

# UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA BEYOND 1967 INTO THE 21ST CENTURY: A CALL FOR A NEW MISSION PARADIGM

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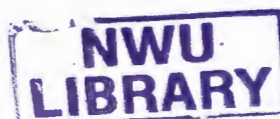
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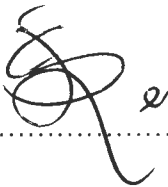
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## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been appropriately acknowledged. The thesis is in submission for a doctoral degree in Missiology at the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of the Department of Theology and Philosophy of the North West University, Mafikeng Campus, South Africa. No part of this work has ever been submitted previously for any degree or examination at any other university.

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Signed.....

Date.....

19 | 04 | 2018

## PREFACE

1. The North West University - for its financial assistance
2. The Fleurhof Congregational Church - for their support and allowing me to serve them during my studies; this congregation made me aware that mission across cultures and races is not only an academic exercise, but a missional reality
3. My family (Onalena, Gugulethu, Ayanda and Sindiso jnr.): I denied them my fatherly presence and thus robbed them of the very love they needed most. My wife, Naledi, deserves a special mention: Nale, you supported me throughout this project and at times it was difficult, but your words were and still are "...when God instructed Moses [and the Israelites] out of Egypt...He never mentioned the Red Sea...the 40 years in the desert, hunger and thirst..." Thank you, Nale. You will sing for me "...it wasn't easy...."
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## ABSTRACT

The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) was formed through the coming together of three ecclesiological traditions: The London Missionary Society (formed in 1795), the American Board for Mission (formed in 1810) and the Congregational Union of South Africa (CUSA). The London Missionary Society (LMS) worked among the Hottentots, Griqua, BaTlhaping of Kuruman and the Batswana of Bechuanaland as they moved up north to the country of Mzilikazi, where they worked among the Ndebele's. The American Board for Mission (ABM) worked among Zulus and Mozambicans, while the Congregational Union of South Africa (CUSA) worked among the Xhosa people and the Coloureds.

The evangelisation of Southern Africa was contemporary to colonisation and tribal wars. Words like savage, heathen and uncivilised were common. Mission work took a *kerugma*, voluntarism, needs-based, colonialist, Abrahamic and prophetic model approach, whereby the guiding principle was to preach the gospel and leave it to the locals to form their church polity. This ecclesiological ideology became the basis for congregationalism.

During the wars of liberation from colonialism, the mission paradigm and prophetic thrust was also to change. Coincidentally, there was a move from fellowship to solidarity, as seen during colonialism. The UCCSA was formed in 1967 and new mission models were to be adopted. These models centred on the covenant and contextualisation, some of which were found to cut across history (such as *kerugma*).

The UCCSA is quintessentially an African church, it is part of the innovative and resilient culture that is Southern Africa. The formation of The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (1967) was such a prophetic act, a dramatic demand for justice in the turbulent years of the apartheid regime and colonialism, whose founding ideology was separation of people based race, colour and creed. This unity was a radical social change that brought together people from different races, colour, creeds and ethnic groupings spanning over five countries.

As the UCCSA makes its way through the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is need for a new mission paradigm. For this new paradigm to succeed it must reflect postmodern realities. The study argues for the development of missional congregations. The success of such a paradigm revolves around the type of leadership, lay or ordained, and the leadership philosophy to which they subscribe. There is need for mission-shaped leadership, who will be able to discern the will of God and guide the church to partner with Him in saving the world.

The church needs to remain relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century socio-economic, political and religious landscape, hence the call for a new mission paradigm and the development of missional congregations within the constituencies of the UCCSA.

**Key terms**

missional, paradigm shift, mission models, margins, postmodern, *missio Dei*, contextualisation

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|        |                                                 |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------|
| ABM    | American Board for Foreign Mission              |
| CUSA   | Congregation Union of South Africa              |
| CWM    | Council of World Mission                        |
| FETSEM | Federal Theological Seminary                    |
| LMS    | London Missionary Society                       |
| WCC    | World Council of Churches                       |
| UCCSA  | United Congregational Church of Southern Africa |

## OPSOMMING

Die United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) het deur die samesmelting van drie ekklesiologiese tradisies tot stand gekom: die London Missionary Society (gestig in 1795), die American Board for Mission (gestig in 1810) en die Congregational Union of South Africa (CUSA). Die London Missionary Society (LMS) het tussen die Hottentotte, Griekwas, BaTlhaping van Kuruman en die Batswana van Betsjoeanaland gewerk, met hulle optrek na Silkaats in die noorde. Die American Board for Mission (ABM) het hulle op die Zoeloes en Mosambiekers toegespits, terwyl CUSA by die Xhosa-mense gewerk het.

Die evangelisering van Suider-Afrika was deur koloniserings en stamoorloë gekenmerk. Woorde soos barbaar, heiden en onbeskaaf was algemeen. Missionale werk het 'n *kerugma*-, voluntaristiese, behoeftegebaseerde, koloniserende, Abrahamiese en profetiese modelbenadering aangeneem, volgens die beginsel om die evangelie te verkondig en dit dan aan die plaaslike bevolking oor te laat om hulle kerkregeringsvorm te bepaal. Hierdie ekklesiologiese ideologie sou die basis vir kongregasionalisme word.

Gedurende die vryheidsoorloë van kolonialisme het die sendingsparadigma en profetiese inslag ook verander. Tegelykertyd was daar 'n skuif van gemeenskap na solidariteit, soos gedurende kolonialisme gesien. Die UCCSA is in 1967 gestig en nuwe sendingsmodelle is inwerkinggestel. Hierdie modelle het op die verbond en kontekstualisering gesentreer, met die besef dat sommige geskiedenis deurkruis (soos *kerugma*).

Die UCCSA se pad deur die 21ste eeu vereis 'n nuwe missionale paradigma en hierdie nuwe benadering sal net slaag as dit postmoderne realiteite voor oë hou. Die studie beveel die ontwikkeling van missionale gemeentes aan wat se sukses afhanklik van die soort leierskap is, leke of bevestig, en die leierskapsfilosofie wat nagestreef word. Daar is gebrek aan leierskap van 'n missionale aard wat God se wil sal kan bepaal en sy kerk daartoe kan lei, om in die redding van die wêreld te deel.

Hierdie studie hou dus voor dat die gemeenskap van gelowiges nie deur sosio-ekonomiese en politiese ontwikkeling onaangeraak kan bly nie. Die kerk moet tred met die 21ste eeu se sosio-ekonomiese, politiese en godsdienstige landskap hou en daarom die oproep vir 'n nuwe paradigma en ontwikkeling van missionale gemeentes, binne die raamwerk van die UCCSA, opneem.

### Sleutel terme

missionale, paradigmaskuif, sendings/missionale modelle, grense, postmodern, *missio Dei*, kontekstualisering

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# CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

As the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) participates in the mission of God in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, also referred to as post-modernity, it faces a number of challenges. The postmodern period is characterised by life that is “fluid and flexible, pluriform and contingent, fast and ephemeral” (Schweitzer, 2004:4).

Life is thus planned on a short-term basis. This calls on the church to be relevant to the times, as it attends to “a time of many stories and also of many different voices - the voices of different age groups, of the women and men, of different ethnicities” (Schweitzer, 2004:5).

The church (UCCSA) is struggling with the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and as a result it is losing many of its young people to charismatic churches<sup>1</sup>. It would seem that either the church is not providing the youth with a platform to tell their stories (naming God within their experience) or the church is failing to develop a theology that is relevant and speaks to their circumstances. Fundamental though, is how the times have signalled a shift from the master’s story and created an opportunity for the previously oppressed and silenced, by the political and ecclesiastic polity, to voice their stories: the youth, the women and minorities - ethnic and racial groups. The urgent question would be and is: “What kind of ecclesiastic, theological and missiological paradigm must the church have to remain relevant when the dominant and uncontested voice loses spiritual appeal?” How can the church respond to this post-modern environment and retain as well as equip their members through Sunday worship that they may transform society? Understanding the church requires looking at its history and finding its roots. Only then a mission paradigm can be developed to answer the challenges and still be relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In 1967 the Congregational Union of South Africa (1877), London Missionary Society (1795) and Bantu Congregational Church of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1810) came together to form the UCCSA. Addressing the assembly of 1967 in Durban that marked the formation the chairman, Rev. J.K. Main<sup>2</sup>, cited in Wing (1986:23), said: “The test of us coming together lies in the purpose for which we are united, to be more effective witnesses in the world in which God sets us, in the age which God has called us”.

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<sup>1</sup> They are also referred to as Pentecostal churches.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. J. Kenneth Main was the first chairman of the UCCSA. He belonged to the former LMS and was ministering with the Botswana Synod. He opened stations in Tonota and Maun and worked in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), for fifteen years as the LMS Board Representative for Southern Africa and later as the chairman of the UCCSA (Briggs & Wing, 1970:188).

This extract emphasised the aspect of togetherness, but failed to adequately address the purpose of coming together and resulted in the formation of covenant models in the UCCSA to bridge the gap. The model defined the church, the sacrament and governance in terms of the covenant and created coherence. This led to the church predominantly focusing on the issues that should keep it together, rather than on what they can do together: inward rather than outward looking. This concern was evident in 1995 when the church declared its intention to move away from maintenance to mission. Two documents were produced to address that deficit:

1. *Reshaping the church for mission* (produced by the UCCSA commission for evangelism in 1995, as mandated by the 1994 UCCSA Assembly), with the understanding that “God is at work in Southern Africa and that the challenge of the church is to restore all people to the unity in God and Christ and that the church in its mission embark on a full scale Re-evangelism” (UCCSA, 1995:ii).
2. The church realised that nothing had changed and that it was still concerned with its well-being, rather than the mission to which it is called. Another document was produced by the Mission Council Committee (1996), titled *Tell me the old story: A mission plan for the local church*. The document is anchored on five pillars: tell (proclaiming), teach (teaching and nurturing), tend (loving service), transform (transforming service) and treasure (caring for creation). It is also guided by the theme *In Christ there is a future*. The objective of the document was to challenge the UCCSA to locate mission in the local church, as “the Congregationalists believe that the local church is the primary place where mission is practiced...(and) it must be at the frontline of mission practice”, while looking inside and outside itself (UCCSA, 1996:i).

The UCCSA claims ancestry<sup>3</sup> from the LMS, established in 1795 (Lovetta, 1899; cf. Haile, 1951; Du Plessis, 1965). The formation of the LMS was crafted around three models, out of many, viz.: ecumenism, voluntarism and *kerugma*. Ecumenism has continued to define the ecclesiology of the UCCSA in its formation (1967) in its current status, as Haile (1951:1) explains:

“As the union of Christians of various denominations in carrying on this great work is a most desirable object, so, to prevent if possible any cause of dissention...that our design is not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopalians or any other form of church order and government...but the Glorious Gospel of the Blessed God to the Heathen.”

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<sup>3</sup> There is need to look at the Congregational Union of South Africa and the American Board of Mission as the contributing churches to the UCCSA as it is now. The emphasis will be on LMS, referring to the rest where relevant, because LMS is the main branch.

It was opted to run parallel to the Episcopal, Presbyterian and Anglican institutionalised churches. This approach was a consequence of a perception of the church having no room for mission in its programmes and teachings.

The discussion on the two models in the formative years of the LMS, *kerugma* and voluntarism, was based on Matthew 28 (the *Great Commission*). The LMS saw the church as only concerned with the doctrines that serve to defend its identity and not with its participation in the mission, in accordance with the Great Commission. *Kerugma*, by definition, speaks to preaching and proclaiming the good news (Luke 4:18-32; cf. Isaiah 61:1). The good news is good as it is experienced within a group's particular context and it remains God's intention for redemption of the whole universe. It denies the notion that the mission agent knows what good news is for the intended gospel recipients, thus avoiding mission imports.

It can be acknowledged that the LMS' definition of the making of disciples did not include the native population, but the countries and nations outside of Europe (and, more specifically, Britain) labelled "heathen". Be that as it may, there was a belief that God can partner with heathens and that "God may call into fellowship of His Son from among them to assume for themselves such form of Church Government as to them shall appear most agreeable to the Word of God" (Haile, 1951:1).

The people of God were thus not defined in terms of denomination, but by fellowship with Him and His Son (Briggs, 1996:115).

The world the LMS was sent to (1799) and the world that provided the formation of the UCCSA (1967) has today changed politically and socially, though it has remained geographically the same. This means that the Great Commission needs to be re-appropriated for a new missiological context. It cannot be argued with any certainty whether the missionaries knew the world to which God was sending them. The Great Commission works to dispute the assumption that "where the missionaries are sent there are no disciples", i.e. that disciples are those who worship God and believe the teaching of Jesus as the teacher "Rabbi". People of other religions are still considered as potential disciples; hence the missionary is sent to make disciples among them. This means one thing for the church: the harvest is larger than ever (Greenway, 1999:3).

During the LMS period and the years that led to the birth of UCCSA (1799-1967) many were "un-churched"<sup>4</sup>, meaning the heathens of the dark and uncivilised continents. Now in the 21<sup>st</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>The selection of the word "un-churched" takes into consideration that believing in God has to be defined within the limits of ecclesiological theology.

century many are “de-churched”<sup>5</sup>, failing to find any reason to join the church and the church possibly unable to speak good news to their new sufferings. The people have left the church (UCCSA) and or other mainline churches, because of either secularisation or simply switching to Pentecostal churches or African Initiated Churches (AIC). The UCCSA is aware of this “de-churched” section of its community, evident from its launch of the programme *Re-shaping the church for mission* (1986). It saw a great deal of talk about “re-evangelising” that was defined to imply the transformation, empowerment and development of the community of believers into active proclamation of the Word (Petersen, 1986:ii).

During the formative years of LMS, the definition of Africa as the uncivilised, dark and heathen continent was based on information gathered by explorers and slave merchants. This conclusion may have been true from their perspective, but not according to the religious beliefs and order of the Africans. The information gathered would, however, have given the commercial explorers, the merchants and the imperialists a certain impression of the mission field (Africa). The question would be: Was that information sufficient or relevant to the missionary strategies and execution of the mission models developed? It could well have influenced their perception of the mission field as being uncivilised and unsaved. This would imply that there were more reasons for the enlightened Western missionaries to deem the mission field in this light.

The information shared by the explorers and the merchants led the missionaries to perceive the mission field (Africa) as dark and uncivilised and the inhabitants as destined for hell. However, there is no indication that the inhabitants of the “Dark Continent” ever requested to be saved from the situation. Years later, it could still make sense for the UCCSA to develop mission programmes that reflect the situation on the ground and thereby avoid the attitude of “we know what is good for you” and shift to the Macedonian model: “Come over to Macedonia to help or minister with or to us” (Acts 16:9). Mission is thus initiated and intended to address the issues of community as the mission context. Obvious as it may sound and look, this supports the Macedonian Model, a local initiated mission, where the experienced life of the community informs the mission agenda.

It could be argued that within the context of the UCCSA, what Bosch (1991:349-518) presents as the emerging paradigm of ecumenism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, should be seen in the UCCSA as the re-appropriation of ecumenism or the placing of ecumenism into new perspectives given that when the LMS, the parent association of the UCCSA, was formed its composition was

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<sup>5</sup> This is one the phenomena that this study believes defines the stagnant church or institution. It is based on the belief that some people who were once members of the church may leave the church either to join another church or no longer attend any church.

ecumenical in nature and belief, as can be argued from their fundamental principles (Haile, 1951:1, cf. Du Plessis, 1965:99). Bosch's (1991:368) assertion that ecumenism is the move towards relevant missiology is of particular interest. Ecumenism must be understood as a community, not fragmented Christendom. This was the concept that formed the ecumenical movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Vidler, 1971:84). The call for the 21<sup>st</sup> century paradigm<sup>6</sup> must be led by the theme that speaks to what can be accomplished collectively and moves away from a covenant based on fellowship to a covenant based on solidarity, which will also lead to the re-appropriation of ecumenism modelled on the covenant with God.

Significant for this period (21<sup>st</sup> century) is the emphasis on the community as the context for mission. Firstly, the concept of "community" must be clearly defined. It cannot become an "aerosol word" and carelessly sprayed around, but must always imply a common bond and identity. There is a sense that this definition of community could well present a kind of dilemma. As McCoy (2001:2) explains, there are as many communities as the bonds and identities that can be identified. There is academic community; political community; racial and tribal communities; faith community; business community and, one may say, the protestant community. It is out of these communities that ecumenism is born and nurtured. This reinforces the call for contextualisation, as the preferred approach for the UCCSA, since each synod should be deemed a community in its own right, with its own joys and challenges, without losing the sense of being a family within the bigger UCCSA family.

The synods must realise that the spreading of the gospel and politics seem to go together, as both parallel and opposing forces and at times as complementing forces. They must see and interpret this in their context. Their complementing each other relates to the idea of establishing a state church whereby "it was difficult to differentiate between political, cultural, and religious elements and activities, since they all merged into one" (Bosch, 1991:275).

The rise of the home government in the colony of the mission society's operation would see the prosperity of the mission work. For example, the Portuguese Jesuits worked in the Monomotapa kingdom under the leadership of Gonzalos da Silvera in 1561. When the Portuguese power collapsed in 1667, the church they had planted disappeared (Rees, 2009:4; cf. Gundani, 2005). Another example relevant to the arrival and the success of the LMS is it historically coincides with Britain's colonisation of the Cape Colony in 1794. Their arrival and the route they took followed the colonial expansion of the British Empire. The state church was

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<sup>6</sup> The study enters into the discourse with an understanding of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the period of 2001 AD and beyond. At this stage all the UCCSA home countries were politically independent from the colonial rulers.

challenged by the Enlightenment paradigm that also contributed to the birth of a number of missionary societies, of which the LMS was one.

The above contention can also be seen as a contributing factor in the birth and the formulation of the UCCSA theology, which had its locus as the covenant. The UCCSA came to prominence during the rise of nationalism, anchored by the principle that “sovereignty resides essentially in the Nation: no body of men, no individual, can exercise authority that does not emanate expressly from it” (Bosch, 1991:299).

The call for political liberation necessitated the church to amend its theology in the public arena and in the pulpit. The church was to side with its struggling members and the community in which it found itself.

It would be academically naïve to assume that this was coincidental. The argument it is out of the intertwining that the royal first gospel approach finds support, i.e. when you preach to the royal family the subjects will follow. It is based on the assumption that the king will be the agent of gospel outreach. This is demonstrated in how the LMS moved among the BaTlaping of Kuruman; the Inkosi Tshashi in the Eastern Cape; the Xhosa people; Mzilikazi, the Ndebele King; and Kgosi Khama of Batswana. Mission work succeeded where it was accommodated by the political leadership or the royal household (Briggs & Wing, 1970:163; cf. Kalu, 2005:32).

Therefore, moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century the church (UCCSA) must be able to respond appropriately with relevant mission models. Such models can be sought through the contextualisation approach, as this research seeks to advocate for a relevant mission paradigm. The new paradigm must be made up of the experiences of the people who are part of the story, who care for the creation, who are a blessing to other nations, who are guided by way of the gospel of Christ, who are redeemed for redemptive living and to attract others as they are the ambassadors of the mission of God (Wright, 2010:35-128).

The call for a new paradigm for missionary work in the UCCSA, within the framework of contextualisation, must acknowledge the various cultural-geographical contexts within the UCCSA as represented by five synods in five countries (Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe - even in those synods there are various cultural expressions). In doing so, the new mission paradigm must take oral theology as cultural expression seriously:

“It is the theology (oral theology) of masses; it is produced in the open fields, in the home and the family, in the factories, in the bus, in the school compound, at the committee meetings, in church buildings or under the tree where Christians may hold services and meetings” (Mbiti, 1965:133).

The new mission paradigm must not be detached from people's experiences as formative factors of its theology. Such experiences are prominent at funerals when villagers preach to each other without the minister, when village men sit around the *kgotla/enkundleni/edale* fire and speak of the triumphs and calamities of the community.

The greatest challenge the church faces in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that of relevance. The church used to be the champion for human rights issues, education and health, but these are now also addressed by secular organisations. The general contention may be true, but still the activities of the church are at the centre of the creativity of God. The mission of the church (*missio ecclesiae*) is thus defined as the life and work of Jesus Christ. The church must avoid the trap of becoming just another social movement, but maintain that it is called to be in solidarity with the bruised and the dehumanised children of God (Jele, 2014; cf. Mzilethi, 1999).

The church exists for others as Christ existed for the church. This calls on the church to develop and re-appropriate a new paradigm that is influenced by the transformative theology that seeks to advocate for social, economic and ecological justice. The church cannot be an observer, but must be an active participant in the social context in which it ministers. This calls for a well thought out theological position that is consistent with the mission paradigm of the period. It must always be prepared to proclaim justice, peace and righteousness. In so doing, the church continues to be a witness of Christian teaching and values (Bonhoeffer, 1974:127).

The call for a new mission paradigm in the church (UCCSA) acknowledges the change in mission theological dynamics. There is a robust engagement with the social-cultural context in the Christian community. It could also be argued that the church can be *re-visioned* and re-imaged through the provocative and prophetic voices (Phiri & Werner, 2013:i), with the intention of advocating for missional church.

The church is called to participate in the integral part of the mission of God (*missio Dei*) in the everyday life of people. Mission is not just a church's activity of sharing in the mission of God, but a frontier of beliefs, conviction and commitments as the church proclaims the gospel of God to another culture and to itself. The whole world is then theologically considered as the mission land, as far as the salvation of God is concerned, and this makes the issues of culture in the communication of the gospel paramount. Matters of culture affect every aspect of mission with the understanding that the gospel message is culturally mediated. Though the gospel is trans-cultural, it is expressed in terms of a particular culture or to be more precise, at the time of the Western missionaries it was as if the culture of the communicator (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:7) took precedence. This is apparent from the street liturgy, as expressed at funerals and weddings, where a mixture of churches in the area cooperates in an expression of the religiosity of the community.

This is how UCCSA sees the current 21<sup>st</sup> century as a challenge to its mission and positions itself to respond and develop mission paradigms to that effect.

## **1.2 LOCATING THE STUDY WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE 21ST CENTURY**

The ancestor society of the UCCSA, the LMS, came into being in 1795 and four of its missionaries (Johannes Theodorus van der Kemp, Johannes Jacobus Kicherer, John Edmond and William Edwards) arrived in the Cape Colony in 1799. This marked the beginning of the LMS missionary work in Africa. During this period the mission models of society were clear. The LMS modelled their mission on voluntarism and preaching (*kerugma*), both focused on winning souls for Christ on the Dark Continent (Du Plessis, 1965; Haile, 1951). The theological point of departure was the Great Commission, because: firstly, the UCCSA still believes that the Great Commission is pivotal to its ecclesiology and provides confidence in it through Christ's presence (Briggs, 1996:1); secondly, it lays the foundation for organic discipleship, established to produce or bear fruit (cf. John 15:1-16); and thirdly, as way of locating this study in the context of a missional congregation, it is argued that the Great Commission aids in interpreting the grace of God outside the Jewish geographical world and traditions. The fundamental element of the Great Commission is, as Matthew 28:19-20 puts it, to "go and make disciples of all nations...and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you".

This interpretation of this text has and will lead to cultural imperialism and superiority, as evident in the LMS' view of African tradition as heathen (Bosch, 1991:67; cf. Haile, 1951). This needs to be missiologically challenged or modified that it may speak to the current "whole earth" understanding, as Bosch defines his concept of the earth by saying that the "whole earth will include the world you are in not the one out there in 'Samaria'" (Bosch, 1991:57). According to this perception, the earth must not be externalised as it creates a far-away country mission mandate and leaves the one where the community of faith is. The Great Commission transcends geographical limitations and goes beyond the church's spheres of influences to witness the grace, mercy and love of God (Erickson, 1998:1063).

The UCCSA found it crucial, at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to determine how to keep a racially, economically and politically divided church together as can be seen in the preferred outcomes of the covenant ecclesiological model.

The launch of the covenant model was accompanied by the following statement:

"Nearly thirty years ago there was a quiet revolution in Southern African church circles, so quiet that hardly anyone realized what was taking place, least of all those caught up in it. Three bodies with the congregational roots came together in Durban to form the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa. Not a union or even a federation of the local

churches, but a church, with a conciliar structure, and a covenant as its founding principle. For the Congregationalist this was a new kind of polity, whose implications many of our people have yet to realize and understand. But it is imperative that they do so" (Briggs, 1996:x).

Though Briggs (1996) does not define the concept of "quiet revolution", he provides the covenant as basis for the model of the churches merging to form the UCCSA.

The proponents of the models seem to be arguing for covenant as model of governance and keeping the church united rather than for mission, as stated in Briggs (1996:13): "It is the covenant bond which unites us and keeps us one in Christ, no matter what earthly or human differences might threaten to divide us."

Evidently the interest was to keep the church together, regrettably by means of an inward-looking model the centre could not hold any more. It was the same covenant that gave rise to an undertaking to keep this coming together from being based on human desires or those of the uniting bodies, but "the covenant to worship, work, and witness together in the fellowship of this church" (Briggs, 1996:25).

In locating the investigation into a new paradigm, it is paramount to the research and the mission of the church to look at the socio-political changes as well as the global context of the church and its realities. These are addressed in terms of church history and formation, aiding this study to offer a pragmatic argument toward a new paradigm for the UCCSA in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **1.2.1 THE MARGINS HAVE COME TO THE CENTRE**

When the UCCSA was formed in 1967, there was a great deal of discrimination along racial and economic lines. The poor and races outside that of the ruling regimes could not be seen in the city centre, but on the periphery of life. The world was divided and even the resultant theology was reactionary. Theological talk, liberation theology, black theology, women and feminist theology served to replace the system not to transform it.

Once the margin or the marginalised has come to the centre, the theology has to change and follow suit. Those who were on the margins (the beggars, the oppressed, the naked) are now found on the streets of the city centre from which they were once prohibited. The whole world can thus witness the suffering of the people. The question is: What mission paradigm will promote the mission of the UCCSA as it faces current realities? How can it assist the poor to find a place in mainstream 21<sup>st</sup> century life?

### **1.2.2 MISSION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EMPIRE**

The study, as situated within the 21<sup>st</sup> century, must be seen in relation to the activities of the Empire. The Council of World Mission (CWM) defines the Empire as follows:

“We speak of the empire, because we discern a coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power in our world today, that constitutes a reality and a spirit of lordless domination, created by human kind yet enslaving simultaneously; an all-encompassing global reality serving, protecting and defending the interests of the powerful corporations, nations, elites and privileged people, while imperiously excluding even sacrificing humanity and exploiting creation; a pervasive spirit of destructive self-interest, even greed the worship of money, goods and possessions; the gospel consumerism, proclaimed through powerful propaganda and religiously justified, believed and followed; the colonisation of consciousness, values and notions of human life by the imperial logic; a spirit of lacking in compassionate justice and showing contemptuous disregard for the gift of creation and household of life” (CWM, 2010:4).

The fundamental question that defines the new intended paradigm, as stated by Coetsee and Grobbelaar (2013:814), centres on how the UCCSA responds to the context of the Empire defined by economic injustice, social fibre breakdown, corruption and political intolerance; as Jesus responded to the Empire of his time, and discern how the Empire of this day manifests itself within the relevant geographical space. These concerns dictate the direction and tone of the discourse of this study.

### **1.2.3 DOING MISSION IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE**

The LMS was formed (1795) in a world divided between the enlightened and the unenlightened, in which only Western missionaries were thought to know the world of the Africans and not the other way around. Technology has made the world a small place (global village), people now know other worlds and are able to draw comparisons. Students and people studying and working abroad share and adopt other cultures and belief systems. The understanding of concepts such as human rights, democracy, love of God and grace are defined in relation to other world citizens. Church members now compare the message from the pulpit during Sunday services with the sermons heard and watched on radio and television. In this context, the role and the power of the media cannot be disregarded in the development of a new paradigm.

The critical question that Baker (2009:21) raises and deemed relevant is: “What does God have to say about Globalisation...(and) does it have purpose in his overarching plan for humanity?.” The search for answers to this question challenges the church to determine God’s plan for

humanity in the context of globalisation and join Him. Such a critical attempt to engage globalisation, Escobar (2003:56) argues, is about “how Christian mission is going to take in this new world; should the Christian mission simply ride the crest of globalisation”. It is contended that the Christian mission has to be critical in the call for and adoption of a mission paradigm.

Thus the critical question to be answered is how the call for a new paradigm will respond to this historical epoch, as the church (UCCSA) tackles realities of life and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century within her ministerial constituencies?

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is dominated by issues of economic injustice; political and religious intolerance and extremism; climate change and environmental injustices. Mainline churches, including the UCCSA, seem to have lost touch with this reality as expressed in the minutes of their meetings and agenda. The church must be relevant in and to the community in which it works and lives. The expectation is that the church must respond to the context of common consumerism and social media, which has supplanted fellowship, parenting and education of the community. The questions that arise are: What kind of mission paradigm(s) can be adopted by the church to respond to the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> UCCSA context? How can such mission thinking or paradigm respond to the new context and will it be enough and viable in its response and sustainable as the guiding principle of doing mission work, partaking in the *missio Dei*, and giving hope to the people of this age?

It poses the challenge of formulating a paradigm that will heed the different voices from the previously suppressed and suppressor (Schweitzer, 2004:4). Such a paradigm must deal with a church that has become heavy at the top and weak at its base. This can be addressed by developing the underrated laity, who have been reduced to spectators in the mission of God and consumers<sup>7</sup> of the gospel – producing nothing, only to pray and obey (Kritzinger, 2007:15).

### **1.4 THE RESEARCH QUESTION**

The focal issue of investigation is engaging the issues towards a relevant mission paradigm in the UCCSA, as it endeavours to remain relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century paradigm. Achieving this aim raises the following questions that also provide the research structure:

1. What is the understanding of the mission in the pre-1937 period?

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<sup>7</sup> The concept related to the consumer of the gospel means that members must realise that they have a role to play in the *missio Dei*, as agents of mission in their churches and community, and cannot merely be the recipients of the preached Word.

2. What influence did the different ecclesiastical traditions brought to the definition of the church during the formation of the UCCSA, and the understanding of mission and its models?
3. (a) What are the issues that have created or influenced a call for a mission paradigm shift? (b) what is the new understanding?
4. How can the new understanding be foreseen to assist the church in the participation in mission of God?
5. What are the commendations and recommendations for the UCCSA in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
6. To what extent can the proposed paradigm be developed?
7. To what extent can the role of leadership style assist and impact negatively or positively on the development and efficacy of the formulated mission paradigm.

## **1.5 AIMS**

The aim is to do a missiological research of the UCCSA mission and work within the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the intention of proposing a new mission paradigm that will assist the church to be relevant and transform the community. In so doing, the following objectives are explored.

## **1.6 OBJECTIVES**

1. To investigate the LMS's understanding of mission pre-1967 as the main partner of the three (CUSA and ABM)
2. To evaluate the mission and theological influence of the churches that merged to form the UCCSA
3. To examine the paradigm, shift trends in the UCCSA
4. To offer a missiological reflection on the socio-political context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century paradigm
5. To investigate the current mission understanding of the church, with the intention of developing a new paradigm for the UCCSA in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that will enable the church to participate in the *missio Dei* within its time and place
6. To analyse the role of the current and required leadership philosophy that will facilitate and sustain the new mission paradigm

## 1.7 THE HYPOTHESIS

The UCCSA traces its history back to the formation of the LMS (1795) with its subsequent arrival in the Cape Colony (1799). When the LMS moved up north, the churches formed themselves into Congregational Union of South Africa (CUSA) in 1877. The LMS issued an invitation to the American Board of Foreign Mission (ABM), which was formed in 1810, to join it in the Africa mission field in 1835.

It can be hypothetical stated that the history of UCCSA, as traced through her ecclesiastic ancestors, is encumbered by the fight for human rights and the downtrodden. Its mission history speaks of a church that responds to the social realities of the time and has defined its mission throughout. The call for a new paradigm is therefore not far-fetched, but within the DNA of the church. It has been a church that believes in ecumenical approach to mission, making partnership paramount.

The central theoretical argument, therefore, is that the UCCSA should develop a mission paradigm in keeping with the 21<sup>st</sup> century (culture and mission; public theology; justice, peace, global village, ecology and environmental science) and Empire, that will enable the church to participate in the *missio Dei* with more efficacy and relevance.

## 1.8 THE RESEARCH GAP: FOCUS OF THE STUDY

Through the reading of the church literature, both grey and bibliographic, which is predominately narrative, e.g. Loretta (1899), Haile (1951), Du Plessis (1965) and Briggs 1970, and how they portray the sequence of paradigm shifts, the intention is to argue for the most suitable mission paradigm for the UCCSA to participate in the *missio Dei* in the post-modern paradigm (21<sup>st</sup> century paradigm). It advocates the crucial need for a new perception of mission, as the means to participate in the *missio Dei*. It is also crucial to investigate how such a mission paradigm will assist the church with social transformation, the defining argument of the *missio Dei*. It furthermore seeks to determine how such a paradigm can employ community engagement tools, as means to partner with local churches in the *missio Dei*.

Consulting the minutes of the church (assembly 1961 and 1965) as well as the work of Lovetta (1899), Haile (1995:1), Du Plessis (1965) and Briggs and Wings (1970) make it clear that all approaches to the mission activities of the church are from a historical perspective. Even documents written upon request of the church and through individual initiative say little about the mission of the church and the models adopted. Such a mission paradigm must, however, be consistent in terms of the questions: Does the mission paradigm give attention to the influence and relevance of the church in the community? and what is the value that the church adds to the community? This does not in any way suggest that the church has never had an

impact on the community, especially in education, health and the struggle for liberation (Mzilethi, 1999:64). Most of the literature deals with the history of the church and its doctrines. Even the covenant model is designed and interpreted for governance, rather than for the mission of the church.

The intention is also to exploit the shortcoming and to re-vision or re-appropriate the understanding of and model for mission in the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century paradigm. Missional congregations as mission model for the church (UCCSA) are based on the *diapaxis* (dialogue in action) emphasis in this particular context. Theological reflection alone cannot bring about transformation. There is a need for the sharing of life, responding together and focusing on what matters most in that particular context to bring about and create a humane society (Kaunda, 2013:562; cf. WCC, 2013). The contention is that it is important to not only write history, but to criticise and evaluate it and to develop a new paradigm building on the old.

The research gap does not always intend to expose the failures of the previous models, but instead acknowledges that over the years the mission world changes and new missional challenges arise as well as how new mission concepts can be developed. It would be in interest of this study to investigate how the new mission paradigm will respond and address the mission shortcoming, as the church faces the new challenges.

Where politicians speak of lack of democracy, the UCCSA should be speaking of the death of Congregationalism as it moves towards 21<sup>st</sup> century mission praxis. The church now has a powerful church council, regional councils, synodical committee and assembly executive. The minutes would, for example, read “the decision was taken in the assembly executive, or regional council, or church council”. The paradigm (mission perception within the UCCSA) seeks to ascertain how the total participation of the local people can be achieved. The desired church activities and focus are shaped by mission and find their mandate in the mission of God. It is the sending community, i.e. Trinity, which sends the community of faith or missional congregation and this seems to be the shortcoming that existent literature on the subject does not address adequately.

## 1.9 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

The following concepts will be defined as part of the research:

**Church:** the term can be used interchangeable to refer to the building and the people (Christian) that belong to a certain denomination. This interchangeable may be as result of the little attention given to the doctrine of the church suggesting that the doctrine has yet to pass its pre-theological phase as compared to Christology and the doctrine of Trinity (Erickson 1998:1037).

However, in this study, it will be used to refer to the people of God (cf, Acts 19:32, 39 and 41). And precisely, will refer to the local church as compared to the universal church. It is used to refer to those who have been called to assembly, and the denomination is the institution of the called to assembly (Kālu 2005:9)

The study will use it in this sense, where reference is made to the universal church it would be stated.

**Contextualisation:** It is the process of examining the gospel in the light of the receptor's world view, the adapting of the message and encoding it in such way that it has meaning to the receptor (Hesselgrave, 1992:C45-46). The communication of the gospel must be appropriate to the local culture and society (The Lausanne Committee, 1992:C192).

**Covenant:** The reading of Exodus 19:5 and Jeremiah 31:31-4, gives the understanding that the covenant is authored and dictated by God. He chooses his people and promise to protect them. The term covenant, can be used etymological where it refers to coming together

According to von Rad (1975), the term covenant may designate the agreement itself, as the relationship of communion between parties. The biblical usage suggest that the parties are of an unequal status. In this case the relationship is impose by the superior.

However, as it was used in the coming together of the London Missionary Society (LMS), Congregational Union of South Africa (CUSA) and American Board for Foreign Mission (ABM), there is no indication of superior party. Their understanding seems to be drawing Genesis 26:30, 31:54, which can be used to mean eating together or sharing. Also the term covenant as drawn from the socio-political context, concurs with the Genesis understanding. The study will use the term, either theological or ecclesiological, as referring to the coming together of the LMS, CUSA and ABM which that coming together was later an organic merger.

**Culture:** Many a mission scholar has endeavoured to define culture (Kwast, 1992:C4-5; Hiebert, 1992:C9-10; Hesselgrave, 1992:C43; The Lausanne Committee, 1992:C164). They define culture in terms of values, integrated systems of beliefs and customs giving the community identity, dignity and continuity. This research employs it comprehensively, rather than segmental (Van der Walt, 2001:48; 2008:93). In other words, it does not use one element as descriptive of a certain culture but the values, integrated system of beliefs and customs that give a community its identity, dignity and continuity form the definition. It is furthermore, noted that culture is not acquired through formal education, but that every human being is a cultural being.

**Indigenisation:** It is presenting the gospel in such a way that it is consistent with the principles and assumptions of the indigenous culture, while at the same time being authentic to Biblical tenets (Hiebert, 1992:C21). It leads to the impression that the gospel is presented and allowed to change the culture from inside to Biblical foundations. It is all about the gospel changing the culture from within and not adding anything.

**Missio Dei:** *Missio Dei* refers to the activities of God in saving the world, in which the church is privileged to participate (Bosch, 1991:389-392). No agent or human can be said to be the initiator of mission; the mission belongs to God and the church exists because there is mission. The concept of the *missio Dei* attests to the fact that the living God is the missionary God and the nature of the *missio Dei* is expressed in Genesis 12:3-18, where God's plan to bless the whole earth is revealed. He is a God who promises and fulfils. The study elaborates on the theme through a discourse on how the missional congregation participates in the *missio Dei*.

**The synod and the assembly:** These are structural bodies in the organogram of the UCCSA church. The UCCSA constitution defines the synod as a court of the assembly. The assembly determines and defines the bounds of the synod from time to time. The synod administers and has general oversight of the regional councils within its set parameters. In exceptional circumstances where the powers of a synod are required in a particular area, but the creation of two regional councils is not practical, the assembly may at its discretion constitute a synod that shall have the authority of a synod and a regional council. Its members are appointed by the local churches, within its bounds, on the basis provided for a regional council (UCCSA Constitution, 2009:8).

The UCCSA constitution defines the assembly as the governing body of the church and its highest court. It meets as it acts in the issues, referred to it by local churches and synods, from time to time (UCCSA Constitution, 2009:13). The word synod refers to the structure of the UCCSA in a particular country as well as how it relates to the assembly and also refers to the Head quarters as the central office.

**Organic:** This term is included in reference to the discourse on organic leadership and church. It is to grow and develop in a manner of a living organism (Bevins, 2009:10). The language that advances organic concept draws from, for example, Jesus' description of his relationship with his disciples and their dependence on his mission in organic language: "I am the vine and you are the branches" (John 15:4-5), thus indicating that no one can bear fruit without the tree. Even Paul describes the church organically when he calls it the body of Christ. The formation of organic language starts with the gospel and will also influence the natural growth of the missional congregation (mission-focused churches).

**Paradigm shift:** It is argued that the concept of paradigm shift maintains that “science does not really grow cumulatively (as if more knowledge and research bring us ever closer to final solution of problems), but rather a way of revolution” (Bosch, 1991:184). No group or individual can create a new paradigm; it grows and ripens within the context of an extraordinary network of diverse social and scientific factors. As the new paradigm emerges the older and problem-ridden paradigm fades away (Bosch, 1991:184). Vasquez (2000:2) sees “paradigm shifts” as “distinctions the scholars...make to show deep changes in understanding, perceptions, values, and attitudes of groups and societies. Their description of what has come about, not prescription of what we want to happen.”

The investigation is located within the 21<sup>st</sup> century paradigm where even in ecumenism, there is a shift from fellowship to solidarity. Paradigm shift also raises the awareness that the scientific, social economical and religious worlds are not static and as they change, not cumulatively, mission paradigms shift too.

## **1.10 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW**

The purpose of this section is to provide the study with the means to answer the question “where things are at the moment”, i.e. locating the “it” within the domain of research activities in the subject missional church (Porter, 2006:153).

Many scholars have made considerable investigation into and offered analysis on the subject of a new paradigm within and outside the UCCSA. The intention is to conduct a missiological analysis in terms of the history of the church, the mission work of the UCCSA, with the aim of proposing a new mission paradigm for the UCCSA. The starting point would lie in the church’s history, by means of a survey of literature on the subject both as a list and as a facilitator to form the basis for the search for a new paradigm for the UCCSA in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Such research creates the awareness that mission paradigms shift and the possibility for another paradigm in the 21<sup>st</sup> century UCCSA, which can be advocated and its viability tested.

