too serious to be overlooked, we need to deal with them in a straight-forward manner. Matthew 18:15 states, "If your brother sins against you, go and rebuke him in private." Loving confrontation is often the key to repentance, which can remove the root causes of conflict and open the way to genuine peace. The Bible says that we should see conflict neither as an inconvenience nor as an occasion for selfish gain; but rather as an opportunity to demonstrate the power of God.

Paul told the Christians at Corinth the following when religious, legal, and dietary disputes threatened to divide the church, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for God's glory. Give no offense to the Jews or the Greeks or the church of God, just

as I also try to please all people in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.” (I Cor. 10:31-33).

Look at the example of how Paul confronted the Christians in Corinth: “Now in giving the following instruction I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. For, to begin with, I hear that when you come together as a church there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. There must, indeed, be factions among you, so that the approved among you may be recognized.” (I Cor. 11:17-19).

1.13.2 Order in the Church

We should look at conflict as an opportunity to glorify God, to serve others, and to grow to be like Christ. This perspective may seem naïve and foolish at first glance, especially to anyone who is presently embroiled in a dispute.

Sometimes persons in the church are more interested in what they want. They want their way and claim that priesthood of the believer gives them the right to say what they want, when they want, and about whom they want.

Noted Baptist historian Dr. Jerry Sutton in *The Baptist Reformation* writes, “The primary emphasis on the priesthood of all believers, both biblical, historical, and Baptist material, is that a Christian does have direct access to God. It is a privilege that one does not have to go through a priest other than our Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, and that we have the right to read the Word of God for ourselves.”

The problem with the distorted priesthood of all believers and the argument for the purely egalitarian congregationalism which insisted that all believers have equal rights and responsibilities in the church is that it makes no latitude for immaturity or carnality in the church.

1.13.3 Biblical Portrait of a Peacemaker

As one studies the Bible, it does not take long to identify Barnabas as one of the prime examples of a peacemaker. Jim Soft (1993) states that “one of the most profound and rare eulogies in all the Bible is ascribed to Barnabas: ‘He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith’” (Acts 11:24).

This passage continues, “and a great number of people were brought to the Lord,” no doubt in part because of Barnabas’ encouragement and peacemaking mission.

Scripture clearly teaches that when a man has been justified by faith, he will have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 5:1). Therefore, the primary goal of the Christian peacemaker is to point men that are in conflict to the Saviour.” (Jim Soft, 1993).

Barnabas identified problems and gave resolution in four different levels: between an individual and group (Acts 9:20-23), between two ‘races’ of people (Acts 11:19-26), between two churches—Jerusalem and Antioch (Acts 15:1-35), and between two individuals—Paul and John Mark (Acts 13:13, 15:36-40, 2 Timothy 4:11).

Rather than providing a method or teaching the mediation process, Scripture provides a profile of the character of the person who was used of God to bring people together. Although techniques of mediation are important, the best technique will fail if the mediator lacks qualities exemplified in Barnabas’ character (Jim Soft, 1993).

Table 3: Barnabas' Character

He was a man of encouragement	Acts 4:36
He was a man who rejoiced	Acts 11:23, 15:3
He was full of the Holy Spirit	Acts 11:24
He was a man of courage	Acts 9:26-27
He was a man of perseverance	Acts 14:50, 14:21-24
He was a man of observation	Acts 11:25-26
He was accepting	Acts 9:30-31, 11:25-26
He was a man with a sense of timing	Acts 9:30-31, 11:25-26
He recognized John mark was not ready for the mission field	Acts 13:13
He was willing to confront others	Acts 15:2, 36-37
He and Paul confronted non-believers with the Gospel	Acts 15:2
He was discerning	Acts 11:22
He was submissive and accountable to others	Acts 4:36-37
He was trustworthy	Acts 11:27-30
He was humble	Acts 4:8-14
He was a man of faith	Acts 11:24
He recognized his limitation and capacities	Acts 13:7
He was anointed by God	Acts 13:2-4

Paul had his share of dealing with conflict in the church. Notice what he told the church at Corinth, “I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is not one wise person among you who will be able to arbitrate between his brothers (I Cor. 6:5)?”

We must ask God for wisdom when we deal with church conflict, “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without favouritism and hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” (James 3:17-18).

The church leaders and church members need to realize that we must depend on God. He gave us a promise: “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely. And may your spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.” (I Thess. 5:23-24).

1.13.4 Church Conflict

Church Conflict Defined

Ken Sande (2003) says that “conflict is a difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone else’s opinion or purpose.” This is a very good definition of conflict, especially for the purposes of understanding church conflict. The Bible says that “The purposes of a man’s heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out” (Prov. 20:5).

It appears that church leaders need a better idea on how to handle conflict in their life and that of the church and how they can integrate a Biblical approach to conflict management and resolution to church conflict.

Hugh F. Haverstadt (1991) in his book, *Managing Church Conflict*, makes the following observation: “Christians not only fight, they also often fight dirty. Issues are personalized. Gossip and hearsay fog up reason and common sense. Enemy-making wounded parties separate and shred long standing friendships. Moralistic judgments vaporize trust. Labeling parties suppresses openness and candor. Robert’s Rules of Order are misused to polarize members of governing bodies, making political alliances more influential than reason or spirituality in determining leader’s votes.

1.13.5 Summary

The SDA church employs the Bible to guide it in handling conflicts. This chapter has shown that both in the old and new testaments, conflicts usually arose among God’s people. This simply shows that conflicts will always be there, even among Christians. What is cardinal is the way conflicts, especially dysfunctional conflicts are resolved to restore good and stable relationships between and among church members. Examples of some of the Disciples of Christ have been given just to show that despite working together to spread the word of God, conflicts usually threatened their

unity but once they resolved such conflicts constructively, they once again lived in peace and harmony to achieve their goal of preaching the good news of Christ.

Despite the Biblical principles of resolving conflicts in churches as outlined above, conflicts have continued to cause a lot of pain by destroying relationships, hence the motivation by the researcher to analyse the effectiveness of conflict resolution strategies being used at Twashuka SDA congregation and finally come up with recommendations.

The next chapter will review the work of other researchers who have studied how conflicts are supposed to be resolved in churches. It will, however, show why such studies have not been able to come up with recommendations that can completely do away with dysfunctional conflicts. This is evident by the fact that there are still dysfunctional conflicts in churches, including the SDA church, despite such recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Literature Review

A lot of scholars have written dissertations on the role of the church in conflict resolution. This study will not confine itself to the review of studies by members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in resolving conflicts among its congregants but scholars from other churches as long as their studies are similar to what is being studied by this researcher-conflict resolution.

One of the closest studies to the one this researcher is carrying out is a doctoral thesis project submitted by Donald Q. Hicks in 2010 to the Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, Virginia, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for his doctorate where he studied conflicts within churches that lead to the termination of pastors within the Southern Baptist Convention.

The advantage of the above study is that it helped this researcher to understand some of the conflicts found in churches and how these conflicts can lead to termination of employment for pastors. However, the researcher only focused on the conflicts between pastors and church members. This researcher will, however, expand to include other church leaders involved in conflict resolution such as deacons/deaconesses and elders. This is premised on the fact that conflicts in churches are resolved at different stages depending on the gravity of the issue up to the time the issue reaches the pastor. This is the gap that this study will fill.

Another gap with Donald's (2010) research is that although he rightly included pastors in the research maybe because most if not all Baptist churches in the United States of America have church pastors, the situation in Zambia and many other less developed countries, especially most SDA churches are run by church elders, but of course falling under a district pastor. This, therefore, entails that most conflicts are handled by church leaders below the pastor such as deacons/deaconesses and elders. Some conflicts are resolved by church leaders below the pastor, so not conflicts require the presence of church pastors. Twashuka SDA church is run by elders, meaning that they handle most of the conflicts among church members. It is only complicated cases that are referred to the pastor.