The researchers who have detailed the history of the LMS (1795 and the arrival in Africa in 1799) and the subsequent formation of the UCCSA in 1967 are Lovetta (1899), Haile (1851), Du Plessis (1965) and Briggs and Wing (1970). Their approach is historical, delineating the activities of the LMS and the lead-up to the formation of the UCCSA.

Other scholarship within the UCCSA and even outside the UCCSA appears to be reacting to the mission shortcomings found in the work of Western missionaries (Jele, 2014; Mzilethi, 1999; Makhuzeni, 1999). The emphasis is on the role of the local people and the subsequent advocates of the liberation theologies as the paradigm for mission that has found its expression

in the nationalist congregation and the autonomy of the UCCSA as the form of governance. It is the coming together of LMS, ABM and CUSA in 1967 that brought about the concept of covenant as the mission paradigm (Briggs, 1996; De Gruchy, 2007; De Gruchy, 1999).

It is, however, the work of Bosch (1991) and his (six) epochs in missiology that provides the foundation and direction for the search of a mission paradigm for the UCCSA. The greatest influence of Bosch's perception of the mission of Jesus Christ is that it is inclusive. The mission of Jesus is seen as accommodating the poor, the rich, the oppressed as well as the oppressor, the sinners and the saints. The mission of Jesus is deemed to destroy the boundaries that divide humanity.

The new mission paradigm must specifically take contextualisation into account, in which the culture of the recipients of the gospel is critical. The study reviews how Song (2006) and Moreau (2006) discuss the concept of contextualisation, as the model of achieving desired mission paradigm, then applies it to the UCCSA context as the focus of the investigation.

From the above literature, it can be argued that the theological knowledge of the mission of God is concerned with justice in every human society. This must provide the starting point for the activities of the UCCSA. Contextualisation must thus address issues of socio-political and economic justice and transformation at the grassroots level. It leads to the belief that contextualisation is not limited to adapting and accommodating, but that it also provides alternatives for a better life in its communication of the gospel and as such forms the backbone of the relevant church.

### **1.11 MOTIVATION AND VALUE OF THE STUDY**

This section considers the hypothetical question: "Why this study and why now?" The study investigates the mission of the UCCSA which is found in rural, peri-urban<sup>8</sup> and urban areas in five synods (Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe). It is clear that the UCCSA is witnessing to the people in an ever-changing world and such change needs to be considered in the demographical set-up of the church. The interpretation of suffering, struggle and a good life is contextual: rural, peri-urban and urban. It is influenced by the economic and political landscape of each country, hence the varying attitudes towards social realities. Ministerial practice has challenged the study to reflect on the relevance of the church to the suffering and transformation of society.

Practical experience has led to the need to question the assumed every-time and every-situation "covenant model" in search of a church that is organic, led by organic leadership

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<sup>8</sup> "Peri-urban" refers to the settlements found on the periphery or outskirts of cities or urban settlements.

through this complex and challenging mission time. Experiencing how different synods, as communities of faith in the UCCSA, interact with God in their life challenges has led to reconsideration of the mission modes and models used before the formation of the UCCSA and after. It is the life situation in Southern Africa that is encumbered by poverty, corruption and political instability that has motivated the quest for a model that will enable the church to participate in the *missio Dei* to save the world. It calls on the church to look outward, to be transformative and to build bridges with local congregations and the communities around them.

The question that needs to be answered is how a new paradigm will assist the church toward closer participation in the *missio Dei*. Such participation gives the church definition and shape; without which it cannot be called missional. When the church is missional, it shares in the *missio Dei* and transforms the community towards life in its fullness.

#### **1.11.1 THEOLOGICAL VALUE**

The concept of *missio Dei* serves as the theological point of departure. There is a shift from the traditional way of ordering church polity and the way in which the UCCSA performs its theology around the model of “the covenant”. The study, however, seeks to model the mission and the polity of the church around the community of trinity.

Trinity refers herein to a sending community that sends the community of faith, the church. In contribution to the field of missiology, the church will be defined as the communities of faith that share resources and expertise in eco-stewardship and advocacy for life-affirming churches.

#### **1.11.2 PRACTICAL VALUE**

Work in three of the five UCCSA synods has clearly shown the importance of contextualisation as mission model or as basis for developing a mission model that may be applied by the UCCSA mission committee in all five synods. The calling system (a system where the local churches employ ministers directly) in the church sees the minister moving from one synod to another, obliging the minister to work in other cultures, making the model of communication of the gospel in cross-cultural and inter-cultural contexts essential.

It thus becomes necessary to elucidate the idea of partnership, as the partnership manifested in the Holy Trinity, as the community of faith sent by the Trinity. The mission-shaped church takes context seriously, which is a shift from the central, “office-manufactured” theology and polity. Through community engagement and transformative theology, the church will be in touch with the masses and their oral theology and read the signs of the time (21<sup>st</sup> century). This would necessitate leadership who will enthusiastically advocate Congregationalism and guide

congregations beyond talk of autonomy of power towards mission focused at congregational level.

## **1.12 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In the endeavour to identify a suitable methodology, Wan's (2005:2) argument that the critical question in missiology is how to communicate the gospel to the people in their historical, cultural and socio-economical context rings true. It acknowledges that there are many and varied settings of the human race. The methodology must, therefore, take cognisance of the cross-cultural setting and different political landscapes of the UCCSA countries. It also needs to explore the different political landscapes of the five countries of the UCCSA operational synods.

Missiology as a discipline engages other disciplines as it attempts to achieve its goal of communicating the gospel to people within their social and historical settings.

According to Smith (2008:167), the methodologies selected must be considered the tool box out of which the research draws the tools fit for each task.

In this research, therefore, literature review is employed as methodology. Systematic literature mapping provides an overview of the relevant literature within and outside the UCCSA. It assists with the tracking of the development of mission trends and mega-trends through the history of the church and aids the research to identify and exploit the study gaps (Taylor, Killick & McGlade, 2015:117, cf. Osmer, 2008:4).

The grey literature is also considered, i.e. reports, minutes and conference papers. While these cannot be considered bibliographic sources, they cannot be disregarded since they form part of the original sources.

This methodology assists in answering the following fundamental questions with the aim of analysing the thinking mission history of the UCCSA and subsequent call for a new paradigm shift. They are: What were the theoretical issues leading to the formation of the UCCSA? What are the current issues and debates related to the topic under study and how are these influencing the future of the church, thus the call for a new mission paradigm?

It is not the intention of the research to give a chronological review nor to write the history, therefore the historical material only serves to demonstrate changes or to provide background to the argument, i.e. the relevant background to the policies of the UCCSA and its predecessor.

The literature relevant to the topic includes the church documents, minutes and the use of the Bible as reflective of the Reformed theological tradition.

### **1.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

Since the study employs historical analysis, predominantly in the form of a literature review, all sources are acknowledged and listed in the bibliography. In terms of references to the minutes, it is argued that this is public material accessible to all members, present or absent at such meetings, and available to all in the church library.

It is also important that I make a declaration that I am the practicing minister of the UCCSA, the church being studied.

## **CHAPTER 2 BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UCCSA AND ITS UNDERSTANDING OF MISSION**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

An investigation of the paradigm shifts in the mission of the church or any Christian institution cannot be complete without delineating the history of the church and thus the mention of the year 1967, the critical moment in history when the UCCSA church was formed. In achieving this, the chapter sets out to answer the question as to how the UCCSA was formed by the coming together of different churches (LMS, ABM and CUSA) and what these brought to the union in terms of church theology, dealing with social realities as they define the concept of mission. The chapter also looks at the process of coming together, how the church was defined. As the chapter traces the history of the mission work of the church, it delineates and discuss the possible mission models in the time leading to and upon formation: Kerugma, Abraham, need-based model, colonial model and prophetic models.

Since it is necessary for the church to be relevant in the 21st century and adopt an appropriate mission model, it is important to look at its history and thus a brief overview focusing on the relevant issues and not necessarily chronological, but directed at the mission models that preceded the merger of the UCCSA.

### **2.2 HISTORY PRE-1967**

The pre-1967 history of the UCCSA is divided into two parts for the purposes of this study, i.e. the formation of the LMS and the LMS in Africa described sequentially. The LMS as the major branch of the UCCSA is explored first, followed by the other branches.

This chapter on history creates the awareness that the history of the church is not merely about memories or intellectual interest, but the narrative of God's work among the people and with the people. Secondly, it aids the understanding of the journey for the search of the *Basileia* of God through history, showing the church where paradigms change and will continue to change now and in the future.

#### **2.2.1 LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY (1795)**

Christian historiography is a way of showing the uniqueness of the Christian perception of reality. It looks at the importance of the theological and *Christo-centric* understanding of the church and its story. The emergences of theology of political engagement, which postures the life of the church as mission to cultures and to baptise them, seem to dominate the process of challenging the old historical presentation of church history (Kalu, 2005:13). The old historical

presentation painted the picture of a dark mission field (Africa), uncivilized and inhabitant of heathens (Haile, 1951:3). This tracks from 1795 to the present day, in the church's search to develop an appropriate mission paradigm for the church to respond to current socio-political and economic realities.

The study argues that Christian history does not need to be the product of the theological institution or missionary societies to qualify for this genre. It is interested in examining the history of the people; e.g. the social structure with the intention to influence social transformation from the Christian perspective (Chronicles, 1 & 2 Kings and 1 & 2 Samuel). It also finds value in community ideas, value systems and the cultural pattern of humankind. This becomes of paramount importance to the development of a mission paradigm and interaction with current realities within the UCCSA ecclesiology (covenant and Congregationalism), to provide the church with transformative suggestions within constituencies.

The presentation of the LMS history has two approaches, i.e. institutional and missionary. It should be noted that history is not neutral and is often in the hands of the victor or those with power and control.

The *institutional approach* views the history of the church from the denominational perspective. The reconstruction of history starts from the time the society arrives in Africa (1799), setting up the mission station among the locals, with the founding principle of preaching the gospel and allowing God to call and gather his people. The LMS was to allow the local people to form their own ecclesiological order (Haile, 1951:1). The first obstacle in this historical approach is that historians will present the church as the custodian of the grace of God. This establishes the tenet of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* or *no salvation outside the church (Roman Catholic)*<sup>9</sup>, as argued by Cyprian from the Roman Catholic perspective (Bosch, 1991:218; cf. Kalu, 2005:13). It then promotes the very principle that the Society (LMS) opposed, as described in Haile (1951:1) as follows: "A fundamental principle of the Missionary Society that our design is not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy, or any other Church Order and government."

The other possible challenge of this historical approach is that it promotes denominationalism and thus plays down the role of other denominations in its success, e.g. when the LMS (1799) arrived they were received by the minister of the Dutch Reformed Church (the assumption is that the DRC gave them an understanding of the context of African spirituality).

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<sup>9</sup> Though the author uses the phrase in the presentation of the history and roots of the LMS, this is done mindful of the fact that the phrase was coined within the Roman Catholic tradition. It came during the time when the church (Roman Catholic) was dealing with the Donatist. It also finds support in the papal pronouncement (Pope Boniface 1302 and the Council of Florence pronouncement in 1441 of "one flock one shepherd") (Bosch 1991:218). More precisely, the term is associated with Cyprian (d.258)

The LMS was formed on principles of ecumenism. Failing to mention the Moravian brothers within the history of the LMS's arrival is to disregard the very principle of sharing resources in the mission of God (Du Plessis, 1965:244). The LMS missionaries "loaned" the interpreter who accompanied them to the Xhosa people. The institutional historical presentation seems to be void of the celebration of partnership as mission principle.

The other challenge of the institutional approach is that it depicts God as stranger to the local population, prior to the arrival of Western missionaries, a fact disputed by Dr. Livingstone with the words: "Already Africa is for God, God did not wait for me to bring him to Africa. I found him in every village" (Kalu, 2005:15).

It is further argued that the institutional historiography is not biblical. Biblical history takes intentional interest in people and their experiences to narrate stories. It speaks of the people of God and how they organised their lives and how they related to others. In as much as the history of the Old Testament centres around the people of Israel, their selection was not to limit or institutionalise the mission of God, but served as an expression of God's salvation plan to all nations (Wright, 2006:189; cf. Anderson, 1975:51).

The second historical approach investigates the *missionary history*, which is characterised by missionary ideas, personal recollection and ideologies (Kalu, 2005:22). It is an approach that promotes missionary heroism (i.e. Robert Moffat, his sons and daughters, Livingstone, John Philip and others who have become the icons of the UCCSA's ecclesiological history and theological lessons) (cf. letters of Paul). The approach does not, however, record the activities of the local people or their contribution to the success of the mission of God in the everyday world. This type of historical approach makes the gospel an imported product. Thus, there is nothing of the transformative power of the gospel in as per the local church or community contribution is emphasised.

There is need to learn from this shortcoming, since the church must face a new mission paradigm that speaks to the importance of the community as God's partners in his mission (Ephesians 2:10; cf. Greenway, 1999:14). The historical approach, together with institutional historiography, seems to create colonial evangelism and cultural imperialism.

The preferred historiography to present the church's involvement in the *missio Dei* must be a process of reflection on and reconstruction of LMS, CUSA and ABM history in Africa to rediscover the role of the local people and must enable the community to take part in the journey of self-discovery. It must present the liberative concepts of history that will help to counter poverty, social violence, compete in the theological space and create room for ministerial transformation and interfaith dialogue.

The call for the re-imaging of church history doesn't create suspicion in church history scholarship, but identifies a number of gaps that may not have been considered relevant at the time and yet are important now as missiological studies move forward beyond 1967. The study avers that such a presentation aids the church in a critical reflection on its past, in order to map a way forward with a more balanced historical approach.

### **2.2.2 LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY IN AFRICA (1799)**

The introduction of this chapter mentions the birth of the UCCSA in 1967, when three congregational church bodies united. The oldest of these was the LMS, which was formed in 1795 and arrived in Cape Town in March 1799. The LMS worked on the Eastern Cape frontier in places such as Bethelsdorp, King Williams Town and Kat River (Fort Beaufort) as well as in the Northern Cape, with the famous mission station at Kuruman serving as the centre for the work up north. Aside from Kuruman and under the guidance of missionaries like Robert Moffat and David Livingstone, mission stations were established in modern day Botswana and Zimbabwe. By 1967 the LMS was well established in these regions.

Closer analysis of LMS history suggests that they did not work among the Zulus and the Mozambicans, but the ABM (discussed later as one of the formations of the UCCSA) did. It is only mentioned here to show the sharing of mission geo-space with the LMS. Most of the work among the Zulus was done by the ABM, as the overseas missionary work of Congregationalists in the United States of America (USA). The ABM worked mainly in Natal and Mozambique, making a large contribution to education and health amongst the Zulu. They also oversaw the translation of the Bible into Zulu (De Gruchy, 2000:10). By 1967 the ABM had effected the change from overseas mission to local church and had become the Bantu Congregational Church (BCC). The ABM may well have worked in Zimbabwe, but their activities did not contribute to the formation of the UCCSA and led to the establishment of the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe (UCCZ).

The LMS worked among the people of the Cape Colony, namely the Xhosa, Hottentots and Griqua (born from the marriage between Dutch colonialists and Hottentot mothers), before venturing on an inland mission. In 1813, John Campbell<sup>10</sup> objected to the term "bastard" as offensive. They were then named the Griquas after their ancestor Griqua and their settlement, *Klaarwater* (Clearwater), was renamed Griqualand. The LMS also worked among the Batswana and the Ndebele (Briggs & Wing, 1970:25) and was to define the mission inland, i.e. mission away from the Cape Colony, especially the route that resulted in the formation of the Botswana and Zimbabwe synods (as they are now known).

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<sup>10</sup> He was appointed by the directors of the London mission to inspect the mission stations in South Africa and mark the end of the pioneer stage of mission work (Du Plessis, 1965:118).

It is argued that the mission inland, i.e. away from the Cape Colony, could be seen as an expanded interpretation of the Great Commission. It not only focused on the winning of disciples for Jesus Christ, but also fought for their quality of life and advocated for human rights. Inasmuch as they were the contemporary of colonialism, they could in a sense be seen as different from colonialism.

In following the mission work of the LMS, as the main group from the Cape Colony, reference is made to previous research in this regard (Jele, 2014). This work was more narrative, as it only traced the mission activities of the LMS and not the ABM and CUSA. Reference to previous work (Jele 2014) serves to aid the understanding of the formation of the UCCSA and the subsequent advocating for a 21<sup>st</sup> mission paradigm. It also provides the current study with an appreciation of the historical framework of the missionary society that formed the UCCSA.

### **2.2.3 LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY AWAY FROM THE CAPE COLONY**

The mission work in the Cape Colony took three directions: the eastern mission, here called the Xhosa mission; the middle mission or the mission among the Hottentots, the Batswana and the Ndebele (here referred to as the mission “up north”); and the far west mission work, which resulted in the formation of the Namibian congregational churches and ascribed to the LMS. It can be argued that the different political and economic context made the concept of mission different and these were to be included for the gospel be holistic; thus it must encompass all the elements of humanity.

#### **2.2.3.1 London Missionary Society among the Xhosa people**

The point of discussion in this section centres on the Kat River and Fort Beaufort settlements, as the areas where the mission work among the Xhosa people was most intense. Describing the LMS’ mission work as it moved out of the Cape Colony in South Africa bears mention of Ntsikana (1780-1820). He may have been converted while listening to the sermons of Van der Kemp of the LMS, he a Xhosa and the son of a king’s councillor. According to Briggs and Wing (1970:22), he features in the second Xhosa mission.

“It is important to be conscience of the vastness, divisions, affirmatives, and diversities of Africa. To that extent, there is some truth in the suggestion that ‘Africa’ does not exist as such, but rather to the extent that people articulate a shape and form for the Africa they desire.” (Maluleke, 2005:473)

Here Ntsikana had the Africa he desired for himself and for his people and their religion. It was thought to fit the “African” worldview that was reflective of the Xhosa people and how they interact with the higher being.

The ministry of Ntsikana is important as a depiction of a local's perspective and how he handled the African tradition and the Christian faith. The validity of any religion or theology claiming to be Christian is its biblical basis, as nothing can stand in for the Bible or substitute it. However, if theology is taken as a reflection, then African Christianity is something to be talked of and in the case of the LMS, the Ntsikana approach would be of value, as Maluleke (2005:474) states:

“When we are looking for African theology (Christianity)<sup>11</sup> we should go first to the field, to the village church, to Christian homes to listen to those spontaneously uttered prayers before people go to bed. We should go to the schools, to the frontiers where traditional religion meets with Christianity. We must listen to the throbbing drumbeats and the clapping of hands accompanying the impromptu singing in the independent churches...everywhere in Africa things are happening. Christians are talking, singing, preaching, writing, arguing, praying, discussing. Can it be that all this is an empty show? It is impossible. This then is African theology (Christianity).”

This was the desire of Nsikana and the desire of the church of his time (in response to the LMS) and the generations to follow, built on the basis of the experience of the people in their everyday world and life.

#### **2.2.3.2 London Missionary Society among the Griqua people**

The Griqua mission started after the Xhosa mission (which does not mean that the Xhosa mission was closed or abandoned) and was a useful route to the launching of the Kuruman mission in 1817 among BaTlharo and BaTlhaping and the subsequent mission up north among the Ndebele, Bakwena and BaNgwato. It provided the gateway for the mission work up north and thus formed a vital point in the missionary work of the LMS. It was centred on Clearwater (“Klaarwater”), the work of Anderson and Kramer. In 1809 the settlement had grown to 784 people (Du Plessis, 1965:109). The model focussed on gathering people in settlements to create religious communities, where the Bible and Christian life were taught. It could be argued that the colonial approach, in the form of settlements, was taken to establish a mission model. The colonial model worked on the principle that people were better taught the Christian ways if moved from their native communities and a new, pure community is formed. It failed, because these people were cattle farmers and dependent on the land. Living in the mission village did not give them the necessary land to make ends meet. Secondly, there were a great deal of tribal warfare between the Zulus and Ndebele at the time, even racial strife, and in the village they would have been easy targets for the enemy, hence very few would have stayed for the teaching.

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<sup>11</sup> The argument is that in the process of practising and being engaged in the Christian faith a theology is developed that is reflective of the context and situation.

### 2.2.3.3 London Mission Society in Bechuanaland

The mission among the Batswana people, of both the north and the south, started with the two native tribes of BaTlhaping and BaTlharo (today Kuruman in the Northern Cape). The Batswana chief at that time was Molehabangwe, a man of note and also known to be kind to strangers as well as a true statesman in times of peace. This, together with his political will and leadership commitment to support the missionary work, provided a good environment for missionary work among the BaTlhaping and BaTlharo. This gesture also encouraged future mission work among the Bechuana (Du Plessis, 1965:110).

According to Briggs and Wing (1970:26), the mission among the Bechuana was welcomed by the Chief Mothibi of BaTlhaping (Kuruman) who said: "Send me the missionaries I will be their father."

This seems to refer to the second missionary expedition that resulted from John Campbell's visit, the subsequent sending of Robert Hamilton in 1817 and the coming of Moffat in 1826. Du Plessis (1965), however, avers that it was the meeting with Chief Molehabangwe that paved the way. Though the missionaries Edwards and Kok failed, because they were mixing gospel with commerce, the mission work continued and these two must be noted for the pivotal role they played in the evangelisation of the Hottentots (Du Plessis, 1965:52).

Another person of interest in the Bechuana mission is Robert Moffat to whom is credited the translation of the Bible into Tswana and other Christian education material. He also facilitated the Ndebele mission, due to his friendship with Mzilikazi (further detail may be obtained from the important role of the Ndebele). Jele (2014) presents a narrative history of how the Ndebele king contributed to the success and passage of the mission up north, especial among the Bahurutse (now Zeerust in South Africa, among the Batswana tribes) who were more of the King Mzilikazi's vessel tribes.

### 2.2.3.4 London Missionary Society across Molopo river

The Moffat expedition may not have been the first across the Molopo River. Moffat's testimony about Edwards in 1842 suggests that Edward had some contact with the *Bauangketsi* (*Bangwaketsi*), given the reference to Edward in Du Plessis (1965:111): "He went to bartered (and trade) as far as *Bangwakgets*i, a powerful nation north of Molopo River." It is assumed that Edwards had a chance to share his faith while trading with the local people. Though there is a notion that a great deal of time was spent on trade at the expense of the mission work among the missionaries, it must be said that in most cases the missionaries were self-supporting. The example of the vegetable garden in Kuruman, intended to supply traders with fresh produce, is evidence of this claim. It is also necessary to factor in the fact that missionary society personnel

were recruited on a voluntary basis. The missionaries thus required the resources to fund the work, which was not always adequate.

Special mention should be made of Kgosi Kgama (*Khama*), in terms of mission work across the Molopo River, and his influence at Shoshong station. After being baptised, he started to attend the worship services regularly (Briggs & Wing, 1970:74). Kgosi Khama's children were obedient to their father, but on matters of faith he encountered resistance. His successful repelling of Ndebele warriors made him popular among his people, who followed him to worship services. He is known for his strong stance against alcohol consumption, including the white man's brandy (Briggs & Wing, 1970:164), and never believed in or liked witchcraft or heathen ceremonies (Jones, 1999:51). This position made proclaiming the gospel easier, because he sought to rule the BaNgwato according to the principles of the Ten Commandments.

When the Chartered Company wanted to take over Botswana in 1896, according to Briggs and Wing (1970:165), the three principal chiefs requested the Queen of England (leading to the independence of Botswana in 1966) that:

1. none of the tribal land in Botswana be taken from the people and given to the Chartered Company or anyone else;
2. the traditional form of tribal government be retained; and
3. the sale of strong drink, to both black and white, be prohibited.

Seventy years later, his son Seretse Khama, became the first president of the country upon independence in 1966 (Biggs & Wing, 1970:165).

#### **2.2.3.5 London Missionary Society among the Matabele people**

The mission among the Ndebele arose from the activities of two personalities: the missionary Robert Moffat and the Ndebele King Mzilikazi. Their relationship dates back to 1829 (Du Plessis, 1970:162). The actual missionary work among the Ndebele commenced around 1859 with the establishment of the Inyati Mission Station, a place (Matabeleland) in the modern day Zimbabwe. The local king (Mzilikazi) pledged his support and promised to protect LMS missionaries, calling them *ombiza ka zibulawa* translated to mean "the vessels that must not be broken or killed" (Mzilethi, 1999:64; cf. Briggs & Wing, 1970; Haile, 1951). Local participation continued until after the death of the Ndebele King Mzilikazi in 1868 and the Ndebele-Boer War of 1896 that ended the Ndebele kingdom.

Four people are worth mentioning. Firstly, Matambo Ndlovu who was baptised in 1892. In missionary circles he is described as a good reader. Matambo was the first Ndebele to profess

his faith publicly and he is recorded as the first African to be ordained as minister of the Word and sacraments in what was to be later called Rhodesia. He was the younger brother of Maqamula and they belonged to the tribes who were captured and subjected to the amaNdebele. As such he was a slave boy and despised by some of the Ndebele. He found a new lease on life at the Hope Fountain Mission Station where, according to Briggs and Wing (1970), race and tribe meant nothing and all were treated equal. When the 1896 Ndebele-Boer War broke out, Matambo and his friend Makaza drove the missionary to safety and that caused them trouble with the king and the Ndebele nation. It was his brother Maqamula who negotiated his release and Makaza was subsequently killed (Briggs & Wing, 1970:197; Mzilethi, 1999:65).

Secondly, Makaza Nkala who was a friend of Matambo. He is described by Mzilethi (1999:65) as a clever young man, gifted in reading. He is to be noted and celebrated as the first Ndebele martyr (cf. Briggs & Wing, 1970:197).

The two were responsible for reading the gospel to the locals, a role they fulfilled before and after the war. They took it upon themselves to mobilise the community to gather for worship services and participate in the teaching of confirmation classes (Mzilethi, 1999:66). It was in the teaching of the confirmation classes that the Christians were nurtured to mature members and their role in the mission was explained. This reflects the major part these two individuals played in teaching and grooming the locals.

The third person worth mentioning is Matoko Moyo, an African teacher influential with the young people in the Dombodema district. This resulted in many young people in the area attending school and forcing Reeds, who was the missionary in charge, to request more teachers (Mzilethi, 1999:66).

The fourth individual relevant to demonstrating the involvement of the locals in the missionary work of the LMS is Hotsha Hlabangana, the son of a local chief (*induna*), who later went to Tiger Kloof for training as a teacher.

Highlighting these individuals illustrates the local contribution to the missionary activities of the LMS in terms of the *missio Dei*. At times they participated as a community, by building the mission stations and providing free labour. Clearly they were not passive recipients of the gospel, as the LMS would like readers of their history to believe (Lovetta, 1899; cf. Du Plessis, 1965:154-164).

The impact of the mission work of the LMS among the Ndebele cannot be overstated. It influenced the concept and worship of God as well as how people related to Him in daily life. There was a shift in the concept of education, from family and *indale/kgotla* type of education to certificated classroom education.

There was also a shift in the political landscape. The Ndebele built their nation through conquering and assimilation, a model condemned by the Western missionary as inhumane and barbaric. According to Ndebele oral history, the greatest kingdom has to be feared and yet the missionaries preached respect and love not fear. This is expressed in the translation of the Ndebele war song *woz' ubone indaba yomkonto* (come and see/hear the news that are of (spear) war) to *woz' ubone indaba engayisiyo yomkonto* (come and see/hear the news that are not of (spear) war) (Mzilethi, 1999:72; cf. Ndebele hymnal, 1992:114). It also saw the acceptance of Western democracy and Western religion, which to them was Christianity. Critical to understanding this acceptance is reflection on how Christianity was preached. It also demonstrates how Christianity and colonialism were intertwined (cf. Van der Walt, 2008; Bosch, 1991; Du Plessis, 1965).

Another aspect that should be celebrated in the ecclesiological history of the LMS and recorded in the missional congregation paradigm is the introduction of the teacher-evangelist as the model of reaching the grass roots population of the community. This model does not only prove the efficiency of gospel communication, but also the need and importance of local leadership in mission work (this is examined in subsequent chapters, under organic leadership) (Belmont, 2010).

The LMS teachers were responsible for education and during the weekend for church services. The community respected them as both teachers and ministers, they were in most cases members of that particular community. Inasmuch as there is evidence that they had teacher training, there is no indication that they had theological knowledge. This would have been adverse to their mission and theological decisions. Most were trained in Tiger Kloof (South Africa) and Hope Fountain (Zimbabwe). The model of teacher-evangelist is no longer in use in the UCCSA as a denomination, however, in Botswana and Zimbabwe there are still evangelists, though they no longer work as teachers.

The success story of the LMS is delineated, i.e. among the Xhosa, Griqua, Tswana and the Ndebele, and can be attributed to two factors: 1) the preparedness of the missionaries to engage with the context, challenging the oppressive regimes and befriending the local chiefs; and 2) the involvement of the local people, as agents proclaiming the gospel as teacher-evangelists. This accounts for the spread of the gospel up north. The presence of the UCCSA now (after the 1967 merger) in KwaZulu necessitates a review of the American Board of Mission (ABM), as element of church history.

## **2.3 AMERICAN BOARD OF MISSION (ABM)**

A discourse on the ABM details the second institution that makes up the UCCSA's three ecclesiastic traditions (LMS, CUSA and ABM) that will assist in the interpretation of the new mission paradigm that is open to ecumenical formation and relationship.

The ABM was established in 1810 by five students from William College, Massachusetts (USA), and is the product of the "Great Awakening".

The 29 June 1810 meeting of the ABM resolved:

"That there be instituted by this General Association a Board of Commissioners for Foreign missions, for the purpose of devising ways and means, adopting and prosecuting measures for promoting the spread of the Gospel to the heathen land" (Howard, 1992:B83).

The intention of the ABM was, therefore, spelled out in their mission work. The above would seem to indicate that it would be the planning of mission work and approach taken as well as the resourcing, possibly funding and human resources. The board was characterised by solidarity, voluntarism and evangelism (Winter, 1992:B54; cf. Howard, 1992:B82).

The LMS invited the ABM to come and work alongside them in South Africa. The Board responded by sending missionaries Daniel Lindley, Venable and Newton Adams who arrived in February 1835 in Cape Town (Du Plessis, 1956:220; Wing, 1986:60).

The two mission societies were bound together not only ecumenically, but theologically too. They both held the Bible supreme on matters of faith and order and also shared a belief in freedom, dignity and work of all men and women created in the image of God (Wing, 1986:60). This could be interpreted to suggest that both men and women can co-mission with God (Greenway, 1999:23).

### **2.3.1 AMERICAN BOARD OF MISSION: MISSION TO THE FARMERS OR ZULUS**

The invitation to the ABM, by the LMS, was to work among the Zulus (Du Plessis, 1965:224). They proceeded to Griqualand on their way to Kuruman to join Moffat, possibly for orientation on mission work among the Batswana of BaHurutse. From Kuruman they proceeded to Mosega, capital of Bahurutsi. The place was under the occupation of the Ndebele, led by Moffat's friend Mzilikazi (Haile, 1951; Du Plessis, 1965). This may also explain why they had to go to Moffat first. However, wars between farmers and the Ndebele as well as between the Ndebele and other tribes were prevalent. This altered the initial route to reach the Zulus.

The inland route that was to take the missionaries to Zululand became unwise due to the wars. The farmers moved inland, fleeing from the British occupation of the Cape Colony (1794), resulting in a number of Anglo-Boer wars. The inland option was not peaceful either, given the constant conflict with the Ndebele (Du Plessis, 1965). It would, however, seem that the ABM's work was intertwined with the social life arrangements of the farmers. This could possibly be ascribed to the way the ABM was received by the farmers and could be based on a reading of declaration by Pieter Retief's (Declaration of Pieter Retief: Grahamstown, 22 January, 1837), cited in Du Plessis (1965:437):

"We complain of the unjustifiable odium which, under the name of religion, has been cast up us by interested and dishonest persons...We are now leaving the fruitful land of our birth, in which we have suffered enormous losses and continual vexation, and are about to enter a strange and dangerous territory; but we go with a firm reliance on an all-seeing, just, and merciful God, whom we shall always fear and humbly endeavor to obey."

Piet Retief's declaration (Du Plessis, 1965) suggests that the farmers had contact with the gospel upon leaving the Cape Colony and understood the concept of the grace of God. This would also mean that they had a greater understanding of the Christian value of peace, as opposed to the Ndebele who were warriors. It is interesting that the missionaries (LMS and the ABM) had associated with the English government, with whom Retief had severed ties, were now working among them in Zululand. His (Retief) argument was that they would like to be allowed to govern themselves, without the interference of the British government in the future. However, there is a sense in which the English missionaries were to work with the enemies of their home government and have their lives intertwined as well as a sense that the farmers believed that religion was being exploited, i.e. actions taken in the name of religion. It further supports the thinking that Christianity in Africa was not only the contemporary of colonialism, but that each benefited from the other consciously.

The understanding of the discourse is that the farmers were mostly Christians, opposed to England's occupation of the Cape Colony and negative about the Colony's policy towards the black population. The missionaries accused the farmers a great deal of labour exploitation and human rights abuses, among others. The government believed the missionaries and not the farmers. Against this background, there was also the quest for more land by farmers, the government and the missionaries (cf. Lovetta, 1899; Du Plessis, 1965).

As to the question whether the ABM was a mission to the Afrikaans farmers or Zulus, both assertions could be true depending on one's perspective. For example, when the ABM's inland route failed; the missionaries went to the Cape Colony where the LMS was established and

followed the coastal route to the Zululand. The ABM reached and met with farmers in Port Natal in 1837.

On 3 February 1838 Pieter Retief also arrived in Dingaan's land, the king of the Zulu nation at the time, and settled at a place later called Pietermaritzburg (named after Pieter Retief and Gerrit Maritz). Lindley, one of the missionaries who came to Zululand and a former minister of ABM, became the minister in the town of Volksraad as Du Plessis (1965:231) records. The study argues that the ABM mission reached out to all Africans, regardless of race (farmers and Zulus), though it was caught up in the conflict between and among the farmers and the African tribes.

The review of the ABM shows how it shared the mission stage with the LMS. This historic relation may explain the easy coming together in 1967 (as described further on). These two organisations demonstrate the mission and the presence of the UCCSA in KwaZulu Natal, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Mozambique. The critical question is to account for the historical presence of the UCCSA in the Eastern Cape, hence the need to look at the Congregational Union of South Africa.

## **2.4 CONGREGATIONAL UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA (CUSA)**

The CUSA is the final part of the three ecclesiastic traditions relevant to the formation of the UCCSA in 1967.

The CUSA was predominantly found in Port Elizabeth and was also responsible for the mission work and establishment of the churches of this tradition in Namibia. It was made up of both English settlers, who were Congregationalists, and those mission stations that the LMS had initiated and then handed over to the converts (new Christian believers) to run as local churches (De Gruchy, 2007:33).

It is a direct offshoot of the LMS mission principle, as Haile (1951:1) indicates:

“It shall be left (as it ever ought to be left) to the minds of the person whom God may call into fellowship of His son from among them to assume for themselves such form of church Government as to them shall appear most agreeable to the Word of God.”

Nonetheless, the following two factors influenced the formation of the CUSA:

The first is the concept of self-supporting and came as a result of the LMS's inability to fund the local churches (Steel, 1999:115). The reason given by the LMS was their aspiration to use the resources for the extension of the gospel to the heathen land. This could be translated to suggest that the Cape Colony was no longer considered as the heathen land or that the

missionary gospel had become rooted in the area and were able to organise themselves into church governance, the initial goal. By definition, therefore, the heathen lands would refer to land not known to Western missionaries. This must have encouraged cultural imperialism that feeds on the concept of a civilized race and improved culture.

Secondly, but linked to the above, was the Voluntary Bill passed in 1875 in Cape Town (South Africa). The Bill sought to do away with state funding for the church, funding that created the constant risk of interference from government departments in church affairs. The funding the Cape government provided the church at the time came with the inherent understanding that the church functioned as a kind of department of the government, responsible for the production of good citizens (Du Plessis, 1965). The government expected the church to make or transform the community into good citizens who are easy to govern, while the missionaries set out to establish communities of faith to teach and nurture new converts.

The above two factors influenced the leadership of the congregations formed through the mission work of the LMS, ABM and CUSA alliance. Twenty-one people met in Grahamstown on 12-13 October 1857 and the Union of Voluntary Evangelical Church in South Africa was proposed and accepted (Steel, 1999:116).

The name of the union would be changed to The Evangelical Voluntary Union at the 1861 meeting to place more emphasis on the evangelical rather than the voluntary (Steel, 1999:116). Achieving this new mission emphasis made it critical for the union to train ministers in their programmes (Federal Seminary of Southern Africa - FEDSEM<sup>12</sup> and Adams College). The union was furthermore structured in such a way that the financially stronger churches would assist the weaker churches. The study argues that this creates the impression that sharing of resources defined mission to them as partnership.

The name of the union would again change, on 6 July 1877, to the Congregational Union of South Africa {CUSA} (Steel, 1999:116). The congregations were organised into independent districts, running their church affairs autonomously. At this time the union was made up of approximately twenty-seven congregations, almost the whole of the Eastern Cape (congregational tradition) had joined the union. The union also attracted members from Kimberley, the Reef, Orange Free State, the Goldfields, Witwatersrand, Watervaal Boven in the east to Klerksdorp in the west and Mesina in the north (Du Plessis, 1999:231).

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<sup>12</sup> FEDSEM had its first intake in 1963. The project was undertaken by the Anglicans, the Methodist, the Presbyterians and the Congregationalist. It must be noted that though LMS, CUSA and the ABM agreed to participate in the project, they were not united as yet. It, however, explains the pre-union relationship of the three ecclesiastic institutions. One of FEDSEMs greatest challenges was its proximity to its competitor, Fort Hare (Briggs & Wing, 1970:301).

In the strands that formed the UCCSA, the ecclesiological evolution is one tradition whose mission book had endless chapters, always ready to write a new contextual chapter in their mission work in every mission paradigm. It would suggest that the definition of mission has to be re-appropriated in each paradigm.

The reading of two letters addressed to the South Africa Institute of Race Relations suggest that the church was dealing with racial issues towards the joining LMS and ABM to form the UCCSA.

The church was divided into white, coloured and black ministers who we were living on grants. The first letter, dated 13 December 1963, seems to suggest the unbalanced treatment of the minister in terms of stipends.

The second dated, 24 January 1964, was a response raised by institutes of race relations. The letter suggest that race was an issue in the church and the people were questioning it. The letter responds "there are no multiracial congregations in the Congregational Union" and admits that this to be true, stating "this is quite correct, but the church I attend (referring to the author of the letter) at Rondebosch has a coloured man".

The reading of the justification suggests a stating of the exceptional case and refusing to accept the racial divide in the Congregational church. The issues of racism needed to be dealt with in the new church as baggage brought to its formation.

A belief that constitutes racial discrimination seems to have been the reason for the formation of the all-coloured congregation with the CUSA, called the Ebenezer churches. According to Dugmore (1992:64), the issues of race discrimination in the church goes back to 1887:

"When our church started it was because a (Coloured) deacon was not allowed in the white church in End street...we are not going to beg these people to have a seat in their church"

Joining a multi-racial, multi-national and tribal church meant that the CUSA was to work hard to reconcile its constituency towards the formation of the new church, of which a covenantal approach was necessary. This read with the letter dated 24 January 1964 mention the appointment of a Joint Committee in 1961 and that it had met three times before the date of the letter.

The two letters seem to challenge the new and subsequent UCCSA of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as still fraught with issues of racism at a complex level.

CUSA also brought another important aspect to the fore. According to Elphick and Davenport (1997:84), the Congregation Union of South Africa was formed as result of the LMS withdrawal from working up north. They developed and adopted the principle of self-sustainment, which

saw the CUSA ending its dependence on overseas support and subsequently cutting ties with London as the sending country for most of the LMS missionaries. The following churches were established as a result of this new mission attitude: Somerset East (1856), Grahamstown (1871), Port Elizabeth 1874 and Bethelsdorp 1880. The timeline in the establishment of the churches as communities of worship seems to suggest that the CUSA defined mission in terms of church planting and self-reliance.

## **2.5 DEFINITION OF MISSION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE UCCSA FORMATION**

The definition in this section does not imply the inadequacy of the current description, but merely serves as investigative tool into the way LMS, ABM and CUSA defined and understood what they were doing and called mission and how that understanding influenced the formation of the UCCSA and continue to influence the mission paradigm. The church's definition of *missio ecclesia* throws lights on the church's concept of participation in the *missio Dei*.

The concept of mission in this time was based on the interpretation of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:17-20). There was a shift in the interpretation of the Great Commission to suggest that it referred to all generations, not only the apostles (the audience of the address). The definition or the demarcation of the world was still at this stage from the holy ground to the world to be saved, i.e. moving from the Western missionary world to the "uncivilized heathen" south, in which the enlightened West considered itself superior (cf. Van der Walt, 2008). The Great Commission remains open to re-interpretation, as the mission paradigm continues to shift and as it finds expression in other geographical spaces.

It is an argument based on the biblical world being centred on Palestine and north Africa, creating the sense that the end of the world would be limited to these areas. The voyages of exploration showed the world to be bigger than the biblical world, thus the concept of the end of the world stood to be altered. Christian witnessing had to be redirected to the discovered world, including Southern Africa that was to be the mission field for the LMS.

This period the LMS perceived mission as the expansion of Christianity and coincided with the West colonising different parts of the world, an intertwining presented through institutional historiography. Such a historical presentation compromised the history of mission. McGrath concurs and argues that scholars have thus perceived the mission history as imperial history (McGrath, 2013:266). In this context of the colonial era mission was seen as the winning of souls from darkness. This was to shift in the forming of the UCCSA.

The presentation of the history of the formation of the UCCSA from the LMS, CUSA and ABM leads to a renewed call to re-interpret the Great Commission as the basis of mission. William Carey (1761-1834) provides a classic example for such a call. Carey argued in 1792 that it is

the responsibility and duty of all Christians to spread Christianity to the heathen nations (McGrath, 2013:269). This is a return to the initial interpretation of Great Commission, challenged by Theodore Beza and Johann Gerhad. The Great Commission was a command to all generations. In the same year (1792), one of the older ministers challenged William Carey with: "When God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do so without your aid or mine" (McGrath, 2013:271). The challenge creates the sense that dissenters sought to argue that mission belongs to God. It is not a human endeavour. Some centuries later Wright (2010:23) concurs and puts it plainly:

"Fundamentally our mission means our committed participation as the people, at God's invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's history."

The challenge to Carey also adds another dimension to the issue. Inasmuch as it agrees that the mission belongs to God, it falls short of mentioning that God empowers those who are called to participate. The concept of the *missio Dei* does not completely take people out of the equation, thus making them the passive masses in the mission of God. They are empowered participants (cf. Acts 2:4).

The way people participate in the *missio Dei* is based on their commitment to the invitation and how they receive and interpret God's command. It cannot be denied that the understanding of mission during this paradigm was influenced by the Great Commission (the Matthew 28 directive to go and make disciples). The Enlightenment also had a great impact, especially its focus on salvation, in that humans are capable of making decisions of repentance upon hearing the gospel proclaimed to them (Bosch, 1991:281).

Mission was defined as being sent to the nations. There is little or no indication that these missionaries doubted that they were sent by God and or their communities. Mission, therefore, was sending white missionaries to Africa (McGrath, 2013:276) in terms of the LMS's mission history. Mission to the "dark continent" was understood as both a human endeavour and a calling to reach the "unchurched". The position that Wright argues defines mission from the word "send" (from the Latin verb *mitto*, i.e. mission as sending), limiting use of the resources taught in the Bible (Wright, 2010:23). It must allow other subordinates of mission like schools, development and health programmes to express the holistic and intentional nature of mission. Mission is a planned action and reveals the participation in the salvation acts of a purposeful God. Having presented the ecclesiastic tradition of the concept of mission that formed the UCCSA it is important to explore the mission models at play during the time of formation.

## 2.6 MISSION MODELS OF THE LMS PRE-1967

The pre-1967 period refers to the LMS stage, the parent mission society of the UCCSA, in the life history and evolution of the UCCSA. The model is representative of a system that allows for the analysis of the actual situation or process and facilitates the understanding of the institution or church, as is here the case. Mission models also assist to demonstrate the perception of the mission of God and how people view it within a particular mission paradigm.

The reading of both the New and the Old Testament presents a number of mission models. Both demonstrate that God is a purposeful and missionary God and how his people must participate in his mission. The models that are clearly evident in the LMS and UCCSA literature are the covenant model, Abrahamic (Abraham) model and the New Testament house church model (cf. Briggs & Wing, 1970; Briggs 1986).

The reading of the history and the mission understanding of the UCCSA brings to the fore how the models employed cannot be disconnected from the founding principle of the institution, as Haile, 1951:1) indicates:

“As the union of the Christians of various denominations in carrying on this great work is a most desirable object, so, to prevent, if possible, any cause of future dissension, it is declared to be fundamental principle of the missionary society that our design is not to send Presbyterianism, independency, Episcopal, or any form of church order and government (about which there may be differences of opinion among serious people), but the Glorious Gospel of Blessed God to the heathen; and that it shall be left (as it ever ought to be left) to the minds of the persons whom God may call into fellowship of his Son from among them to assume for themselves such form of Church Government as to them it shall appear most agreeable to the Word of God.”

According to Schreiter (1985:6), a model “suggests not only a procedure for engaging in theological reflection, but also some specific interest or principles that help guide the uses of the procedure”.

The six models pertinent to the LMS, as one of the predecessors of the UCCSA, are: the voluntaristic, *kerugmatic*, Abrahamic, needs-based, colonial and prophetic models. These models require review to demonstrate how they were constructed out of the fundamental principle of the LMS and its mission activities and strategies of engagement with the local people in the mission field. The focus here is on how they reflect the way the LMS operated.

### 2.6.1 VOLUNTARISTIC MISSIONARY MODEL

Winter (1992: B54) argues the following:

“The vehicle that allowed the Protestant movement to become vital was the structural development of solidarity, which harvested the vital ‘voluntarism’ latent in Protestantism, and surfaced in new mission agencies of all kinds.”

According to Bosch (1991:280), this model represented a new mood in Protestantism, where those touched by awakening were no longer willing to sit and wait for the official church to initiate, but instead grouped together and formed societies.

This model relates to the mission societies that were initiated independent of the church structures. The Enlightenment<sup>13</sup> produced missionary societies such as the LMS (1795) and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (1810) (Bosch, 1991:327). The model was not about church planting, but to preach and win people for Christ. The model did not focus on doctrinal issues, but on mission activities. This enabled the LMS, formed as a result of voluntaristic initiatives, to be doctrinally flexible and ecumenically receptive as expressed in the formation of the LMS and its foundational principle (cf. Haile, 1951; Du Plessis, 1965).

The Reformation espoused the principle of private judgement in the interpretation of Scripture. It was the principle of the individual right to interpret Scripture, a shift from the clergy-centred interpretation of Scripture as a privilege of the few. It also emphasised the sovereignty of God and must be seen against the papal infallibility authority (Bosch, 1991:261).

The like-minded would come together to promote a common cause or advocate for a new mission move. The coming together, therefore, became a loose union based on mission purpose rather than on fellowship and solidarity. The dominating issues among the voluntary societies, during the LMS (1794) period, were antislavery campaigns, prison reform, charity work and foreign missions (Bosch, 1991:328). The guiding ideology was to not only attend to personal circumstances, but also consider the circumstances of others. The context of mission work is thus crucial. These challenged Christian believers to become co-workers with God in the salvation plan (Bosch, 1991:328).

Voluntary societies, like any other social organisation, are people who gather or join a group in order to evaluate alternative courses of belief and action to set the future or initiate complete change (Hesselgrave, 1991:484). In the process of evaluation, the societies accept that the institutional structures only serve to ensure stability. It forms the starting point for engagement, with the knowledge that such structures can at the same time be static. This means that there is need to accentuate change within or outside the institution. This calls for an initiative of the society operating independent of the ecclesiastic structure. Such an initiative does accelerate change and the indirect result leads to the formation of societies, like LMS (Lovetta, 1899:246).

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<sup>13</sup> Enlightenment: emphasis on the human initiatives

Two aspects are clear in this model. Firstly, the voluntary missionaries interacted with the people, for example John Philip van der Kemp who also married a local girl and lived among the Zulus, fighting for the rights of the indigenous people (Du Plessis, 1965:120; De Gruchy, 1999:23). Voluntarism would be the ideal point of departure for a new paradigm, demonstrated in the willingness of the missionaries of the time to go beyond racial divides (though with the mentality of being the superior race). They were prepared to be part of the community they were ministering.

Secondly, the fact that the missionaries did not emphasise doctrinal issues, but salvation, worked to their advantage. Though later on, as they started to establish churches and the mission station, it was an evident departure from the fundamental principle of the LMS. It provided what was to be good ground for the formation of the UCCSA, more than 150 years later in 1967. This is better explained in the formation of the Congregation Union of South Africa (reviewed further on), which according to De Gruchy (2007:23) was founded by the churches formed by the LMS and the white settlers.

The other important element to consider, as building block going forward, was the teachings influenced by the philosophical thoughts of John Locke. According to Robert (2009:44), all humans are equal and have the capacity to reason and engage in social contracts, i.e. ordinary people can organise themselves into societies outside the structures of the church (as with the formation of the LMS). This concept also defines salvation as individual cooperation with God, rather than a passive recipient of the divine faith or inherited custom (Robert, 2009:46). It, however, opposes the African Traditional Religion (ATR) teachings that emphasise community blessing and sin. Such Western Christian teaching was to change all of African philosophy.

The emphasis fell on the personal decision as the starting point in religious faith (Robert, 2009:44). Thus religion was deemed and defined as a matter of personal commitment, rather than a product of inheritance, and this was against the spirit and the organisation of the clan or tribe, where emphasis fell more on unity and community than on the individual. One is described in relation to the clan or tribe as “you are because of your clan or tribe”. This guided the voluntary model of mission, in which commitment remains the legacy of the UCCSA (1967), drawn and celebrated from the LMS (1795).

There was also a shift in missionary voluntarism from the celibate Roman Catholic model to a family model. William Carey insisted on taking his family to India (Robert, 2009:46). The family missionaries from the LMS were the Moffats, Sykes and Livingstone. It created a safe space for women to convert to Christianity, as they related to the missionaries through their hand-work meetings and Bible study classes. The Moravian missionaries also believed in family ministry and they taught the missionaries two valuable lessons: Firstly, to be a successful missionary

you must have an intention and honest interaction with the local people (they lived among the *Khoisan* of South Africa in the Cape Colony) (Robert, 2009:45) and secondly, there is a possibility for reconciliation in a post-oppressive state (in any country). When dealing with slavery, the Moravians emphasised reconciliation as way to avoid bloodshed and a vicious cycle of violence.

It must be admitted that the adventures of exploration by, for example, Captain James Cook 1779 played a major role in the voluntary mission model. Firstly, it brought the exotic cultures and the knowledge of the existence of a world other than the Western world. Secondly, the missionaries took courage from the merchants as they went through the dangerous water into the dark world to make money. The missionaries thought it possible to also go and harvest souls for Christ in the dark world (Robert, 2009:46).

Voluntarism understood from a 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective may be interpreted against the background of the advancement of the democratic and socio-political ideology that all people are equal. Whoever feels the call of God and avail themselves, can participate in the *missio Dei*. Democratic teachings also encourage freedom of association, which fits well with the inter-denomination context of a voluntaristic missionary model. The distinctive characteristic of voluntaristic societies (like the LMS) is the sense of urgency to undertake the mission task. As it is written in Matthew 24:14 (NIV): "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as the testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

There is a sense that the voluntaristic characteristic fades away as the society starts to plant churches and establish church governance and polity. This fading away or paradigm shift must not replace the urgency in preaching salvation. There is also the risk that too much emphasis on individualistic skill may not blend well with the 21<sup>st</sup> century mission paradigm that encourages a community approach. There is now a move away from the mission objective of winning souls toward transforming the community, i.e. mission has become transformational in intent.

The shift away from voluntarism and the planting of churches led to the church starting to grow inward. The volunteers were able to work and preach even outside the structure of the church and thus voluntarism as a mission model cannot simply be dismissed, but needs to be redefined according to the mission needs of post-modern society. The concept of modernity will be addressed in detail in due course, but it should be mentioned that it is the shortcomings of modernity that put individualism above community. It was also modernity's rationalism that challenged the very essence of religion by placing science at the core of interpreting life.

## **2.6.2 KERUGMATIC MISSIONARY MODEL**

Preaching and the Bible are central to the Protestant tradition. The confirmation class of the UCCSA teaches that the Bible by definition is “the story of what God did among his people. It is the story of God’s mighty works. The action of God is primary in the biblical material” (Wing, 1986:19).

The proclaimed Word is, therefore, not only the idea or the belief or the teaching, but primarily the activities of God.

Isaiah 55:11 (NRSV) confirms as follows: “So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth, it shall not return to me empty, but shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the things in which I sent it.”

The text falls within the Deutero-Isaiah (40-56) where the prophet deals with the theme of the servant of the Lord who died and rose again. This text speaks of the radical hope for the community. In this section God is presented as the Redeemer and the Lord of history who remains loyal to his words and promises. It is however the image of the servant that challenges the church upon defining its mission in the context of the *missio Dei*. The servant must be faultless and fight envy. The servant needs to be deeply concerned and unhappy with the unjust and corrupt society, this defines the church as the servant of God. The servant of God is mission focused, never losing sight of the command, and commissioned from God (Pawson 2007:498).

This is more of a text of encouragement to the prophets and community who are losing hope and want abandon the effort of spreading the word of God. According to the text, the purpose of the Word of God is to transform and cannot go to waste. The reading of the text further suggests that the Word of God brings joy to the listening community. The use of the “mouth” does not limit preaching to the spoken word, it may further suggest the lived Word, Jesus Christ as the living testimony of the presence of God among his people.

It involves proclaiming the mighty works of God and is the core principle of communicating the faith to people, i.e. proclaiming the Word and the works of God. Since the apostolic age, it centred on the reading of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). It introduces someone to the Christian faith with the ultimate goal of conviction and change is necessary, as demonstrated in the apostles (Acts 2:42). According to Paul (2 Timothy 4), it comes from God: “Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award o me on that day, and not only me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

Unlike other mission models, e.g. liberation theology, the *kerugmatic* mission model focuses on salvation of the soul and transformation of the community to Christ<sup>14</sup>. The *kerugmatic* paradigm did not show an interest in church planting in the LMS model, as explained in the founding principles of the LMS in 1794, where the model was what Doss called “mission separate from the church model” (Doss, 2005:305)<sup>15</sup>. Though this was its initial goal, the records indicate that a number of churches and mission stations were established. By nature and definition and indeed as a mission paradigm, *kerugma* is the oral preaching of the gospel. As a model practiced by Jesus and the early church, it moves (through the preachers) from one place to the next. According to the gospel of Matthew (cf. Matthew 24:14; 26:13; 10:7), to preach or proclaim refers to an oral message or address to “outsiders”. Outsiders would have been all people aside from the disciples of Jesus, which would suggest that “outside” was not limited to the gentile world. Jesus did not preach to his disciples or in the synagogues, he instead taught.

The reading of the text, Matthew 24:14, presents Jesus having a dialogue with his disciples during the Passover period. Jesus was telling them of the end of time. The disciples were concerned about the coming of the time, in response to which Jesus urged them that the focus and priority are the preaching of the gospel to all nations. Matthew 26:13 brings another dimension to preaching in that it argues that preaching is not limited to oral and pulpit activity, but also giving witness of what has been experienced. The third (Matthew 10:7) verse of Scripture quoted above gives the content of the gospel to be preached, i.e. the coming of the Kingdom of God and that it is near. This may also explain the times and the context of the preaching that it was good and an alternative Kingdom was desired.

It is thought that Matthew writes to a community of new believers and the intention of the gospel is that they produce more disciples. As the disciples and other followers of Jesus were wrestling with *Parousia*, they must not lose sight of the future kingdom. As such the followers must be good readers of the signs of time and in their preaching they must consider the following as the gospel content: Firstly, the Kingdom of God is near (Matthew 10:7) and secondly, it is the alternative kingdom ruled according to the principles of justice (Matthew 20:13) (Pawson, 2007:807).

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<sup>14</sup> This seems to follow the colonial approach, winning the land for the colonial administering country. Such a parallel is not missiological, but it must be noted that since they were contemporaries i.e. arrival of Christianity and colonialism, comparison cannot be avoided when clarifying certain issues.

<sup>15</sup> Doss puts forward two models which are: mission separate from the church as model 1, which could have applied to the model of the LMS; and Model 2, where church and mission are together and more institutionalised.

There is support in Johnson that the gospel was targeted at the new believer, but further the anticipation of the establishment of an organised worshipping community. This is evident in the strong homily and liturgical presence (Johnson, 1999:191).

It must be mentioned that teaching, as we know it now, was more than an intellectual enterprise. It challenged the listeners (already believers in most cases) to commit themselves to the mission of God (Bosch, 1991:66).

However, the churches that resulted from this model were replicas of the Western church in structure and polity (Haile, 1951; Du Plessis, 1965; Briggs & Wing, 1970).

*Kerugma*, therefore, must be viewed as the decisive characteristic of the Christian faith and an important way of participating in the *missio Dei*. Proclaiming must follow a certain pattern, beginning with common human experience and making Scripture understandable to the listener. Scripture must speak to the situation of the people (Erickson, 1998:483). Central to *kerugma*, as was to the preaching and teaching of Jesus Christ, is the Kingdom of God (*basileia*) and cannot be simplified to the concept of winning souls. The fact that *kerugma* starts with human experience and encounter with God makes it more than oral preaching, but witness of the grace of God and sharing with other members of the community where the gospel is preached.

Preaching was not completely void of teaching, to suggest it was void of teaching would be to miss the point. Preaching was also the means of instruction and teaching the ways of Christian life (Erickson, 1998:1065; cf. 1 Corinthians 14:3-5). It is possible that when Paul spoke of prophesy he was referring to preaching. Erickson (1998) argues, as he participated in the Christology debate, Jesus can be made known through the church's proclamation (*kerugma*). Brunner (1934) (quoted in Erickson 1998:682) says "we are bound to oppose the view that Christian faith springs...out of the historical Jesus of Nazareth...(but) out of the witness to the Christ of the preached message". This makes *kerugma* important, as it details the Jesus of faith and the work of those commissioned.

The reading of the 1 Corinthians 14:3-5 suggests that the purpose of preaching is to encourage, edify. Paul tells the Corinthians that preaching must be result oriented and purposeful. The sermons and witnesses must serve the purpose of addressing the gap in the life of the target community, as it was the issues of division and immoral practices within the community of Corinth.

Paul writes a letter to a church whose problems were to destroy its life and ministry and the letter intends to address them (Pawson, 2007:954). Johnson sees the community of Corinth as a mixture of confusion, pettiness, ambition, enthusiasm and fervour. A community struggling to

define itself in the complex context of an urban set-up (Johnson, 1991:295). It is this context where *kerugma* becomes critical as preaching the Christian way of life.

The Form Criticism<sup>16</sup> has proved that the exact chronological sequence of the Jesus' life cannot be constructed, but can be discovered through the apostles' witnessing of the works of Jesus. Erickson (1998:483), however, advises caution when following the *kerugma* (proclamation) as constructed based on the works of the apostles. Following the apostle *kerugma* risks moving from one thesis to the other in the writings of the apostles and missing the point found in the Jesus of history, who preached the gospel within the cultures of the Ancient Near East. As such the *kerugma* is issue and place specific, not innocent of the time.

What the existential theologians, such as Brunner (1934) and Pannenberg (1968), are saying is that Jesus cannot be known through proven historical facts, but through the proclaimed Word (*kerugma*). The other fact to bear in mind is the possible difficulty in the *kerugma* of the LMS. According to Erickson (1998:483), preaching must start with the common human experience. For the LMS it was reflective of Western culture and civilization. This condemned in total the indigenous worldview, in favour of that of Western culture as cited in the example of Ntsikana to demonstrate the need to move from particularism to universalism, whereby the work and grace of God is experienced and explained from and within any give context and socio-religious set-up.

The two models can be summed up by what Hiebert (1985:250) calls the "mission separate from church" model. The model was developed and found prominence in the person of William Carey, whose mission ambition and endeavours exceeded those of the institutions. He was motivated and found his mandate in the Great Commission. The programme started with the formation of mission societies. These societies were then expected to recruit members and send them to the mission field, in this case Africa. The churches that resulted from their labour were not missionary churches in the modern sense of the word and the theologians who follow them claim to be their true successors and the interpretations did not advance the missionary idea and the motivation (Peters, 1968:46). In this model the emphasis was on establishing churches and moving on. Whoever heard the calling of God would form their own church polity. This resulted in churches like the Congregational Union of South Africa (1859) being formed, as churches born out of this mission model. Though Steel (1999:115) argues that this was a sign that the churches were becoming self-supporting and independent after the withdrawal of the LMS, Peters (1968:48) explains that:

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<sup>16</sup> Form criticism assumed that the process through which the church handled the gospel material is the pattern of how folk stories were handed down. It shows also that the gospels are the products of the community of faith in a particular history and local context (Erickson, 1998:95).

“the missionary societies left many large churches passive and uninvolved in mission...it set up a trade company type of mission administration and complex with the mission societies becoming autonomous agencies alongside autonomous church bodies, thus introducing a dichotomy on the home base.”

Therefore, Steel's (1999:115) celebration of the self-supporting church does not take into consideration the ecclesiology of the universal church as the body of Christ. The greatest weakness of the model adopted by the LMS was that young churches became self-supporting, but did not have any ecclesiastic link with the founding church and associated with societies operating according to a philosophy of mission separate from the church (Doss, 2005:306). The model also allowed for the development of the dual theology of humanity, i.e. saving souls as the primary focus of the societies and ministering to the whole person that is supposed to be the focus of the church.

The analysis seems to suggest that the paradigm emphasised the verbal communication of the gospel. This focus must be understood in the context of the Reformation, where the reformers argued that the Roman Catholic church was adding all sorts of doctrines and the only way to remedy the situation was a return to the original, i.e. preaching. Central to the mission of God was the spiritual condition of the people, especially the poor, as expected content and subject matter of preaching. This is seen also in the preaching of the UCCSA (as will be described later) that after the wars of liberation and as some Christians started to occupy prominent positions, the preaching of liberation that centred on the misery of the people was watered down. This forms the call for the paradigm shift and the advocating of the mission-shaped congregation, whose mission is centred on the fullness of life for every creature and creation (cf. Doss, 2005).

The study argues that this was true of the LMS, as the focus provides the formatives for the UCCSA. John Philip<sup>17</sup> (1828a:ix) wrote in the Cape of Good Hope (now Cape Town):

“While our missionaries...are everywhere scattering the seeds of civilization, social order, happiness, they are, by the most unexceptionable means, extending British interest, British influence and British Empire. Whenever the missionary places his standard among a savage tribe, their prejudices against the colonial government give away.”

Phillips (1828b:227) continues in his second volume:

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<sup>17</sup> John Philip is celebrated in the UCCSA as a human rights activist.

“Missionary stations<sup>18</sup> are the most effective agents which can be employed to promote the internal strength of our colonies, and the cheapest and best military post that a wise government can employ to defend its frontier against the predatory incursion of the savage.”

It is such statements that leads to the conclusion that the gospel, as preached by the missionary, was considered (by missionaries) to be civilization or a step towards civilization. Bosch (1999:67) rightly asserts that *kerugma* must be challenging and consistent with the will of God, which is to save the broken world (cf. Matthew 6:10; Matthew 7:13; Matthew 21:28-31).

### 2.6.3 ABRAHAMIC MISSION MODEL

It is a missional ideology that suggests that whoever receives a blessing from God must pass it to or share with others (Lovetta, 1899:6). The LMS deemed it their responsibility to take God's blessing to other nations, including education, health, Christianity and civilization. Du Plessis (1965:92) puts it as follows:

“The blessing we have experienced in our hearts has rewarded our endeavours with a speedy consolation, and we call upon you...to join us in this glorious work...from feeble endeavours we have seen great issues arise...we have been witness of a gracious condescension of our incarnate God, who has led us...He strengthens the weak.”

This mission paradigm was fashioned on the Abrahamic<sup>19</sup> mission model. The opening statement (Du Plessis, 1965:92) demonstrates it as the opposite of the Sodom model, where the world was blamed and condemned (Wright, 2006:6). In Abraham lies the story of redemption. The ultimate goal of God's mission is to bless the whole world, as promised to Abraham (Genesis 18:19). The Abrahamic model is reflective of the mission of the LMS of the period (1794-1799). A number of traits of the Abrahamic tradition were projected onto their mission model, evidenced by their intent to launch a mission to the heathen land in an endeavour to transform the lives of the people.

This aspect is viewed from Wright's line of reasoning, though mindful of the fact that Wright is not arguing within the UCCSA paradigm. Theologically, Wright (2006:190) argues that there is movement from election to redemption. Mission is indeed sanctioned by God, so that through them (missionaries) the whole world may be redeemed and experience the grace of God. Missiologically, according to Wright (2010:190), there is a move from one man (Abraham) to all nations. The people of God are redeemed to belong to his priesthood in the midst of all nations.

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<sup>18</sup> Mission stations in the UCCSA today are used to argue that the church offered a holistic approach: church (spiritual), clinic (health) and schools (education) (cf. Mzilethi, 1999:70).

<sup>19</sup> The next chapter describes the Abraham covenant as it pertains to the formation of the UCCSA in 1967.

The model also intertwines with the exodus model in which people are free from oppressive institutions. However there is a sense in which the Egyptians can celebrate the exodus motif<sup>20</sup>.

“Go...and be a blessing” (Wright 2010:208; cf. Genesis 12:1-3) is quad-dimensional. Firstly, blessing is *creational* and *rational*. This means that the blessed are intelligently aware that God blessed them and they are missionally challenged to share the blessing with the world. Secondly, blessing is *missional* and *historical*. The God who blessed Abraham was a purposeful and intentional God. This missional concept is seen through Abraham, continuing in the Great Commission of the New Testament. The formation of the mission societies must be interpreted with the understanding of continuing the mission of God of blessing the nations. Thirdly, the blessing is *covenantal* and *ethical*. The covenant God calls his people (the church) to be faithful and obedient to the mission command. Fourthly, blessing is *multinational* and *Christological*. It finds its universality in Jesus where the whole world is called the children of God, because God owns the world (Wright, 2010:216; cf. Exodus 19:5).

The writer of the book of Exodus (Exodus 19:5) on chronicling the journey of the Israelites tells of an episode where Moses was to deliver a message to the house of Jacob. The message was about the redemptive action of God in Egypt. The script was that Jacob must obey the command and keep the commandment, by so doing Jacob would be blessed. The blessing must be taken with the understanding that the whole earth (and what is in it) belongs to God.

The exodus narratives detail the biggest escape in biblical history where more than two million slaves escaped from slavery in Egypt. It is the story that pictures the mighty works of God in human suffering and how they can be liberated by God. Such stories are retold in Passover on Easter narrative as the communities struggle to find way out of the new forms of slavery (Pawson 2007:99). These are universalised in the person of Abraham as mission model.

The Abrahamic model raises two aspects. The first is the sending God who sent Abraham and the disciples (Matthew 28), who also sends the LMS and other missionary societies of God today. Secondly, believing and obeying the mission commission and command remains important and will continue to define the church's participation in the *missio Dei*, as Wright (2010:79) explains:

“It is not that the divine promise has become contingent upon Abraham's obedience, but that Abraham's obedience has been incorporated into the divine promise...Theologically this constitutes a profound understanding of the value of the human obedience, it can be taken up by God and become a motivating factor in his purposes towards humanity.”

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<sup>20</sup> There was a threat to their community, as the slaves were multiplying and organising themselves. In this case, as the manpower of the economy they could take over or sabotage the economy.

This must be a guiding line for the church in seeking the appropriate mission paradigm that will assist in becoming obedient to God's purpose for the world today, which is to bless all nations through the obedience of the church following the model of Abraham. Theologically the church is also challenged with the question of who the descendants of Abraham are. If the church responds in the affirmative (Romans 4:16-17), then they are challenged to be a blessing to the world. Only God can bless and when He blesses them, they can through obedience be a blessing to the world on the principle "you are blessed to be a blessing to others".

Romans 4:16-17 read in conjunction with the Pauline missionary journey, possibly the one in Acts 28:17-22, presents Paul at pains to convince the Jewish community of salvation outside the Abrahamic lineage. Paul rightly asserts that limiting the salvation plan of God to Jews descendent of Abraham would leave the whole world to perish.

Paul's use of the Old Testament in the Christian context seems to reflect that all can be justified and be beneficiaries of the grace of God by faith, not by Jews traditions. Paul very strategically makes Abraham the point of departure. It is critical to note that New Testament scholars argue that Paul writes to a community he never had contact with and a departure from his normal approach of establishing a community and then writing a follow-up letter. In this case, it is suggested that Paul sought to establish a community that is a self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating colony of the Kingdom of God (Pawson, 2007:1060). There is also the sense that Paul adds the dimension of reconciliation to mission, where Jews and gentiles share the same ancestor (Johnson, 1999:343). The use of Abraham is diatribal and proof that the Torah is established on the principles of faith. Abraham is not called righteous because of merit, but righteousness in Abraham is a gift of grace from God. There is no need for superior races or figures. The mission of God is about reconciliation, peace and inclusive communities (Johnson, 1999:354).

#### **2.6.4 NEEDS-BASED MISSION MODEL**

This model builds on the conviction of the directors of the LMS who wrote "arise then, brethren, we adjure you, unite...the heathen who surround you, call to; 'come over and help us!'" (Du Plessis, 1965:92)

It recognises the role of the local people in the success of the mission work, given that they did the contextual analysis and made a call. The thesis can be demonstrated by means of the following three examples.

Firstly, according to Briggs and Wing (1970:26), it was Chief Mothibi of the BaTlhaping tribe who invited the missionaries to work among his people: "Send me missionaries and I will be the father to them..." (Briggs & Wing, 1970:26)

James Reed and Robert Hamilton, who were artisans, were thus sent to the Bechuanaland in 1817 in response to the request. The mission station at Maruping (New Lettakoo) was opened.

Secondly, the Bushmen and the Koranna came into conflict with the colonial settlers. A man called Floris Visser, also a farmer, mediated the peace deal (Du Plessis, 1965:103). He was a man of character and piety, always praying, singing and reading Psalms. His way of life attracted the Bushmen and the Koranna. Mr. Visser advised them to go to Cape Town and request that a missionary come and work among them. Du Plessis (1965:103) explains that “they expressed an earnest desire to learn to know the God whom the Dutchmen worshipped”. The missionaries (Van der Kemp, Kicherer, William Edwards and John Edmonds), who arrived in the Cape in 1799, were to go in different directions, with Kicherer and Edwards setting out to help the Bushmen and the Korannas.

The third example is from the Macedonian mission. Acts 16:9 suggests that Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia calling him to come to their aid. Under the guidance of the Spirit of God, Paul went to Macedonia as Acts 16:10 indicates: “After Paul had seen the vision; we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.”

The argument being that Paul didn't initiate the missionary trip, but that it was a response to the issues in Macedonia and participation in the mission of God to save the people of Macedonia. This model finds support in the words of the LMS “the heathen who surround you, call to you: ‘come over and help us’” (Du Plessis, 1965:92). Though there is no record of any correspondence that suggests the existence of such a request, it is reasonable to think that the heathen life presented by explorers and merchants suggested the need to civilize and Christianise them and this the LMS interpreted as a call for help. This model seems to suggest that the mission undertaking must be aimed at and initiated for a missional purpose.

### **2.6.5 COLONIAL MISSION MODEL**

The introduction of this model is built on Van der Walt's (2008:7) contribution to the impact of colonialism and Christianity in Africa. He argues as follows:

“Colonial possession were equated with political prestige and status...the cultural reason arrives from the ethnocentrism of the European people. They regarded anyone different from themselves as inferior...the Europeans...felt it (is) their duty to ‘civilise’, ‘up lift’ and ‘evangelise’ the Africa people...and this provided them with moral justification.”

This is where term the “dark continent”, which may as well mean uncivilised, the heathen, people of no faith finds its base.

This is located within the paradigm Bosch (1991:344) calls Enlightenment and for Reed (1992:2) is called “colonial era in mission” (the wording by Reed is adopted in this section and indeed subsequent chapters). Reed (1992:2) argues that “taking its cues from Enlightenment, civilization became missionary goal, parallel to that of evangelism, and missionary strategies were wedded with the colonial spirit”.

This thinking finds support in the Darwin theory and stands accused of being responsible for the thinking that Western is better and more civilized. The Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection holds that the traditional theological doctrines support the theory that “different species were separately created” (Raphael, 1994:7) and plays into the superior culture concept.

The word “selection” suggests that some beings are better placed or can evolve to be more advanced than others. This creates the thinking that made the West perceive itself as superior to the uncivilized people of Africa. It also became the reason or feeder for greed and colonialism.

The same sentiment can be found in the missionary ideas of William Carey, considered the pioneer of modern missionary societies. Carey (in Reed, 1992:2) argued as follows:

“Can we hear that they are without the gospel, without government, without laws, and without art and sciences and not exert ourselves to introduce among them the sentiments of men and of Christians? Would not the spread of the gospel be the most effectual means of their civilization? Would that not make them useful members of the society?”

It is such thinking that made Christianity the handmaiden of colonialism and through colonial expansion Christianity spread across the globe and also entered Africa. This led the entire “Western missionary movement...to give birth to Western superiority feeling and prejudice” (Reed, 1992:3).

This could possibly be traced to the views of Enlightenment where humankind imagined a super race, which could also point to the missional desire to go and civilize the uncivilized world.

Colonial models led missionaries to set up mission stations as Christian colonies. At these stations there would be a clinic, school, church and human settlement, e.g. Clearwater (Griqualand), Kuruman, Inyathi, Zinyangeni and Hope Fountain in Zimbabwe. The often spoken of, in the UCCSA history, John Philip (cf. Du Plessis, 1965:143; Briggs & Wing, 1970:27) said about these stations in 1828:

“Missionary stations are the most effective agents which can be employed to promote the internal strength of our colonies, and the cheapest and best military post a wise government can

employ to defend its frontier against the predatory incursions of savage tribes.” (Bosch, 1991:305)

It was for the rights of these very tribes that UCCSA (LMS, ABM and CUSA) writers argue John Philip fought. There is also a sense that the colonial administrators used the missionaries and their societies to their advantage, which people like Van der Kemp resisted seeing the Hottentots as equally free, when in actual fact they were not (Du Plessis, 1965:131).

It has to be accepted and acknowledged that this paradigm saw the spread of the gospel globally and many lives were changed in a socio-religious way. It also had some negative effects on the UCCSA mission, which it was still dealing with in 1995 in their programme *hamba/tsamay/beweeg! with evangelism: reshaping the church for mission* (UCCSA, 1986).

Firstly, the colonial model failed to produce local and independent churches that were able to grow. The church only created maintenance congregations, not missional. The reading of the founding principle shows that this was never the goal of the missionary work in Africa. It suggests that the intention was to preach the gospel to which people would respond by forming a church. This was never achieved, according to (Haile, 1951:2), instead the churches were replicas of their mother churches. This kept them tied to the colonies and thus not independent. Secondly, it failed to produce leaders who could think theological within their cultural context, a situation that led the Western theology to go unquestioned and there no distinction was made between Western culture and the gospel proclaimed. This meant that to be Christian was to be Western-like, as Van der Walt (2008:7) illustrates:

“The British approach to mission was that the indigenous people and the British should be segregated. An African could acquire British culture - and many did - but never the ancestry to go with it...The only way someone could be as good as an Englishmen/women.”

It also led to the liberation theologies being reactive rather than moderate (cf. Gundani, 2005).

The trend was for the churches of the home government to evangelise the area colonised by their nations (cf. Du Plessis 1965; Bosch, 1991), an approach called comity (Beaver, 1991:B70). It was justified as a way to avoid double occupancy of the region, overlap of mission programmes and competition among mission societies. It was simply the validation of the colonised mission land. Comity is the practice of designating a mission agency to be responsible for the evangelism of a particular territory. It may have been intended to avoid mission duplication, but it created denominationalism according to geographical area.

It would be important to also look at the concept of civilization, especially in the context of this model. Civilization is difficult to define, given its different meaning to different people. It is

related to the development of Western origin. Whoever opted for civilization had to accept the superiority of Western culture as an inherent part of the new life (Van der Walt, 2008:438). Van der Walt (2008:442) explains that:

“we have Westerners who regard Africa as uncivilized and Africans are inferior, subhuman race...they see no future for the continent if it does not accept superior Western culture, lock, stock and barrel.”

Bosch's (1991:311) summation of civilization in this context as Westernisation and/or Christianisation indeed rings true. Success or failure must be seen and interrogated within the context of the political and economic activities of the time.

It must be borne in mind that during the time of the arrival of Western missionaries, in this case the LMS, civilisation was defined from the colonisers' perspective. As such civilisation would mean “to make one look like” the colonisers.

There is another side of the argument that cannot be avoided and it needs to be considered lest the entire debate be trivialised and reduced to religious imperialism. According to Loretta (1899), there was indeed a zeal to evangelise. This zeal has to be seen independent of the colonial motives, despite them being contemporaries. In this case it could be argued that inasmuch as there is a school of thought that the evangelisation of Africa and colonisation are closely linked, it cannot be ignored that they were separate endeavours that promoted different agendas and at times at odds (cf. Du Plessis, 1965).

#### **2.6.6 PROPHETIC MINISTRY AS THE MISSION MODEL**

This model is based on the LMS's activities and attitude towards the slave trade and more specific on the person of John Philip (though there are other prominent figures like Livingstone and Van der Kemp, for the purposes of this discussion the focus falls on John Phillip).

A number of scholars have attempted to describe John Philip. According to Du Plessis (1965:143), he was a man “with the restless spirit and incautious utterances”. Bosch (1991:311), however, considers his leadership “sufficiently dictatorial and opinionated”, to which Ross (2005:4) adds that “his aggression and intolerant manner did harm, as did his unwillingness to admit mistakes and his unsympathetic attitude towards colonialist”. The Congregationalists (writing within the UCCSA) saw him as man of experience, whose preaching transformed the people from ordinary members of the church into missionaries. Even though this is not a biography of his life, all these descriptions relate to his activities in the mission field.

This does not reveal the full nature of Philip, but according to Briggs and Wing (1970:34), he was:

“concerned for the under-dog in every circumstance...indomitable courage in every cause he championed...That he rapidly became a most controversial figure is really a measure of the man himself, and if late South African tradition has accorded him more censure than praise, that must mean that his principles, though unpopular, could not be ignored.”

John Philip arrived and practiced his ministry in the Cape Colony (South Africa), governed at the time by the soldier Rufane Donkin (1772-1841). He served as a British army officer during the Napoleon era and was the commander of the army in the Cape Colony, but knew little or nothing about civilian administration. A military approach was thus taken to resolve any crisis.

Philip's ministry centred on the underprivileged, in which he spoke for and with the oppressed, whether it be the indigenous people or the colonial settlers. Philip was called before the acting governor, Sir Rufane Donkin, and accused of meddling in political affairs, considered a cardinal sin. The governor said of Philip: “Philip...is to be feared, more as a politician than a missionary” (Briggs & Wing, 1970:27), to which Philip replied:

“If a minister is guilty of dereliction of his duty in advocating the cause of the oppressed, or in relieving the necessities of the destitute, I plead guilty to the charge...I could not see the mission destroyed, nor aborigines trampled in the dust, nor the settlers left to perish, without attempting to relieve them by legal means.”

His ministry theology was not meant for a particular group, but that all who suffer need the protection and the salvation of God. It can be argued that an Empire can take any form or colour, but the eyes of the prophet must not be diverted from the poor and the oppressed for the land at any given historical time.

Another picture is, however, sketched by people outside the LMS tradition and their descendants who make the following assertion:

“While our missionaries...[it can be assumed that this includes John Philip] are everywhere scattering the seeds of civilization, social order, happiness, they are, by far most unexceptionable means, extending British interest, British influence, and the British Empire. Where the missionary places his standard among a savage tribe, their prejudices against the colonial government give way...Missionary stations are the most efficient agents which can be employed to promote the internal strength of our colonies, and the cheapest and best military post that a wise government can employ to defend its frontier against the predatory.” (Bosch, 1991:305)

This means that in as much as he fought for the right of the oppressed coloured, he still retained his allegiance to the British government and its interests, suggesting that Philip has been the subject of extravagant laudation and the most unmeasured vituperation. His biggest weakness was that he could make sweeping statements of accusation, without verifying their validity (Du Plessis, 1965:153) and refused to retract his utterances.

Regardless of the polarised assessment of John Philip, he provided the UCCSA with a legacy of social responsibility as one component of mission work in the countries of operation. He created the basis for the development of the liberation theology that opposes the policies of oppression and economic and ecological injustices.

The study has thus far argued that the ability to adapt to mission trends is not the task of academics or about the fancy churches that have been established, but that it has been the key to churches' success in participation in the mission of God in their particular context. The voice that speaks to the suffering and the oppressor has both annoyed the abuser and brought a smile to the oppressed.

It is being realised, in retrospect that the very mission philosophy of the LMS of not seeking to establish churches was indeed a missiological setback for African Christianity, especially in the UCCSA. The LMS was so preoccupied with mission that it never undertook church planting, an omission that led to a lack of mission innovation and made them dependent on the Western mission strategy and ecclesiological approach that failed to address the African worldview. Being a mission society contributed to their perception that the church doesn't participate in mission.

The LMS mission philosophy had both its advantages and disadvantages. The following five advantages have been identified:

1. The LMS was able to free the mission from the denominational and doctrinal structure of any particular church.
2. Considering the fact that most of the human resources recruited for mission were lay, it is evident that the LMS appreciated the contribution of the laity to the mission.
3. It further explored the command and commission of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.
4. It recognised and took seriously human/people rights, as a mission obligation.
5. It considered the concept of partnership as a mission asset.