The Donald (2010) research also focuses just on conflicts that lead to the termination of pastors within the Southern Baptist convention but this researcher is rather researching on the role of the Twashuka SDA Church, as a Case Study, in resolving conflicts-all types of conflicts and not only those that can lead to pastors being dismissed or having their services terminated. The research, actually is about conflict resolution mechanisms to ensure that there is cohesion and unity in the church.

In Donald's (2010) research, his study does not seem to survey members of churches for their opinions. It is based primarily on research of articles, books, and interviews with leadership within SBC churches, state conventions, associations and the national convention agencies.

In this research, however, the views of church members will be captured because conflicts of the belief that conflicts do not only affect church leaders but ordinary members as well, hence the more reason to hear them on what they feel about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of conflict resolution mechanisms available in their congregation.

Among the scholars who have written a dissertation on the same topic is Bernabe (1990), whose title is "the role of pastoral leadership in church conflict resolution within the Philippines Seventh-day Adventist Church. A Case Study of the Nelson Church."

Although this dissertation is almost similar to mine, this study was only confined to pastoral leadership. My study, however, will consider leadership at various levels of the SDA Church such as deacons/deaconesses, elders and pastors. All the three positions have a big role to play in the resolution of conflicts in the church. This is because some conflicts can be resolved at the deacons/deaconess' level, whereas others can be tackled by elders of the church and finally the pastors.

This study will take a holistic approach to the resolution of conflicts in the SDA church as opposed to just concentrating on the role of pastors because these are not the only ones involved in settling disputes or conflicts in the church.

A study by Bernabe (1990) also studied conflict resolution in the Philippines within the context of Filipino cultural leadership and Biblical leadership style. However, this study will only focus on the Biblical leadership style.

The study being reviewed also presupposes that all SDA Churches are run by pastors. This is, however, not true for churches, especially in Zambia where only few “rich” churches are managed by pastors whereas others are run by elders. The leadership styles between such congregations may differ.

The study does not tell us whether it is composed of the elite people based in the city or one that is located in rural or remote area where most of the congregants have less education and financial resources. It is the considered view of this study that leadership styles normally differ depending on the status of people that congregate in a particular church.

Bernabe (1990) concludes that a Filipino pastor leader who exercises paternalistic leadership style should be fully aware of his own psycho-socio-cultural leadership orientation and biblical leadership style. Full consciousness of motifs, especially paternalistic leadership, may lead to better and more satisfying results in church conflict resolution among Filipino Adventist churches. What he fails to bring out, however, is whether these two attributes-paternalistic and Biblical leadership styles are the only attributes found in a pastor which can help resolve conflicts.

Ellen G. White (1888: 44-45), in her message to the 1888 General Conference of the SDA church pointed out:

The word of God is the great detector of error; to it we believe everything must be brought. The Bible must be our standard for every doctrine and practice. We must study it reverentially. We are to receive no one's opinion without comparing it with the Scriptures. Here is divine authority which is supreme in matters of faith.

In resolving conflicts in the SDA church, Ellen G. White (1888) urges church members to use the Bible alone as a guide and not turn to man for answers. According to her, conflict resolution skills among church leaders are not necessary but what is important is the guidance of the Bible.

This study, however, is not disputing the need for the Bible to help people resolve conflicts in the church but that leadership skills are also necessary in conflict resolution, whether in church or outside. This study will, therefore, examine whether church leaders at Twashuka SDA church such as deacons/deaconesses, and elders are trained in conflict resolution to enable them resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner. It is the firm belief of this researcher that knowledge of the Bible alone in resolving conflicts is not enough. There is also need for church leaders to acquire skills in handling cases among church members.

Ellen G. White (1888) continues:

God wants us to depend upon Him, and not upon man. He desires us to have a new heart; He would give us revealings of light from the throne of God. We should wrestle with every difficulty, but when some controverted point is presented, are you to go to man to find out his opinion, and then shape your conclusions from his?—No, go to God. Tell Him what you want; take your Bible and search as for hidden treasures.
(Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 415).

One thing that Ellen G. White seems to overlook is that not every church congregant is able to read the Bible and obtain guidance on how to resolve conflicts. It is an undeniable fact that some church members are illiterate, hence they cannot read or write. These and even those who are literate or educated still need assistance from church leaders whenever they face conflicts. Some conflicts that involve more than one person cannot just disappear by reading the Bible but requires that the disputants come together and in some instances a third person to mediate such as church leaders.

There are many more statements from her that make a similar point. In her view, we have an obligation to search the Word of God for ourselves. The thoughts and opinions of others, even prominent and educated people, are not to be decisive for us. The Bible is to fill that role.

She, however, seems to contradict herself when she says:

In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. In these days He speaks to them by the testimonies of His Spirit. There was never a time when God instructed His people more earnestly than He instructs them now concerning His will and the course that He would have them pursue”

(Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 661).

She further expressed the relationship of these writings to Scripture in the following statement:

In the Scriptures God has set forth practical lessons to govern the life and conduct of all; but though He has given minute particulars in regard to our character, conversation, and conduct, yet in a large measure, His lessons are disregarded and ignored. Besides the instruction in His Word, the Lord has given special testimonies to His people, not as a new revelation, but that He may set before us the plain lessons of His Word, that errors may be corrected, that the right way may be pointed out, that every soul may be without excuse.

(Selected Messages, bk. 3, p. 31.).

Another study was done by VanDenburgh (1996) at Kettering College, Ohio, in the United States of America in his dissertation entitled “Resolving Conflicts between Pastors and Parishioners” where he posits:

This proposal is undoubtedly biased in favor of pastors. I am a pastor and tend to see things from the pastor's point of view. Often enough the pastor ends up as the scapegoat for conflict in the local church. The conflict may even be the result of the pastor doing precisely what he or she needs to do for the good of the congregation. An intensified episode of conflict may also be the result of deep and systemic issues that have been a part of the congregational family system for years and rooted in circumstances that happened long before the pastor arrived. So my purpose in this article is to look at dealing with congregational conflict constructively, seeking a resolution that justly involves the pastor, but does not hang everything on him or her.

A closer look at the above statement presumes that conflicts in churches result from misunderstandings between pastors and church members. However, it is the firm belief of this study that conflicts in churches, in this particular case, the SDA can involve church leaders from deacons, elders, pastors and ordinary members. This is the reason why this study seeks to find out what role these church leaders and even ordinary members can play in conflict resolution. This study will argue that some conflicts at the lower level can be resolved without the involvement of the pastor but if this fails, that is when the church pastor can get involved.

It would also seem that the study by VanDenburgh (1996) was biased. This is because the researcher, being a pastor himself, says that pastors are often seen as scape goats for conflicts in the local church and confesses that as a pastor he sees things from a pastor's point of view.

Staal (2013) undertook a study in the Netherlands titled "Why people turn their back at the Adventist Church: A Case study of the Netherlands." The purpose of the study was to find out what makes members leave SDA churches in the Netherlands. Some of the findings were that members left the church owing to unacceptable changes; small groups dominating the rest; conflicts in the church; growing difference between life inside and life outside the church; lack of spirituality in the church; a decreased importance of Adventist tradition and theology and unanswered questions and doubts about God.

Some of the recommendations made were that there should be follow up of church members moving to other places; strengthening ties with the church; training pastors in change management; giving care and attention for those without power; developing conflict resolution strategies and training churches in being inclusive.

However, the study by Staal (2013) did not focus on how conflicts in the SDA church are resolved but simply why people turn their back at the Adventist church. This research, however, focuses on whether the SDA congregation at Twashuka has effective conflict resolution strategies. Members leaving the church was one of the reasons that motivated the researcher to undertake the study. The presence of conflicts in churches cannot only be manifested by members leaving the church.

Exchange of bad words between and/or among members, fighting, formation of classes, for instance could also be pointers to the presence of conflicts amongst believers.