However, there were also shortcomings. Firstly, inasmuch as independent churches were indeed planted, as stated in the founding principle, they were replicas of the Western church in structure and practice. Secondly, there was no programme of empowerment for the local

people to assume leadership of the church that would have grown out of the mission work. Most churches or worship communities collapsed after the withdrawal of the missionaries.

## **2.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter is a discourse on the mission understanding of the church before the formation of the UCCSA, 1967, by means of a delineation and analysis of the history of the church with deliberate bias towards the mission. The study concludes therefore that the UCCSA's concept of mission has to be drawn from three strands of the formation of the UCCSA: firstly, mission as reaching the heathen and uncivilised world (LMS); secondly, mission as working with different races and self-reliant independence (CUSA) and thirdly, mission as partnership (ABM). Herein the *kerugma*, Abrahamic, need-based, colonial and prophetic models all played a role. This leads to addressing the next key and fundamental questions: How was the UCCSA formed out of this history and how did these three ecclesiastic traditions come together?

## **CHAPTER 3 THE COMING TOGETHER OF THE THREE ECCLESIASTIC FORMATIONS**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter sets out the history, the theology and the mission models of the LMS, ABM and CUSA as the background and preparation for the merger. Chapter three wrestles with the question of how the UCCSA evolved from the ecclesiastic traditions and the process by which the three strands (LMS, ABM and CUSA) came together to form the UCCSA, as the objectives of the project. In achieving this the chapter reviews the following: the process of formation seen at the United Churches as early indicators of a merger, together with the context of the formation as formative factor and developments that took place after the merger.

### **3.2 THE PROCESS OF FORMATION**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, it is three church traditions (LMS, ABM, and CUSA) that came together to form the UCCSA in 1967. The process of merging comprised two confusing processes, which needs to be put into perspective. Both the processes were a manifestation of a new mission paradigm in the mission history of the church, a shift from the fundamental principle of the LMS of only preaching the glory of God not to planting the church<sup>21</sup>. However, the opposite could also be argued by saying that there was indeed the intention to plant churches, but that they were to function independently of the sending churches of the West. However, there is a bias towards an emphasis on the concept of co-operation that manifested in the new mission paradigm, expressed in the formation of the LMS (1795) and its sending guide, was being re-appropriated. First, there was the formation of the United Church (1951) and then the formation of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (1967).

Initially there were the three church traditions (the LMS, ABM and CUSA). The American Board of Mission evolved to the formation of the Bantu Congregational Church (BCC) form of ecclesiological organisation, liturgy and traditions, since the LMS originally sought to possess some aspect that was distinct to only them. In the process of coming together, there was the 1951 United Church project (to be discussed in the next section). The coming together and ecclesiological contribution of the London Missionary Society, Bantu Congregational Church and the Congregational Union of South Africa is detailed further on in the research.

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<sup>21</sup> This must not be taken to suggest that the idea of a church was not there at all, but it would seem that the LMS by nature and composition was not affiliated to a particular church making it difficult to prescribe a church polity or governance.

Secondly, there were obvious differences in terms of economic and political stratification, race and colour, given that there were black, “coloured” and white churches (Haile, 1951:1).

Thirdly, even amongst the black members of the three branches (ABM, LMS, CUSA) there were differences of language and culture, given the diverse work of both the LMS, ABM and CUSA amongst the Batswana, Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, Ndebele and Chitswa people. Finally, these three church formations were working in five different countries, viz.: South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique (De Gruchy, 2000:34). The contribution of each is of interest to the formation of the UCCSA and how it understood its mission within its own paradigm.

### **3.2.1 THE FORMATION OF THE UNITED CHURCH**

The intention is to create the impression that there is or was a church or denomination called the United Church, but it was task-oriented group of local churches that were to deal with the situation of the Goldfields. The concept, however, developed even further in churches like Vryburg United, St. Barnabas, St. Mungos and others, where not only the Congregationalists, but also the Methodists and the Lutherans would come together and pool their resources to employ a minister and thus the new model of mission: partnership. The underlying concept of the United Churches is the “common witness”. There was no church as yet in the Goldfields and thus the minister was called to start the mission work, with the aspiration of eventually establishing a church.

The Goldfield Mission Project may not be linked to the formation of the UCCSA, but it provided the necessary environment for negotiating the merger of the churches.

Industrial development and the discovery of gold in South Africa led to a wave of people leaving their homes in search of employment. This presented mission opportunities for the church. The ABM, LMS, CUSA and Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS)<sup>22</sup> came together in 1951 to establish the United Church. These were French missionaries seeking employment in the north of Kuruman and were also working under the counsel of John Philip, the LMS missionary (Briggs & Wing, 1970:54).

This church was created for the workers in the Goldfields of the Orange Free State. Its joint committee was tasked to identify areas of common interest, which was recorded in the CUSA assembly minutes (1966) as follows:

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<sup>22</sup> Beyond the Goldfields Mission Project, the PEM is not mentioned in the formation history of the UCCSA. It must be mentioned that PEM had John Philip as their mission adviser and friend until his retirement as the LMS superintendent in 1850 (Briggs & Wing, 1970:54).

“Sharing experience and engaging in united action in areas where the work of the bodies overlapped. The committee was also charged with establishing the United Church in the Goldfields of Orange Free State.”

There was never any intention to form the United Church (Congregational church), but to minister to the migrant workers from Lesotho, Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe (Rhodesia at the time). There is no indication that the call came from the home churches of migrant workers. It was a new mission initiative. Although the goal was never to plant churches among migrant workers, the intention to plant the seed for them to form churches in their home towns or countries cannot be ruled out. The PEMS was only interested in the United Church when the sharing of pastoral resources was not the wider scope of the project (Briggs & Wing, 1970:308). Briggs and Wing (1970) and the minutes (United Church, 1951) do not explain PEMS' disinterest in the other aspects of the project<sup>23</sup>. The objective of forming the United Church was to have a church that is united in ministerial activities, i.e. sharing of pastoral resources. The individual churches were to retain their polity and theological convictions.

The reading of the CUSA minutes of 1951, 1953 and 1960 does not explain the wider scope either. The study is, however, of the conviction that elements for missional consideration must be both biblical and within the polity and philosophy of the church. In this case, however, it is possible that the wider scope may well have conformed to the biblical standard, but could not meet the ecclesiastical philosophy of the different churches that formed the United Church.

The reading of the minutes (1951, 1960 and 1966), in conjunction with Briggs and Wing (1970), does not give the reader the intended mission approach, as it is in the case of Paul. It must, however be accepted that the intention was noble, i.e. to proclaim the gospel to the mining community and especially the mine workers. A perceptive reading of Acts 13:12-14 suggests that missionaries would target areas that are hubs of activities, like Antioch. The people would come to the city to trade, which would provide a good mission field. They would then upon their return share the story of the gospel with their friends, families and business partners and in so doing become agents of the gospel. This was not the sole intention for uniting the churches, it was also the pastoral care of the migrant workers who at the time did not belong to a church.

The migrant workers from Lesotho, Mozambique and Botswana were not permanent residents of South Africa, every holiday and at the end of their contracts (which were not formal, they could come for a year or so and work and go back) or upon retirement (for those permanently employed or who had a formal contract) they returned to their particular home countries. The intention was to take advantage of the people who had been grouped by employment. This

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<sup>23</sup> The PEM was mostly focused on the Sotho people and this may also explain their interest in the Goldfield project (Biggs & Wing, 1970:103).

gave birth to the formation of ministries in the church like, Soldiers of Christ (*ibutho/masole/amadodana*) whose worship approach is a fusion of the African Traditional Religions and Christianity.

It is important to mention that these migrant workers were not affiliated to any church, so this was a new mission initiative in which the Goldfields was identified as a mission opportunity.

These developments could be viewed independently, but also provided fertile ground for the formation of the UCCSA. This further meant that as they worked together the possibility arose for the adoption of a covenant that defined them as one.

The joint committee of the United Church did not develop a contextual mission theology informed by the experiences of the people. The target group was migrant workers who were uprooted from their ancestral homes (Lesotho, Mozambique, Botswana and Zimbabwe). Theology that speaks to African spirituality and worldview was needed. An African cannot appease his ancestral spirit on foreign soil.

The gospel model of the church was to address the spiritual lack the migrant workers were experiencing. The lack of spiritual care was not the only problem of the migrant workers, some chose to seek employment in the South African mines due to political instability at home (Zimbabwe and Mozambique would be prime examples, given that the liberation struggle was at its peak and some were wanted for political crimes. Sanctions against the colonial regimes also made it difficult to find work or they simply refused to find employment and thus contribute to the success of the colonial regime). There was also a need for a mission model that would engage with different cultures from a wider geographical area and had come to work in South Africa.

### 3.3 THE FORMATION OF THE UCCSA

A cursory reading of the LMS history (1799-1967) (cf. Lovetta, 1899; Haile, 1951; Du Plessis, 1965; Briggs & Wing, 1970) presents the formation of the UCCSA as a continuation of the Orange Free State Goldfields Mission Project (United Church). However, a great deal of organisational structure building and conflict preceded the Goldfields project that must be kept in mind. The contention is that an awareness of these events is essential for obtaining a complete understanding of the history of the church in its mission evolution. The process towards the formation was not without its challenges and the following are a number of examples of the obstacles the church had to overcome on its road towards its current context.

In 1925 a native ministerial committee<sup>24</sup> was established (from the native Tswana and Matabele districts) to address what it perceived as unfair and unbalanced policies of the district committee. The following two issues formed the core of the contention:

1. After ordination the native ministers had the right to baptise, to marry and administer the Holy Communion, but not to receive or dismiss members. Will they ever have the right? (Briggs & Wing, 1970:286)
2. We don't have the right to sign membership tickets or catechumen tickets. We are not taken into the councils of missionaries with regard to school matters. When shall we be man? (Briggs & Wing, 1970:286).

The district council (made up of two native advisory boards, the Tswana and the Matabeleland boards) was disbanded in 1943 and replaced with the mission council in which the African ministers were represented. Before disbandment, the district council was set to:

“hold annual meetings with the missionaries, for the discussion of questions of Mission policy, and for assistance in dealing with disputes in the churches, so that we may, at the same time, satisfy the natural desire of the Natives for the greater voice in the conduct of the affairs, train them in the principles of the church government, and avail ourselves of the influence and knowledge of their own people.” (Briggs & Wing, 1970:286)

Wing and Briggs (1970:287) do not provide the role of the mission council that replaced the district committee, only the structure of the committee is explained. It was made up of three regional councils of the LMS and were to preside over their geographic space: Southern Regional Council (South Africa), Central Regional Council (Botswana) and the Northern Region Council (Rhodesia). These structures arose while the LMS missionaries were starting to organise themselves into administration committees, which were to be responsible for the administration of the funds from the board and the placement and supervision of the ministers (Wing & Briggs, 1970:285).

This structure was maintained until 1967 with the formation of the UCCSA. The regional councils were predominately laypeople and became a forum for the locals to express their views.

The above developments identify the events that arguably led to the formation of the UCCSA.

Firstly, the church was pre-occupied with evolutionary issues like the shift in structure from being a society to a church. This was a big step because it was a departure from the missionaries'

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<sup>24</sup> This was different from the district council.

fundamental principle and philosophy. The society's mission objective was to proclaim the gospel of repentance, not to form churches. Crucial though was that the society never formulated a programme for leadership development. This can, however, be understood within the context of the study's explanation of the *kerugma* paradigm (cf. chapter two of this study), where the preaching of salvation was sole and focal. The formation and practice of the society was outside the red-tape structure of the church in England that was not deemed supportive of mission initiatives, as dictated by the Great Commission.

Secondly, the integration of the native ministers (the ministers recruited from local membership, most of whom were also trained as school teachers) into the mission mainstream of the church was very important. It shows the different understanding of the role of the minister or simply the members of the church as equal participants in the *missio Dei*. As mentioned in previous paragraphs and in relation to the mission models (colonial model), explained in chapter two, the sentiment of a superior race infiltrated the mission mentality and organisation of the church. The colonial paradigm, by implication, did not see the indigenous people as civilized<sup>25</sup>, but instead considered the Western missionaries (Moffat; Kok; Hamilton among the Tlhaping; Livingstone among the BaKwena in Botswana; John Philip among the Xhosa, the Hottentots and Heleme; and John Moffat among the Ndebele) as civilised and there to help the indigenous people out of the dark. The furthest the locals could go in mission work were to be missionaries' assistants (*isandla sika mfundisi/lentsogo laga moruti*) or teacher evangelists<sup>26</sup>. The rise of African nationalism encroached on the ecclesiological theology and made the indigenous people believe that they had something to offer in the running of the affairs of the church. As Nathan Shamuyarira (1974:143) puts it, the Bible teaches that:

"God is not interested in just a part of human life, but in the whole of it. The church should never fail to raise the voice of conscience on fundamental principles of racial equality, human dignity, and injustice. It not supports a qualified franchise...and still pose a question 'who is my neighbour?'"

It is such gospel teaching and interpretation that turned the people to a God who is also concerned about their dignity and empowered them to take an interest in national issues.

Thirdly, the name changed from district committee to mission in 1954, though the two districts of Matabele and Bechuanaland remained in use until 1996, but this did not in any case signal a new mission paradigm. The changes were purely administrative rather than missional, yet it must be acknowledged that the church was able to respond to the historical context. It was

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<sup>25</sup> See the description of civilization in chapter two.

<sup>26</sup> These were normal black and local people, especially in the areas missioned by LMS (Kuruman, Botswana and Zimbabwe).

thought at the time that talk about a church was in reference to the white people and any mention of mission to be undertaken related to the black people (Hambira, 1999:220).

### **3.3.1 CONTEXT IN THE TIME OF COMING TOGETHER**

The mission theology of any church is shaped by its context, and it dictates the direction of mission strategy and the adoption of models is twofold, i.e. theologically and socio-political and thus also the case with the formation of the UCCSA.

#### **3.3.1.1 Socio-political context**

The UCCSA came together at the height of the liberation war in Zimbabwe and South Africa. Briggs and Wing (1970:289) argue that the period saw the erosion of human rights and full gamut of Apartheid legislation. These include, among many, the Bantu Education Act, the removal of the coloureds from the voter's roll and the Group Areas Act (Briggs & Wing, 1970:289). In Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) there was the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from Britain by Ian Smith and the densification of the liberation. The Rhodesian Front came in power in 1962 and in 1965 declared independence from Britain (Auret, 1992:22). These realities affected the theological content of the church.

A mission shift requires a leader who can rise and drive the church to move away from being an inward-looking church and have its mission agenda informed and pushed by the socio-political context. Auret (1992:22) argues in the case of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), but it is also deemed applicable to other countries, as follows:

“Rhodesia...was a society in which the black majority had no effective political role or voice, where attempt on the part of black leaders to redress some of the social and economic ills of their people were met with banning and detention. It was a country divided by the Land Tenure Act into racially segregated areas...people almost without hope of being able to shake off the yoke of colonialism.”

The church is formed when theology is based on the teaching that “when you want peace, work for justice”. This was understood to underwrite the philosophy that “peace must be in men’s mind, so that it can exist in human events” (Auret, 1992:29).

#### **3.3.1.2 Theological context**

The theological context arises from the interpretation of statements and positions made by the church through history. It also looks at how such statements and positions could inspire the church today as it faces the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This context aids in the evaluation and formulation of an informed call for a new paradigm.

The context provides the theological framework that presents the church, UCCSA in this case, as the reading community. The theological context provides the UCCSA with the framework for seeing themselves as the people of God. It informs how the church is governed and how worship is structured. This calls for both a spiritual and intellectual reading of the Bible in the context of certain realities and aids the church to discern the will of God and join Him. During the time of formation, the theological landscape was defined by the liberation theology. An analysis of the UCCSA context seems to indicate that the coming together was a quest for solidarity in an unkind world, which was at the time entrenched in war.

Theology helps to define the uniqueness of the church, denominationalism. The study seeks to discern the revelation of God in the minds of the church fathers, as they agreed to come together in the spirit of both what can keep us together and what we can do together. As mentioned above, it is in theology that the God of hope is revealed in the Scriptures and history of his people (Erickson, 1998:32).

The probe into the mission of the church in the context of the Reformed theology is undertaken within this context of the new mission landscape. It is through Reformed theology that the participation of the church in the *missio Dei* provides the understanding of God's preferential bias for the poor. The Reformed theology gives structure to the mission thrust and discourse base (Bosch, 1991:435; cf. Luke 4:18-32).

There is need to shift the theological mind-set of the theologians in and around the UCCSA, prophesy must be modelled around the themes of the settled Israel, across the river Jordan theology. The "across the river Jordan theology" is coined and used to refer to the theology designed and applied in the settled community after the struggle for liberation. This theological concept relates to the period of suffering experienced during the exodus from Egypt through the desert, to cross the river Jordan, as mark of the beginning of a new life. Hence, the "across the River Jordan theology" is modelled around the themes of the settled Israel. This is the theological mind-set that may produce the preferred mission outcomes.

The prophetic witness as a mission model, within the socio-political context, must be able to challenge the leadership to be sensitive to the needs of the people (cf. Anderson, 1975; Bosch, 1991). It understands mission as the directive from God, where his people are called to repent and take part in his mission activities as He saves the world.

### **3.4 THE DEFINITION OF THE CHURCH**

This section details the endeavour to understand the definition of the church in general and UCCSA in particular in the context of the time of formation of the UCCSA. As referred to in the above paragraphs, in the process of formation of the United Church a joint committee (1965)

was formed and one of its tasks was to draft the constitution that was to formalise the coming together of the churches. Although the constitution is a legal document and cannot be used to define the church, it can provide an indication of a church's perception of itself as a community of faith. It can express how its members understand themselves as an institution or organisation and how they intend to undertake their ecclesiastic business. The constitution is also not a theological document that can be used to define doctrinal issues, but it can be read to establish the missiological sense of the church and its theological understanding. With this conviction and submission, the paragraph of the constitution that intends to define the church needs to be reviewed:

"Scripture declares and faith accepts that from the beginning God's purpose was to gather all people in joyful, loving and permanent communion with Himself and with one another. The Church is the community of those who believe in the one God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; who thus accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour: and so, by the power of the Holy Spirit, seek to live to the glory of God the Father. They covenant with God and one another to walk together in all his ways and ordinances according to all He has made known to them. The corporate life and fellowship of the Church are experienced most immediately in the local church, gathered in response to the Word of God to worship, serve and witness to Him. The corporate life and fellowship of the Church are experienced more widely in the denomination as expressed in the latest edition of constitution<sup>27</sup>." (UCCSA, 2009:2)

This extract is relevant in that it provides the understanding of the nature of the church and its mission. The church is the community of those who have heard the Word of God and responded by participating in the mission of God. The church is instituted by God and the coming together of the people expresses the mission of God. The reading of this extract, therefore, suggests that the mission of God was understood as keeping God's people (church) together in happiness and joy. The church's understanding of mission was consistent with the fundamental principle of the LMS that it shall be left to the minds of those whom God has called to fellowship with his Son to form a church polity of their own (Haile, 1951:1).

In 1986 another attempt to define the church was made. This was to become a watershed attempt, because the publication would serve to train new Christians. According to Wing (1986:33), the first General Secretary of the UCCSA, the "church is not a building, or society or an organisation and it is certainly not the property of any particular minister. .The church is people...the people of God".

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<sup>27</sup> The use of the word denomination in the UCCSA means the church comprised of all the synods (Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe) and the 2009 version is the latest edition of the constitution that has undergone several amendments.

Read in conjunction with the constitution it means the church is the people gathered by God for his purpose, which is fellowship with his Son.

In 1996, more than twenty-nine years after the formation of the UCCSA in 1967, Roy Briggs was tasked to compile the material to prepare probationers<sup>28</sup> for ordination. This reflects that the 1967 formation was not an isolated event, but a process that would continue as the church grew and faced new mission frontiers. It was also meant to prepare ministers for the realities of the time and Briggs (1996:xi) argues that “the basic aim of these studies is to spell out the implications of our Church’s covenant, so that the relationship it creates will become more aligned to the will of the Lord of the Church”.

The nature of the church, according to Briggs, is created and headed (cf. Ephesians 1:22-23) by Christ. The people are gathered by Christ and He forms them into a church. The church

“must continually bear witness to the fact that membership of the Church is by grace alone, as through the forgiveness of their sins Christ graciously calls his people and gathers them into fellowship...which we call the covenant of grace.” (Briggs, 1996:1)

This defines the nature of the church to be taught to ordained ministers and shared with congregants as the position of the church.

Moreover, it can be argued that it would not be productive to construct by inference the meaning of the church based on the principle of the society (LMS), which was not a church itself. Also, it was working outside the command structures of the church, implying a free and non-structure ecclesiastic formation and theology. It cannot be disregarded, however, how at the historical time (1967) of the formation of the UCCSA the church was defined as the people called by God for the purpose of fellowship with Him through his Son. The LMS missionaries understood themselves as a non-denominational network, commissioned to take the gospel to the heathen land and not a denominational polity (cf. Haile, 1951). The governing structures of the sending churches of the LMS missionaries might have influenced the organisation of the local churches and the strong emphasis on independence. This could be drawn from the fact that the society was operating on the principle of “mission separate from the church model” (Doss, 2005:305). It may also explain the independence approach in the setting up of the church and the focus on the autonomy of the local churches upon its formation in 1967 onward.

There is thus a deliberate interest here in the images of the church that develops from the reading of Wing (1986) and Briggs (1996). There is the sense that there were two possible

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<sup>28</sup> Also called interns within the UCCCSA

ecclesiastical definitions in the UCCSA with its formation in 1967, the church as the people of God and the church as the body of Christ and these are examined in the following sections.

### **3.4.1 CHURCH AS THE NEW PEOPLE OF THE GOD**

The understanding of the UCCSA is that to be the people of God is the same as to be the people of Jesus, because they are called to come and fellowship with the Lord (Wing, 1986:34). However, it becomes equivocal when Wing arguing for the formed UCCSA, follows Paul's line of presenting the church as the New Israel (cf. Galatians 6:16; Acts 2:36) whereby the Old Israel did not accept Jesus as the Messiah and the new Israel is bought by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). Reading the theological logic of Joseph Wing (1986) in the context of the transition from the LMS to the localised UCCSA church, it may suggest that the LMS was the old Israel and the New Israel would be the UCCSA. This presents an awkward analogy and a theological mismatch. Whether this is the fair interpretation of the ecclesiological understanding of Wing or not, it needs qualification and the church fathers of the UCCSA did not oblige. What is relevant in this case is that upon its formation in 1967, the UCCSA defined the nature of the church as the people of God (1 Peter 2:9-10). Being God's people is his choice (Erickson, 1998:1045), as Paul would put it 2 Corinthians 6:16: "For we are the temple of the living God. As God said, 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God and they will be my people.'"

The concept of the church as the people of God has a number of qualifications and it is more likely to assume that the UCCSA checked before that title was implemented. The urgent question that needs to be put forward is "when and where did the people of God come into existence as the church would put it or when does the earthly church qualify to be called the people of God?" (Wright, 2010:28) The question posed is: "When and where did the UCCSA consider themselves as the people of God?" This question looks at the mission of the church, its history, its focus and scope.

It is out of this discussion that the church must see its priorities in the mission of God and its limitations. It addresses the element of ministry of the Word and presence (Wright, 2010:9).

### **3.4.2 THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST**

The UCCSA writers Briggs (1996) and Wing (1986)<sup>29</sup>, whose work was published after the formation, argue that the church is seen as the dwelling place of God (Wing, 1986:35; cf. Matthew 24:2ff). Briggs (1996:1) asserts that the church must be based on the gospel, which is the heart of the New Testament and finds personification in Jesus Christ. The church, as the

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<sup>29</sup> Though writing as active ministers of the UCCSA, their work was not sanctioned by the church. It was, however, widely accepted and often referenced.

body of Christ, is considered the Temple of God and Christ's presence among the people constitutes it. This affirms the spirit carried from formation in 1967 and is the fundamental ecclesiological and theological position of the Congregationalists' concept of the nature of the church. The presence of Christ's in the community of faith validates the being of a church and it also follows by implication that where the church is, Christ must be as the Creator and Head of the church. This concept is better demonstrated in Paul's letter to the church in Corinth, 1 Corinthians 12:27, in which he says "now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is part of it".

These are the three premises, drawn from the constitution and from Wing (1986) and Briggs (1996), which intend to advance the proposition that the church is defined as fellowship with Christ and amongst its members. It is better demonstrated in the covenant relationship with the Triune God (cf. chapter two of this work).

Having looked at the definition of the church within the UCCSA context, it is important to consider the debate around the subject. This is essential, because the UCCSA's understanding of the church as both the people of God and as the body of Christ establishes the church as an organic entity. These become the focal points of debate in the definition of the church in the UCCSA. A number of theologians have participated in the discourse on the nature of the church, though within the liberation theology. They rightly argue (De Gruchy, 1987; Bosch, 1991), in defining the church, the need to draw the line between the people and the church as the people of God, because "[the people]...is sociological category and may not be turned to a theological term and treated as a synonym for church" (Bosch, 1991:444).

The reading of this point suggests that the UCCSA must be avowing, because this simplistic way of perceiving the church sacrifices the notion of the church as the distinctive community who holds the belief that they are saved by the grace of God. The church is the community that seeks to rediscover the liberation activities of God in the context of both ecological and human injustices and this is found in faith in Yahweh, which forms integral liberation motives (Bosch, 1991:444).

It can be argued that for the UCCSA to come out of these debates and still maintain their perception of the church, they need to re-appropriate their theological position that sees the church as the gathered people of God for mission and sent for that purpose (cf. chapter two of the study) as critical. This will influence the new paradigm. The theological point of departure must be the church, therefore, not the people. The church is being sent by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit to the world, which is the focus of the *missio Dei* (cf. Bosch, 1991; Greenway, 1999). The understanding of the UCCSA as a church must be drawn from its nature and it would thus be wise to look at its DNA.

### **3.5 UNPACKING THE DNA OF THE UCCSA**

The use of the word DNA, in the endeavour to comprehend the new mission paradigm, affirms that because the church is organic or living, one can speak about the DNA. When investigating the church as the body of Christ it is indeed an organic living entity. Therefore, it has a DNA as it is God's creation from all the nations. The quest for the DNA of the church is more of a forensic analysis of the missionary parenthood (LMS) of the church and its organisational arrangement. It aids in depicting the church within the work and activities of God through history.

According to the DNA of the LMS, denominationalism is foreign to the life and body of the church (cf. Lovetta, 1899; Haile, 1951; Du Plessis 1965). The church, as it seeks to fulfil its mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> century context, must find its DNA in the Triune God as its missional identity. It is through such an exercise that the church will regain its missional identity. The exercise must be considered within the context of ecumenism as model of mission (Bosch, 1991).

Some missiologists, like Van Gelder (2008:5), argue that "race, social class, educational differences, and geographical disparities all stood as intervening variables that better explain the reality of denominations". This may speak to the UCCSA as well and some inherited from the CUSA (cf. letter dated 24 January 1964)

Denominational ecclesiology is now a reality that cannot be denied or wished away. The missiological question that the UCCSA needs to address is: Is there a new paradigm that can help the church to effectively participate in the mission of God in its denominational state?

The idea that the DNA of the UCCSA as a church (ecclesiological formation) cannot be sought in the LMS as a society is critical, but in the missionary work of the LMS that was always prepared to go to new lands to pioneer mission, as Moffat states "I can see...the smoke of a thousand villages where the gospel has never been preached" (Haile, 1951:9).

This will define the UCCSA as the church that sees the challenges and the mission opportunities every time and growing natural. This also point to correct usage of the term DNA and that the church can be viewed as organic and leads to a review of UCCSA's concept of mission, as it draws from its parent society.

### **3.6 THE UCCSA'S CONCEPT OF MISSION**

The previous section endeavours to define the nature of the church from the UCCSA perspective as from its formation. It also describes how the theological formulation of the church was consistent and loyal to the fundamental principle of the LMS that argues that:

“God may call into the fellowship of His son from among them to assume for themselves such of the church governance as to them shall appear most agreeable to the Word of God” (Haile, 1951:1).

The emphasis on fellowship must be considered within the context of the LMS's withdrawal from the Cape Colony 1801 and the initiation of the Graaff-Reinet and Bethelsdorp missions and that of the Orange Free State mission project (United Church, 1966), which called the individual churches to work together. The concept of the church and mission is defined in terms of the covenant with Christ and with one another (cf. Briggs, 1996).

However, in a sense the departure from the LMS' mission understanding of being sent and working outside the church structures (as mission models) needs to be reviewed as a society without a church polity. Though both the UCCSA and the LMS based their mission on the Great Commission of Matthew 28, which is missional and task oriented in that it sees mission as the making of disciples and thus an outreach action (cf. Greenway, 1999).

According to Briggs (1996:43), the term mission in the UCCSA is synonymous with ministry, as the “various aspects of the church's ministry (mission) and worship”. It could well be argued that he never intended to suggest that the terms refer to the same theological meaning, but it would seem that he is implying that in the UCCSA it bears the same theological and practical definition.

Bosch (1991:473) explains the theology that brings this together:

“will be directed not only toward divine service in the church, but also toward divine service in the everyday life of the world. Its practical implementation will include preaching and worship, pastoral duties, and Christian community, but also socialization, democratization, education toward self-reliance and political life.”

These are the elements that define mission as the participation in the *missio Dei* and sees the participants as servants.

The Great Commission as the post-resurrection mission paradigm must not be read in isolation to the pre-resurrection mission paradigm of Luke 10:1-9, in which Jesus sent his disciples to the places He intended to visit (Briggs, 1996:78). They were to proclaim the message that the Kingdom of God has arrived. This defines the mission of the church as partner in mission with Christ reaching out to others. The impression created is that Jesus sought to teach his disciples that mission is about partnership and a co-ordinated programme, not haphazard in any way. Of importance is that mission participation is about partnership, not a one-man mission. It is the responsibility of all those in a covenant with Jesus Christ.

Reading Matthew 28:18ff, Luke 10:1-9 and Acts 1:8, Briggs (1996:79) concludes that the understanding of mission in the UCCSA is:

“[the] proclamation of the Kingdom of God and witness to Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. It involves taking the Christian faith to the nations, teaching them and baptizing them in order to make them Christ’s disciples. It is a worldwide mission to all nations in every part of the globe...and this is the mission of the church...[and] the church...have liberty to engage in the mission which continues his redeeming plans for the whole earth.”

It should be noted that in as much as Briggs (1996) does not speak of the world of the UCCSA, he conveys the impression that the world that needs to hear the Word is not inside the church, although he does not deny that the world of the UCCSA is not also part of the redeeming plans of the mission of Jesus Christ. The Pastoral Plan for Transformation document (1986), unlike Briggs (1996), seems to suggest the church itself needs to be considered as the prime mission field as much as it is the agent of mission.

The 24<sup>th</sup> UCCSA Assembly adopted the following mission statement in 1990, which captures and defines the current mission of the UCCSA even going back to 1967. Some aspects have remained constant in the theological pronouncement of the UCCSA, especially the issues of justice as reflective of the LMS church fathers (John Philip, David Livingstone and Van der Kemp). The statement is usually cited on commitment Sunday, the first Sunday of January:

“We, the members of the UCCSA, in our covenant relationship and empowered by the Holy Spirit, respond to Christ’s commission, and commit ourselves to go out into the world and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19):

- To call all people to commit themselves to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord;
- To proclaim the coming of the Kingdom of God;
- To declare that by God’s grace the captives are set free;
- To minister to the physical, mental, material and spiritual needs of all people;
- To enable biblical reflection that will lead to Christian action;
- To expose all powers of evil;
- To work for justice, peace, reconciliation, and the integrity of all creation;
- To share unreservedly our resources through a diversity of ministries;

- To uphold the bond of unity we have in Jesus Christ.” (UCCSA, 1990)

The emphasis on covenant theology, as defining most aspects of the church, seems to suggest that the UCCSA is more concerned about its internal harmony than saving the world outside. It leads to the conclusion that the people of the covenant seem to be more intent on their own convenience within this relationship than on the mission task contained in the covenant. It is, however, this contention that the definition of mission can best be located in the purpose of God for the world, reasoning based on the understanding that the definition of mission as a concept is goal oriented. This also helps to answer the question as to whose mission is it? As Wright (2010:24) put is:

“It is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world, as that God has a church in the world for his mission. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission.”

He further explains that “mission arise from the heart of God Himself, and is communicated from his heart to ours, mission is the global outreach of the global people of God” (Wright, 2010:24).

The dialogue with Wright does not only define mission, but also the church as the people of God and it draws its mission mandate and definition from God.

### 3.7 CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO SOCIAL REALITIES

The mission of the church (cf. 3.4 of this research) is found in the heart of God's mission and is communicated by his people, in this case the members of the church, doing the will of God and this must define the mission of the church (Wright, 2010:24). The section seeks to investigate how the church responded to social realities in the context of mission during the years of pastoral transformation. This challenged the church to review its understanding of mission, as is evident from the church's responses to the realities around it.

#### 3.7.1 PASTORAL PLAN FOR TRANSFORMATION OF 1986

The reason for a plan is given in the foreword of the project, cited by Petersen and Parsons (1986:3) as follows:

“The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA)...in 1985, at the height of the resistance against the system of Apartheid, and at the time when the church was facing a serious crisis of credibility, a group of South Africa theologians issues a now famous declaration, called ***Kairos Document***, which exposed this crisis and challenged the church to new prophetic action. The UCCSA responded to this challenge by adopting the tool SEE-JUDGE-ACT...This has enabled it to develop a new perspective of its role in the struggle

against Apartheid, and to lead it, at a local level, to new actions of solidarity and prophetic witness.”

The initiative was the church’s response and contribution to the South African *Kairos* moment, which led to the production of the *Kairos* Document. The programme was based on Romans 12:2:

“Do not conform any longer to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

The programme was designed as the church’s response to the *Kairos* Document<sup>30</sup>. The church (UCCSA) in the 1986 general assembly resolved that:

“to review its entire structure, ministry and mission in the light of the Kairos challenge...and ...that a process be set in motion within the UCCSA whereby key persons in the church, both lay and ordained, be trained and empowered to take up the Kairos challenge for themselves.”

Three areas were targeted for transformation in the church’s response, these are: First, the programme intended to transform the church leadership both lay and ordained by training and empowering them to meet the challenges of the *Kairos* Document, which was socio-political discrimination. This would unlock the talent and skill available in the church. It was to go beyond the *Kairos* Document, given the need to meet the challenges of the gospel in the present day, i.e. in the 1986 period (time of the writing and creation of the *Kairos* Document).

Second, the programme looked at the structures of the church. The concern was that some structures of the church were maintenance oriented rather than mission oriented and thus the church structures spent much of their time debating the maintenance of the structures, instead of the mission and will of God. Restructuring in response to the mission of God, the programme advocated for an ecclesiastical analysis. The analysis model used was based on the SEE-JUDGE-ACT methodology.

The model was developed for the factory workers in Belgium who were struggling with faith in conditions of exploitation. The model aided them in analysing their work situation, look at the root causes and evaluate them in the context of their faith (Petersen & Parson, 1986:1). The use of the model assumes that the participants would develop a prophetic action to confront social problems.

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<sup>30</sup> 'κairos can be translated as “a moment of decision or action”. The South African *Kairos* Document was produced by a concerned community of faith. The definition then, points to the time appointed by God, therefore, those who advocate for it must have prayerfully sought to discern the will and voice of God.

The third target of reformation was society. The pastoral plan's interest in the transformation of society is based on the simple logic that the church exists in and within society. The argument being that when the church is empowered and restructured, it would be able to challenge the evils in society (Petersen & Parson, 1986:2). Society is full of racial discrimination, gender violence and xenophobic tendencies and specific to the document was the ugly face of Apartheid in South Africa.

The pastoral formation was indeed a good response to social challenges, in its holistic review of leadership, for the church and society to be transformed. This was done with the understanding that it is the will of God and the command of the gospel. However, it did not have a denominational outlook. It was responding to South African Apartheid, not the political instability in Mozambique or the military oppression in Zimbabwe. There was a general assumption that other countries were liberated and the situation of prophetic and ecclesiological urgency was in South Africa. However, the shortcomings of the document did not mean it could not be applied to Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The acceptance that something can be done and the document could be applied in other situations, necessitates investigating the document in which the UCCSA undertook to reshape the church.

### **3.7.2 HAMB/TSAMAY/BEWEEG WITH EVANGELISM: RESHAPING THE CHURCH FOR MISSION**

The reason for this undertaking is given as:

“a matter of sharing our grassroots experienced of our witness and faith in Jesus Christ. This witness is also expressed not only in church life but also in society especially in the good and bad things of life...we, realized that God is at work in Southern Africa and that the challenge of the church is to restore all people to the unity in God and Christ and that the church in its mission embark on a full scale of Re-evangelisation of our members on grassroots level.” (Petersen, 1995:i)

The programme came as a follow-up to the Pastoral Plan for Transformation, a commission on evangelism was established in 1994 (Petersen, 1995:ii). The commission conceded that they were not experts in evangelism, but they involved the grassroots organisations. This approach was explained in that the commission wanted the participants to share their grassroots experiences. Unlike the Great Commission from which they drew inspiration, their focus was internal evangelism and called re-evangelism. It creates the impression that the commission sought to make a connection to the preceding Pastoral Plan for Transformation, which was interested in the transformation of the church and society.

The looks approach is the same, only this programme seems to start with the definition of mission as “what the church is doing, it is action, it is the overall task of the church for the salvation of the world” (Petersen & Parsons, 1986:6).

Evangelism, therefore, becomes one of the strands in the multi-dimensional mission of the church, as explained in the Luke 4:18-19. The dimensions are: liberation, evangelism, healing, justice and service. Though the commission did not spell it out clearly, it can be inferred that the church believed that evangelism is the continuation of the mission of Jesus Christ and reflected in the following excerpt from Petersen (1995:2) (cf. Matthew 28):

“Evangelism is therefore the primary and essential task of the church and that each part of the body of Christ is to make the good news known, so that a new community of believers is build (inward). It, therefore, means that the church, as the body of Christ is also sent into the world (outward).”

Instead of reaching out to the world, the church was convinced that it is their members that needed to be re-evangelised. It could be argued that the church found it necessary to restore its members to unity with God as the starting point for a re-evangelisation programme, to better equip members for mission. In doing this, the commission proposed a three-phased approach:

Firstly, *transformation*, in which the commission suggested that the church leaves the past behind and become aware of the intimate connection between conversion, church and society. Reading through the document there is no mention of any past problem that the church deemed undesirable for its work and mission. It is argued that the best course of action would be to build on the Pastoral Plan for Transformation (1994), with the ecclesial and social analysis as tool to establish the starting point. Naming the elements to be discarded would assist the church in mapping its way forward. De Gruchy’s (2007:33) article on the roots of the UCCSA suggests a great deal of tension within the new church (formed in 1967) that impeded harmonious progress. This was the result of joining members from five nations with different political pasts and positions for the future. It would also imply differing levels and depth of prophetic ministry and hence differing pronouncements.

The second phase of re-evangelism dealt with *empowerment*. Re-evangelism would be to equip the church for witnessing and “to be Good news people in action with a sound biblical basis” (Petersen, 1995:1).

The programme set out, in the process of equipping, to exploit the variety of cultures the ecclesiastic traditions brought to the formation of the UCCSA.

The third phase of *re-evangelism* dealt with *development* and this pointed to the fact that the church was moving toward greater contextualisation of the gospel. It is of interest to this research that this development took cognisance of the multi-cultural composition of the church, which called for a reinterpretation of the gospel within the witnessing of the UCCSA. Two factors seemed to call for the reinterpretation of the gospel, namely the past political situation and the multi-cultural set-up of the church. The emphasis fell on the local church and the experience at grassroots level, as with the development of the ecclesiastic and social analysis tool for Belgian factory workers to understand their faith in the context of suffering (Petersen & Parson, 1986:1).

The SEE-JUDGE-ACT within the UCCSA is seen and interpreted as follows:

Firstly, *SEE* is the stage of biblical analysis; it looks at the biblical experience. This stage addresses the “why” question, as it gets to the root of the causes.

Secondly, *JUDGE* explores the experience of the community and compares it with the text read, according to the feelings, attitudes and the people involved.

Thirdly, *ACT* is the stage based on the understanding that Christian action is obedient to God and this stage attempts to answer the question: What does God wants in the situation and what is He calling the church to do. Putting the Word of God into action calls for radical action, hope and faith (Petersen, 1992:11).

Having dealt with the understanding of the UCCSA and their interpretation of mission, which is both what the church says and what it does, the other pertinent elements are its proclamation and presence in a particular geo-space (Wright 2010:30). The attempt now is to delineate and discuss the constructed mission models from the history of the UCCSA from the time of formation onwards. It must be noted that some of the mission models may be similar to those described in the pre-UCCSA period, i.e. during the time of the LMS, ABM and CUSA. Now they are, however, explored within the context of the UCCSA and its mission response.

### **3.8 COVENANT AS THE MISSION MODEL IN THE UCCSA (1967)**

A reading of the UCCSA minutes and Briggs’ (1996) *A Covenant Church*, where he writes for the purposes of teaching church polity among probationers and membership, indicates the centrality of the covenant with the UCCSA.

The Bible (especially the Old Testament) continually refers to covenant, including the Abrahamic (as described in chapter two) among many. In most cases the covenant is between two parties, who may not be equal. When a covenant was made between God and the people,

it required repentance on the side of the people and a promise from God to refrain from inflicting such harsh suffering again, as with the story of Noah (described further on in this chapter) (Von Rad, 1975:130). In the Old Testament the blood offering seals the covenant<sup>31</sup> (Anderson, 1975:44; cf. Genesis 15:7-21).

The practice of sealing a covenant with blood seems to have continued in the New Testament mission paradigm. As per the gospel evangelist, however, it is Jesus' blood that becomes the seal of the covenant (as in the Easter theology or passion narratives) (Matthew 25:28; Mark 14:24) and in the early church theology (Romans 3:25; 1 Corinthians 11:25) it is also used as the Eucharist liturgy.

According to Miller and Miller (1975:116), covenant is defined as the agreement or contract between individuals or, as in Scripture, between God and individuals or people. Among the covenants between individuals are: Abraham and Abimelech (Genesis 21:27); Abraham and the Amorites (Genesis 14:13); and Laban and Jacob (Genesis 31:44). Examples of covenants between Yahweh and individuals are: God and Noah (Genesis 9:13), with the rainbow as symbol of agreement; God and Abraham, with the circumcision as seal (Genesis 15:18-21, 17:4-14). There were also those covenants that God made with the people, such as with Israel on Mount Sinai (Deuteronomy 29:1ff). These covenants held pledges for protection and promises, especially God's promise to Israel that He would be their God and they his people (Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 26:17ff).

The model must be designed in such a way that it challenges the church to be mission focused or shaped. In order to achieve this, it would be necessary to formulate and adopt an appropriate working definition. The covenant must, therefore, in this context be deemed a:

“[a] relationship between parties of unequal status. In no sense, then, is a relation of parity as between the partners always presupposed. The covenant is often an agreement imposed by a superior on inferior (cf. Joshua 9:6ff; 1 Kings 20:34; 1 Samuel 11:1ff). Complete freedom of action, and therefore the freedom to decide, that is, to take the oath or not, is in this case possessed by the superior, the lesser partner is simply a recipient.” (Von Rad, 1975:129)

The reading of Joshua 9:6 speaks of a distant nation seeking protection from Joshua and that became the basis through which the covenant or treaty is to be established. One part joins the union as the sought protection from the powerful state. Furthermore, the reading of I Kings 20:34 shows that in as much as the sins of the forefathers are remembered they cannot be the basis of the salvation plan or determine the terms of the new treaty.

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<sup>31</sup> The Old Testament traditions are also influenced by the cultures of the Ancient near East and Egypt.

Joshua in the Old Testament is resented as the military commander in charge as Israel enters the land of Canaan. His name is *Hoshea* meaning “salvation”, which was later changed to “*Yehsua*” God saves. It is from then that the interaction with the distance tribe is entertained as the salvation belongs to God (Pawson, 1999:208).

In the case of the UCCSA, another perspective of the covenant is needed or has to be brought in as Von Rad puts:

“The partners enter into the arrangement of their own free will and on equal footing.” (Von Rad, 1975:130, cf. Genesis 21:27-31, 31:44; 1 Samuel 23:8; 2 Samuel 5:3)

This is based on how the church (UCCSA) explains how they relate to one another (presented in a diagram further on in this chapter). The covenant in the UCCSA comprise of three parts, namely “to worship, work and witness together in the fellowship of this church, for the building of the Body of Christ and the manifestation of the Kingdom of God on earth” (Briggs, 1996:194).

The covenant as a model must be understood in the context of the UCCSA's perception of the nature of the church, which is those called by God to fellowship with Christ. The further reading of Briggs (1996) gives the impression that the covenant within the UCCSA is seen as mode for fellowship and where the church sees itself as the body of Christ, more than just a covenanted community of faith.

The church enters into the covenant with God and then with one another as the recipients of the commandments and commission of God to partner and participate in his mission. The covenant as mission model requires in-depth explanation, lest it presents a maintenance church that is more inward looking and concerned about its relationship within structures. It becomes more a church to itself than to society, whereas their pastoral plan (written in 1994) conveys the intention to transform to reach out.

An analysis of the covenant as mission and governance model for the UCCSA makes it necessary to reiterate Wright's (2006:326) questions: “How can we read the covenant text in the biblical texts missiologically?...what ways do the various covenant formations reveal the mission of God and the derivative mission of God's people in the world?”

In an attempt to answer these questions that seek to address covenant missiologically, the two biblical covenants with Noah and Abraham serve to demonstrate that there are a number of covenants, which presents a way of understanding the concept of the covenant in the missiological discourse. Citing the two covenant example provides the evidence that the UCCSA is indeed a covenant church, through their covenant understanding and application. It shows that the church became the church through the actions for God.

### **3.8.1 NOAH COVENANT**

The story of Noah is found in Genesis 6:10ff and 8:15-9:17, with particular reference to Genesis 6:11:11: "And the earth was evil in God's eyes and full of violent ways. And God, looking on the earth, saw that it was evil: for the way of all flesh had become evil on the earth."

God was concerned about corruption and violence and the narrative paints a picture in which all of humanity was corrupt and violent. Only Noah was said to be righteous in God's eyes and the flood was the way God dealt with the corruption and violence, demonstrating his absolute intolerance of corruption and violence.

Wright (2006:326) raises two fundamental theological points as basis for explaining the covenant missiologically. God's salvation plan is meant for all creation. Though humanity is corrupt and violent, God is still committed to creating a better place for the created world.

The language at the end of the flood is the reaction to the creation story in Genesis 1. Noah and his family are to multiply and fill the earth, thereby renewing and confirming the mandates of creation and stewardship of the environment respectively (Wright, 2006:327). The mission of God can be understood from creation and every covenant made and entered into expresses God's original intention of a good and habitable earth for both humankind and animals: all creatures. The missiological understanding of the covenant is better explained in terms of partnerships, where human beings partner with God in his mission as stewards.

### **3.8.2 ABRAHAM COVENANT**

The mission model proposed around Abraham was set out in the previous chapter, but also needs to be revisited in terms of evaluating the missiological understanding of the covenant in the UCCSA and to emphasise that the blessed must reach out and be a blessing to others, as in the Abraham narrative (Genesis 3 and 9). It is on this covenant that the canon of election is based, where Israel becomes the chosen race or the special people of God. They were chosen that they may become a blessing to other nations (Wright, 2006:327). The logical sequence is from one to many. In Genesis 17:5 God calls Abram to be the "exalted father" of nations, "Abraham" (Stott, 1992:A13). The argument projected in the Abraham model is how God intended to extend salvation to all nations.

Richardson (1992:A108) argues that there is no way that the whole world would be Christian. The dream of the LMS, after their formation, would have been to save the whole world from condemnation, since God intends to include each and every person and/or created being in his salvation plan. This dream led to the establishment of the UCCSA. However, the reading of John 12:32, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will make all men come to me", suggests that

the language is representative rather than an expectation that all people will be redeemed or made Christian, as Richardson (1992:8) would argue. The salvation plan is for all humankind not for the chosen few. It is furthermore, suggested that Richardson's (1992:9) interpretation is based on two assumptions. Firstly, to be a Christian is to be saved. This thought limits the concept of salvation to joining a church and reduces or *ecclesiasticises* salvation to a religious item, not the agenda of the *missio Dei*. Richardson may have thought of mission as salvation and as an event limited in time and space. The second argument would suggest that people like the African Traditionalists, the Muslims and Hindus may not experience the redemption of God as they do not believe in Christ, i.e. the Triune God. It is belief in the Saviour, Lord Jesus Christ that can guarantee salvation.

However, it can be said that the best way to explain missiological justification of the covenant is to read the covenant of Abraham (Genesis 12) together with the Great Commission (Matthew 28). This suggests that even if the directive was given to the disciples, faith makes all believers the seed of Abraham (cf. Numbers 14:21) and is thus applicable to the current paradigm. The alternative is to re-examine the possible meaning of the word "nation" in those times, which Winter (1992: B176) explained was not used in the same way as it is today. It must be noted that the word "nation" in terms of mission has both geographical and political meanings. Winter (1992:B176) suggests that "nations" could refer to tribe or group or household. Now with this proposed interpretation of "nation" together with the knowledge that the gospel is also directed at gentiles, the word may not only be referring to people close or distant but also to those who still need God's blessing.

This leads to the conclusion that the covenantal God's grace goes beyond belief and merit, while during its formation it was the model of unity for the UCCSA. God depicts Himself in the covenants with Abraham and Noah not only as the God of Israel, but as the sovereign Lord of the earth and all that is in it. He is the God who judges and restores, as with the Noah covenant, and promises and fulfils, as in the covenant of Abraham. Those tasked with the Great Commission (Matthew 28), directly (disciples) or as the seeds of Abraham and of the new covenant through the blood of our Lord and through the cup of suffering, are to continue to be a blessing to others and show the grace of God.

The study, therefore, argues that from the Abrahamic model the church's mission, as it participates in the *missio Dei*, is modelled firstly on "leaving and going" (Genesis 12). This element of mission is also found in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19 - "Go and make disciples") and appears in the motivation of the history of the LMS and other missionary societies of the time.

### 3.8.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COVENANT

This section takes a critical look at the above presented arguments and investigates the missiological perspective of the covenant in the UCCSA, as follow up to the previous section and to relate it to the UCCSA. It is the argument of the study that such an objective can be achieved if the characteristics of the covenant are investigated. The intense interest in the subject of the covenant is how the UCCSA defines its administrative, theological and mission formation in terms of the covenant (cf. Briggs, 1986; Von Rad, 1975).

1. The parties that enter into the covenant are not equal and the terms are dictated by the superior party, in the case of the Old Testament covenant it is Yahweh.
2. There is always a request or demand for the lesser partner to be met or followed.

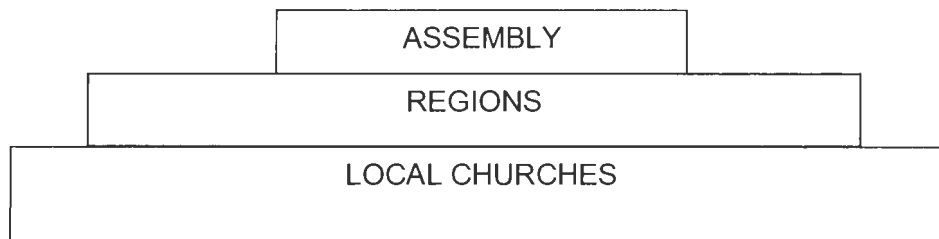
It is out of these characteristics that there is deliberate interest in the efficacy of the covenant in the mission work, with special focus on the structure of the church. The church holds that it is structured in such a way that the power and church governance is with the people. The study seeks to challenge the church to use the same structural approach in empowering the local churches (congregations) to participate in the mission of God. This would suggest the participation of the people in the *missio Dei* and its efficacy must be expressed locally, where life is lived and experienced. There is need for the church to have a platform where the local churches share mission stories of their local experiences. The meeting must be or include sessions of fellowship and storytelling. It is from this that the mission programme can be drawn and covenant be understood in terms of solidarity, as the mode of mission execution (Bosch, 1991:99).

### 3.9 COVENANT MODEL AND THE UCCSA STRUCTURE

The intention here is to instigate the stage when the church employs the commands of the covenant. A true reading of the UCCSA polity suggests that the church hops between two fundamental paradigms, i.e. Congregationalism as the discernment of the will of God at a local community level and covenant that focuses on relationship defined in terms of partnership and the method of relating to Jesus and then with one another. Congregationalism is the oldest, dating back to the ancestor society (LMS), and the covenant model seems to be based on the coming together of the ecclesiastical traditions that formed the UCCSA in 1967 (as described in the first paragraphs of this chapter). It draws a great deal of inspiration from the ecumenical theology as the paradigm of discourse and operates on two optional levels, “what can keep us together and/or what can we do together?”, while the denominational antithesis of each ecclesiastical order becomes the thesis of the formation.

The UCCSA covenant model seems to suggest that the covenant paradigm is void of mission concepts, but only relates to the internal structures. The church's preferred model is presented as circles around the centre, representing Jesus, demonstrated in the figure below. It would only be fair to first look at the conventional structure or organogram.

Figure 1: Structure 1

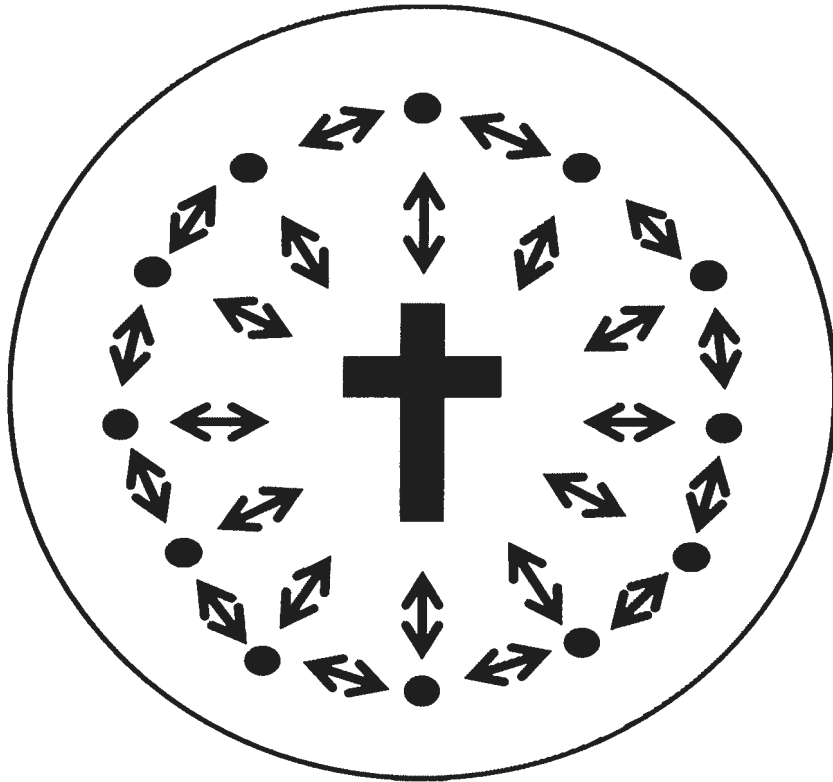


The structure would appeal to the sociological discourse rather than the Protestant or Reformed theology, where in the apex there must be a person or group that is in control.

Briggs (1996:30) argues that this hierarchical model is against the teachings and beliefs of Congregationalism. Congregationalist teaching focuses on the local church as the people called by God to fellowship with Him and his Son (Jesus Christ). The organogram is more episcopal, siphoning power from the congregation and surrendering it to a committee or individual. However, the structure is practical and administrative, because decisions have to be made by a small and compact group, in this case the assembly. The people who serve on the assembly committee (at the top) get the mandate from the local churches/congregations, as per the teachings of Congregationalism, and is made up of both the lay and clergy. The other point that seems to influence the rejection of the structure is the belief that where there is a hierarchy, decisions are forced downwards. Though the church holds the conviction that the assembly deals with the recommendation from the local church and designs its mission resolution based on the experience from below, in practice the church employs the very structure that they argue is against their principle.

The proposed structure that the church believes to be representative of Congregationalism is depicted below.

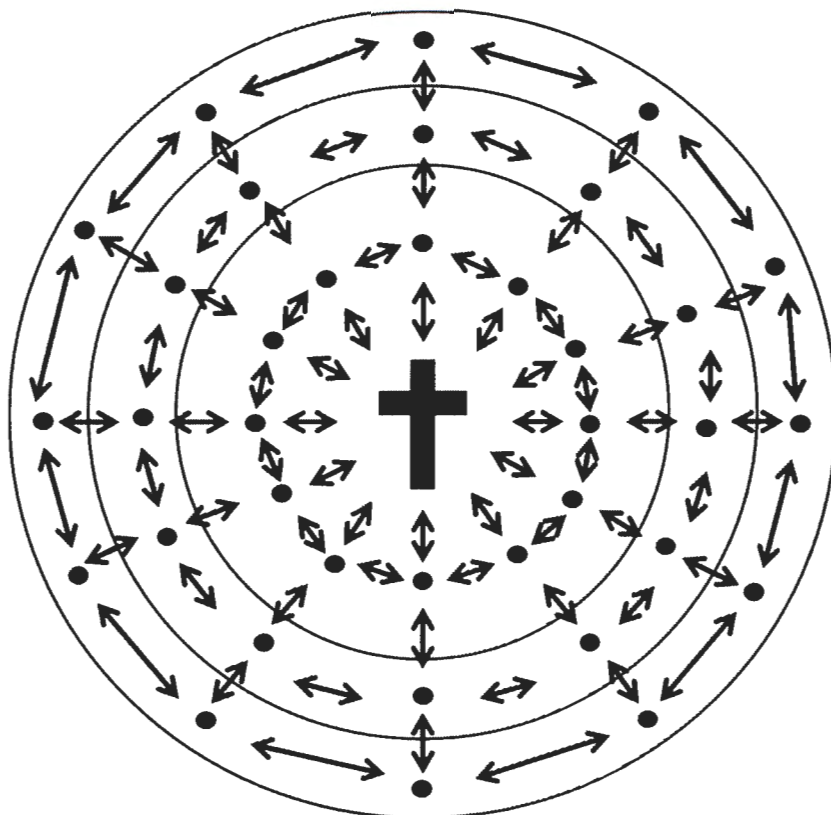
Figure 2: Structure 2 (Briggs, 1996)



The structure intends to promote a church structure that develops from the centre and places Jesus Christ at the centre, surrounded by the dots representing members of the congregation. Firstly, the members must have a covenant with Jesus Christ. Secondly, in the process of forming the congregation, they must first make a covenant with one another. Thirdly, it is inferred from the diagram that the congregants can have individual and direct covenant with Jesus<sup>32</sup>. Based on the arrows, the covenant can be initiated from both ends and both parties (including Jesus) can benefit from the covenant. It would be theologically hard to explain, however, how Jesus as God incarnate can benefit from human beings initiatives as they come together to praise and worship Him. The arrows can then be best explained in terms of communication and relationship, but that would not be representative of the UCCSA's theological interpretation. A fair debate on the subject would be to engage within the context of coming together and also within the Protestant theology, where no human being is above others or could seem to be closer to God than another, which would be papal theology. The circle in essence argues for equality before God.

Figure 3: Structure 3 (Briggs, 1986:23)

<sup>32</sup> This may create an individualistic interpretation of salvation.



Structures 2 and 3 point to the church growing from the centre (Jesus) outward. Structurally the members (believers) come together to form a congregation, through the covenant with one another and with Jesus Christ. The next circle denotes that the individual congregation will join together in a covenantal relationship to form regions and the regions will form synods. The synods can be likened to national head offices, in a country set up. The synods would be Botswana (6 regions), Mozambique (5 regions), Namibia (3 regions), South Africa (11 regions) and Zimbabwe (7 regions). The administrative coming together (meeting) of the synods forms the assembly, as the policy making court of the church.

The problem (with structure 3) is that it presents the other structures of the church, whether it be individuals or congregations, as close to the centre (Jesus) and then developing away from the centre, i.e. away from Jesus Christ. Inasmuch as it addresses the question of equality, it creates more problems of spirituality in terms of closeness to Christ. The structure thus creates a theological ambiguity as to who is more involved in the *missio Dei*, i.e. if calculated in terms of closer to the epicentre or axis of the activities of the *missio ecclesiae* and *missio Dei*. In the same way, if the mission activities take place in the margins, the question still remains as to who are closer and more involved. However, it remains the UCCSA's preferred model and is called the covenant model.

The model seems to avoid the use of the terms lower and outer court in the description of the structure of the church and puts Christ in the centre. The relationship is between members and Christ and the church argues that though the circles go out from the centre, there is theological consistency in terms of ecclesiological interpretation. Jesus is present in every dimension of his gathered people. This must be seen against the backdrop that the church seeks to present Congregationalism, since the concept of Congregationalism places the power with the congregation, and it is in these congregations where the mission activity is thought to be or must be visible and felt.

The UCCSA, as an institution and church, must at any given stage speak to sociological principles, i.e. it must have structural boundaries, in order for it to exist. The structure must not be too rigid, but it must aid the church to maintain stability in the church. This is true as far as the social ordering of the church, but it remains to be seen how the church would be able to devise a structure that is reflective of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the mission context and as the theological framework (Bosch, 1991:165). It must be noted that the transitional period between the LMS and the formation of the UCCSA was never designed for a take-over/hand-over from the LMS, the church was left unprepared to establish a structure as well as polity, biblical and theological base to support such governance and the mission model of choice (Bosch, 1991:166; cf. Haile, 1951; Du Plessis, 1965; Briggs, 1991). The churches in the Cape Colony were only left with rudimental instruction on faith by the LMS missionaries, when they (missionaries) engaged in the up-north mission expedition. The worshipping communities were to struggle to find a name that would identify them and to come up with an operational structure to survive beyond the departure of the missionaries.

The church must choose whether it is to structure itself for mission engagement or control, which would be more sociological than missiological. Considering Structure 2 and 3, the missiological justification for the structure becomes difficult, especially since the intention is to advocate for a new mission paradigm for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It may be argued that if the local congregations are indeed the mission fields and also agents of the *missio Dei* and also if the church theology and polity suggest that the church grows as in diagrams 2 and 3, then the covenant and the missional activities of the church must be found in the inner circle. It is in the local congregation that community of faith is surrounded with the people from the margins and the saving grace of God must be experienced.

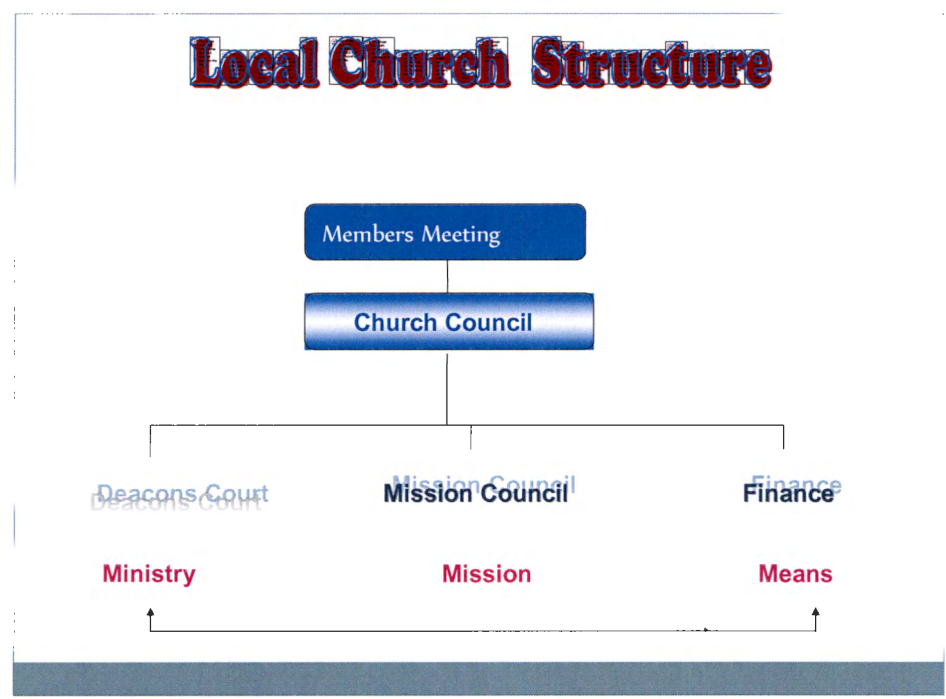
The debate in the above paragraphs seems to suggest that the covenant models of the UCCSA were not designed along missiological lines, but on how the new community of faith can be kept

together despite cultural, racial and indeed previous ecclesiastical differences (LMS, ABM and CUSA)<sup>33</sup>.

3.7.1 CURRENT STRUCTURE

The structures below are a reflection of the current situation and how the UCCSA organises its mission work, to be analysed in relationship to the church’s affirmation as a covenant community.

Figure 4: Structure 4



The local church is considered to be the primary point of the ecclesiology of the UCCSA. This structure, as compared to the covenant structures (2 and 3), emphasises equality before the Lord. It seems to be congregational and not designed around offices, like bishops, but is built on groups or committees. Decisions are made at member meetings, where the voices of all members are heard and their stories expected to inform the agenda of the church.

<sup>33</sup> As discussed in chapter two of this thesis.

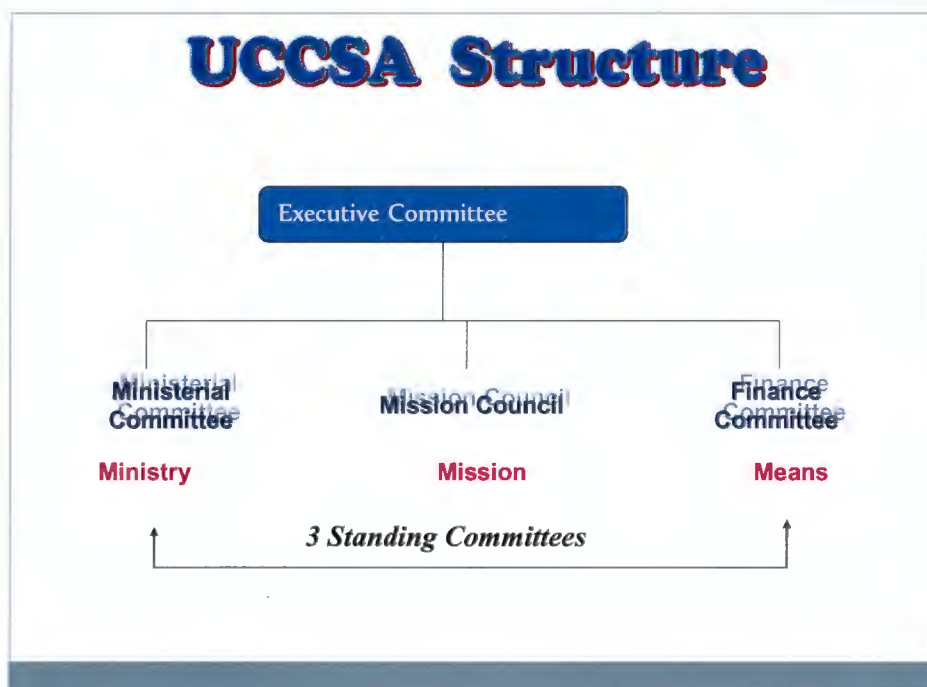
Figure 5: Structure 5



Figure 6: Structure 6

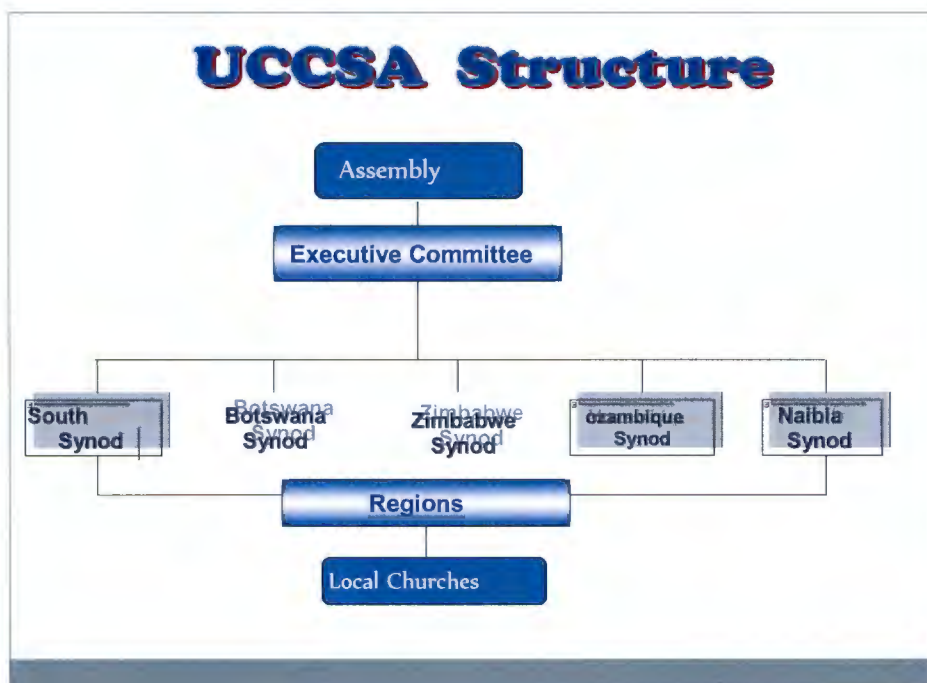


Figure 7: Structure 7



Structures 4-7 depict the primary courts of the UCCSA. They are mostly governance structures, but also help to show where mission activities must take place.

Figure 8: Structure 8

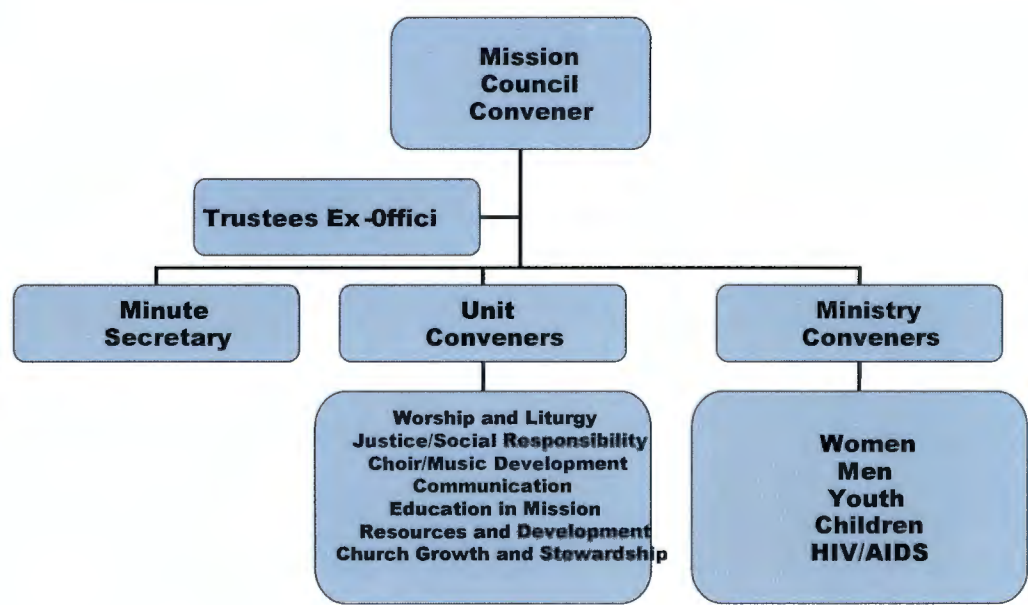


It is imperative for the mission council committee to function at all levels of the church: local church, region, synod and denomination (on paper it exists, the challenge would be practical).

The assembly is the highest decision-making court/authority. It does not only deal with issues from the congregation, but also refers to issues (in most cases in the form of a decision for implementation). Its sittings deal with *inter alia* doctrine, discipline and church extension (granting of church status to local churches) (cf. UCCSA, 2007).

Figure 9: Structure 9

# Mission Council



The figure above speaks to the structure of a mission-focused church. Under the block/heading “unit conveners” is a list of mission programmes that the church is involved in or intends to launch (worship and liturgy; justice and social responsibility; music development; communication; education in mission; resources and development; church growth and stewardship). The block “units” reflect the outreach of the church, how it must respond to the world around it. These units make the church outward looking, but the next block, “ministries”, is inward looking, the structural and human resources for mission.

Having discussed the biblical examples of the covenant (Noah and Abraham), the UCCSA polity and structure of governance, it could be said that the UCCSA sees and practices covenant in

terms of partnership among members (Figure 2 Structure 2 and Figure 3 Structure 3). The church, as partnership of covenanted members, partners with Christ and God. The design of the structure argues that the circle around Christ is a re-mandate of the mission to build the Kingdom of God.

### **3.10 CONGREGATIONALISM AS MISSION PARADIGM IN 1967**

Though the interpretation of the structures above may differ, the UCCSA defines itself as a congregational church. The concept of Congregationalism is brought to this discussion, because the church holds the concept as its pillar of identity (Wing, 1986:67). It would be logical to adopt the concept of Congregationalism both as model of governance and mission. The diagrammatical presentations above can be taken as a point of departure for the analysis of the life and work of the church.

The UCCSA defined the church as those called by God to gather and make a covenant with Him and his Son (Briggs, 1996:56). It must be kept in mind that the definition is also based on the three ecclesiastical orders that came to together (the LMS, ABM and CUSA). This would explain why terms like autonomy, independence and then covenant frequently occur to define the nature of the church, not limited to the local and gathered Christians, as employed by the UCCSA to date. Congregationalism also serves as means to argue for the intended structure of the mission execution. Using a model that emphasises autonomy and independence seems to be a denial of the realities of the history of the UCCSA and its heritage from LMS, ABM and CUSA.

However, it must be realised that the constitution does not define Congregationalism in the above caption. The constitution is, of course, a legal document meant to control and provide order and as such it is rather difficult to construe the mission interpretation from it, since it is not clearly defined. When the three ecclesiastic traditions came together, the idea was to avoid it from becoming one church (the LMS, CUSA or ABM) being absorbed into the other, but to maintain its autonomy as a congregation.

It bears repeating that the congregations have a long and proud heritage, which served the society (LMS) well, as it evolved toward the church (UCCSA) in 1967. It helped the church deal with the realities it faced at that particular time. Therefore, the question is: Can Congregationalism be a vigorous and potent force in advancing the mission of God in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the Southern African context and in the context of the emerging ecumenical paradigm? (Bosch, 1991).

### 3.10.1 INSTITUTIONALISATION AND CONGREGATIONALISM

Herein institutionalisation refers to the policymaking courts of the church, e.g. church council at congregational level, regional council and regional and synod conference and the synodical and assembly at the denominational level. These courts are defined in terms of leadership and are expected to facilitate the understanding and fulfilment of the task of the church. As argued in the previous paragraph, the UCCSA endeavours as much as possible to move away from surrendering all power to a single person. The institutions<sup>34</sup> have become more powerful than the congregations, however, which is by default the opposite of the intended Congregationalism.

The other point to note is that in the local congregation the constitution reserves the position of chairperson for the minister. This is *clergerising* the leadership and pushing away the laity, cementing the fact that the church courts are designed for control rather than mission.

The study argues that the UCCSA, as an institution, ascribes to a congregational form of governance, which Winslade (2009:2) explains as follows:

“Congregational government is a form of church government in which the local church is autonomous and at which the major decisions affecting the church are made by the members. It’s a form of government which while demanding the separation of the church from the state stresses the priesthood of all believers and the assumption that the Holy Spirit will guide the decision-making to the conclusions commensurate with the Will of God.”

The citation provides the opportunity for reading into the concept of Congregationalism its missiological perceptions, especially in terms of the intention of advocating for a new mission paradigm for the UCCSA in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The inference is that God can use any member of the congregation as his priest (1 Peter 2:5-9; cf. Ephesians 4:11), which means that being a servant of God is not the exclusive domain of the ordained ministry. There is a great deal to be said about Congregationalism, especially as an inherited paradigm that was initiated to facilitate a breakaway from *Episcopalianism* that argues that:

“authority and power rests with the...bishop. There might be many voices and contributing arguments, but in the final analysis the ultimate authority over the church is vested in one person who is God’s official representative or vicar...over the church.” (Winslade, 2009:1)

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<sup>34</sup> The word institution will be used to refer to long-standing customs or traditions that are accepted as an important part of a particular society. Institutionalisation, therefore, denotes the process of making that custom or tradition part of a particular society, system or organisation (Cambridge Advanced Learner's dictionary, 2008).

As the study discerns the paradigm shift from covenant and Congregationalism mission paradigms to missional congregations, it brings the following to the discourse<sup>35</sup>.

*Firstly*, congregational governance is not necessarily a New Testament model. This argument is made, because the UCCSA subscribes to the Reformed theology which upholds the supremacy of the Bible. The reading of the New Testament does suggest such a congregational governance and it is thought to be a product of extrapolation of biblical principles (Winslade, 2009:2). The Scripture that would seem to support the above statement is the Jerusalem Church Council citing Acts 15:28: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements."

The exegesis of the text does not reflect a democratic process in decision making as advocated in the UCCSA theological framework and polity, but mostly reflects theocracy. The text, together with others that seem to provide glimpses of ecclesiastical order in the early church, cannot be dogmatised to support the 21<sup>st</sup> century church polity in the mission context.

The possible way to explain the misnomer in the UCCSA Congregationalism, as it is considered to be similar to democracy, is to realise that the LMS' meetings were not necessarily business meetings but discipleship gatherings or discussions on how the church can be true to the Great Commission. Even those meetings that led to the formation of the UCCSA were on common witnessing, not democratic meetings. Gilmore (1963:143), quoted in Winslade (2009:4), argues:

"Church is not, and must never be regarded as, a democracy, for the power is not in the hands of the demos but of the Christos: it is a *Christocracy*...this delivers us from the worst kind of the church meeting where the aim is not so much to discover the will of God as to gain a policy of one's own choosing by majority vote."

The congregations are not developed to debate, but to discern the commission and command and act accordingly. This does not intend to suggest the church must not make decisions on its affairs as a social structure, but instead that the congregations are called to partner with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This must form the primary principle of Congregationalism that God can use people anywhere within their geo-social context. Their experiences become the gospel stories and thus inform the mission activities of the church.

*Secondly*, congregational governance is developed in a particular socio-political and geo-spatial context. It must be acknowledged that the form of Congregationalism was inherited from the

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<sup>35</sup> These points are influenced by the Winslade article (2009), but it must be noted that he was arguing from the Baptist perspective. It is raised in this study because he challenges the relevance of Congregationalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as the point being wrestled with in the bid to advocate for a new mission paradigm for the 21<sup>st</sup> century UCCSA.

LMS as a society, in its protest against the church's relationship with the state, against the power put on the bishops and thirdly, against the lax attitude of the church towards mission and the response to the Great Commission. Upon arriving in Africa, the LMS sought to allow the locals to form their own church government that would allow them to participate in the mission of God. The question that is being raised in the context of calling for a mission paradigm shift in the UCCSA is not the theological depth of the concept, but its relevance within the current socio-political context. Congregationalist historians (Lovetta, 1899; Du Plessis, 1965) attest to the fact that the England that gave birth to the LMS was a "cauldron bubbling with revolutionary changes in economics, politics and religion" (Winslade, 2009:3).

The socio-political situation changed in the lead up to 1967 and it is within this breadth and pattern that it is suggested that since Congregationalism is initiated within a historical context, it must always have the socio-political and economic realities as informative factors. Missiologically, therefore, mission work or the participation in the *missio Dei* does not take place in a vacuum.

*Thirdly*, congregational government is primarily about a local church's competence to discern the will of God. Then the need arises to review Congregationalism in the context of autonomy in the UCCSA, with reference to the previous diagrams. Originally, the LMS' paradigm made its top leadership subject to interference from the state. In this kind of model the concern, as the structure goes down (synods, regions and local churches), is interference of the higher courts of the church. The primary purpose of Congregationalism is to accord every member of the congregation a say in the decision making. It works on the premise that each local expression of the church is competent to discern the will of God and to govern its own affairs. From the missiological perspective "the locus of God's operation in a particular community is best determined by God's people in that locality" (Winslade, 2009:3).

This does not suggest that the local churches, as in the covenant model, cannot be influenced by other congregations from different synods and still receive guidance from the denomination or higher courts of the church.

*Fourthly*, congregational government does not imply the absence of leadership, but it raises the question as to the type of leadership that can carry and assist the congregation to partake in the *missio Dei*. The question of the absence of leadership in Congregationalism seems to premise on the priesthood of all believers. Winslade (2009:4) argues that "the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers does not mean or implies the leadership of none, or does it mean the leadership of all".

Arguing from the UCCSA and indeed missional perspective, the assertion is that it would limit the concept if it can only be used to deal with decision-making issues. It must be broadly considered to mean that in every locality people do have different gifts that can make the congregation rich and better positioned to partake in the mission of God. Missional Congregationalism thus assumes that every member of the local church has something to offer and has a right to be heard.

The above seems to define Congregationalism in terms of control and also depicts it as power to the people by the people, which is identical to secular democracy. In contrast, Congregationalism must rather be defined in terms of the mission of God, wherein the church takes part to collectively discern the will and mission agenda of God. The role of the local church in the *missio Dei* must be emphasised as the context where experiences with the grace and mercy of God can be shared (cf. Briggs, 1996).

### **3.11 LIBERATION THEOLOGY AS A MISSION MODEL IN UCCSA**

It is thought that the liberation theology draws from the premise that when an individual or group is not treated fairly, his/her/its rights are being compromised. Such activities go against the salvation intent of the *missio Dei*.