The study by Staal (2013) seems biased from the beginning because it creates a picture that members are turning their backs at the Adventist Church in the Netherlands even before the research is done. It also does not tell us whether all the SDA churches in the Netherlands were researched before coming up with the findings. Still, the research methodologies used are not explained, for instance, how the respondents were chosen.

Fesolai (2013) conducted a research in Australia at Avondale College of Higher Education School of Ministry and Theology, a thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Bachelor of Theology and Ministry. The title was, “Through the Eyes of Young Leaders: A Study of the Leadership Development Experiences of Young Leaders in Three Samoan Seventh-day Adventist Churches in the Greater Sydney Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists.

In the study, Fesolai (2013) explains that the challenge for young leaders in a Samoan church in Australia is the balance of introducing new ideas and platforms into the Samoan church, while not being seen as challenging the authority of older members of the church adding that there are several practices in Samoan churches that hindered the involvement and contribution of young people, which eventually drove them away from church.

Among the findings, Fesolai (2013) posits that issues related to the lack of involving young people in the church’s decision-making process, which had a knock-on effect to how young people saw the acceptance and value of their views. The study also suggests that there is lack of understanding and support from those deemed older leaders of the church who were appointed to work with young people. Another finding says that young people always got frustrated whenever it comes to discussions over the direction and plans of youth ministry by elders who usually hide under the saying, “respect your elders” to silence young people. The youth leaders were often reminded that they were “younger” by elder leaders and that they also felt this gave older leaders in the church the opportunity to criticize young people during board meetings.

The research by Fesolai (2013) is helpful to this study because it brings out salient issues to do with the youth participation in the decision-making process of the church. This research will also interview the youth in Twashuka SDA congregation on their views about their involvement in decision-making in higher positions of the church. Whereas Fesolai (*Ibid*) narrowed the term “decision-making” to church positions such as that of youth leader, this research refers decision-making to senior positions like that of an elder in the church where decisions that give direction of the church are made. It will investigate whether the selection of the youth in senior church positions has an impact on the levels of conflict in the church.

However, the gap in the research conducted by Fesolai (*Ibid*) is that it needed to include the understanding of attitudes and perceptions of older church leaders and how this impacts their leadership decisions. There was also need to get views of other church groups such as elders on their perceptions about youth leadership in the church.

A study by Ringerling (1978) at Portland State University on the incident of divorce, religious conflict and need and potential utilization of marital/family services among SDA couples in the North Pacific Union Conference is also related to this study because it brings out the aspect of conflict.

On the findings of the study, it was observed that church members in the North Pacific Union Conference were reluctant to bring personal problems to their pastor because of lack of objectivity due to close association with the pastor through church activity. Some were concerned about the confidentiality factor of discussing personal problems with the pastor and the time limitation on the part of the pastor, who was seen to be too busy with other church programmes. Others said they would prefer counselling with a pastor who was specially trained. There was also a group that felt that problems should not be shared with anyone but God. They felt that most problems originated with spiritual problems, therefore by straightening out the spiritual life, other problems would also be resolved.

Many respondents, however, felt that the majority of pastors serving in churches in North Pacific Union were not properly trained to be counselling marriage partners with complex marital

problems. The researcher stated that there is need for SDA counsellors whether they be pastors with specific training in marriage counselling or other SDA professionals trained in this area. From these findings, Ringering (1978) concluded that SDA colleges and universities have a responsibility to offer curriculum that will prepare SDA professionals if the needs of the Seventh-day Adventists are to be met. He concludes that divorce, while occurring less frequently than national averages was currently breaking up many SDA homes and that religious conflict is a source of unhappiness in nearly one-half of all Adventist homes, although not severe enough in most cases to cause the home to dissolve.

The study by Ringering is important to this research because it also examines the role of training among church leaders such as pastors in specialized areas such as counselling. One of the research questions in this study is, “Are church leaders at Twashuka congregation trained in conflict resolution? Although Ringering (*Ibid*) focused on specialized training in marriage counselling for church leaders, this study limited itself to specialized training in constructive resolution of disputes and not the mere spiritual guidance given by church leaders at Twashuka SDA congregation. One gap that comes out so clearly in this study, like other studies already reviewed, is the much emphasis on pastors as if they are the only ones entrusted with the responsibility of handling conflicts, thereby forgetting or ignoring the position of elder as equally important, especially in churches run by elders and not pastors.

This study will contribute to the literature on conflict management in SDA churches by adding more knowledge on how churches can constructively resolve conflicts that threaten the peace and unity of the church. Other researchers have concentrated on the role of pastors. However, this study will explain why it is important for every church member to play a role in the peaceful resolution of disputes and whether church leaders need to undergo special training in the handling of disputes in the church as opposed to relying on the spiritual aspect, as is supported by the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* and other church literature. However, much responsibility in handling church conflicts lies in the hands of senior church leaders such as elders and pastors, who make decisions that affect the day-to-day running of their churches.

2.2 Summary

This chapter has reviewed literature related to the study. It has stated how the reviewed literature by other researchers will help in this study. The gaps to be filled by the existing literature have been highlighted. It is, however, important to note that not all the literature related to this study has been reviewed owing to time limitations. The next chapter will introduce the methodology to be used.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Methodology

Under this section, this research clearly states how the investigation is carried out such as what data will be collected; from where and from whom; the research instruments it intends to use, whether questionnaires, direct observation, interviews etc. It will also show how the collected data will be analysed and interpreted (ZERNET, 1991).

3.1 Research Design

Research design is the plan to be followed to answer the questions raised by the research problems. According to Leedy (1985), it is a formal, written set of specifications and procedures for conducting and controlling a research project. For Adegoke and Adebayo (2010), research design is a logical arrangement of the procedures and tools to be employed in a proposed research in order to minimize misinterpretation of the social phenomenon being investigated.

In this study, the researcher, therefore, used qualitative research design where In-depth interviews and the Focus Groups were employed. To ensure validity and reliability of the research, this researcher also reviewed church literature such as the Church Manual, Seventh-day Adventists Believe and the Elder's Handbook. It should, however, be mentioned that these are not the only books on leadership in the church but this is what was available at the time.

Bolarinwa (2006) observes that qualitative research verbally describes or tells what is done or what has been done. It tells the story around events, occurrences and practices. In short, qualitative research endeavours to reveal or understand human attributes, attitudes or behaviour in a more exploratory or interpretative way (Mytton, 1993).

3.2 Sampling and Sample size

The researcher used the purposive and quota sampling, which fall under the non-probability sampling technique. This is so because the conclusions or findings of this study will only apply to the sample population. Purposive sampling is a sampling method in which elements are chosen

based on purpose of the study. Purposive sampling is most useful when data review and analysis are carried out simultaneously with data collection.

Quota sampling, according to Saunders (2003), is to set quotas to ensure that the sample you get represents certain characteristics in proportion to their prevalence in the population such as age and gender. In a nutshell, the researcher relies on his “assumed” good judgement in selecting the sample units to minimize bias in the selection (Denzin, 2000). This is exactly what this researcher did.

The sample size consisted of five Focus Groups drawn from the deacons/deaconesses, elders and ordinary members. Each focus group consisted of four deacons, four deaconesses, four church elders, twenty (20) ordinary members from which five (5) are men-both married and unmarried, five (5) single mothers, five (5) married women; and five (5) youths. The groups were deliberately arranged in such a way that had to capture the views of different groups of members that constitute the church. This is important because views of people on the subject under study may differ depending on age, sex, education, status etc. It was the view of this researcher that the views of these heterogeneous groups were, therefore, likely to be representative of the whole church congregation under study.

It should also be noted that the choice of the deacons, deaconesses and elders was based on their key role in resolving conflicts in the church. The ordinary members could not be left out as they are also key to capture their views on whether they are satisfied with the conflict resolution mechanisms in place.

To ensure that each respondent was free to express themselves, each one was interviewed separately. This mode is important because it avoided a situation where the youth and women could have felt shy to express their views freely in the presence of elders or would probably feel uncomfortable to express some views that might contradict those of the church elders. This derives from the fact that women and the youth in the Seventh-day Adventist church usually feel uncomfortable to either speak or contradict what church leaders such as church elders say.

4.0 Data collection methods

4.1 Focus Groups and In-depth Interviews

Because of time limitation and the scope of study, this researcher employed two methods of qualitative study- Focus Groups discussions and In-depth interviews. This is not to say they are the only ones but given the time frame, these were probably the most effective data collection methods under the circumstances. Other methods such as observation and ethnography may have required a longer period of time. Focus groups are also useful when dense sets of observations are not readily available (Morgan, 1988) as was the situation at Twashuka SDA congregation.

The focus group is an interview style data collection method. According to Berg (2001: Lengua et al. 1992), by using this approach a researcher strives to learn through discussion about conscious, semiconscious and unconscious psychological and socio-cultural characteristics and processes among various groups. It involves grouping a handful of people or a small group of participants to constitute groups (recommendable six to twelve), under the guidance of a moderator, and it is aimed at discussing or talking about some topical issues of social research interest or which are thought to be of special importance to the interviewees themselves and to the investigation.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a rapid assessment, semi-structured data gathering method in which a purposively selected set of participants come under one roof to discuss issues of concerns that are based on a list of key themes drawn up by the researcher/facilitator (Kumar 1987).

The Focus group discussion has become extremely popular because it provides a speedy way of learning from the target audience (Debus 1988).

Like all other methods of scientific study, Focus Group discussion has both its strengths and weaknesses. The advantage of this technique is its ability to bring together a heterogeneous group of people, hence the researcher is able to gather a large amount of data within a record of time than in other methods.

This makes focus groups “quick and easy” (Morgan, 1997: 13). But to ensure the characteristics of people required is achieved is not easy, and sometimes it’s difficult to guarantee that all the invited people turn up on time.

Second, the fact that Focus Groups are driven by the researcher’s interests can also be a source of weakness. One shares the argument by Morgan (1997) that: “The fact that the researcher creates and directs the groups makes them distinctly less naturalistic than participant observation so there is always some residual uncertainty about the accuracy of what the participants say” (Morgan, 1997:14).

This is more or less the same weakness that characterises In-depth interviews. In-depth interviews is the most commonly used method of gathering information (data) in qualitative research studies. It takes place between two parties (that is interviewer and interviewee (interviewee or subject)).

4.2 In-depth face to face Interviews

An interview is a conversation with a purpose (Bolarinwa, 2006). Interviews can simply be defined as face-to-face talks with respondents (Musingafi, 2012). Individual in-depth interviews provides an opportunity for detailed understanding of the research topic in particular on how these key informants perceive the issue under study (Ritchie & Lewis 2003:36).

The interviewer usually maintains a one-on-one discussion with the interviewee, he/she maintains eye contact, listens and records or write) down the answer(s) once a question has been asked. It is used to collect answers, views, opinions, beliefs, thoughts, ideas, notions and knowledge.

One of the strengths of in-depth interviews is that it makes it possible to collect information from different categories of sample. As long as sampling was done properly, this can ensure a fair degree of validity of information. It is possible for one to collect more complex information with greater depth and understanding, particularly if one uses in-depth interviews and focused group discussions. Interviews are more personal as compared to mailed questionnaires and tend to result in better response rates.

The other advantage of in-depth interviews and Focus Groups, however, is that they are both conducted face-to-face, and so the researcher can use follow-up questions easily. The major problem of in-depth is bias. Bias can occur when an interviewer shows approval (or disapproval) of responses by way of facial expression or nodding the head. Lack of anonymity could also result in dishonest responses especially if the topic being discussed is of personal or sensitive nature. Just as it's the case with focus groups, the purpose of the in-depth interview would be to "elicit open ended responses" (Lindlof, 1995: 178)

4.3 Church literature

It is the view of this researcher that document analysis is capable of producing qualitative information. This is because written materials can be particularly useful in trying to understand the philosophy of an organization, in this case, the SDA church.

This researcher used the SDA Church Manual, the Seventh-day Adventists Believe and the Elder's Handbook to examine the church's policy on how leaders should handle conflicts whenever they arise before the unity of the church is threatened.

It is in view of this background that this researcher employed the three research techniques for this study in order to provide more reliable data. This is, however, not to say that the other techniques were seen to be ineffective. To the contrary, given the limited time under which to undertake the study, these three techniques proved to be more effective.

5.0 Analysis of interview data

Analysis of data involves summarizing the mass of data collected and presenting the results in a way that communicates the most important features. Qualitative data analysis searches to describe general statements about relationships and themes present on the data. Wolcott (1994) states the term analysis is a generic term that embraces the three basis categories when analyzing data: description, analysis and interpretation.

He suggests these categories are not exclusive; neither visibly separated by a line, yet identifying and distinguishing each one may be useful to organize and present the data. In qualitative data,

especially content analysis, the data collection and gathering is simultaneously receiving some kind of interpretation. The reading of the data to follow the criteria to inclusion on the database, leads to initial interpretation and understanding of the concepts, and depending on the researcher, the analysis can begin while collecting data (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Reflecting over the conceptual framework, and questioning the data, the ideas emerge on categories through the engagement with the texts. Categories of inclusive patterns and meaning, yet exclusives, are generated according to the existing framework. In a related strategy, themes are discovered within the data, and the researcher creates deductive constructed-analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Two important ways of data analysis are editing and coding (Adegoke, 2010).

5.1 Editing

Editing consists of detailed examination of gathered data. Proper editing would expose any incorrect entries, omissions, irregularities and other errors. This also enhances the ease of coding and the quality of data. Editing provides qualities that aid analysis and these include: accuracy, completeness, clarity, legibility and consistencies (Adegoke, 2010).

Editing, therefore, helped this researcher to detect and rectify bias arising from false responses and editing also helped to eliminate and reduce obvious errors. The process, further ensured that all information sought has been obtained especially on those critical one germane to the research goals.

5.2 Coding

In the analysis of the empirical material, one would follow the procedures prescribed by Lindlof (1995), Morgan (1988) and Rubin & Rubin (1995). Under this procedure, the first step would that of coding the data from both the in-depth interviews and the Focus Groups in order to recognize differences and similarities between all the different items. Coding is a process in which “the researcher creatively scans and samples data-texts, looks for common denominators and differences, and begins to formulate categories” (Lindlof, 1995: 224).

In this study, similar concepts, ideas or themes were lumped together in order to label, separate, compile and organize available data. The over bearing themes and ideas were interpreted as more important, while the seldom appearing patterns were viewed as less important to the phenomenon of conflict resolution.

Direct quotations from the interviewees, and examples also proved useful in the analysis, especially to advance argumentation.

The other stage is the ‘triangulation’ of data, which involves a ‘compare-and-contrast’ assessment of more than one form of evidence about the subject of inquiry (Lindlof, 1995: 239). In doing the triangulation, the different data from focus groups and respondent interviews were synchronized, distilled, gleaned for evidence and compressed.

This study, therefore, analyzed the first coding process through initial coding. This type of coding was chosen to examine, compare and search for similarities and differences throughout the data.

The second level coding chosen, was Pattern coding. Pattern coding gave to this study the basis to explain major themes underneath the segments of the data; patterns in human relationships, the search for causes and explanations to the possible phenomenon, and finally, the platform to construct frameworks and processes.

As observed by Saldaña (2009), a triangulation of the patterns and themes helped to create new levels of understanding the existing knowledge by reviewing the interviews in a comparative analysis with the previous two levels of coding.

6.0 Limitations of the methods

If there had been enough time and funds for the study, the best approach would have been to use triangulation which means the process of combining both qualitative and quantitative research approaches in single research studies.