The premise is based on the church documents discussed earlier in this chapter, viz. the *Pastoral Plan for Transformation 1985* and *Hamba/Tsamay/Beweeg with Evangelism: reshaping the church for mission 1995*. The Pastoral Plan for Transformation document arose in response to the challenges of the *Karios* Document. This in a sense affirms the context of the coming together of the churches.

The second premise that calls for the suggestion that the liberation theology, as the mission model, is how the church used the *See-Judge-Act* methodology as both socially and ecclesiastic method of attempting to find meaning of faith in the context of suffering and oppression. The document further argues that the purpose was to provide the church with the resources at all levels to deal not only with the challenges raised by the *Karios* Document, but to find meaning in the gospel in their contextual settings (UCCSA, 1986:1).

By definition, mission is about the community of faith and how they participate in the mission of God. It is also about the relationship people have with God and how they establish the covenant with Him as well as with their kinsmen as they participate in the mission of God (cf. Hendricks, 2004:25). According to Erickson (1998:322), in dealing with the liberation theology, religion is pragmatic: It is concerned with the alleviation of the injustices of the human race and challenges the church to formulate the doctrine that speaks to the local people's experiences. Theology, therefore, becomes a critical reflection of the praxis.

The use of the liberation theologies as the mission model also takes into account that liberation theologies are justice seeking theologies and also that they were born out of Western Christianity. This very Christianity and its use of the Bible provided colonisation and oppression a theological justification. However, as Pears indicates, even in that state it may be used as it is not shy to express their political, cultural and social standpoint (Pears 2010:3)

Furthermore, the ACCRA confession argues that “we continue to live in a scandalous world that denies God’s call to life for all...(and) the threats to life are... all the products of unjust economic system defended and protected by political and military might...” (ACCRA Confession, 2004:4). The liberation theologies continue to be relevant, since it calls unjust institutions to repentance for as long as these continue to affect the life of the people. The ACCRA Confession was crafted under the guidance of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, designed to speak to justice in the economy and on earth. The debate opposed the outcry that “on this trade in human as commodities, wealth in Europe was built. Through their labour, sweat, suffering, intelligence, and creativity, the wealth of Americas was developed” (Accra 2004:8). It is through such an outcry that the spirit of justice is educated.

In response to the *Kairos* Document, the church needed to re-define the concept of sin. The *Kairos* Document was produced as a theological comment on the crisis in the socio-political situation in South Africa. Theologians raised critical issues that called for a new understanding of sin and probably salvation too. The document specified the areas of concern and what needed liberation, which were: the institutionalised killing of people and the targeted imprisonment of black people by the Apartheid regime. This situation called for a moment of truth, *kairos* (Villa-Vicencio, 1986:251). What made it difficult was that the Christian community was divided. However, the first challenge that they had to address was the liberation of the gospel from the “State theology” (cf. Banana, 1996). This is the theology that sought to justify the status quo within racism, capitalism and totalitarianism or the Empire. It would, therefore, be reasonable to argue that these form the targets of liberation theology and inform the definition of social sin and salvation.

The UCCSA in 1985 responded by transforming its structures, with the intention of transforming society around it. The UCCSA’s response is also expressed in the covenant model and seen in the concept of solidarity. It realised that the Christian community was divided and the UCCSA’s emphases on unity and fellowship intended to address the questions of compartmentalisation of the community of faith and calls for solidarity.

The covenant model, as reflected on at this moment (2016), is being shifted to partnership and sharing of resources: financial and human<sup>36</sup>.

It has to be mentioned that the liberation theology in the UCCSA found prominence as a response to the *Karios* Document, which spoke to the South African context of the time. This does not suggest that it was initiated at that time, but only that at that time it was at its most prominent. While other synods (Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe) were politically independent states, South Africa was not as yet, and though they were independent, they still belonged to the third world controlled by a first-world economy. Issues of transformation, subject to social and ecclesiastical analysis, revealed to the church that those liberated countries were yet to attain full independence, were yet to gain full control over the means of production and own the productive land.

The church still needed to be decolonised in structure and mission, which involved critically re-evaluating the Western approach to mission in Africa. Western missionaries (LMS) viewed the African mission field as a place to be developed and had nothing to offer to the mission of God. The African churches were considered recipients of charity, with the mission societies continuing to send donations to the founded/planted churches after they no longer sent missionaries. This led to the UCCSA having large and powerless churches that could not fund their programmes and still asserting that the monies had to come from overseas for buildings and the remuneration of ministers. The church needed to be transformed from subjects of the charity model of the overseas partners into liberation theologies.

There are times when donations do not address the social and missional needs of a local church, because the local church is not consulted and the donor presumes to know the recipient's needs. This type of ecclesiastical proclivity to mission is contradictory to the African liberation theology ethos, especially in its response to the *Kairos* Document. The principle teaching of the UCCSA puts emphasis on the local church. This can be translated to mean that the experience of the local people must inform social and missional programmes and the adopted mission model must reflect the local congregation's experiences and needs, both social and spiritual, to express itself (Bosch, 1991:434).

Though the Pastoral Plan for Transformation was influenced by the *Kairos* Document in the South African context, the God picture in the document was not limited to the South African context. He is the God who sides with the oppressed, poor and the marginalised of any regime, black or white, to some extent. There is a need for liberation from structural and cultural set-ups that may still be oppressive. The poor, the marginalised and the oppressed existed in 1985 and

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<sup>36</sup> The author of this thesis is the full-time minister of the UCCSA and participates in the activities of the church.

still exist in 2016. The prophetic voice of the church must not be limited to the issues and time of the *Kairos* Document. The study argues that liberation theology, as mission model, must scandalise the spiritualisation of suffering and poverty. Any theology that seems to support it, such as the State theology, needs to be challenged.

If the *Kairos Document* is, therefore, read in the context of the Pastoral Plan for Transformation, the *kairos* must be viewed as both now and futuristic. The time will come, *kairos*, when the poor, the oppressed and the abused are no longer allegorised or spiritualised. The liberation theology, as mission model, attempts to make the poor, the marginalised and the abused realise that they are dependent on God and start to claim all biblical promises to them. It must be noted and emphasised that being poor is quiet incontrovertible. It is a material reality, a socio-economic truth that does not need to be spiritualised (Bosch, 1991:436).

Liberation theology, as mission model, fits or fitted well into the UCCSA's Congregationalism principle. Liberation theology adopts a bottom-up approach, the same method the UCCSA purports to advocate for mission work. The argument is that the local church, more so in the rural areas, should step in where the social organisations that teach human rights don't go. This is where rape, oppression or violation of human rights of any kind take place and go unpunished or are not reported. If the church is to adopt a liberation theology, whether economic or socio-political, the local church experience must influence such a mission endeavour.

Bosch (1991:457-461) reasons, as part of his ecumenical paradigm, that the church must witness against all forms of oppression as part of their mission work. This is not per se liberation theology, but he wants people to be liberated and that must be the church's participation in the *missio Dei*. Wright (2006) also addresses this topic and refers to the exodus of Israel as motif for the liberation of humankind, asserting that the people must be freed economically, politically and in terms of religious. It is also a form of liberation, but neither of them is arguing for a liberation theology. This means that the *kairos* moment will be there for as long as God challenges his people to act against a situation that is not life affirming.

As there is a call for the liberation theology as the mission model, the move must be mindful of the fact that liberation theologies are justice seeking theologies, which means that as long as there are injustices, never mind the nature, they will always be relevant. The use of the liberation theologies, however calls for the users to be critical as they are born of the Western Christianity and also for the shift every time of the hermeneutical tool. Their relevance to the study, therefore, is that they are not shy to express their cultural, political and social standpoint (Pears, 2010:3).

### **3.12 CONCLUSION**

This chapter reviews the coming together of the different traditions (LMS, ABM and CUSA) in 1967 and these churches' contribution to the union. It also investigates the models that were employed that might have supported such an endeavour. Particular attention is given to the covenant model, as it defines the theological ethos of the church (UCCSA), in the context of liberation struggles and rise in nationalism. The covenant model provided platform for solidarity and fellowship. It is concluded that the formation drew a lot of ecumenical DNA from the LMS. The church needs to face the challenge of defining whether they do mission work on the peripherals or from the peripherals or at the peripherals. The critical task that needs to be attended to is how the mission paradigm of the time of formation is still relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in view of the scope of change taking place.

## **CHAPTER 4 CALL FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT IN THE UCCSA**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter seeks to wrestle with the question over the issues within the UCCSA history that have necessitated the call for a paradigm shift. In achieving this, the chapter first endeavours to formulate a working definition of the concept of paradigm shift, then looks at the factors that necessitate the call and also analyses the models of contextualisation as critical in this call, as it may affect the reading of the paradigm and its subsequent application. Rosado (1997:1) argues that “we cannot become what we need to be by remaining what we are”.

### **4.2 PARADIGM SHIFT**

As a way of conceptualisation, the research attempts formulating a working definition or description of the concept of paradigm shift. This exercise is done mindful of the fact that descriptions or definitions are relative and none-exhaustive.

The systems theories are considered as the paradigm shift within most disciplines and general schools of thinking. This as a starting point in the debate on the paradigm shift, more especially in attempting a definition it could be seen as a way in which a new perception of the world is described. It takes account, as it describes the perception of the world, of assumptions, concepts and values that provide the community of faith the lenses through which to see the world in them and around them. Most scholars (Bosch 1991 and Joshua 2014, as examples) ascribe the theory of the paradigm shift to Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996), where “successive transition from one paradigm to another via revolution is the usual developmental pattern for mature science” (Joshua, 2014:83).

According to Kuhn (1970:11), a paradigm is born out of epistemological crisis and this crisis provides models from which a particular coherent tradition originates. This is accompanied by revolution, which alters the historical perspective of the community that experiences it. This change of perspective affects the values perception of the community. Revolution as an element of defining paradigm shift is defined as “sudden, radical, or complete change...activity or movement designed in socio-economic situation....a fundamental change in the way thinking about or visualising something: a change of paradigm” (Kuhn, 1970:9).

In summary, it could be argued that there is no paradigm shift without a epistemological crisis. The community must reach a certain stage in its life that it could call a breaking point. It is out of this point that revolution occurs. Secondly, Kuhn (1970) argues that discoveries are rare as expectation clouds the vision. It looks at the preconceived ideas or the baggage from the past. Thirdly and related to the first, is that to reject one paradigm is always the decision to accept

another and the failure to substitute the rejected paradigm is as good as rejecting the science itself (Kuhn, 1970:79). This could be true in dealing with the UCCSA, as it transacts through history and responds to different socioeconomic and religious realities.

It can be noted then that the theory of paradigm shifts is based on the argument that “science is none accumulative because terms change their meaning and though the world does not change with the change in paradigm, the scientist afterwards works in a different world” (Kuhn, 1970:121). This is applicable in the call for the paradigm shift in the UCCSA and how that shift must be understood and handled.

The theory (of paradigms) was designed within the natural sciences (mature sciences) context, not the social sciences (proto sciences). Though it was not intended for disciplines like missiology, it has managed to uncover and make explicit what may be known implicitly. The theory’s central argument is that science does not grow accumulatively, rather by revolution.

The theories of Kuhn (1970) must be viewed within the field of physics as his area of career and pursuit. His theories came about through his perception that history was not doing justice to the complexity of the situations he faced. For him, therefore:

“history, if viewed as a repository for more than anecdote or chronology, could produce a decisive transformation in the image of science by which we are now possessed. That image has previously been drawn, even by scientists themselves, mainly from of the finished scientific achievements as these are recorded in the classics and, more recently, in the textbooks from which each new scientific generation learns to practice its trade....the aim of such books is persuasive and pedagogic; a concept of science drawn from them is no more likely to fit the enterprise that produced them than an image of a national culture drawn from a tourist brochure or a language text” (Kuhn, 1970:1).

Such a declaration provides the starting point in comprehending the concept of the Kuhnian theory of the paradigm shift and so, he argues further that:

“even from history, however, that new concept will not be forthcoming if historical data continue to be sought and scrutinized mainly to answer questions posed by the unhistorical stereotype cravrn from science texts...Almost as regularly, the same books have been read as saying that scientific methods are simply the ones illustrated by the manipulative techniques used in gathering textbook data, together with the logical operations employed when relating those data to the textbook’s theoretical generalizations. The result has been a concept of science with profound implications about its nature and development...And history of science becomes the discipline that chronicles both these successive increments and the obstacles that have

inhibited their accumulation...the historian then appears to have two main tasks. On the one hand, he must determine by what man and at what point in time each contemporary scientific fact, law, and theory was discovered or invented. On the other, he must describe and explain the congeries of error, myth and superstition that have inhibited the more rapid accumulation of the constituents of the modern science text" (Kuhn, 1970:2).

Out of this argument and the reading of history texts, he came to a proposal that discoveries are rare because expectations cloud our vision. That is the reason why he emphasises that the role of the historian must involve interrogation of who discovered the theory and the context of discovery (Kuhn, 1970:2).

Secondly, he argues that the decision to reject one paradigm is always a decision to accept another and for him the failure to substitute the rejected paradigm is tantamount to the rejection of the science itself (Kuhn, 1970:79). This will mean, therefore, science (knowledge) is not accumulative, because the terms and what defines them change. Though the world does not change with the change paradigm, the scientist subsequently works in a different world (Kuhn, 1970:121).

The reading of Kuhn (1922-1996) suggests things viewed from the new paradigm makes more sense than viewed from the older paradigm. Secondly, paying attention to history is imperative, what was told and by whom, as this will provide the church with insight as it rejects and accepts new mission models that speak to the historical time and context.

Bosch (1991) in applying this theory argues:

"[the] theories have a particular relevance in our time since, in virtually all our disciplines, there is growing awareness that we live in an era of change from one way of understanding reality to another...it is abundantly clear that the twentieth century, particular after the Second World War shows evidence of such a shift in perceiving reality. Since the seventieth century the Enlightenment paradigm has reigned supreme in all disciplines, including theology. Today there is growing sense of disaffection with Enlightenment and a quest for a new approach in understanding reality. There is on one hand, a search for a new paradigm; on the other such a paradigm is already presenting itself." (Bosch, 1991:185)

In addition to the discourse in previous chapters, the purpose of this section is to show the need for a paradigm shift and how the mission of the UCCSA cannot remain unchanged. The pressure to change does not always come from within the church structures, i.e. how the church

perceives things, but it can at times (if not often) come from outside the boundaries of the church, from the society it finds itself in, and that provides the mission context.

The starting point is from a lay and loose understanding of the concept “paradigm shift”. A “paradigm” is about perceptions, standards, metaphors, examples and models used by the community or group to express their experience. The word “shift” seems to suggest that things do not remain the same, they change from time to time. A number of scholars have attempted to define or describe the paradigm shift.

According to Maluleke (2005:470), there has been a call:

“for the African theologies and African churches to either recognize the ‘paradigm shifts’ which are occurring before their eyes or to effect some ‘paradigm shifts’ themselves...African Christian theology will not allowed to degenerate into an immutable museum. It is dynamic, growing, and multifaceted and dialectic movement built diachronically and synchronically upon contextualisation and constant introspection.”

Such a call must guard against a situation where each paradigm is completely disconnected of the previous. This would be the case should the new generation be left to craft their own, with no link to the previous paradigm.

This is the state evident in the UCCSA, as it deals with new realities and leaving behind old paradigms. The argument, therefore, from the reading of the paradigms theory, is that it suggests that the accumulation of information does not bring an individual or institution closer to a solution for the riddles of its time. Life is expressed differently in each historical epoch. What worked in this period may not necessarily work in the future, as new challenges call for new models. Bosch (1991:184), however, suggests that no individual or group can create a new paradigm; it grows and ripens within the context of an extraordinary network of diverse social and scientific factors. As Bosch asserts, a paradigm shift is not manufactured in an office or the product of boardroom meetings. It cannot be attributed to a particular church or denomination or para-church, but the mission plan of God. The church only responds in its awareness of the activities of its context. This means that the church is able to read the signs of the time and discern what God is doing in his mission and what his will for the church is.

Rosado (1997:9) describes a paradigm shift as a movement away from the old explanation that no longer explains reality, resulting in a redefinition of the realities that were taken for granted, due to the emergence of a new model or way of thinking, valuing or perceiving the world. This “movement away” transition is not like changing the gears of a vehicle. The theologians who were born and socialised in the previous paradigm are still contributing to the discourse of advocating for the new paradigm. For example, Joseph Wing is the first General Secretary of

the UCCSA and also the last missionary of the LMS. It is possible that he could, consciously or unconsciously, have found himself caught up in a theological stretch between the LMS mission and the UCCSA models influenced by the socio-political dynamics of the 1960s. Some theologians are the products of the liberation period and are still working in or practising their theology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This makes it unlike mechanical gears, where if one is engaged the other gears disengage. In theology, some of the theological arguments or positions find themselves in the next paradigm as being carried by their exponents. Mission theologians will, for examples, engage themselves in issues of poverty, human rights and child protection across paradigms.

As perspectives shift, the eyes of the church must not be drawn away from the mission of God and their participation in it. According to Wright (2006:62), the question that must not escape the church is: “Whose mission is it anyway?” (cf. p89 of this research). In the process of seeking answers to this question the missional hermeneutics of the Bible begins. The starting point is coming to the insight that the mission belongs to God: *missio Dei*.

*Missio Dei* is about the mission of God to save humanity and the whole of creation (Genesis 1:28) and the church participates in this mission by invitation from Jesus Christ, co-owner of mission with God. As it is written in Revelation 7:10: “Salvation belongs to our God...and to the lamb.”

The book of Revelation is one of those books that is specific to how it is to be used:

Revelation 1:3: “Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.”

Scripture suggests that those who use it must speak out and be heard, it is not for them to keep but share with others (Pawson, 2007:1254). Johnson asserts that this is how mission can be done in the face of persecution and death (Johnson, 1999:586).

Lotz (2008:5) argues that it is in this period of the 21<sup>st</sup> century where religions meet that the question arises: “Will it be a meeting where tolerance, understanding and dialogue take place or will be settled by wars and destructions?” The question of salvation then becomes a question of religious tolerance and an inter-faith project.

This question in its entirety finds a basis in the fall of the Berlin Wall and the fall of communism where a number of expectations of freedom, equality and justice were to be realised. It becomes part of what defines and influences the 21<sup>st</sup> century mission context, a context that is dominated by the following:

"The rich North against the poor South, human rights violations by totalitarian governments, religious persecution, lack of (*quality*) education, poverty, hunger and injustices that follows from crime and corruption." (Lotz, 2008:5)

These must influence the new mission paradigm in the UCCSA.

### **4.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PARADIGM SHIFT**

This section seeks to argue beyond the delineating of the factors that influence the paradigm shift and how the church (UCCSA) responds to current areas, which will determine their ability to read the signs of the time. Rosado (1997:23) explains as follows:

"A new paradigm or way of perceiving our world, has emerged as a global consciousness focused on the interconnectedness of all life, both human and environment. This holistic view of life has profound undergirding of spirituality. Spirituality is that intangible reality and animating, integrating life-force which connects us to the divine-however defined-to each other and to the natural world, resulting in the state of security with a sense of wrathful purpose. This is Holistic Spirituality, spirituality in four dimensions: a vertical God, the world of the sacred; an inward to self, the world of personal well-being; a horizontal to the humankind, the world of people; and a downward to nature, the world of all non-human life forms."

Mission at this stage is about all creation. Mission of God is also living in harmony with the environment as its stewards and with neighbours as a global village. In light of the UCCSA and the concept of paradigm shift as a movement away from the old mission perceptions and values, it must show the shift from the LMS and its contemporaries that formed it. Such a shift must traceable.

The LMS (formed in 1795) arrived in the Cape Colony in Africa in 1799, which became the home and administrative hub of mission in Southern Africa. By 1807 the LMS deemed the situation to have improved and mission calling was considered irrelevant. The LMS leaving the Cape Colony forced the churches to fend for and organise themselves, which led to the idea of forming the Congregational Union of South Africa. At that particular time there was not much change or shift in terms of religious harmony. Western Christianity remained, which can be defined as Christianity in Africa characterised by tension between African beliefs and Christianity as new religion. Western missionaries considered the ATRs, coupled with their understanding of heathenism, as hindrance to spreading the gospel.

There has been an increase in refugees in the 2000s, especially in Botswana and South Africa, mostly from Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Those from Botswana entering South Africa and vice

versa do not consider themselves or is not considered by the local as *Mkwerekwere*<sup>37</sup>. This bears mentioning, because they cross the borders in the belief of finding brothers and sister “across the river Jordan”. The other reason deemed important to this concept is the geographic nature of the UCCSA, found in five countries. The argument does not, however, relate to the growing xenophobic trend, but to challenge the prophetic voice of the church to change according to the signs of the time. Fellowship can no longer be the focus, but solidarity.

In consideration of the factors influencing the paradigm shift in the UCCSA, the culture is starting to be understood as shaping the human voice that answers the voice of Christ (Bosch, 1991:189). Culture is now recognised as having a role in mission as shaping factor. This has brought about a shift from taking for granted the supremacy of the Western and trans-Atlantic theology to the recognition of the African theology and moulding insight into human participation in the mission of God as people and more precisely as Africans. This calls for cultural sensitivity and being internationally oriented and focused within the UCCSA, to heed the diversity of the membership. The church is, therefore, called to urgently coin new metaphors or theological expressions that will keep the church in line with the purpose of its call, to witness the grace and the mighty works of God.

There seem to be a belief that before the arrival of Western missionaries the African Traditional Religions (ATR) were binding the community together. People could come together for different ceremonies, e.g. weddings, funeral and the veneration of ancestors. This made it easy for most African Christians to embrace Christmas and Easter as family holidays, more than religious events. Because God does not only speak to individuals, but to families, communities and tribes, the shift in emphasis from the religious to social holidays came easily. Community life is important in the experience and expression of religious life.

There is also a need to look at industrialisation as another factor that has a bearing on the paradigm shift. The development and adoption of denominationalism that followed industrialisation reinforced the element of individualism. Christian mission became more institutionalised and the institution (church) became more important than the societies.

The initiated church in such situations has to deal with maintenance over mission, thus the church becomes inward looking and its survival is foremost. There is need to move away from that and make sure that the needs of humanity and creation feature higher on the agenda of the church than its institutional needs. The negation of the needs of the created world related to the Sabbath day principle (Rosado, 1997:17, as it is written in Mark 2:27: “Then he said to them,

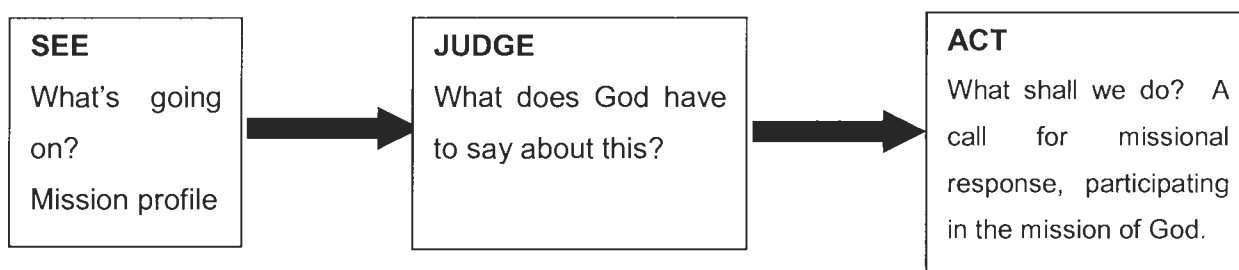
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<sup>37</sup> This is the xenophobic term used to describe foreigners, originating in the South African mines, but of late is widely used in South African communities to refer to non-South Africans and has led to violence.

‘The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath’” is a reflection of moving away from the maintenance to mission).

The study further asserted that several times the political landscape also contributes to the paradigm shift. In this, the UCCSA responded to the *Kairos* Document with the Pastoral Plan for Transformation and used the See-Judge-Act tool (Petersen & Parsons, 1986). The intention is not only to re-appropriated the approach, but employ the pastoral circle or praxis in response to contextualisation.

Figure 10: See-Judge-Act Tool



This also served as the ecclesiastical assessment tool in the UCCSA and it became imperative for the church as it reviewed its mission and asked itself the perennial and daunting question: What can we do? As mentioned in chapters two and three, the church was dealing with issues of social justice raised by the *Kairos* Document. The See-Judge-Act model of mission work takes a leaf from the “pastoral cycle”. The model starts from a social concern in a particular context and is then placed within the context of the community of faith, in this case the UCCSA (Petersen & Parson, 1986:8). The tool or model aims at having all congregants on board as participants in the mission of God and works on the assumption that all congregants have the ability to discern the will of God.

The concept of See-Judge-Act remains pertinent as there is an attempt to road-map the paradigm shifts in the UCCSA. It is the only way in which the process can be understood.

It must start with the biblical text, according to Van Engen (2004:36), because it helps to guard against imposing an agenda on the Scriptures and the error of liberation theologians who stand accused of reading issues into the biblical text. As the readers of the Bible struggle to understand the mission of God, Scripture is allowed to provide foundational motivation for the mission, its shape and guide and evaluate any given mission enterprise.

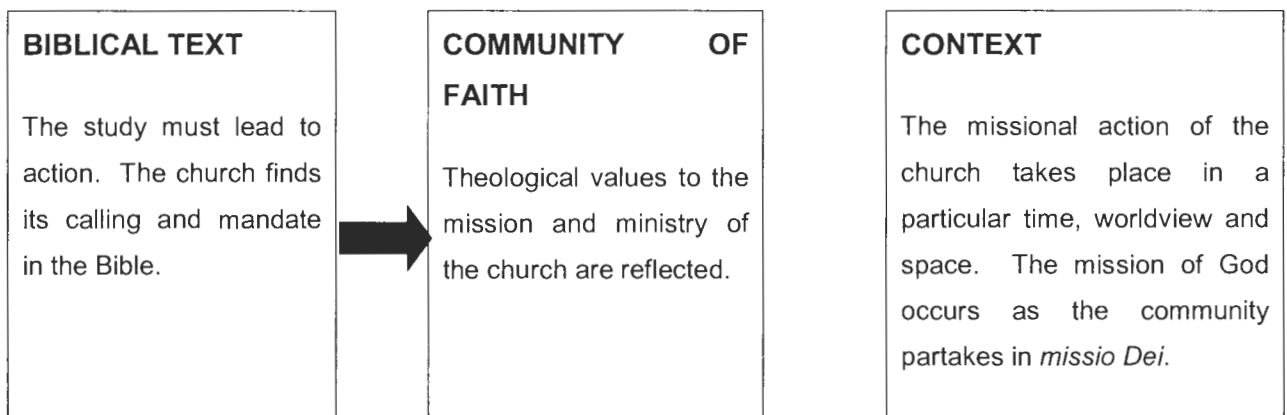
The next step of the model considers the *community of faith*, which can either be a church. Based on the reading and reflection of Scripture, the relevant theology is developed or missional analysis is conducted.

The final stage of the model focuses on the *missional context* and deals with the issues that relate to the church in this context. The connection with the text must be established in terms of the hermeneutics of reality. Such a connection must lead to the hermeneutics of the context that calls for the re-reading of the Bible that flows to missional insight and values without changing the essence of the message. The church must be able to hear the cries and listen to the stories of pain and joy of the community of its mission.

The presentation is not a simple linear route; it must also be seen in the format of the venna diagrams. Herein the biblical text, community of faith and missional context circles come together and the integral theme is developed and become the hub through which to approach the rereading of Scripture. It must be contextually appropriate and significant. It must show biblical relevance and be missionally active and transformational in intent (Van Engen, 2004:48).

In a linear presentation the pastoral cycle would be depicted as follows, similar to Figure 10 (see-judge-act tool):

Figure 11: Pastoral Cycle

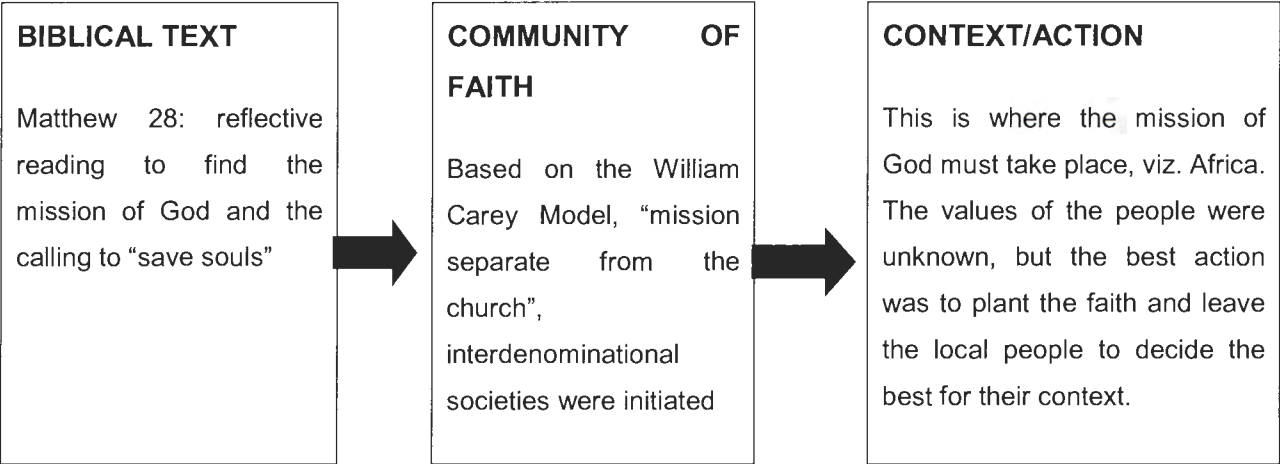


Engagement in the process and the paradoxical action reading of the text lead to the missiological implications of reading of the text. As the study engages in the process conceptually, it is already involved in the “paradigm construction” or “paradigm shift”. Paradigm formation is a powerful process that aids the community of faith to reconceptualise its mission in particular contexts (Van Engen, 2004:50; cf. Bosch, 1991:351). A paradigm therefore, consist of a set of values, worldview, priorities and the knowledge that makes a person, a group of persons or a culture look at reality in certain way. The above tool strives to observe and explain the new insight as the result of the biblically informed, contextually appropriate missional action of the church in a particular historical and geographical space.

Figure 12 is an attempt to demonstrate and delineate the possible paradigm shifts from 1799 up to 1967 and how the church is to re-conceptualise as it moves forward.

4.3.1 1799 THE PERIOD OF THE ARRIVAL OF THE MISSIONARIES

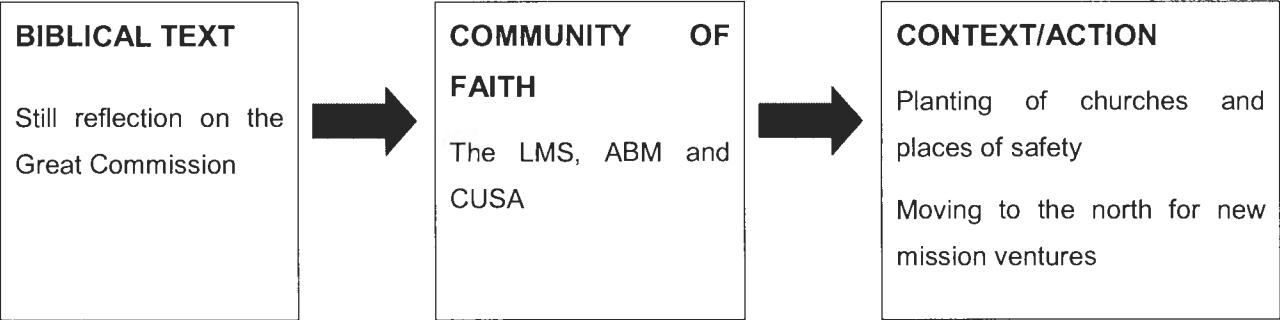
Figure 12



Inasmuch as the reading of the text at that time may have been correct, the contextual appropriation of action lacked contextual analysis.

4.3.2 1799 TO 1859

Figure 13



Inasmuch as the reflective reading of the Scripture was still the Great Commission (Matthew 28), it is argued that Scripture indeed provided the motivations for mission, but there was need to reread Scripture in the context of the new paradigm calling for political freedom, equality and recognition as people created by God for a purpose. There is now historical evidence of the hermeneutics of the context, as understood in modern times, which would have provided the church with new insight and action. The fact that they were sticking to their old principles and attitude of civilising the local people and calling them to repent, shows that the worldview of the

local people was not considered (Van der Walt, 2008). The emphasis was on planting churches and moving on as soon as the churches were planted, the mission would then be deemed successful. Mission is defined as the evangelism of the unreached (Doss, 2005:306; cf. Du Plessis, 1965; Haile, 1951).

#### **4.3.3 1859 TO 1967**

Doss (2005:305) clearly indicates that at this stage the LMS planted churches according to the model of mission separate from the church, averring that the churches lacked missionary ideas and motivation given the lack of teaching and sustainable structures at times. The push for the Great Commission started to fade as core of the theology on mission values when the planted churches were established as self-governing bodies (Doss, 2005:305). In that way, the focus had shifted from mission to maintenance. It may also be possible that the planted churches did not see the use of having a mission arm, as the LMS was. It must be noted also that the LMS was not the mission arm of any church, but an interdenominational society of the lay and clergy who thought the church was not doing much in spreading the gospel as spelt out in the Great Commission, hence:

“as the union of Christians of various denominations...it is declared to be the fundamental principle of the Missionary Society that our design is not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopal...or other church order or government...but the Glorious Gospel of the Blessed God to the Heathen.” (Haile, 1951:1; cf. Du Plessis, 1965:99)

This makes them interdependent from being the mission arm of any denomination.

The LMS activities were, as from the 1800s (1801), focused up north as they considered that the condition of the people at the Cape had improved. In 1805 they (Lambert Jansz and Jansen, as LMS missionaries) established mission communities in Klaarwater. This was the transition away from the Cape and the mission up north was established (Du Plessis, 1965:108).

In order to appreciate the paradigm shift within the UCCSA, as discussed in a previous section (4.3-4.3.3), it must be noted that from the formation of the LMS (1795), the founding of the ABM 1810 and the resultant establishment of the Congregational Union of South Africa (CUSA) 1877 to the formation of the UCCSA 1967 the church has experienced the rejection and adoption of many paradigms. The church has experience the fall of Christendom, the rise of postmodernism that presented the church with theological, cultural and ecclesiological crises. The church also experienced the “Western-reach-the-rest” paradigm that influenced the formation of the then LMS. The sending of the missionaries is now from everywhere to everywhere. This has seen a deeper ecumenical engagement and partnerships being forged

(Tennent, 2010:18), calling for the church to continue to redefine its mission and polity as it enters in another historical epoch.

#### **4.3.4 1967 AND BEYOND**

The period was characterised by liberation wars, political and economic refugees. The reading of the texts depicts theologies of liberation and resistance, in which the exodus motif became dominant. There is always the risk of imposing agendas on Scripture, a fallacy committed by the liberation theologians that still has repercussions. The above demonstrates that context is important, as the environment in which missional action takes place. The fundamental question in the contextual rereading of Scripture is: What does it mean to know God in our context? In the process of answering this question, the church rethinks its obedience and participation in the mission of God. The object is always the world, men and women in their multiple life situations (Van Engen, 2004:48).

The above analysis provides the basis for the need for contextualisation. Contextualisation as the mission practice of the UCCSA beyond 1967 into the 21<sup>st</sup> century is an ongoing phenomenon. Contextualisation would assist the church to understand and apply its mission model(s) correctly. It also aids the church to see or discern what God is doing in a particular place and time and participate in that *missio Dei* appropriately.

Contextualisation needs to be scrutinised under four sub-headings (4.3ff), viz. the meaning of contextualisation, the historical development of contextualisation, its biblical mandate and then more specifically the concept of contextualisation in the UCCSA.

#### **4.4 CONTEXTUALISATION AS RESPONSE TO THE PARADIGM SHIFT**

The study starts by justifying contextualisation, as an appropriate response in the UCCSA paradigm post-1967, by means of the example of worship symbols and liturgy. Each church, denomination, uses different symbols in their worship to express how they interact with God in a particular place and context. The overarching argument is that symbols and liturgy bear the same meaning, but also show the expression of the people in a particular context (Pears, 2010:8). The classical example of the use of the symbol in shifting the paradigm in the UCCSA is the Holy Communion for children. The 2005 assembly held in Kwa-Zulu Natal, at the Nanda Seminary, resolved that the Holy Communion must be given to children. The assembly reasoned that if Holy Communion is the means to the grace of God, children cannot be left out. The church, however, does not demonstrate an adequate modern-day understanding of the sacrament, especially within the UCCSA culture. 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 suggests that whoever participates in the sacrament must be able to make their own judgements and that it would be too much to expect from children. This is not about doctrine (baptism), however, but a way to

demonstrate the paradigm shift and how it affects major belief components in the church. The church may well feel that children must share in Holy Communion, but there must first be a great deal of teaching, especially at the grassroots level and especially in the rural congregations that have a significant number of elderly members. They believe that by allowing children to share in Holy Communion, the sacraments are not taken seriously.

Things do not remain the same, however, perceptions of reality change and are always challenged. The traditional understanding of mission in the UCCSA is also being challenged and this shift calls for contextualisation as a way of response. Contextualisation, as an essential part of mission work, must be used with caution. It tends to create pockets of theology and thus becomes limiting and confining in nature, creating the danger that the context and not the Bible becomes the norm. It is, however, an attempt to look at the meaning of contextualisation as a theological concept, i.e. theologians' interpretation of it during debate.

#### **4.4.1 WHAT IS CONTEXTUALISATION?**

The study admits that in most cases it is difficult to give a comprehensive definition of concepts, only the working definition is of real value; the best way is to talk about what contextualisation is about. Speaking about contextualisation has become popular in many circles, so much so that at times it is necessary to pause and question as to whether people really know what they are talking about. The understanding that contextualisation is isolated to missiology or theology is not true, even education and other disciplines make reference to contextualisation. The context is central to theology and mission work. As a way of demonstrating and clarifying contextualisation, the concept of sin serves as example. In African culture sin is committed against the community in terms of breaking taboos and ritual impurity. These are not sins only against others, but also against the Higher Being. It is believed that ritual impurity is about a dented relationship with God. The task of the church in such a case would be to emphasise the power of God to overcome evil and that sin is against the will and salvation plan of God. The missional church looks at the themes and concepts of the given culture and identifies the aspects that can be used and how (Erickson, 1998:79; cf. Van der Walt, 2008:74). This shows that the definition and the description of the concept of contextualisation would be difficult. However, Tennent (2010:347) argues that even if the terms may differ from place to place or from discipline to the other "(the) formulation, presenting and practicing the Christian faith in such a way that is relevant to the cultural context of the target group in terms of conceptualisation, expression and application...maintaining theological coherence, biblical integrity and theoretical consistency". This is how the concept contextualisation must be understood and applied with the UCCSA as the model of mission.

In this study contextualisation is a movement from the traditional way of perceiving mission to the one informed by the context and local people's experience and the everyday world. The LMS, as argued previously (Van der Walt, 2008:8), did not take the local context seriously or seriously enough to inform their mission thinking. This must not be taken to sound unappreciative of the effort they made with the translation of the Bible. Contextualisation informs the missionary how to proclaim the gospel in an understandable way within the local context. The theological formulation of contextualisation is based on the biblical text and the experience of the community of faith, as focus of the mission of God. Biblical statements are interrogated within a particular location and this abjures the importation of cultures and context, i.e. the Bible determines the meaning and the culture is expected to keep from distorting biblical truth. This is done mindful of the fact that theologians have always been influenced by their context and that it finds expression in their theological formulations and discourses (Pears, 2010:8).

#### **4.4.2 RATIONALE FOR CONTEXTUALISATION?**

This section advocates the inclusion of contextualisation in the mission paradigm of the UCCSA in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The meaning of the sacraments, symbols and liturgy may not carry the same weight throughout history and across geographic terrain as it gathers new meaning in response to current realities.

Also rationale for contextualisation, Pears correctly states that Christianity is a religion in transition, and is "part of the constant changing world that progresses, develops, renews, and re-invents itself". Then contextualisation must follow because "Christianity is subjected to the changes of human, culture and social existence" (Pears, 2010:1). This is also substantiated by the shift of the universal truth and knowledge. The study argues that since most of the concepts are now shaped and validated by cultural, social and political context, it follows that mission is also to be influence by its context of joining God in mission.

As discussed in the previous paragraphs, it is through the biblical text that God is known and the cycle of pastoral/praxis makes the church reflect on its context, i.e. its reality, and such discernment may be deemed to amount to contextualisation. Pears (2010:8) avers that knowing reality continually changes and is challenged by socio-political and economic realities that influence even the expression of theologians. This is why it is justified to call for a paradigm shift, more precisely for moving to or re-appropriating contextualisation. Three reasons are put forward to substantiate the understanding of contextualisation within the UCCSA discourses and practices.

Firstly, there is a fundamental commonality in the definition of reality in the five synods of the UCCSA. The definition of culture is expressed in terms of norms and values in a particular context, as Hesselgrave (1992:C44) explains:

“Men living in a coherent groups...define the world around them, deciding what is real and how to react to this reality. Failure to grasp this simple fact about culture - that is, culture, not rocks or trees or other physical surroundings, is the environment of man dooms any attempt to work in a cross-cultural context.”