The use of survey questionnaires (quantitative method), for one, could have been useful in reaching out to a larger number of respondents, with closed, straight-to-the-point questions on a number of aspects that cannot be exhausted through in-depth interviews or Focus Groups (see Morgan, 1997: 17-30).

Among quantitative methods, direct observation research could have been used. According to Vuuren and Maree (1999), direct observation refers to using your eyes to observe people and their environment, situations, interactions or phenomena and recording what you see as data. This could have involved directly observing how church leaders at Twashuka SDA church in Lusaka resolves conflicts.

Participant observation could also have been used, time allowing. This refers to a form of sociological research methodology in which the researcher takes on a role in the social situation under observation. The aim is to experience events in the manner in which the subjects under study also experience these events. Holigrocki, Kiminski and Frieswyk (1999, 2002) however point out that while observing and experiencing as a participant, the sociologist must retain a level of objectivity in order to understand, analyse and explain the social world under study.

However, despite the limitation of the chosen data collection techniques, the study was still expected to gather rich, useful findings and conclusions. Under such time constraints, the use of Focus Groups and In-depth interviews have proved to be the best and most effective combination of methods of data collection.

The sample size for the research study may seem to be somewhat small and insignificant, be that as it may, since qualitative research does not aim at statistically generalized conclusions, the number of interviewees is not likely to affect the research conclusions.

7.0 Ethical considerations

The purpose of qualitative studies is to describe a phenomenon from the participant's points of view through interviews and observations. The intention of the researcher is to listen to the voice of participants or observe them in their natural environments. The researcher's interpretation of these experiences is usually described as an emic perspective (Field and Morse, 1992).

According to Boss (2005:5), the term "ethics" is often used to refer to a set of standards of right and wrong established by a particular group and imposed on members of that group as a means of regulating and setting limits on their behavior.

The acceptance of this statement means that researchers recognize that participants are autonomous people who will share information willingly. A balance research relationship will encourage disclosure, trust and awareness of potential ethical issues.

Although qualitative research methods make it difficult to predict how data will be collected through interviews or observation (Streubert and Capenter, 1999), researchers have the obligation to anticipate the possible outcomes of an interview and to weigh both benefits and potential harm.

For example, in the case of interviewing victims of violence, the interview may trigger painful experiences and the participant may become distressed during the interview. In this case, the researcher is confronted with an ethical dilemma-to continue with the interview and gain more insight about the topic under study or to stop the interview and give advice or refer the participant to an appropriate treatment or counselling service.

Deciding to continue would indicate that the researcher considers that the value of the data obtained from the distressing experience outweighs the participant's distress. Stopping the interview and searching for possible solutions for the participants' distress indicates that researchers are aware of the vulnerability of participants and their rights.

An interview is usually equated with confidentiality, informed consent and privacy but also by recurrence of old wounds and sharing of secrets. The interview opens new risks to both researchers

and participants. This is the more reason why Munhall (1988) says that qualitative researchers are expected to describe the research experience in an authentic manner, often contrary to their own aims.

In carrying out this study the researcher followed research ethics in order not to harm the subjects by way of obtaining informed consent. Informed consent is a mechanism for ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in a particular research study so they can decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they want to participate.

In achieving informed consent, this researcher informed research subjects about the purpose of the research; what was expected of research participants including the amount of time required for participation; expected risks and benefits; the fact that participation was voluntary and that one could withdraw from research if he or she desires to do with no negative consequences and how the researcher would ensure the confidentiality of the data to be collected.

This researcher, therefore, used oral consent meaning that research subjects were given all of the information needed for consent verbally.

7.1 Summary

This chapter discussed the research methodology by clearly stating how the investigation was carried out such as what data was to be collected; from where and from whom; the research instruments used such as in-depth interviews, group focus discussions and review of church literature. It also showed how the collected data was analysed and interpreted and the limitations of the methods used. The chapter also highlighted the ethical considerations the researcher took before embarking on the study. The next chapter will present the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 Presentation of findings

4.1.1 Participants

The researcher approached the elder-in-charge at Twashuka SDA Church, elder Noah Mukali, where he fully explained the purpose of the study and the need to interview and have focus group discussions with church members. The researcher also mentioned that church leaders such as deacons/deaconesses, and elders would also be interviewed to explain how they resolve conflicts in the church, to which Elder Mukali had no objection.

The exercise was done in a period of two months and the interviews and focus group discussions were done on Sundays at the church when participants were free. The church's literature was reviewed every night for three weeks. It is also important at this stage to mention how the participants were chosen.

In the case of deacons/deaconesses and elders, purposive sampling was used. According to Creswell (2002), purposive sampling is a sampling method in which elements are chosen based on purpose of the study and that purposive sampling may involve studying the entire population of some limited group or a sub-set of a population. All the deacons/deaconesses and elders in the church were therefore interviewed to make it a representative sample.

For the general membership, quota sampling method was used to capture the various characteristics of the population. However, as Saunders (2003) rightly put it, "if we set quotas for say, gender and age, we are likely to attain a sample with good representatives on age and gender, but one that may not be very representative in terms of income and education or other factors. To do this the researcher must know the characteristics of the entire population to set quotas.

The researcher, therefore, having known the characteristics of the population at Twashuka SDA Church in advance, divided the general membership population into four groups: (1) five youths; (2) five single mothers; (3) five married women; and (4) five men-both married and unmarried. All efforts were made to ensure that the researcher was unbiased in the selection of the participants

because it is possible to select participants that are that, for instance, better dressed, seem more approachable etc.

4.1.2 Research situation

It should be mentioned at this stage that the participants were promised that there would be some refreshments during the interviews. This was not meant, however, to bribe them. It was instead aimed at encouraging them to come and also actively participate in the discussions knowing that their stomachs were looked after. It was also mentioned to them that the research was for school purposes and not to profit the researcher, as it were.

4.1.3 Youths

During the focus group discussion, the researcher asked the youths if they knew of any conflict resolution mechanism at Twashuka SDA church. All the five youths responded in the affirmative by saying deacons/deaconesses, elders and at times the pastor handled all conflicts or disputes in the church.

However, when asked by the researcher, whether they were satisfied with the conflict resolution mechanism in place, only one answered in the affirmative while the other four disagreed saying: “As youths, our issues are always ignored by church leaders who always say we are immature and cannot waste their time (leaders) to discuss our problems.”

The youths further claimed that their issues were usually ignored by church leaders because they either had no or less representation in decision-making positions in the church. They said church leaders expected them (youths) to behave like old people hence their disapproving of the manner in which the youth were dressing, haircut and walking styles and dating non-believers, among others.

“Church leaders should realise that as youths we have rights and no one should infringe on those rights. They always misinterpret the Bible under the guise of Christian standards so that we can be like them, no this is wrong, let them give us space,” they complained.

On the issue of discipline, all the five were in accord to condemn the double standards applied by the church leaders in disciplining erring members in the church. “We as youths, wonder why we are immediately censured or even dis-fellowshipped when we break God’s commandments such as impregnating ladies; drinking alcohol and other cases and yet usually elders committing the same offenses are left scot free simply because they are elders.”

“We wonder if the position of elder in the church only for people with grey hair. Why is it that we the youth are usually discriminated against when it comes to senior positions in the church?” the youths asked.

A look at 1 Timothy 3: 17, however, does not mention that youths cannot be ordained as elders. The mere mention of the fact that elders should be husbands of one wife... in no way does it discriminate against the youth because there are youths who are married and are taking good care of their families.

4.1.4 Single mothers

It should be noted that this group consisted of women with varying ages to ensure representativeness. Also important to note is that while some women had been married before, others were not.

The question posed to single mothers during the discussions was, “How do you perceive the conflict resolution mechanism in the church?” It is interesting to note that all the five said the conflict resolution mechanism in place was fine except that it was not followed to the later by church leaders entrusted with this responsibility.

They pointed out that they were discriminated against mainly by married women who always viewed them as snatchers of their husbands whenever they approached deacons and elders for conflict resolution.

“We fail to take table our issues before deacons and elders, especially those who are married, because their wives treat us as harlots, always looking for ways of taking their husbands away.

Worse still, if the church leaders come to our homes when we have problems,” they bitterly complained.

The other challenge they pointed out was the lack of confidentiality among some deacons and elders saying this has also led them to stop confiding in the church leaders. They explained that instead of trying to resolve problems Biblically, leaders take advantage of such situations to spread even sensitive information to other members of the church who are not supposed to be privy to such information.

“How do you expect us to be divulging our problems to people who do not respect confidentiality? We would rather we live with our problems than telling deacons/deaconesses or even elders for fear of embarrassment and being a laughing stock in the church and even in our communities,” they observed.

“Look here, can I be so foolish, surely to ask an elder to pray for me because of say, infidelity when such sensitive information can easily be spread to others by the same elder? One interviewee asked.

The interviewees explained that if the church leaders were using the biblical principles of settling disputes to the latter as found in Matthew 18: 15-17, then they would have no problems with the manner conflicts were handled in their church.

4.1.5 Married women

The interview with married women was very interesting. Interesting in the sense that this researcher thought this group had few problems with regard to the handling of issues in the church. It turned out that they were equally affected.

They all indicated that the resolution of disputes or conflicts in the church as outlined by the Bible was clear but the only problem was the people entrusted with this responsibility who they said were deliberately ignoring such principles or were totally ignorant of what to do.

Mention should be made here that this group consisted of women married to church leaders such as deacons and elders and others who are married to ordinary members and those who do not congregate at Twashuka SDA church.

Those whose husbands congregate at Twashuka SDA congregation explained that it was very difficult for them to raise their issues at church for fear of embarrassing their husbands.

“We have conflicts in our homes but we fear to embarrass our husbands, so we would rather keep quiet for the sake of maintaining our marriages,” all of them said this.

This group also observed that they had lost confidence in deacons/deaconesses and even some elders for their failure to maintain confidentiality, hence their decision to just keep quiet even when they are faced with major conflicts.

“We don’t know what has happened to church leaders nowadays who cannot keep secrets. Just the moment they leave you, the whole world will know that there are problems in your home,” the women reacted.

They also said women who report their husbands to the church authority whenever there are conflicts are generally viewed to be evil by other church members claiming that the SDA church is patriarchal, where men are more likely to be favoured against the womenfolk when handling cases.

On the role of women in conflict resolution in the church, while two out of five responded in the affirmative, three said major decisions were only made by men because the church policy did not allow women to be ordained and hold senior positions such as that of elder and pastor.

4.1.6 Men

For men, the main issue that came out was the manner in which some church leaders, especially elders were elected into the office.

They observed that the biblical principle found in Matthew 18: 15-17 was never adhered to as people now focused on other attributes such as how much tithe and offerings someone returned as if positions were now on sale to the highest bidder.

“We have observed with sadness that some people return tithe and offerings to buy certain positions in the church,” they said.

The group also observed that members with higher status such as wealth, good education and high positions at their work places were usually elected to high positions in the church even when these fail the test as stipulated in Matthew 18: 15-17 as opposed to poor and less educated members.

“That’s why even when it comes to disciplining members whose social status is high, these cases are either put under the carpet or no punishment is meted out to such people but if those involved have low status, their issues are immediately heard and punishment hurriedly meted out,” they explained.

The other concern expressed by men is the fact that Twashuka SDA congregation was no longer a united church because classes had developed in the church.

“We now see a situation where there are classes in accordance with social status, when the church as the body of Christ is supposed to be one. This creates conflicts,” they complained.

4.1.7 Review of Church literature

According to the General Conference Session of 1946 (Church Manual, 2005), it was resolved that the highest authority under God among SDAs is found in the will of the body of that people, as expressed in the decisions of the General Conference when acting within its proper jurisdiction; and that such decisions should be submitted to by all without exception, unless they can be shown

to conflict with the word of God and the rights of individual conscience (Testimonies, Vol. 9, p. 260).

The content of the Church Manual (Ibid. p. 261) is the expression of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's understanding of Christian life and church governance and discipline based on biblical principles.

However, a closer look at the above statements indicates that the General Conference, which is the supreme decision-making organ of the SDA church, makes decisions which are binding on all church members worldwide.

All decisions, therefore, taken by the General Assembly of the SDA church must be obeyed by all members and any opposition to such decisions is not tolerated and such members who do so are disciplined by the church.

The fact that the Church Manual of the SDA church explains that church discipline should be based on biblical principles suggests that other factors such as skills in conflict resolution by church leaders are either not important at all.

4.1.8 Elders

The above statement is supported by elders at Twashuka SDA congregation who, during the interviews agreed that their congregation always used biblical principles to resolve church conflicts. They never mentioned the important role that training in conflict resolution plays.

“When we are dealing with spiritual matters, what is important for us as leaders is what the Bible says in Matthew 18: 15-18 and also what the church policy is,” they mentioned.

They are supported by Testimonies (Vol. 7, p. 260) which clearly explains that in dealing with erring church members, God's people are carefully to follow the instruction given by the savior in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew.

The Bible in Matthew 18:15-18 stipulates, “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over, but if he 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 he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

What, therefore, seems to come out clear among church leaders at Twashuka SDA congregation is that they are conversant with the procedure of conflict resolution but what would seem to be hindering their efforts to effectively handle conflicts is the lack of skills to do so and also to appreciate that not all conflicts are bad.

Three church elders actually said that, “the church as a body of Christ should not be involved in any conflict and that all conflicts are instigated by the devil to divide the church, hence they should not be tolerated at all.”

They said they are supported by the writings of Ellen G. White in Testimonies (Vol. 8, p. 240) which urges Christians to make every effort to avoid tendencies that would divide them and bring dishonor to their cause.

According to the Church Manual (2005), every effort should be made to settle differences among church members and contain the controversy within the smallest possible sphere. “Contentions, strife and lawsuits between brethren are a disgrace to the cause of truth. Those who take such a course expose the church to the ridicule of her enemies and cause the powers of darkness to triumph.”

From the above statement, one would conclude that conflicts in the SDA church are seen to be an embarrassment to the church especially when they are known to everyone and every effort should be made to resolve them so that the church should always be seen to be peaceful and united. But this notion is wrong because conflicts are part of life. What matters is not the conflict but how

conflicts are resolved once they surface. To just brush conflicts aside or use cosmetic ways of resolving them without establishing the root causes is not the solution.

During the interviews, it was discovered that no elder at Twashuka SDA congregation had undertaken a formal course in conflict resolution. What they indicated though, was the fact that leadership seminars were usually held for church leaders and not much emphasis was placed on resolution of disputes because they were expected to strictly follow biblical principles in dealing with conflicts.

On whether gender is considered in election to decision-making positions at Twashuka SDA congregation, the elders said the church policy states that whereas women can hold leadership positions in the church, they cannot be ordained as elders or pastors. As a result, there has never been a woman as an elder at Twashuka SDA church since the congregation came into existence.

It should be noted that major decisions in the SDA church are made by elders and pastors and the absence of women in such positions means that their voices are not heard as men make decisions on their behalf.

4.1.9 Deacons

The Church Manual (2005) lists the duties of deacons as assistance at services and meetings; visitation of members; preparation for baptismal services; assistance at the communion service; care of the sick and the poor; and care and maintenance of church property.

With regard to the question of what role deacons play in conflict resolution at Twashuka SDA congregation, the deacons explained that theirs was to inform church elders about the existence of conflicts that required attention or resolution.

“For instance, if we hear that a member is pregnant and/or impregnated a lady, we visit such members to ascertain the truth of the matter before we table such cases to church elders who will subsequently call for church board meetings to discuss and arrive at decisions,” they explained.