Secondly, people are born and socialised in the structures that are defined and sustained by a particular culture. The culture that they find themselves in becomes their reality. Such reality changes and is challenged as well. So contextualisation does not only look at time and space, but also the concepts that define personhood in a particular context.

Thirdly, the researcher as a member and practicing minister of the church can attest to the intentions of contextualisation, because even in the “covenant” UCCSA there is cultural diversity. Such diversity suggests that even in fellowship (covenant) people see reality in different ways and this accounts for different worldviews. The emphasis of the covenant by the church must guard against committing the mistake of treating all situations with a uniform mentality<sup>38</sup> and participating in the mission of God is to communicate his love in such a complex context, as Geisler (1978:241) explains:

“The Christians accept as axiomatic that his task is to communicate Christ to the world. That sounds simple enough, but in fact it is very complex. It is complex for at least three reasons, there are many views of ‘Christ’, secondly, there are many ways to communicate, and thirdly, there are many ‘worlds’ to which Christ must be communicated.”

In the church the people see or know Christ in relation to their experience and it cannot be the same, it differs from person to person and community to community. Contextualisation must build on the principles of the pastoral circle that takes intentional concern for the individuals in the group or social grouping as its point of departure.

#### **4.4.3 BIBLICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR CONTEXTUALISATION**

The UCCSA belongs to the Reformed tradition, in which the Bible takes centre stage in any theological debate or when faced with a theological crossroad. Therefore, a new model must

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<sup>38</sup> The “uniform-mentality” refers to the belief that people who are found in the same place must think and act the same way. This goes against the science of optics (people perceive things or see things through the lens of their situation and experience).

be based on the belief that the suggestion for a new model must be based on biblical values and teachings.

The understanding of God's mission does not only involve the reading, but also interpreting of it and this is done contextually. It can follow three approaches, viz.:

#### **4.4.3.1 Popular approach**

The community of faith interprets Scripture as if it was written in their time, language and cultural context (The Lausanne Committee, 1992:C167). This approach is well explained in the biblical translations as the classic example of popular contextualisation, e.g. the translation of the Tswana Bible (the Gospel of Luke in 1829, New Testament in 1838 and the complete Bible in 1857) (Briggs & Wing, 1970:58; cf. Haile, 1951:8), the Ndebele Bible (the New Testament was completed in 1884 and in 1978 the whole of the Ndebele Bible) (Mzilethi, 1999:67) and the Xhosa Bible (completed in 1859) (Makhuzeni, 1999:35). It must be noted that the readers also read their context into the Bible at times, without considering the different contexts. The overarching principle is that the Word of God is not the exclusive domain of scholars, but must be accessible to all. This means that the central truth of salvation is plain for all to see and be guided by (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16). The problem with this popular approach is that it does not seek to interpret the text in the context of the writer and first reader, which could reveal the real intentions of God's mission at that particular time and place.

The production of the Bible in a local language makes the gospel available to the local people in their context and reveals to them the liberation power of God, one of the prime goals of the LMS missionaries.

#### **4.4.3.2 Historical approach**

This approach looks at the historical and cultural context. It takes an intentional interest in what the text meant in its original language and context. Central to this approach is that God speaks to the people in their particular historical situation and this is the centre of its laudation. The main problem is that it does not give the meaning of the text to the contemporary reader. The approach is silent on the cultural circumstances of the reader, working on the assumption that what worked in past historical times may be applied in the current context.

#### **4.4.3.3 The contextual approach**

It is best to suggest that this may be appropriate for the UCCSA at a given historical and geographical space. The contextual approach accepts the two other approaches and draws a foundation from them. The contextual approach identifies by means of the historical

approaches the original context of the text as the fundamental understanding of the missional intentions of God. From the popular approach it learns that listening to and obeying the Word of God is paramount to participation in the mission of God. The contextual approach takes the discourse further and considers the contemporary cultural context of the reader and argues that there must be a dialogue between the biblical text and contemporary issues (Lausanne Committee, 1992:C168). The approach, however, accepts that the reader does not go to the text in a personal vacuum. Readers approach the text with the array of concerns streaming from their personal and community experiences and their missional call.

#### **4.5 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CONTEXTUALISATION IN THE UCCSA**

The historical development of contextualisation can be traced to the end of the Second World War. In full awareness of Paul's contextualisation in saying "I become a Greek for the Greek" and that incarnation can be considered as contextualisation, i.e. when Jesus Christ became flesh and dwelt among us and God speaking through the prophets in the Old Testament and that even the LMS contextualised by not prescribing the mode of church polity, it is contended that in the present state of the debate, contextualisation can be traced to the Second World War, when it started to become of missiological interest. Another point would be that Western culture supremacy was also challenged and other cultures were the subject of debate in mission discourses.

After the Second World War, many countries under colonial rule started to advocate for liberation from foreign rule and dominance. This move brought about radical social, economic and political change that affected the lifestyle of these nations. In the life and mission of the church, it brought about the element of searching for personal identity as the church tried to participate in the liberation struggles of their countries

Mission as contextualisation, therefore, was at this stage interpreted as an affirmation that God has turned and continues to turn towards the world. Participation by the churches, groups, societies in the mission of God was defined by the rejection of the escapist attitude of "leaving everything in the hands of God". The church moved away from a seemingly neutral stance on social, political and economic issues and was seen in its activities as choosing sides and taking responsibility for its choices, choosing to side with life rather than death and align itself with justice rather than oppression and any form of abuse. All of which form part of prophetic witnessing.

The concept of contextualisation was not well defined during the Second World War. Hiebert (1987:104) calls the period between 1800-1950 "non-contextualisation". The contention was that Western theology, as practised by missionaries, had eternal validity. The missionary and/or

preacher's role was to translate the finalised and defined Western theological truth. The social, cultural and political factors of the targeted group were not taken into consideration (Hiebert, 1987:106; cf. Bosch, 1991:421). This is said appreciative of the fact that other LMS missionaries like Livingstone, John Philip and Robert Moffat did well in the local context.

It was in the early 1970s that the word "contextualisation" was coined. The areas of contextualisation were theology, education and the training of people for church ministry (Bosch, 1991:420).

The term (contextualisation) later served as the generic term for theological models, such as indigenisation models and socio-economic models of contextual theology. The indigenous models focus on translation and enculturation, while the socio-economic models can be divided into two: The evolutionary model is characterised by its interest in political theology, theology of development, and the revolutionary model, characterised by the liberation, feminist, women, black and African theologies (Bosch, 1991:421).

The central argument is that missiology is about the missionary message of the Christian church, incarnate itself in the life and world of those who embrace it. It takes serious the role of culture, politics and economics as crucial components in the process of contextualisation.

As demonstrated by the discussion on paradigm shift, i.e. *text--- community of faith----- context*, there is a shift from the traditional way of practising theology. In contextualisation, the concept of mission is the opposite of the Constantine paradigm where theology occurred from the elite downwards. In the Constantine paradigm the main interlocutor was the educated non-believers. In contextualisation, theology must be from local people's experiences. Contextualisation accepts that tradition and Scripture will always be the cardinal source of theology. It, however, argues that there is a need to go beyond the reading of Scripture to include the social sciences and the experiences of the community. The main interlocutor becomes the poor and the culturally marginalised (Bosch, 1991:423). Missional reasoning, therefore, starts by rejecting neutral theology or a way of practising theology that seems to negate the suffering people's circumstances. It starts by questioning the hermeneutics used by the missionaries that was modelled around cultural imperialism and adopts the hermeneutics of suspicion as the technique of interrogation; it thus becomes the models of contextualisation. Mission as contextualisation, therefore, argues that theology must be directed at those who are affected or involved within the geo-space and time.

Contextualisation is the capacity to respond from the Bible to the given realities of life in a historical time and geographical space. The world is not static, waiting to be explained. Engle, (1983:88) explains the following in regard to contextualisation:

“This is a new term (contextualisation) imported into theology to express a deeper concept than indigenisation ever does. We understand the term to mean making concepts or ideals relevant in a given situation. In reference to Christian practices, it is an effort to express the never changing Word of God in ever changing modes of relevance. Since the Gospel message is inspired but the mode of its expression is not, contextualisation of the modes of expression is not only right but necessary.”

This means that contextualisation is the product of dissatisfaction with the status quo, whereby concept was built on cultural and political colonisation. It (contextualisation) intends to acknowledge the local contribution and influence into the fine thought-product on theological concept. However, in discussing the concept of contextualisation, Tennent (2010:35) rightly states that the concept must not be taken as domesticating the gospel but making it speak and be interpreted within a certain context of the target group

#### **4.6 CONTEXTUALISATION IN THE UCCSA**

In the previous sections, it is argued that the church is participating in the mission of God in a world that is not static. Inasmuch as the sections dealt extensively with the concept of paradigm shift in the UCCSA, the response was generic. This section, therefore, addresses the “what and how” of contextualisation within the UCCSA.

There is a contention that contextualisation is dynamic and progressive. A reading of the history of the UCCSA, through its parent societies (the LMS, ABM and CUSA), creates the impression that the missionaries were aware of both their own context and that of the mission field. There is quite a bit of evidence that the missionaries thought that to do mission work effectively they needed to learn the language of the people, a move that speaks to contextualisation. The most celebrated attempt of contextualisation is translation. However, it includes indigenisation and culture in the endeavour to analyse contextualisation in relation to the UCCSA.

##### **4.6.1 TRANSLATION IN THE UCCSA**

The UCCSA belongs to the Reformed tradition and the basic understanding of translation finds its basis in the principle of the Reformed theology. In the Reformation tradition the Bible is central and must be available to everybody, it is not the exclusive domain of the elite and must be used by everyone. All, therefore, have a responsibility to contextualise the message of the Bible within their life experience and context.

Most of these contextualisation efforts did indeed take place during the LMS period, not that of the UCCSA. Now the church must look at new ways of translation. The concept of translating

the Bible and other church literature must not disregard the meaning of symbols and images within the context of focus. By so doing the church will not only be limiting itself in the translation of the Bible, but also the intended goals of the *missio Dei*.

The study limits itself to two theories of translation as most relevant to UCCSA history, these are as follows:

First is the **Formal Equivalence Translation Model**, which holds that the Bible must be translated into the local language for the spread of the gospel to be effective and local. The message of Christianity is supra-cultural; in this case, culture is thought to play an ancillary role in the translation process (Harrower, 2001:11). The idea of having the text in the local language is to solicit a positive response from the recipients of the gospel in the new culture. The assumption is that people will be convinced that God can speak their language and make it easy for them to identify with the new faith.

The following Bibles were translated to proclaim the gospel in the relevant local language. The Kalanga was translated by Cullen Reed in 1915 (Briggs & Wing, 1970:210). The literature (Kalanga translations) aided southern Zimbabwe and northern Botswana Christians in their services and teachings. The Tswana Bible was translated by Moffat and the BaTlhaping (1826), the Xhosa by CUSA (1833), the Zulu by the ABM (1848) and the Ndebele Bible was translated by James Pelling, assisted by Rev. Amos Mzilethi (in 1961) (Briggs & Wing, 1970:204). All these translations were based on the theory of the Formal Equivalence Translation Model, making the Bible available in the language of the local people.

The problem with this model of translation is that it assumes that language is merely an alternative code for the same reality, in which case it does not address contextualisation. Translation as the model further assumes that the understanding of form and meaning are conveyed throughout, from language to language and culture to culture, a belief that cannot be substantiated (Kraft, 1972:21). It undermines the reality that form and meaning are not equal and differ from one context to another. It seems likely that most of the translation work (Tswana, Xhosa, Zulu and Ndebele) done by the LMS was based on this theory. However, Jordaan (2002:19) is of the opinion that every translation of the Bible contains both formal correspondence as well as functional equivalence elements and there is no watertight division. This could be true of the Robert Moffat translation, whereby the literal and the mind of both the translator and the context of the intended reader could not be separated.

Secondly, the failure of this model to address form and meaning led to the emergence of the **Dynamic Equivalence Translation Model**. The model strives to be faithful to both the original and translated transcript, i.e. taking into account the impact of the message to the original

audience and writers (Harrower, 2001:11). The central point is that the meaning and form are packed into the context. The study believes this should be the preferred model for the UCCSA, not only for the translation of Bible but all church literature and also the proclaimed message. This does not suggest the UCCSA did not take any action, the establishment of Lovedale Bible School for equipping the laity reflected the activities of the contextualisation of the gospel content (Briggs & Wing, 1970:298)

#### **4.7 PARADIGM SHIFT AND CULTURE IN THE UCCSA**

It is difficult to deal with contextualisation without addressing the concept of culture, since the two can assist with insight into the mission context. This reasoning is based on the understanding that the *missio Dei* takes place in a life setting and context (John 1 speaks of the concept of incarnation). People are organised into groups of societies that follow a common worldview and how they express their beliefs are the elements that bring them together. Each community has a way in which they organise their business and the place of each member in the harmonious process of conducting such business. If the church, therefore, has to communicate the Word of God in a contextual framework, the Bible must serve as a point of reference by the community as reflected on their experience and situation as point of departure and then proceed to preach the gospel. This will make people hear the gospel and feel that God can come down to their context and speak a transformative message in their own language.

The student or practitioner of mission cannot afford the luxury of disregarding culture if the practice or study is to be conducted contextually. During the LMS missionary period in Africa in the 1870s the only culture that was known to the practitioners was that of the Western missionaries (his/hers). There has now been a shift. The Western academic theology is showing that it is already aware of the rest of the world and other cultures. Wright (2006:38) states that is an age of a multinational church and multi-directional mission, which calls for multi-cultural and multi-directional mission hermeneutics.

A number of scholars, both anthropologists and missiologists, have attempted to define culture as it impacts their field of specialisation. According to Kwast (1992:C4), culture is a patterned way of doing things within a particular society. Culture is the superglue that binds people together and gives them a sense of identity and continuity (Kwast, 1992:C4). Culture can also be seen as learned and shared ways of perceiving or a shared cognitive orientation (Kwast, 1992:C5). Hiebert (1992:C9) argues that culture is “the integrated system of learned patterns of behavior, ideas and products characteristic of a society...It is a mental map of the world that provides guidelines for action”.

It can also be seen as the symbol system that people create in order to think and communicate (Hiebert, 1992:C10). For Hesselgrave (1992:C43) culture is made up of folkways, modes and mores, language, human productions and social structure. One might compare culture to a large intricate tapestry. The tapestry is made up of numberless threads, various colours, large shading and lines, all of which make up the overall mosaic or pattern that in turn serves in interpreting any part.

The definitions given above becomes obvious on how complex the task of communicating the gospel is. When missionaries came to Africa they were socialised and schooled in a cultural context different from that of the respondent. The Western scholarship and theology were modelled around Western academia and culture, which resulted in the missionaries believing that their culture is biblically approved (Van der Walt, 2008:8). The fact that the LMS and the ABM missionaries approached the local context with the perception that the locals are heathens made them guilty of cultural superiority (cf. Bosch, 1991).

This is a mistake the UCCSA cannot repeat. In order for the church to avoid this, it must engage in serious ecclesial analysis. This is a process where the church analyses the reality as the mission praxis, in itself and within the wider social context. This also accepts that other religions have memories, worship patterns and rituals that are not committed into writing or sacred scriptures (Kritzinger, 2007:775). This will allow the church to define itself within the context of the people who have converted to Christianity from other religions, e.g. Africa Traditional Religions (ATR).

It must also be noted that when the church deals with culture it must be certain on how it defines inequality, individualism versus collectivism and masculinity (assertiveness) versus femininity (modesty). The importance of these is to help in the understanding of how the world is perceived and influences cognitive thinking, the language forms, how belief patterns are formulated and how the community is structured (Hesselgrave, 1991:C192).

The gospel is still proclaimed in a cross-cultural and multi-cultural context; meaning an approach or model must be adopted. The model to be adopted must provide a strategy that recognises the native culture and guides how it can make it easy or difficult to communicate the gospel. It is also the argument of the study that the LMS missionaries, though sent among the people, were expected to learn the language before they could teach Christian values. There is need to learn the world of the intended gospel target, with the knowledge that the worldview will always differ.

In addressing the challenge of communicating the grace of God in a multi-cultural and cross-cultural context, Hesselgrave (1992:C36) advocate a three-culture structure model. The model

puts the communicator in the middle and the text (Bible) and the respondent on either side. The first thing the communicator does is to consider Scripture. The communicator admits that the reading of 2 Timothy 2:15 may not necessarily refer to his/her message, but that of the prophets, judges and apostles. The world referred to in 1 John 1:1-2 is the biblical world, which differs from his/hers in history and geography. The context provides knowledge of the culture for the original study of the text, as influenced by folkways, modes and mores, values, norms and the societal arrangements; the study ascribes these to Biblical culture.

The argument provides the missionary with the sense that he/she is not the primary source of the message, but God (Revelation 22:18-19). In this context, the Bible is the focus with the understanding that it was not written in a cultural vacuum, God used humanity in their cultural context and all their mental faculties. The missionaries were able to integrate their social practice and had a targeted readership and expected positive responses.

The secondary level looks at the communicator who stands in the middle of the process (Hesselgrave 1992:C37). The communicator stands as the ambassador of Christ. The critical element at this level is that the communicator is aware or must be aware that the mission belongs to God, the communicator is a co-worker. This challenges the loose understanding that the mission belongs to the church or the church has a mission. The communicator belongs to a different culture from that of the Bible world and that of the respondent. The theological pronouncement is influenced by the culture of the communicator of the gospel. The secondary level is about missionary culture.

In level three or tertiary level, the focus is on the culture of the respondent of the gospel. The argument being that for the communicator to realise positive results he/she must have a commitment and desire to enter the very life of the respondent, to learn about their culture (Hesselgrave 1992:C38). The example that could also be related to translation as a model of contextualisation is when Jesus said "I am the bread of life" (John 5). If that Scripture was to be within the context of the Ndebele of Zimbabwe, it would be expectation to be "I am the 'pap' (maize meal) of life". The study holds that the understanding of bread in the time of Jesus was a staple food. If it was in Botswana, the statement would be "bogobe" (thick porridge). John Campbell made an attempt to translate the Lord's Prayer to the Setswana of BaTlhaping in Kuruman: "Hara a chuna" our father, "re neya ka mecha yokley bohobe" give every day our porridge (Haile, 1951:4).

In rural Matabeleland<sup>39</sup> in Zimbabwe, bread was only seen during Christmas when the working fathers come home from the mines, factories and farms. Therefore, Jesus cannot be seen as

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<sup>39</sup> The area where the author grew up.

bread that is only eaten once a year; He is the food of our daily life. Language that speaks to the context must be developed and Jesus is with believers every day.

However, Hiebert (1992:C21) asserts that in dealing with culture and the gospel, especially the communication of the gospel in any given culture, gospel and culture need to be separate. A failure to separate may lead to the fallacy of communicating the missionary's<sup>40</sup> culture as the gospel. The respondents will appreciate if the missionary "do not bring us the Gospel as a potted plant, but bring us the seed of the Gospel and plant it in our soils or cultures".

#### **4.8 UCCSA AND INDIGENISATION**

This section debates the question whether the UCCSA is an indigenous church or not? Has there been a deliberate move to indigenise the congregational theology in the UCCSA? In an endeavour to answer these questions the generic concept of indigenisation<sup>41</sup> is explored and some proposed criteria offered.

It is not enough to separate the gospel from the communicator's culture, it must be expressed in terms of the culture of the recipient. As a member and minister of the UCCSA church, within the Congregationalism polity, Congregationalism has most often been presented or taught as the equivalence of democracy, if not the actual democracy in the Christian context. Congregationalism (though not the topic of this section) is viewed as giving the congregation the power to govern themselves. The church believes that God rules the world and all that is in it, the UCCSA teaches that Jesus Christ is Head of the church. This means that in as much as the church espouses Congregationalism, God's rule is theocratic. Congregationalism in this context must be read to mean the discernment of the will of God on the Congregational level (Wing, 1986:24; cf. Haile, 1951).

A "parallel" or shadow structure of the "wise elders", who can influence the direction of the church growth, has been observed and mostly found in the rural congregations. The role of deacon goes beyond being elected as leader in the local congregation. They remain a deacon even when their term of office comes to an end. This denotes the traditional model of the African (*kgotla* for the Tswana, *inkundla* or *idale* among the Ndebele, Zulu and Xhosa). Inasmuch as some people, especially within the ranks of the UCCSA, may promote the justification of such a shadow structure, it does not allow for or accommodate the presence and the participation of women. This is an example of a native form that cannot be disregarded if the gospel or church is to have a local or indigenised context.

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<sup>40</sup> The study will like to put to record that the reference to missionary is not limited to the LMS or ABM person, but all those commissioned to spread the good news.

<sup>41</sup> The understanding of indigenisation in comparison with contextualisation will be discussed next as the subheading of the section.

The other concept with which the study seeks to demonstrate indigenisation in the UCCSA is the organisation called the Soldiers of Christ/*Masole/Ibutho*. The study argues that there are real models of indigenisation in the UCCSA, which can be found in three areas: philosophy of leadership, worship structure and hymns/songs. There is a real danger of syncretism that normally results when people blend old traditions with the new, brought by the new religion.

Hiebert (1992:C21) argues that indigenisation of the gospel is about presenting the gospel in such a way that it is consistent with the principles and assumptions of the indigenous culture, while at the same time being authentic to the biblical foundation.

The call for indigenisation of theology, worship and gospel seems to be on the rise. Sargunam (1992:D134) expects the churches to be talking about indigenising mission instead asserting that “the future of the mission...depends upon our ability to use indigenous methods to disciple the population of our beloved land”.

The question remains a struggling point: “Is the UCCSA an indigenous church and does it have the ability to draw indigenous methods of discipleship?” In answering this question, the general understanding of the concept serves as an undergirding point. The next section provides a working definition to avoid committing the fallacy of undefined terms.

Smalley (1992:C153) argues that those who attempt a positive answer to the question have made a false diagnosis. It has become axiomatic missionary thinking that if a church is “self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating” then by definition it must be called an indigenous church. These do not amount to an indigenous church, however, for Smalley (1992:C153) the indigenous church would be “a group of believers who live out their life, including their socialized Christian activity, in the pattern of the local society, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures”.

The indigenous church cannot be founded, but it can be modelled on the church of the New Testament. This shows that inasmuch as they cannot be founded, they can be planted. This means that the indigenous church will have the opportunity to grow from local soil (culture) and is then not the product of foreign mission (Smalley, 1992:C155). The thinking of Smalley may completely disqualify the UCCSA from being considered as the indigenous church. However, there is sense in which the UCCSA can be considered as indigenous, based on two historical landmarks of the formation of the Congregational Union of South Africa and the subsequent formation of the UCCSA in 1967 (see chapter two). The indigenous church is born of missionary zeal and the work of people who are the product of the local culture. It is the product of the socio-political and economical context of the people, who in response to seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit started the church. It speaks to their situation and context. In the

case of the CUSA, the LMS had left them in the “heat of sun” and they needed to get themselves out of the heat to the shade.

Indigenisation can also be defined as the rejection of the cultural superiority associated with Western missionaries, developed from the Constantine period and Enlightenment. Indigenisation rejected the perception of Western missionaries as supra-culture and that of the heathens as savage, in need of civilising. The formation of the UCCSA coincidentally came when there was call for nationalisation that found spiritual backing from indigenous beliefs.

The indigenous opposed the religion of the elite and preached community religion. Therefore, indigenisation is not limited to matters of liturgy, vestments, music and non-sacramental rites, but defining the gospel from the local context. That being the case, indigenisation is a process that continues to take place in every historical time of the life of the church (Bosch, 1991:448). The danger to be guarded against, however, is the possibility of replacing a dominant culture (Western, as in the time of the Western missionaries) with the local dominant culture (referring to macro and micro cultures), whereby the churches need to be challenged to find a local biblical culture - a culture that is consistent with the principals and teaching of the Bible and the will of God.

Advocating contextualisation in the UCCSA requires a selected approach, because contextualisation can work on a number of levels. Firstly, the total rejection of contextualisation works on the assumption that all cultures that are different from that of the missionary are evil and must be discarded and the respondent must assume a new culture. This was true with the LMS<sup>42</sup>, ABM and other missionary societies that saw the local cultures as counter-progressive to the preaching of the gospel, reflected by the debates among the apostles in Acts 15 in terms of prescriptions to the gentiles (Van der Walt, 2008) and demonstrated in Acts 15:1-2: “Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers ‘unless you are circumcised according to the customs taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.’”

This left the apostles divided (Acts 15:2). It holds that whoever seeks to be a Christian, must follow the laws of Moses as the canon of being a Christian. As it applied to the established churches, UCCSA in particular, it dictated a certain dress code; ways of singing worship and praise hymns; a particular mode of conduct at and after funerals to those of the Western missionary (Harrower, 2001:10). The reading of Acts 15:28, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements”, and especially the word “beyond” in this translation suggests that a prescription was given, but needed to be regulated.

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<sup>42</sup> This is said fully aware of the LMS founding principle (Haile, 1951; Du Plessis, 1965).

It would be unfair and naïve to continue to argue from the perspective of the shortcomings of the Western missionaries. The church now encourages cross-cultural ministry and the ministers have served a number of cultures in the UCCSA. Total rejection is not the solution nor is it an option in mission. The total rejection of contextualisation in the church runs the risk of creating a cultural vacuum that can be filled with information that seems to be appealing to the second-guessing mind. When a community seeks to please the missionary, it may result in their culture going underground and this creates dualism. The old culture is secretly kept alive, behind the back of the missionary. After church services, the respondents will still consult the ancestral spirits on practical issues that they think the church failed to address. The question is how the gospel of God's love and mercy is kept relevant and pure, while also speaking to the people's experiences.

The second approach is the uncritical contextualisation: There is no critical analysis, it is taken as given. It is based on the premise that all religions lead to God or the ultimate being and thus all religions are accepted by God. The mission is not about changing people's culture, but to help them be in touch with the creator God. This argument is also based on the acceptance of relativism and pluralism, all religions must be evaluated and the belief that all religions are of equal value to people and all behaviours are accepted (Harrower, 2001:10).

The challenge with this approach is that it becomes too broad and seems to operate in unlimited theological and cultural space, where everything is good and the command to discern God's will is neglected. Society dictates what behaviour is acceptable and forms the laws of the land that will not contradict the local culture. The failure of the uncritical contextualisation calls for critical contextualisation, which becomes the third approach. Critical contextualisation starts by raising questions of how far culture can be accepted in doing theology and which elements of culture may facilitate and smooth over the communication of the gospel. It encourages the respect and positive affirmation of other cultures. This allows the missionary to appreciate that cultural spectacles influence the people's theological formation and pronouncement and how they perceive their relationship with God. In this approach, cultures are judged but with empathy (Harrower, 2001:11).

The indigenisation must be clearly stated as a model in the mission programme of the missionary, whether Western or local. The planted churches must be allowed to grow to maturity, be equipped with national or local leadership and supported by their people and resources. The church must be a reflection of their context economically and socio-politically and be encouraged to do mission in that context. This is mindful of other cultures where there has still been no transformation (e.g. in terms of women, age and sexual orientation) and the gospel must be transformative, i.e. transform the culture.

This section argues and admits that the locus of the Great Commission, as the biblical base of mission theology of the UCCSA, remains influential. This is based on the fact that salvation, as a concept of missional congregations and indeed the act of God, cannot be discussed independent of sin and sin cannot be addressed without the dictates of the law.

In an African<sup>43</sup> context, especially considering the fact that the UCCSA is multi-national, multi-tribal and multi-racial, contextualisation becomes vital as the differences amounts to various contexts and is influenced by other cultures of the global village (e.g. American culture). There is a sense in which African refers to black people in Africa. According to Van der Walt (2008:75), the (*black African*) elders and ancestors are the originators and custodians of the laws and customs of the tribes. In this case sin is not committed against the Supreme Being (cf. Genesis 2: the human ancestor, Adam, sinned against God), but the community. The person's identity is defined in terms of how he/she relates and participates in the community. This argument on the concept of sin, therefore, is the basis for calling for salvation and read in conjunction with the UCCSA (2009:2) constitution preamble:

"The corporate life and fellowship of the Church are experienced more widely in the denomination. God's purpose will not, however, be fulfilled until all barriers are broken down, and all the people of God accept one another without reservation as brothers and sisters redeemed through faith in Christ and incorporated into the one family of God."

Therefore, the understanding of sin committed and the desired salvation as the focus of the *missio Dei*, especially in the advocacy for the missional congregations, must be treated within the community model. God calls all believers to be part of the body of Christ and to love one another, as Christ prayed in John 17, which models the desired community. It must be appreciated that the preamble of the UCCSA constitution relates first to the love of God and second to the love of neighbour and its practical implication.

Discussing salvation in the context of the community, as a way of understanding the missional congregation, it firstly assumes that each member is considered important and has a role to play in the success of the community. Secondly, it assumes that all members of the community have a responsibility towards the salvation of the community and the wellbeing of each other (Van der Walt, 2008:75).

The concept of salvation in this context assumes that sinning against a fellow human being and the created world is sinning against God (Psalm 51) and thus God becomes central to salvation.

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<sup>43</sup>The term African, as alluded to in chapter one, is highly contested. Whether it is defined geographically, racially or tribally, it will always leave some people out. Talking to people to determine an all-inclusive understanding of the term African seems at times to be a too ambitious exercise.

This is so because God created man to live in relationship with Him and his fellow man. This was broken down when Adam sinned. When the relationship with God is healed, the relationship with the neighbour is also restored. One is not possible without the other. Thus community and God is central in salvation.

There are some things that can be considered to be against the attainment of salvation, as the ultimate good in the community served by the UCCSA and in the UCCSA itself, and these can be considered as sin or sinful. According to Van der Walt (2008:78), salvation in the black African context is defined in terms of wealth, good health, many children and social approval. The study, therefore, puts forward and in agreement with Van der Walt, the opposite, which is greed, corruption and child abuse are to be considered as sin in the mission of the UCCSA or as it participates in the mission of God. The listed actions are considered as sin according to the Bible and thus against God teachings and values (cf. Genesis 14:12; Numbers 11:34; 22:20; Deuteronomy 6:10-13; 1 Kings 10ff). One cannot be a social misfit and still considered a good missionary of God. The relationship with God becomes paramount, as it teaches to love your neighbour and will keep you from being a social misfit. An agent of the Kingdom of God cannot preach Christ without knowing Him and thus knowing God, living in community with Him, results in community of love with the neighbour.

The key question going forward is, therefore, how indigenisation and contextualisation relate in general and in the UCCSA in particular.

#### **4.8.1 INDIGENISATION AND CONTEXTUALISATION**

These concepts are discussed in the light of Bosch's declaration that "Christian faith never existed except as 'translated' into a culture" (Bosch, 1991:447).

Bosch (1991:449) sees indigenisation as having similarities with accommodation, as a way of contextualisation, where the gospel is seen at home with a particular culture. Indigenisation is the term for Protestants and accommodation for the Roman Catholic Church. Taking the debate within this context, therefore, the argument is:

"what would more absurd than to carry France, Spain, or any part of Europe into China (Africa)? It is not this sort of thing you are to bring but rather Faith, which does not reject or damage any people's rights and customs, provided these are not depraved." (Bosch, 1991:449)

Despite the flaws found in indigenisation, especially the selection of the rites and customs, which is considered to be depraved, it enabled the local churches to be free from the founding missionary society. It also led to the formation of the independent churches. In contrast to contextualisation, it failed to address the rise of anthropology, the relativity and contextuality of the

cultures as found in contextualisation. Indigenisation also accounted for syncretism, but as discussed in the translation of the gospel, it is clear that contextualisation (as in translation) is more than just putting Christian beliefs and practices into native form, but making the gospel, in its original text, be understood and have local appeal (Hiebert, 1992:21).

#### **4.8.2 INCULTURATION AND INTERCULTURATION IN THE UCCSA CONTEXT**

The first task of the church, engaging in the mission field, is to listen. This allows the church to speak Christ to the people within their context and experience, i.e. different cultures, in accordance with Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter began to speak 'I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism, but accepts every man for every nation who fear him and do what is right.'"

In the mission field, therefore, "no culture is superior to any other culture; thus the missionary is encouraged not to view their own culture as superior" (Lausanne Committee, 2004:11).

In dealing with *inculturation* and/or *interculturalisation* both empathy and epoché must be observed at all times. Empathy means "attempting to put yourself in another person's shoes so that you can see what the world looks like from their (perspective as influenced by their culture and experience)" (Chitando, 1998:105).

This is by practicing epoché, where one is expected "to avoid pre-judgments...bracketing out of potential distorting opinions and beliefs" (Chitando, 1998:105).

The two concepts *inculturation* and *interculturalisation* speak to culture and the contextualisation of the gospel. This section serves to demonstrate the shift from the colonial model (cf. chapter two), where cultural imperialism dominated contextualisation as approach to Christianity especially as practiced by the LMS in 1799 to 1960. In this particular period, *inculturation* as a contextualisation concept seems to point to domesticating the gospel. In doing so it reduced Christianity to a religious dimension of culture. However, *inculturation* as contextualisation model operates on two levels: firstly, it speaks to indigenisation, affirming that the gospel and culture must be critically looked at and especially where they meet. This also affirms that *inculturation* does not mean the destroying or the endorsing of the local culture (Bosch, 1991:455). It does not address the conflict that existed between culture and the gospel that might have resulted in total rejection of Christian teachings (cf. Mzilethi, 1999:15; Makuzeni, 1999:34). Secondly, it operates on the pilgrimage principle that cautions to be careful with *inculturation*, as the gospel can put the society out of step "for there never existed, in East or West, ancient or modern, which could absorb the word of Christ painless into its system" (Bosch, 1991:455).

The intended purpose of *inculturation*, with its limitations, is to be transformative, re-making and creating a new community of faith and transforming culture to glorify God. It becomes the task of the new community of faith to purge their culture and to shape it according to the Bible, not to any other culture. This was the situation experienced in the LMS and that of the UCCSA in its formation in 1967. Advocating for a new mission model, takes into cognisance the migration from *inculturation*<sup>44</sup> to *interculturation*<sup>45</sup>.

The model of *interculturation*, as a principle of the new mission paradigm, springs from the inadequacy of *inculturation*. The study argues that *inculturation* is tentative, it is an ongoing process, since there will never be a time when the claim can be made of a fully *incultured* community. In each paradigm new mysteries of faith are discovered, making the relationship between faith and culture dynamic and full of surprises (Bosch, 1991:456).

The missional congregation advocates for *interculturation*, which assumes that the local incarnation of faith should not be too local. A “too local church” can become so ingrown that it finds it impossible to communicate with other churches and other faith communities. Advocating for an *interculturation* model in missional congregation admits the reality that the UCCSA is ministering in the context of multi-theologies, multi-cultural, not as opposing principles but as complements towards a common cause, making earth a better place (Bosch, 1991:456).

In a sense the national synods, region and local churches can be a hurdle in the development of missional congregations in the UCCSA. However, according to Bosch (1991:457), there is need to “de-provincialise” the structures of the church by nurturing the contact and interaction with itself (with other synods and regions) and the ecumenical movement. *Interculturation* allows the UCCSA, as it moves forward, to touch base with previous epochs (voluntarism, *kerugma*, covenant and Congregationalism). It also provides the foundation for the 21<sup>st</sup> century context, as it does not shy away from engaging with various theological discourses in advocating for reconciled diversity with the community of faith, as is the case with the UCCSA.

The *interculturation* would provide a pivot for turning away from the concept of autonomy in the UCCSA polity and provide the ground for planting partnership as the desired model of

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<sup>44</sup> Inculturation builds on the understanding that there is a shift towards the role of the local. In inculturation the primary agents are the Holy Spirit and local community. There is no control by missionaries or church leadership. The missionaries or church elite are no longer the “know all”, but is a community of learning where everyone has something to teach and learn. It calls for *convivencia* (life together), where the context is critically looked at in its entirety; social economic, religions and education forms the content of the discussions (Bosch, 1991:447-452).

<sup>45</sup> Interculturation talks of the local incarnation of faith. It builds on the assumption that all theologies need one another (so do the communities of faith). They influence, enrich and create a good environment for the exchange of ideas, at the same time it can be seen as the universal hermeneutical community where each other's views are put to the test (Bosch, 1991:456-457).

evangelism and participation in the *missio Dei*. The reason for turning away from the concept of autonomy, as it is used now, is that it does not make it possible for the local church to discern the will of God and at local level make partners with other churches.

#### **4.9 CONCLUSION**

This chapter argues that as the world changes the church must also change its mission outlook of the church and its theology will not remain unaffected, as it participates in the mission of God. Investigation has led the study to the conclusion that the UCCSA was changed by socio-economic and political factors through the years (1799 to 1967 to date). Therefore, a new mission frontier was created beyond 1967 and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century that calls for cultural and racial tolerance within the UCCSA that the prophetic voice may be heard within and outside the community of faith.

The chapter demonstrates that human experience is an invitation to new lessons in witnessing and mission where violence, poverty, wealth idolisation and both political and economic injustices have become mission agendas of the church as it participates in the mission of God. Contextualisation becomes critical in discerning the will of God. However, there is still need to demonstrate how a missional congregation can be considered the preferred mission paradigm for the UCCSA in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and this forms the core of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5 MISSIONAL CONGREGATIONS AS THE MISSION PARADIGM FOR THE UCCSA IN THE 21ST CENTURY: A PROPOSAL

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter takes the discussion further from the previous chapters as it seeks to wrestle with the task of determining the extent to which the missional congregation, as the proposed paradigm, can be foreseen to assist the church in participating in the *missio Dei* in the local context. The chapter, therefore, undertakes and reviews an attempt to formulate a working definition for the concept of the missional congregation; the praxis for missional congregation; possible ways in which the mission congregation responds to God's revelation, for example, the naming of God as a response and other factors like postmodernity and the third church as the context of the missional congregation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### 5.2 WHAT IS THE MISSIONAL CONGREGATION?

The UCCSA was formed in 1967 and made a deliberate move from "maintenance to mission" in 1986, as is evident from the production of the booklet *Shaping the church for mission* (1986). The understanding in this transition is that the church exists by mission; the mission of the church is to witness the love and grace of God in the midst of a hurting world. Central to this period was the emphasis on re-evangelism, a possible sign that all was not well in the church (Wing & Briggs, 1986; cf. Briggs, 1996).

In the course of proposing a paradigm shift, it is argued that the constituencies of the UCCSA (synods) are experiencing socio-political dilemmas. In all these unfortunate scenarios, the church seems to be marginalised (Hendricks, 2004:20). The marginalisation would in this case see the church as not in touch with the realities or not showing any interest. The church needs to be a good reader of the signs of the time and be able to assess a good entry point in its prophetic ministry.

In proposing the missional congregation as the mission model, Hendricks (2004:17) advises that such proposal must make the point that such communities by nature and vision "do not harbour a fixation on self and own survival, but reach out to others in their needs and suffering, based on the kingdom of God values". Hendricks rightly indicates that the missional congregation must not be selfish, but it must be guided by the principles of the *Missio Dei* that is concerned about the wellbeing of the total creation.

The church needs to discern the will of God in the midst of HIV/AIDS, unemployment, poverty, environmental degradation, domestic violence and sexual immorality and these must not be detached from the global socio-political and economic realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The study,

therefore, refers to the issues related to local and global interaction and their influence on each other. These issues must remain high on the mission agenda of the UCCSA at the local, regional and synodical levels (De Gruchy, 2007:33). The call for new models in the church looks at the future and accepts that the past served the church well, but cannot do the same in the new paradigm.

In discussing the future of the UCCSA, there is a need to reiterate the understanding of the new paradigm, especially given the context of the multi-nation, multi-cultural and multi-racial nature of the church. As discussed in the previous chapters and the attempt to formulate a definition of paradigm, the working definition of “the perceptual perspective, conceptual framework or scientific model of reality” is adopted.

As a new concept and paradigm in the UCCSA the following question is raised: How should the term “missional” be used in the context of the life and work of the UCCSA?

The use of the term missional has been adopted to describe the advocated mission paradigm for the UCCSA in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The missional congregation is the re-affirmation of the very nature of the advocated mission, i.e. “those gathered by God for His mission”. The term describes the nature and essence of the people of God and how they participate in the *missio Dei*.

The wisdom to define the concept of missional congregation comes in the wake of the shift in the way theology is now practiced. There is a rapid shift from an “obediently analysing and systematising of faith traditions” to participating obediently in God’s missional praxis (Hendricks, 2004:24). Such a shift must inform the paradigm of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

There is a great deal of debate on the subject of missional congregations and such debate gives the study the liberty to participate in the discourse, but within the UCCSA context. Among those who have taken part in the conversation argue, like Bosch (1982:26), for challenging the theological system to turn the introversion of the mission church completely outward, while for McCoy (2006:1) such an exercise must provide the church with a mission base to participate in the mission of God. It would indeed seem that such an exercise would help the church to move away from a fantasy gospel to the gospel of reality, in which sermons do not only make people feel good, but challenge their hearts and minds to act in life-transforming ways. Bate (2000:11) adds that it is where the local church expresses its mission creativity at the congregational level and at the community it serves.