It can, therefore, be seen that deacons as well as deaconesses have a role in conflict resolution because they are normally the first people to contact or be contacted about conflicts. The way they handle such cases, some of which are very sensitive, can determine the way the cases will be resolved by either the church elders and/or the church board.

However, during the interview, some deacons/deaconesses expressed disappointment with the manner in which some cases they handle are usually leaked to other church members before such cases are tabled before elders and the church board. They mentioned that as deacons they were ordained to keep secrets and not to divulge information to members before the church is informed. “We actually wonder how church members will continue to confide in us when some of us are busy betraying members by revealing whatever information they give us to everyone we meet. This is quite embarrassing and we risk losing credibility in the church,” they bitterly complained.

4.1.10 Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the study. These findings were obtained through the in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and the review of church literature. The groups that were interviewed were the church elders and deacons/deaconesses. Focus group discussions involved the youths, single mothers, married women and men. The next chapter will discuss the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 Discussion of findings

5.1.1 Data Analysis Strategy

Upon completion of the interviews, I first transcribed the in-person interviews into electronic format to combine participant responses with the online interview data. Then, a Text Analysis tool was used to conduct a First Cycle in Vivo Coding Method (Saldana, 2009, p. 48) to analyze each interview syntax and decode (p. 4) the data by determining keywords and phrases that were common amongst interviewees. Keywords and phrases appeared as word clouds, which were analyzed and encoded (Saldana, 2009: 4) with suitable category labels.

Throughout each Coding Method, commonalities developed. This researcher journalized memos of patterns and themes occurring in the data for later reference. Once codes were categorized, they were compared to one another. Next, a Second Cycle Pattern Coding Method (Saldana, 2009: 48) was used next to recognize similarly coded data and further summarize it into sub-categories or consolidate. Using a thesaurus (Microsoft, 2012) was helpful to better refine coded words.

Then, the researcher applied a Third level of Coding, the Axial Coding Method (Saldana, 2009:151) to further analyze results from the first two stages and discover how the new categories and sub-categories interrelated with one another. The research findings and journaled memos of understandings were again reviewed, then triangulated. Finally, new emergences, findings, and memo references were narrated as they relate to the implications of the study.

5.1.2 Data Analysis and Coding

The process of structural coding is —designed to start organizing data around specific research questions (Saldaña, 2009:51). The research questions were: (1) What conflict resolution mechanisms has Twashuka SDA congregation put in place to resolve conflicts? (2) Are both males and females involved in decision-making at Twashuka SDA congregation? (3) What role do church leaders and members have in conflict resolution at Twashuka SDA congregation? (4) Are church leaders at Twashuka SDA congregation trained in conflict resolution?

The initial coding phase was completed through the process of Structural coding, in which the initial raw data (taken through brief notes collected by this researcher during the interview process) was labeled. The Structural coding of the raw data developed the memo- code in which the following eight labels were assigned: involvement, roles, confidentiality, discrimination, respect, culture, social status and training.

During the second- level coding process, Pattern coding, the researcher recoded the data from the first-level coding by grouping the eight labels into two categories or themes. These were: gender involvement and leadership training. Finally, triangulation demonstrated the relevance of the data and themes developed.

In order to ensure reliability and validity of the research under study, the findings have to emanate from the objectives of the research.

The first objective was to assess the nature of the conflict resolution strategies put in place by the Twashuka SDA congregation to resolve conflicts. The functionalist theory by Emile Durkheim, as outlined earlier in this study, posits that the church has different functions whose objective is to create an equilibrium. This is the reason why Twashuka SDA congregation has conflict resolution strategies in place to promote love and unity in the church. And the researcher found out that the church uses biblical principles to help it resolve conflicts among members. They use the Bible and other supporting documents by the church.

The Church Manual (2005: 14) says the church is one body and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female must be divisive among church members.

However, this study has found that despite such strategies being in place at Twashuka SDA congregation, conflicts still persist. This is attributed to among others, non-adherence to the biblical principles which require church leaders such as deacons and elders to have certain Christian attributes for them to be elected.

The interviews and focus group discussions held with church members were unanimous on the need for the church to strictly follow what the Bible says about election of church leaders by not basing the process on the social status of an individual or favouritism. For example, it was discovered that members who contributed a lot to the church coffers were more likely to be given higher positions in church as opposed to poor people regardless of their Christian standing.

The second objective was to establish whether gender is considered in decision-making at Twashuka SDA congregation. The study found out that while men could rise to the highest positions such as those of elder and pastor, women cannot. This was seen to disadvantage women in having their needs and aspirations be attended to, hence conflicts. To this effect, the issue of ordination of women has always been tabled in the General Conference, which is the highest decision-making body in the SDA church, because women feel they are being discriminated against owing to the patriarchal nature of the church.

It was also discovered that the input by women in the church business at Twashuka is always limited because the culture of the church is that women should take a low profile and allow men to actively participate in church discussions. Women usually hide their emotions during church meetings for fear of retribution from the menfolk. This is supported by the Needs theory under the conceptual framework that stipulates that there is more likelihood of conflict and violence occurring as a result of unmet human needs, psychological and physiological, rather than that of interest, as people strive to fulfill their needs (Burton, 1990a: 18). Both Maslow and Burton (in Marker, 2003: 43) viewed these needs as not limited to food, shelter, and water, but rather extend to include nonphysical elements needed for human growth and development, participation, control over their own life, as well as all those things human beings are innately driven to attain. Women at Twashuka SDA church are, therefore, deprived of the need to participate in the decision-making process of the church at the highest level and not men always deciding what is best for them.

The third objective was to determine whether church leaders are trained in conflict resolution. Fisher and Ury (1981) posit that conflict can be damaging. "If you don't handle it effectively, it can quickly turn into personal dislike, teamwork can break down, and talent may be wasted as people disengage from their work and leave."

They argue that you should resolve conflicts by separating people and their emotions from the problem. Their approach also focuses on building mutual respect and understanding, and it encourages one to resolve conflict in a united, cooperative way. This, therefore, requires some training, which training is lacking among church leaders at Twashuka SDA congregation (*Ibid*).

The fourth and last objective was to assess the role of church leaders and members in conflict resolution. The functionalist theory as pointed out by Giddens (1972) explains that society has functions whose objective is to create an equilibrium. Equally, Twashuka church, as a body of Christ, has members who are supposed to contribute to the peace and unity of the congregation. Matthew 18: 15-17 clearly states what role each member of the church is supposed to play in handling conflicts in the church. It would, however, seem as if this role has been delegated to church leaders alone at Twashuka SDA church. But this not to say that leaders in the church do not play a bigger role in handling conflicts. To the contrary, even as leaders handle more serious conflicts in the church, ordinary members should deem it their role too to play their part if harmony and unity in the church is to be achieved.

5.1.3 Summary

Under this chapter, the discussion of findings started by explaining the data analysis strategy used and how the coding process was done. The next chapter will make the conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion and Recommendations

6.0 Conclusion

This study analysed the conflict resolution strategies in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, a case study of the Twashuka congregation in Lusaka.

The first objective of the study was to assess the nature of the conflict resolution strategies put in place by the Twashuka SDA congregation to resolve conflicts. Under this objective, it was clear from the respondents or interviewees and church literature that the SDA church follows the biblical principles and the church policy in resolving conflicts in the church. Matthew 18: 15-17 and other bible verses are used by the church to guide leaders on how to resolve church conflicts. There are also other documents used such as *Elder's Handbook* and the *Church Manual* that are also used by church leaders.

The second objective was to establish whether gender is considered in decision-making at Twashuka congregation. The study has found out that major decision-making positions in the church such as elders and pastors are only held by men.

This patriarchal nature of decision-making at Twashuka SDA congregation disadvantages women as their voices are not heard but instead it's the men who make most of the decisions. Women may attend Church Boards and Church Business meetings but elders would have already made their decision during Elders Board where women cannot attend and defend such decisions even if they do not favour the womenfolk.

The third objective was to determine whether church leaders are trained in conflict resolution. The study, however, has discovered that even though church elders had attended so many seminars and workshops on church administration and other areas of interest, no church elder at Twashuka SDA congregation had received formal training in conflict resolution. This is partly due to the biblical principles that the church follows and other materials such as the Church Manual, Seventh-day Adventist Believe and Elder's Handbook, among others.

It has, however, been seen that there is need for church leaders to undergo training in conflict resolution to effectively handle conflicts in the church in addition to the above. To know something and to actually apply what one knows differ because there are skills involved.

The fourth objective was to assess the role of church leaders and members in conflict resolution. This study has brought out the fact that both church leaders and members of the Twashuka SDA congregation have roles to play in conflict resolution and that this role is not only for leaders such as elders and pastors.

Matthew 18: 15-17 clearly spells out what role each one is supposed to play in resolving conflicts at Twashuka SDA congregation. The only difference is the level of conflict resolution that can be made by church members and who makes the ultimate decisions- in this case major decisions being made by church elders and pastors.

The significance of this study aims at helping Twashuka SDA congregation in enhancing its conflict resolution strategies so as to minimize conflicts that threaten the unity and cohesion of the church congregation. Although the findings may not be generalized to other SDA congregations, this does not stop anyone from using the findings in other SDA congregations or even other churches.

6.1 Recommendations

- First, the study has found out that although Twashuka SDA congregation in Lusaka uses biblical principles of resolving conflicts in the church leaders are also aided by books such as *Elder's Handbook*, *the Church Manual* and others, there is also need for leaders to undergo formal training in peace, leadership and conflict resolution to enable them acquire relevant skills.

The *SDA Church Manual* (1994:55) urges church elders to resolve congregational conflict. This, however, tends to be problematic when people do not receive training in conflict resolution. There is, though, a school of thought in the Christian circles that the Holy Spirit

can use one to do anything-in this case conflict resolution-even without receiving circular education. It is, however, the view of this researcher that there is nothing wrong with God's people to acquire circular training to supplement the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

- Second, the church is encouraged to elect youths to decision-making positions such as church elder to have youths' voices heard. Once the youth are actively involved in decision-making in the church, this will create an atmosphere where both the elderly and the youth are not suspicious of each other.

The involvement of the youth in decision-making positions creates a situation where they (youths) will gain a lot of experience from older church leaders and the older people are likely to appreciate the needs of the younger generation as opposed to paying a deaf ear to their grievances.

All the church literature reviewed by this researcher doesn't stop the youth from rising to higher positions as that of elders. So, this recommendation is not in conflict with the church policy. Even Matthew 18: 15-17, which stipulates the attributes for someone to become an elder is not discriminatory of the youth with regard to them acquiring higher positions in the church as long as they have such attributes.

- Third, during the interviews, there was concern that some deacons/deaconesses and even elders did not practice confidentiality. The church should come up with clear guidelines on how to discipline those church leaders who are fond of divulging secret information to others.
- Fourth, the election of church leaders, especially the office of elder, deacon/deaconess should be based on biblical principles. This is because some interviewees observed that some church leaders are elected into office owing to their social status such as the level of formal education one has attained, wealth, age etc. even when they do not possess leadership qualities.

- Fifth, church leaders should put in place deliberate policies that will create oneness among all church members regardless of one's status in society. This can promote love and unity in the church.

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1. What experience does the church use to elect leaders?
2. Do you receive training in peace, leadership and conflict resolution?
3. What challenges, if any, do you face in your leadership of the church?
4. How do you discipline erring members of Twachula SDA congregation?
5. What strategy have you put in place to ensure that there is no violence in the church and persuade erring members not to leave the church?
6. What is your role as deacons?
7. Do you receive reports of conflicts as deacons from members of the Twachula congregation?
8. If yes, what nature of conflicts do you resolve?
9. As deacons do you resolve conflicts brought to your attention?
10. Are you trained in counselling?

Deacons

1. What is your role as deacons?
2. Do you receive reports of conflicts as deacons from members of the Twachula congregation?
3. If yes, what nature of conflicts do you resolve?
4. Do you handle conflicts from both the pastor and members?
5. Do you resolve conflicts brought to your attention?
6. Have in you ever received member in conflict resolution?

Youth

1. Who do you want to be a youth in Twachula SDA congregation?
2. Are the youth actively involved in decision making in your church congregation?
3. Are you satisfied with the conflict resolution strategy put in place in your congregation?
4. If not, what would be your misgivings about the handling of issues in your church?

Appendix 1 : Focus group discussions and interviews guide

Elders

1. What conflict resolution strategies are used at Twashuka SDA congregation?
2. Would you say such strategies are effective?
3. What criterion does the church use to elect leaders?
4. Do you receive training in peace, leadership and conflict resolution?
5. What challenges, if any, do you face in your leadership of the church?
6. How do you discipline erring members at Twashuka SDA congregation?
7. What strategy have you put in place to ensure that there is violence in the church and to persuade aggrieved members not to leave the church?

Deacons

1. What is your role as deacons?
2. Do you receive reports of conflicts as deacons from members of the Twashuka congregation?
3. If yes, what nature of conflicts do you receive?
4. As deacons, do you resolve conflicts brought to your attention?
5. Are you trained in counselling?

Deaconesses

1. What is your role as deaconesses?
2. Do you receive reports of conflict as deaconesses from members of the Twashuka congregation?
3. If yes, what nature of conflicts do receive?
4. Do you handle conflicts from both the males and females?
5. Do you resolve conflicts brought to your attention?
6. Have in you ever received training in conflict resolution?

Youths

1. Who do you term to be a youth at Twashuka SDA congregation?
2. Are the youths actively involved in decision-making in your church congregation?
3. Are you satisfied with the conflict resolution strategy put in place in your congregation?
4. If not, what would be your misgivings about the handling of issues in your church?

Single mothers

1. What would be your comment about the conflict resolution strategy in your church congregation?
2. How do you channel your conflicts in the church?
3. What would be your comment about the manner in which your grievances are handled?
4. How free are you to register your grievances to church leaders in your congregation?
5. Are you involved in decision-making in your congregation?
6. What is your relationship with the rest of the church members?

Married women

1. What would be your understanding of the meaning of conflicts?
2. Do you experience conflicts in your congregation?
3. How are such conflicts handled?
4. Who handles conflicts in your congregation?
5. Would you say you are satisfied with the manner in which conflicts are handled in your congregation, and if not, why?
6. What role do you play in conflict resolution in your congregation?

Men

1. Would you say your church handles conflicts among church members?
2. If yes, how well do you think these conflicts are handled?
3. Do you think your church leaders are able to resolve conflicts and if not, why?
4. Have you seen some members leave the church because of unresolved conflicts?

Appendix 2: Functions of elders, deacons and deaconesses in the SDA Church

Elders

- Church organization and administration, including spiritual gifts
- Church growth
- Care of new converts
- Worship leadership
- Preaching
- Visitation
- Function and chairing of committees
- Pastor-elder partnership

Deacons

- Assistance at Services and Meetings
- Visitation of Members
- Preparation for Baptismal Services
- Assistance at the Communion Service
- Care of the Sick and the Poor
- Care and Maintenance of Church Property

Deaconesses

- Assistance at Baptisms
- Arrangements for the Communion Service
- The Care of the Sick and the Poor

Sources: *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual and Elder's Handbook*

Appendix 3: Four constituent levels in the Seventh-day Adventist organization

1. The local church, a united organized body of individual believers
2. The local conference or local field/mission, a united organized body of churches in a state, province, or territory
3. The union conference or union mission, a united body of conferences, missions, or fields within a larger territory
4. The General Conference, the largest unit of organization, embraces all unions in all parts of the world. Divisions are sections of the General Conference, with administrative responsibility assigned to them in designated geographical areas.

Source: *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*