The discourse seems to talk about what the missional congregation does, rather than what it is. This calls for a definition of the missional church within the context of the UCCSA. This is the shortcoming the study endeavours to address in advocating for a new paradigm. It is through

the exploitation of the gap the distinction must be drawn. This will also determine how the church and mission are connected in the context of the reading of the *missio Dei*.

The concept of the missional congregation challenges the Congregationalist church (UCCSA) to reconsider its ecclesiology and missiology. The ecclesiology of the UCCSA has been dominated with the theology that asks “what keeps us together rather than what can we do together”, as was the case in its formation (cf. Briggs & Wing, 1970; De Gruchy, 2007). This does not suggest that this was an inappropriate ecclesiological option, but argues that it developed with the rise in nationalism in the early 1960s and the comrade spirit (defined in the spirit of solidarity, all against the colonial oppressors) was high and it must be viewed within that context. The ecclesiology was then defined in terms of the covenant that had to be maintained. However, the missional congregation paradigm would be calling the church to move from maintenance to mission and participate in the broken world around it. It is in these situations that the missional congregation find relevance and are better placed to witness the grace and love of God. It is through these missional congregations that the knowledge of God is encouraged and nurtured, where the discernment of the will and guidance of God is sought in order to live and witness to the broken world (Hendricks, 2004:24).

The concept of the missional congregation is a reframing of the “mission and church” concept, whereby there is no differentiation between the two concepts. In doing so, it calls for an alternative concept to define the church as missionary and being sent by a missionary God (*missio Dei*). The study is mindful of the older concept of missionary society paradigms, especially in the LMS tradition, where being a missionary was understood in terms of those who volunteer and work outside the church structure and outside England. The understanding now is that you can be a missionary and remain within the structures of the church, in this case the UCCSA. It, however, accepts that the people come to the church from different life situations that could be interpreted to suggest that the missional church operates within multi-contexts. Therefore, every context is a mission context and the local church is obliged to participate in the missional activities of God. The missional church is thus defined by its participating in the mission of God, within its geo-political and socio-economic context (Belmont, 2010:1).

The study, therefore, considers the definition of missional church as:

“A [church]...that places its commitment to participate in God’s mission in the world at the center of its life and identity. Missional church places the focus on what God is doing in the world, recognizing that God’s mission is always ahead of us (the church).” (Granberg-Machealson, 2008:266)

This would see the church as not being a church to itself, but as a missionary movement that proclaims, serves and witnesses the rule of God to other communities. It celebrates the importance of the context as political, economic and/or geo-spatial, in the market place, fields and factories (Belmont, 2010:1).

### 5.3 PRAXIS OF THE MISSIONAL CONGREGATION

It has become a foregone standard in any given church that when the members of the church meet on Saturday or Sunday or any day of the week, they congregate to worship, have the gospel preached, come together for fellowship and also meet to talk of discipleship and culture. All of these arise in the UCCSA, but the interest is how they become distinctive marks of the missional church and the UCCSA in particular.

In dealing with the missional congregation the theology should mean and be used as referring to faith seeking understanding and as a discernment of God's will in the hermeneutical sensitive process of the interpretation of Scripture in the context of the local congregation (Hendricks, 2004:11). This means that it is in the local community where multi-problems and sufferings are confronted; these are racism, HIV-AIDS, sexism, human rights, all forms of abuses and corruption and economic injustices among many. This reflects the importance of the local context and that it cannot be trivialised. It is in the local context where *koinonia* takes place and the presence of God is felt. The study agrees with Hendricks (2004) in that the local congregation is the first and foremost manifestation and it is where the fullness of Christ dwells.

The missional congregation's coming together for worship is taken as the moment of reverence for the deity. It is a moment whereby the local congregants celebrate their participation in the mission of God during the week. The assumption is that during the week the congregants are engaged in different challenges and blessings. It is in the moment of worship that the members of the community of faith confront the deity in prayer and have an opportunity to repent and be "co-missioned". Greenway (1999) describes such a co-missioned community of faith as:

"men and women who are given the honour of being co-missionaries with the triune God in proclaiming the gospel to the lost. Their task has three elements: co-working, co-suffering, and co-witnessing with God and fellow believers." (Greenway, 1999:13)

It is through such congregational worship services that the mission mandate and covenant with God is renewed and re-assured. This must reflect in the worship liturgy of the church, in which members of the congregation feel empowered and challenged for mission.

The UCCSA is predominately a rural church, with a shortage of ministers who prefer serving in urban congregations that offer better remuneration (cf. Jele, 2014). All congregations convene

on Sunday to share stories of joy and suffering and the preacher of the day is asked to translate for them in his/her sermon what he perceives to be the work of God among his people. This means that each congregation has a chance to participate in the mission of God; they only need to be aware that what they are doing is linked to the work of God and that can be done through the context of worship.

As argued in previous chapters, in relation to contextualisation as the response in the paradigm shift, it has been observed that in the process of contextualisation the missional church displays respect for the world as the mission context. The missional church is expected to be culturally flexible, welcoming to strangers (non-xenophobic in nature and practice as a transnational church<sup>46</sup>: UCCSA). As co-sufferers with Christ, the church becomes involved in public theology and engages in political discourse with a transformative agenda (Belmont, 2010:2; cf. Greenway, 1999). However, the main question the church has to address with urgency and honesty comes from John 17:14-16:

“I have given your word to them; and they are hated by the world, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. My prayer is not that you will take them out of the world, but that you will keep them from the Evil One, they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.”

The study observes that in Jesus’ prayer, He makes some submissions to God the Father, He states that He has been loyal to the mission call and that it is through the authority from God that He passes the command to the disciples. The most important, is the need for protection and they can only receive it from God. This means that the mission content disturbs some regimes who will or may intend to harm them. God as the author and source of mission will protect them.

This begs further questions: How can the church not conform to the world, but effectively witness to it and how can the church be prophetic in a world that is not amenable? The cursory reading of the text (Jesus’ prayer in John 17:14ff) suggests that missional congregations are called to minister to the world in which they live. The other question that arises: Is the church able to define its world? These are the questions that test the church’s depth in public theology. The UCCSA, in the missional congregation paradigm, engages in public theology, which is not necessarily separate from missional theology. A number of scholars have endeavoured to define public theology. The following are a few, among many, and their rendition is what makes theology public theology.

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<sup>46</sup> Transnational and international are used interchangeably to describe the nations of the UCCSA, which is found in five countries (Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe).

Cady (1987:195) argues as follows:

“Public theology is public, first, in that it adopts certain methodological characteristics consistent with the demands of rational discourse. It is public, second, in that it consciously seeks to communicate to a wide audience beyond the guild of professional theologians by adopting a rhetorical style which eschews highly technical discourse. Finally, a theology will be public to the degree it adopts as its own a substantive agenda focused on the cultivation and transformation of conditions of common life which underwrite the practice of politics.”

According to Cady (1987:145), therefore, public theology is characterised by (1) “the form of its rationality, (2) the breadth of its reach, and (3) its decisive concern for the *res publica* (‘the realm of social goods’).”

De Gruchy (2007:27) in turn observes as follows:

“[T]here is no universal ‘public theology’, but only theologies that seek to engage the political realm within particular localities...There are, however, commonalities, both confessional and ecumenical, in approach and substance between theologies that do this.”

This means that public theologies are contextual in nature and approach. It is further argued that public theology is ecclesial theology, a theology that is embodied in the life of a community of people who are seeking to witness to God’s reign over all of life (Hunsberger, 2012:11). Hunsberger (2012:11), furthermore, explains as follows:

“By its very nature, Christian witness is public not private, but public theology is not simply about the church making public statements or engaging in social action; it is rather a mode of doing theology that is intended to address matters of public importance...Public theology...arises out of theological reflection and as such expresses convictions and commitments deeply grounded in Christian tradition.”

The two theologies, public theology and missional theology, must speak to one another in the UCCSA context or in any other church that seeks to participate in the *missio Dei*. Public theology grows out of missional theology, whereby missional theology is the church hearing the call to discern the will of God and then go out in the public square to witness and do God’s will for them.

Hunsberger (2012:8) argues that public theology “is beyond the guild professional theologians, it eschews technical discourse and focuses on transforming the common life”.

Considering that the public life situation and the issues that it faces differ from one locality to the other, De Gruchy (2007:27) argues that there is no universal public theology and that theology is specific to the issues of a particular locality.

Scripture (John 17:14ff) clearly states after all that Jesus explicitly told his disciples that mission is to be carried out in this world, as He prayed to God to keep them in this world. The world that is the mission field is hate-filled and broken, a state John describes as evil.

Mission theology and public theology are, however, two sides of the same scissors. Public theology seeks to be in dialogue with politics, economics, culture and religious activities (Browmell, 2011:1). Van Aarde (2008:2) explains that, they all serve to uphold the dignity of the people and preach the gospel of hope.

Secondly, in connecting the two theologies (mission theology), the study sees the mission theology to have as its starting point what the public theology is doing, upholding the dignity of the people, in the struggle to find or discern the missionary understanding of God as he redeems creation. Mission theology<sup>47</sup> further seeks to determine the role of the church, as the people of God, in this redemption process. The church, therefore, sees the mission as its originating impulse and organising principle (Hirsch, 2008:1; cf. Wright, 2006). Such debate will allow the two theologies to be in dialogue in pursuit of comprehending the missionary activities of God, in any geo-religious context.

It is difficult to speak of one mode of engagement within the socio-political realm of any particular context and offer guidance in terms of mission agenda when a church, like the UCCSA, is not confined to one locality. Engagement will differ from synod to synod (country to country), region to region, down to the local congregations. The theological engagement is grounded in the local congregation's experience and expression of its understanding of God's involvement in its everyday world. The missional church is not defined by being dualist in spiritual approach. It does not dichotomise the world into the sacred and profane. It sees the world as created by God and He has a salvation plan for the created world and all that is in it belongs to Him. The missional church participates in this mission plan to save the suffering world.

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<sup>47</sup> Public theology and missional theology both speak to the mission of God, but public theology seems to emphasise the role of the community of faith. Missional theology signals a shift from "obediently" analysing the faith tradition towards an approach that says that the safer way to do theology is to obediently take part in God's missional praxis (Hunsberger, 2012:14).

### 5.3.1 *MISSIO DEI* AS THE PRAXIS OF THE MISSIONAL CONGREGATION

The attempt to define missional congregation must have the *missio Dei* as its point of departure. This section, therefore, does not seek to define the doctrine of *missio Dei*, but instead to present it as the nucleus of missional congregations and suffice it to say it is more than an etymological discourse; it defines the very nature of a missionary God.

The mission shifts from being attributed to the church to the activities of God that has primarily to do with salvation. Salvation is also understood as the restoration of the relationship between God and human and among themselves and with creation.

The church is formed, because there is a mission that defines and expresses God's love to the whole world and all that is in it (Bosch, 1991:390), as it is written in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

As the church participates in the mission of God, it becomes an agent and steward of God's love to the world expressed in their activities and attitude towards the cries of the immediate world around them. God's love and how it is expressed in the UCCSA and possibly other communities of faith becomes the defining factor for the church's participation in the *missio Dei*.

The *missio Dei* is deemed the primary focus in the salvation of the world. This brings the steward of the environment in the *missio ecclesiae* as partakers in *missio Dei* and advocates for the "down-up" approach to mission in the UCCSA. It must move away from being the product of the central office<sup>48</sup> and become reflective of the local people, as they experience the salvific love of God in their daily lives. The activity of the church, therefore, includes transformation of life locally and contextually as well as the crossing of political administration boundaries, as reflective of the nature of the UCCSA's transnationality. The UCCSA's calling must be understood as the charismatic gift of dialogue and community engagement (Isaak, 2013:553). In this case, it must not be a boardroom or academic exercise, but dialogue in action, *dia-praxis*. This refers to an intentional and conscious transformative undertaking to show the hurting world the grace of God (Kaunda, 2013:562). It can be accomplished by looking at the new issues that define the hurting of the world and those that deny the people of God the chance to enjoy life in the created world. These would include economic and political injustices, moral degeneration, migration and xenophobic tendencies. Such issues call the church to redefine or re-appropriate liberation theology, African theology and women and/or feminist theology in the light of being missional.

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<sup>48</sup> Central office here refers to the denominational office or the church's headquarters.

The missional congregation, as the model for participating in the mission of God, must have a dialogue with African spirituality and the African anthro-ethnic philosophy of *ubuntu*. In the principle of black African spirituality, God (*Unkulunkulu/Thixo/Modimo*) is central in the activities and lives of the community and also in accordance with Matthew 7:12: "so in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you and this sums up the law."

The world is not dichotomised into the sacred and the profane, as this would be against the very nature of God and biblical teaching throughout both Testaments. The earth belongs and is ruled by God.

It is further argued that in Africa *anthro-ethnic* philosophy God is central for their benefit; they call on Him only when they are in trouble and need something from Him. While the biblical God is the centre and must be glorified, not for personal benefit, but because He is God. The African context is necessary, but the crucial principal in the missional community must be from the Bible. It is the source of transformation and the African context is the praxis.

The other proposed cardinal principle of *anthro-ethnic* philosophy of *ubuntu* is informed and influenced by *orthokadia* (right-heartedness) and is better expressed in the spirit of the ecumenism that led to the formation of the UCCSA in 1967. It also accounts for the spirit of tolerance that will cultivate inter-religious dialogue and the spirit of co-existence and partnership on similar issues of missional interest (Isaak, 2013:547).

The basic principle of *ubuntu* is selflessness and reflects the biblical principal of *koinonia* (solidarity), which is also based on selfless love of God - the true cardinal point of fellowship and social contract. Further thereto, *ubuntu* is about gaining help, fellowship and solidarity by partaking in community life. However, the study observes that in ecumenism there is more of *koinonia*, than in the philosophy of *ubuntu*. In applying them in the mission context, they must relate to the principles inside the community and also transform it to obedience to God.

The pillar supporting the philosophy of *ubuntu/botho* is *ortho-praxis* (right action), the urgent question would be: When is the action considered to be *ortho-praxis* (Isaak, 2013:548)? This question sounds more philosophical than theological, especially when it is read with Kantian ethics. Kant offers some criteria to determine if the action is correct: Firstly, act as if you are legislating for everyone; secondly, act so as to treat human beings always as ends and never merely as the means; and thirdly, act as if you were a member of a realm of ends (Raphael, 1994:56; cf. Matthew 7:12; Leviticus 19:18). The Kantian ethics is political and the church is expected to be apolitical, especially when it comes to party politics. However, the church's theology can advocate for a society that acts in the right way by speaking out against all forms of exploitation. The church, in its bid for the right action, must go beyond the limits of the

Kantian ethics that is only confined to the human race and excludes other creatures, which is consistent with the Reformed theology that holds the Bible supreme. The missional congregation as the mission paradigm is concerned with all creatures, animals and even the environment. The bottom line of espousing right action would be to legislate or advocate for legislation as though it is from God, affecting everyone and the environment.

The study argues that the African philosophy of *ubuntu* cannot be discarded in total as ideology in the development of the missional congregation. This also means that it does not challenge the supremacy of the Bible, but is part of the context or agenda and as such it must play a role.

It must be noted also that *ubuntu* speaks to the welfare of the tribe, including ancestors and the life now. One must help the other to be helped by them. *Koinonia* is the spirit of Christ, where care and aiding others are founded in God's love. In a missional congregation, therefore, *ubuntu* is the contact point, but it must be transformed from inside to Christ-like *koinonia*.

This is so, notwithstanding its shortcomings (as indicated in the previous chapter). To avoid carelessly spraying the word 'African' around, the following will be considered as the working definition moving forward. African may mean the black residents of the African continent, but these days some black people are more Westernised than white people. This may suggest that being African has nothing to do with colour. Inasmuch as this is the casual understanding of the word, it fails to account for those who are white or coloured and resident in Africa. The definition is also limited in that it does not accommodate those white, black or coloured people who are in diaspora<sup>49</sup>. Does this mean that one ceases to be African upon relocating to another continent? Does colour or geographical location define people (cf. Maluleke, 2005:473)? These are (*ubuntu* and the defining concepts of who is an African) the salient issues that cannot be disregarded in the development of missional congregations in the UCCSA.

The question arises out of De Gruchy's (2005) analysis that the church is made up of 35 000 members, spread over five synods. Out of this 35 000, 50% is coloured, 48% is black and 2% is white (De Gruchy, 2005). African spirituality will thus not only be guided by colour, race and wealth, but *orthokardia* (right heart) and *ortho-praxis* (right practice) in the UCCSA.

The participation in the *missio Dei*, as the praxis of the missional congregation, deals with contextual and practical issues, its approach to life is not abstract. It is addressing the issues that create a mission confluence, where the *being-ness* of the church (missional) and the *sent-ness* (missionary praxis) meet and form the defining character of the partaking in *missio Dei*. It

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<sup>49</sup> The term "diaspora" refers to people displaced from their homeland. They remained the missionaries of Judaism by witnessing and by direct presence (Verkuyl, 1992:A53). This means that the culture of a certain people can be found even beyond their geographical context and needs to be considered.

encompasses the whole world and calls men and women, boys and girls, young and old to be missionary agents (Isaak, 2013:548).

### **5.3.2 INCARNATION AS THE MODEL FOR MISSIONAL CONGREGATIONS**

In systematic theology the doctrine of incarnation is used to discuss the doctrine of Christology, especially the divine nature of Jesus Christ. Incarnation is the climax of the self-communication of God, as reflected in John 1:1-4:

“In the beginning the word already existed; the Word was with God, and the Word was God. From the very beginning the Word was with God. Through him God made all things...the Word was the source of life.”

The author of the gospel of John want to justify to his audiences that Jesus is not the late comer in the redemption plan of God and the research agrees. The gospel states that Jesus was there at the beginning when the fallen world that calls for redemption was created. As if in response to the gnostic philosophy of the time, where the divinity of Christ was questioned, the gospel argues that He was in God and God was in Him, God incarnate in the Word. Since the beginning the mission of God incarnate has been to bring light to the dark world, i.e. to transform it.

In incarnation, missiology is able to explain the transformative and continuous involvement of God in people's daily life. Through Jesus Christ, God experiences with his people poverty, pain, rejection and temptation, but He never ceases to be divine. The missional church (UCCSA), as Christ-incarnate and as it faces challenges, must not cease to be holy and missionary (Stott, 1992:A6).

It is through incarnation that the UCCSA can find a missional meaning. The UCCSA is taught to respect other cultures and encourage local involvement. Inasmuch as Jesus Christ was God-incarnate (or the Son of God), He displayed dependence: He asked for water from the Samaritan woman, He borrowed a donkey for his mission trip to Jerusalem and was buried in a borrowed grave. In incarnation the church appreciates that it is exposed to the economic and political realities of its daily world (The Lausanne Committee, 1992:C175).

It is important to define incarnation within the missional debate. It serves to explain the revelation of God in the history of humankind, as He saves that world. The doctrine is not specifically read from the Scriptures, but through deductive reading (John 1:14 speaks of the Word becoming flesh). This is where the ultimate goal of God is realised, when He came to dwell among his people and creation (Madeliene & Miller, 1973:279). The further reading of John 1:1-18, Philippians 2:5-11, Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:1-4 and Luke 1:26-38 is testimony

that the birth of Jesus was not an accident of history, but the expression of the very nature of the missionary God. Paul explains it as “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19, 21; cf. Erickson, 1998:751). Thus the aim of the incarnation was missional.

The liberation theology must be challenged to be modelled around incarnation, because the God incarnate in Jesus Christ, the Triune God, sides with stateless refugees, the shack dwellers. It is worth noting that Jesus did give attention to the rich by challenging them to share with the poor (cf. Luke 18:18-30; 19:10). Incarnation gives salvation new meaning; not only defined as the eternal desired good, but found in Christ who agonises and sweats with the oppressed (Bosch, 1991:513). As long as the 21<sup>st</sup> century is still in a state that calls for salvation, then the missional interpretation of incarnation must form an integral part of the theology of the UCCSA.

The concept that will assist in producing a framework for the missional church, for the UCCSA, is incarnation. This is the opposite of intellectualising the gospel, an ecclesiology that does not allow orthodoxy (right belief) to overshadow orthopraxy (right living/action), but instead balances them: Right belief leads to right action, otherwise it is not a right belief. Right action cannot come from a wrong belief (Dunbar, 2007:2). The missional understanding of incarnation suggests that the church does not create a holy space that cuts off non-believers from encountering the gospel and the grace of God. “Rather the missional church dis-assembles itself and seeps into the cracks and crevices of a society in order to be Christ to those who do not yet know him” (Belmont, 2010:2). Though knowing Him in this case must not be limited to those who have never heard of Him, but also refer to those who are denied the opportunity of accepting Him as their Saviour and gain life in the fullest sense. It goes further and challenges even those Christians who do not live a missional life in their everyday world.

#### **5.4 A MISSIONAL CONGREGATION IS ORGANIC**

The term organic is borrowed from the natural sciences and it shows that missiology is not shy to engage with other disciplines, in its pursuit or advocating of a new paradigm in the participation in the *missio Dei*. As per other natural sciences, organic refers to something that grows naturally. In this study, it would refer to a situation where the gospel is proclaimed and people are accorded the opportunity to grow naturally. Growing naturally in defining the organic church means that the bearing of mission is internal; all the branches (individual's) participation is valued. The role of the Holy Spirit and the community, as opposed to the individual, is emphasised. The organic modelling of the missional church finds support in metaphors in the Bible: John 4:37; 2 Corinthians 9:6, sowing and reaping; 1 Corinthians 3:6, planting and watering; 1 Peter 2:2 and 2 Peter 3:16, growing; and Matthew 7:17-20, bearing fruit). These

biblical passages see the missional church as organic or a living organism (natural) (Bevins, 2009:10).

The other classic demonstration is the exegetical combination of Paul seeing the church as the body of Christ and made up of many parts (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Critical for the missional congregation is the centrality of God and “man” around the church, as it grows naturally and has the wisdom to be aware of the broken world in its context.

## **5.5 NAMING GOD IN MISSIONAL CONGREGATIONS AS MODEL OF PARTICIPATION IN THE *MISSIO DEI***

The previous paragraphs attempted to argue that a missional congregation is contextual and this would mean that the concept of God must be reflective of the people’s experience in a particular context and time. In naming, i.e. a noun, as it is used to identify a person or animal and other objects found in man’s life. In this case, therefore, God is treated as a person and the understanding is that He can be named.

“An individual being, with self-consciousness and will, capable of feeling, choosing, and having a reciprocal relationship with other personal and social beings.” (Erickson 1998:295)

As for social beings, the bearer of the name does not choose it; it is chosen or given by his/her socialite or parents. Most often the name reflects how the other being defines the bearer’s role in the relationship or how they wish he/she will be in the future. There are instances where the name does not reflect or say anything about the life of the bearer, but whoever gave it (i.e. the parents who name the child). The name reflects the life of the parents, not of the child. The naming of God in this presentation will follow the same pattern that reflects the life experience of the people.

The theology of naming God is about transformative action as responsive to a self-revealing God. It affirms that the congregation or individual focuses on particular issues and purports to address those issues as they confront the community (cf. Hendricks, 2004:33).

### **5.5.1 NAMING GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

The concept of naming God was developed by the Israelites, in imitation of the Egyptians (Von Rad, 1975:182; cf. Anderson, 1975:61-62). The formulation was common among the Egyptians, as used by Pharaoh “As I live, I am that I am”. Von Rad (1975:182) rightly asserts that it could not have been coined by the Elohist, as it was common practice to name God. The priestly document named God within the cultic context (covenant with Abraham in Genesis 6-9; 15), while in the Deuteronomist God is named when Israel interacted with the secular world

(Von Rad, 1975:10). The Jahwist shows the difficulty in naming God, when from the history of religion certain *theophorous* names emerge. This was evident in terms of Israel, because some names were influenced by its interaction with other people during the exodus and came to be associated with Jahweh (the one who causes to be: the one who calls into being; the one who loves passionately), all of them are connected with Jahweh. In Israel, therefore, out of the source theories above, God in the southern tradition was named in response to cultic activities (Priestly and Yahwist) centred on Jerusalem. While in the northern kingdom/tradition (Elohist and Deuteronomic) it relates to other nations (Anderson, 1975:453). The study notices that this theory argues that God does not reveal Himself and that the Old Testament is just a history of the development of Israel's religion and people, though some scholars refute Von Rad's contention (Anderson, 1975) and thus the source theories are questioned.

It must be noted that the naming of God does not make his revelation of God secondary in mission theology. It can also be asserted that God reveals Himself in a situation according to the relevant circumstances and that could influence the naming (experience) of God by the people.

Naming was a response to a life situation or God's revelation and it shows God's activity and creativity in human life (House, 1998:95). When Moses was confronted in Exodus 3:13-16 with the burning bush (fire signified the presence of God), his experience of God's presence and revelation led him to ask Him (God) his name in relation to that experience. Moses asked this question, because he was to communicate with people who were accustomed to the religious practices of Egyptians. The task for Moses was to contextualise, i.e. bring the message to the level and context of the recipients.

The mosaic contextualisation is evident in the number of names found in the Bible. Genesis 22:14 speaks of Jehovah will see or provide (*Jehovah-jireh*), i.e. the name of God in Abraham's experience; in Exodus 17:15 it is *Jehovah-nissi*; Jehovah-shalom in Judges 6:24, i.e. God of peace, as in the experience of Gideon; and other experiences like *Elohim*, when He judges and *tsebaoth* as He shows mercy. They all reflect the individual's experience and how he/she interprets God's response to his/her context. Inasmuch as the Israelites had a general name for God, there was also the sense that God was named in response to a particular situation. This means that naming God will be contextual.

The God of the European missionary, in the case of the London Missionary Society, is named based on foreign experiences and not reflective of the black African's experiences and thus He is distant from the black African's experiences. According to the black African, their god is beyond human description. He is far above and too great to be described, hence the name

*unkulunku (umkhulu-khulu)* among the Northern Ndebele<sup>50</sup>. He communicates with the people through spirit mediums. It would, therefore, be logical from Ndebele worship and veneration practice that acceptance of God as preached by Western missionaries would suggest that Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, is within human comprehension. The belief, henceforth, is that you cannot reach God directly, there must be a go-between and according to the gospel, Jesus became the connection between people and the saving God (cf. John 14:1ff). The question to wrestle with is how the ancestor of the white man could be able to transmit the joys and suffering of the Ndebele to their god? How can this be possible without knowing their life experiences? The question of naming God needs to be probed further within the UCCSA circles in the post-modern era.

The worship of the African god is hierarchical and is reached through family, clan and tribal spirits signified in the name. This made it difficult for the Ndebele to understand how the ancestors of the white missionaries, Jesus Christ as they perceive it, can be a universal ancestor. Such an acceptance would suggest that God has a universal name, this assumption (universality) would mean that the oppressor and the oppressed have the same language for naming God, though they have different experiences. Having discussed the naming of God as the expression of his relationship with humankind, it is proper also to look at its biblical foundation.

### **5.5.2 NAMING GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

The naming of God in the New Testament must relate to both the pre- and the post-resurrection themes. Pre-resurrection Jesus told his disciples that when they pray, they must call or name God as the Father. He sought to teach them that the Kingdom of God is built on the model of a family, with God as the Father and Jesus as the Heir with his followers as his brothers and sisters. Jesus taught his disciples in the prayer to call God the Father, because He was expected to provide for the children and to guide the family. This signals a shift from the political paradigm in naming God, to a social paradigm (cf. Rosado, 1997:5). The study further argues the coming of Jesus cannot be limited to socio-political perceptions, i.e. the Heir from the house of David (Luke 2:1-20; Micah 5), but also in terms of his intention to reveal God (special revelation, making God known to humanity – cf. John 14:6ff).

However, the reading of the post-resurrection themes suggests that the disciples would have been comfortable to name God within the political expectations. This may further indicate that the naming of God by people and God's revelation can differ. However, by discerning God's

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<sup>50</sup> The reference to the northern Ndebeles (Zimbabwe), is due to the author's origin and acquaintance. Southern Ndebeles are found in South Africa, Mpumalanga province. It is also necessitated by the knowledge gained during the MA dissertation.

revelation the naming must be corrected or perceived differently. Such an argument leads to the inference that Jesus, according to the disciples, was a political Messiah. The reading of Luke 4:18-30 influenced this expectation, on the set of his ministry, among his listeners and followers. The statement in Acts 1:6 would then express a political disappointment, i.e. that Jesus could not provide political independence to them: "So when they met together they asked him 'Lord is you at this time going to restore the kingdom of Israel?'" (Acts 1:6)

The study deems the two texts Luke 4:18-30 and Acts 1:6 as related and the product of one author, as is the consensus among New Testament scholarship. It is argued that a cursory reading of the text would see the address by Jesus (Luke 4) and the inquiry by the disciples as purely politically, considering that the Jews were awaiting freedom from the Roman Empire. As spiritual movement and concerned with the problems and challenges for the whole world, Jesus corrected that politicisation of the Messiah. This correction is appropriate, because it would have confined the mission of Jesus to the Jews not the whole world.

Luke seems to be explaining to Theophilus how the new religion started by who and his role. The reading of his second book, Acts, he seems to introduce himself in the on-going mission expansion that has remained loyal to justice and liberation. Most important though is how this religion relates to the Roman empire. It was like he was writing to a learned community who needed facts to believe and thus the disclaimer that he is not the eye witness, but has researched the presented facts (Pawson, 2007:846).

The answer to that query and the confirmation of the claim would be found in John 14:26, the promise of the Comforter (Holy Spirit) as post-resurrection theme to those whose political expectation has been disappointed. Therefore, it is argued that the naming of God in a post-oppressive regime must show disappointment in the liberation motifs and give hope that is found in God. During the liberation struggle promises were made, but once independence was obtained, the liberation struggle leaders started a life of self-enrichment. Unlike in the politics of liberation, the agenda and the promises of Jesus never changed. Only the expectations of his audiences were misplaced. He thus becomes the Comforter, the God of the politically and economically short-changed and robbed by trusted comrades and liberation heroes. It is important to realise that God doesn't change, but that the expectations of Him vary according to different life situations.

The above assertion takes the mission theme back to the Old Testament, where God was involved in the political wars of his people. He never distanced Himself and was only to be found in the temples of the priest and the Levites. He is a God who doesn't change, but is found in the language of the kidnapped girls of Nigeria, economic refugees of Zimbabwe and the always politically exploited people of South Africa, who only enjoy textbook democracy. In

the exodus motif God was named as the Provider, the Protector, the Guide in dark valleys of life. Once the Israelites were settled, He was “the God who has brought us this far”. In the New Testament He was the God of love, a Conqueror and a Comforter. During the 1960s through to the early 1990s, He was named the Liberator. This is not the sum total of God, however, but an expression of those who relate with Him. God never changes, in all these instances, but it is an expression of the nature of the life and experiences of the people. It is the argument of the study that people will use certain aspects of the being of God to either voice their cry or to maintain the status quo. Out of these, the experience of the people is clearer in what they seem to project onto God.

Critical to this discourse is that God can be named in certain situations for the benefit of the naming community. It is more than just naming; it is more like an idolised object. If He doesn't fit the name they give, they become disappointed. Naming God must be more than that, it must call the name-giver to determine what God seeks to do in that situation, i.e. discern God's will. The name-giver must participate in the *missio Dei* within the local and global context.

Naming God in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is an attempt to put the discourse into context. The 21<sup>st</sup> century, according to the presentation, looks at the mission paradigm (missional congregations) in the economic and political context (the Empire). They are not the sum total of the 21<sup>st</sup> context, but the purpose of this study and this section in particular is to argue that they serve as the greatest contributing principle of the paradigm of the UCCSA in post-modern times.

### **5.5.3 THE MISSIONAL CONGREGATION AS THE CONTEXT OF NAMING GOD**

It is in this context (missional congregations) that humankind not only names God, but reflects on their role in creation and the overall *missio Dei*. Humankind must not see itself as the only creation, but that the whole universe and all that is in it belong to God.

#### **5.5.3.1 Naming God amid poverty**

The study makes the argument that the poor will always be part of the community (Matthew 26:11) and their experience will always appeal to the grace of God, as the world embraces greediness and the concept of the Empire. It is also of interest how God reveals his siding with the poor even today and how people name God as source of enrichment (Empire), as in the prosperity gospel. All of these must be viewed in terms of discerning the will of God, since people tend to name God to suit their own needs and don't seek to uncover his will.

This section analyses and challenges the generic belief that the voice of the voiceless ministry is archaic and in conflict with Jesus Christ's depiction of liberation (Luke 4:18ff). The Jesus Christ mission paradigm was framed on the discourse of empowerment, giving those without a

voice their own voice and language. It is asserted that the missional congregation paradigm takes personal experiences as an expression of one's relationship with God. The poor must, therefore, name God in their own language and voice, which could be better explained within the dictates of contextualisation in terms of people's experiences. This also re-interprets the understanding of the death of Jesus Christ:

"To say that Jesus died on the cross for our sins is often to ignore or forget that he died because he was dangerous to a society that wanted to hold onto its power...he died for his siding with the poor." (CWM, 2010:4)

There is the theory that his death can be interpreted as purely religio-political. It must be realised that God cannot be dichotomised in the naming process in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with its challenges, whereby the context is pocketed into silos of the sacred and profane. In the theology of the cross, politics and religion converge as God fights the hurt and broken world. Dichotomising strips God of his being and limits Him to another aspect of his creation.

It does, however, accept the liberation theology of James Cone (1976), which is based on Marxist socio-political teachings (cf. Bosch, 1991; Erickson, 1998) and yet struggles with its far-left extremism in the naming of God as model that seems to suggest transformation as opposed to replacement. It argues from the perspective that inasmuch as God expresses preferential treatment of the poor, He also seeks their (the poor) empowerment that they may become agents and advocates of justice and, even more so, be able to speak for themselves and have their own voice. It does not intend to create a new regime that opposes the oppressor and/or a greedy corrupt community, but a transformative process in the current global and local context.

The fundamental question, as raised by the CWM (2010:4) and indeed also this research is: "Who is the Empire in our midst today and how does it manifest itself?"

It goes further and asks the question: How do those who find themselves under the pressure of the Empire name or speak of God.

An attempt to address this question makes it necessary to turn to the next theme in the discourse on how to discern God's revelation/will and how to name Him.

#### **5.5.3.2 Naming God in the context of the Empire**

The concept of naming God is an action of resisting the Empire, whose political ideologies are but a programme to see the poor as a submissive community that will keep them in power and business and create a dependent community in the system, with no intention to empower or liberate them. The CWM (2010:4) explains it as follows:

“We speak of Empire, because we discern a coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power in our world today, that constitutes a reality and a spirit of lord-less domination, creating by humankind yet enslaving simultaneously; an all-encompassing global reality serving, protecting and defending the interest of powerful corporation, nations, elites and privileged people, while imperiously excluding even sacrificing humanity and exploiting creation, a pervasive spirit of destructive self-interest, even greed, the worship of money, goods and possession; the gospel consumerism, proclaimed through powerful propaganda and religiously justified, believed and followed; the colonization of consciousness, values and notions of human life by the imperial logic; a spirit lacking compassionate justice and showing contemptuous disregard for the gift of creation and the household of life.”

The Empire is now expressing itself in global corporate companies and the new trend of tender entrepreneurship is cropping up, a phenomenon consistent with all the UCCSA countries. Labour and the fruits of liberation is kept within a connected circle of cronies and this has made trade unions powerless, unable to fight economic injustice and are now involved in party politics, such as the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and Congress of South Africa Trade Unions that have formed alliances with political parties.

The Empire has taken away a polite and progressive voice of the poor and replaced it with the language of violence in service delivery protests (CWM, 2010; Boesak, 2012:9). Boesak (2012:1) observes as follows:

“This unjust global economic system is defended and protected by political and military might, and has become a matter of life and death. It is an overwhelming system based on the belief that unrestrained competition, consumerism, unlimited economic growth and accumulation of wealth is best for the whole world; [that] ownership of private property has no social obligation; that capital speculation, liberalization and deregulation of the market, privatization of public utilities and natural resources, unrestricted access for foreign investments and imports, lower taxes and the unrestricted movement of capital will achieve wealth for all; social obligations, protection of the poor and weak, trade unions and relationships between people are subordinate to the processes of economic growth and capital accumulation.”

This has reduced citizen engagement, thus rendering the power of the already powerless and voiceless minimal to none, only the captain of the economy and political elite will survive. In this situation the church is called to “see from the eye of the powerless and the suffering” from which concepts like the liberation theology (1960s) and the *Kairos* Document find their point of departure. This calls for serious spirit discernment of the will of God (Boesak, 2012:9).

Unlike during the liberation struggles or rise of nationalism of the 1960s, which was more of socio-political awakening and the focus was on destroying and replacing the regime, the focus is broader now and calls for transformation of all regimes. It looks at all aspects of life, i.e. social fibre, politics of false promise, economics of the Empire, industrialist and capitalist policies and ecosystem justice. The intention of such a broad view is, however, simple for two reasons: firstly, to resist the Empire and secondly, to not develop a political theology of replacement, but develop a political theology of transformation. It is through such a process that the community of faith (i.e. missional congregation or mission-focused congregation) can resist the Empire and propose life together.

The study argues that the Empire aspires to the extreme of even controlling the intellectual, emotional, psychological, spiritual, cultural and religious spheres of life (CWM, 2010:5). This challenges the church to shift from single-issue advocacy to all faces of manifestation of the Empire and formulate an appropriate theology of resistance to address the impact of the Empire.

#### **5.5.4 NAMING GOD IS CONTEXTUAL IN GEO-SPACE AND TIME**

Arguing in reference to the introductory paragraphs, the names given to things and in this case naming God, is a reflection of the giver of the name's experience. Contextual naming of God calls for the rereading of the Bible within the context of each person or groups of the poor, the rich, women and men and all must be able to recognise God in their geo-context. The name does not always reflect the person's assumed character of God, but how that character is perceived in a particular life setting and time.

In contextual naming of God, there is a need to develop or re-appropriate and/or rebrand contextual theology<sup>51</sup>. In this case the study cites the combat theology, as advocated by Banana (1996:314):

"Combat theology believes in the equal rights, Combat theology believes in the triumph of the moral rectitude over corruption. Combat theology believes in the triumph of courage over timidity...It believes in the strength and supremacy of the collectively of the African life over the individuality of the Western life."

The combat theology is concerned with the issues of daily bread, Banana (1996:310) compares it with the theology of death or cross. It speaks to the different paradigms of "marked disequilibrium between fear and faith...theory and praxis...and between death and life".

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<sup>51</sup> The study holds the argument that all bands of theologies are contextual, because the theologians would respond to a theological paradigm that is dominant at that particular historical time and geo-space.

The combat theology may seem to relate to inciting violence, but the context of the author explains the choice of the brand. Banana (1996) writes from the context of political instability in Zimbabwe after independence, in the context of institutionalised violence.

The naming of God in the combat theology is, therefore, not innocent or neutral in its political discourse. It argues that the poor, the oppressed, women and children must fight the elements of timidity and the prophesy of the voice of the voiceless. It is through the lack of a voice that the Empire would name God on their behalf, because they do not have the language to extract the name of God. Though they have the experience, as the basis for naming, the voice of the voiceless prophesy denies them that chance. In combat theology, God is seen and named in the crucified Jesus Christ. The people come face to face with death and those who want to protect the status quo that exploits the misery of other people are challenged (Banana, 1996:316).

#### **5.5.5 WHY NAME GOD IN A MISSIONAL CONGREGATION?**

This section grows out of the understanding that missional congregation is the advocated mission paradigm for the UCCSA. The scenarios above give a picture and the context of naming God, but the urgent question would be: Why name God? The question goes beyond intellectual theological questioning or discourse; it challenges the position of the community of faith in the participation in the *missio Dei* in the context of the broken and hurting world. How the people picture God in the sectors of life is the need to know God and the chance to name Him within their context. Naming God shows that the people have moved from faith and hope to fulfilled aspirations. This is the point where those oppressed by the Empire, which has infiltrated the church structures and theology, have their voice and language suppressed. They cannot tell the story of their life and subsequently fail to name God, since they don't have the power to speak out.

Naming God is important, as it is a refusal to accept poverty and social asymmetry as legitimate natural phenomena and declares war on economic vandalism that has caused misery to the people of the world, creating stateless Africans in Africa (i.e. economic and political refugees). It is when all the inhabitants of the created world are able to name God in their experience that the ecumenical community can speak of "together towards life" (WCC, 2013:4).

The marginalised and/or all human beings are acknowledged as having a role in mission. Their story could be heard as a mission proclamation and not merely as a story that calls for sympathy, but a story of transformation and affirmation of the salvific plan of God for all. There is need for the development of a theology that refuses to relegate mission to the margins, but seeks to confirm the theology that names God from the margins - the theology that empowers

the preaching of the gospel from the dark corners of life, where suffering and poverty has been accepted as the natural phenomena, i.e. from the exploited farm workers, shack-dwellers (*abahlali base mjobolo*), the gospel from irreconcilable communities of foreigners and the black South African community leading to xenophobia.

In naming God, the church is taken back to the early years of church history that teaches that theology was not the product of a boardroom meeting. To be precise, it was not a religious subject; it was only the apologetic theologians limited to religious spheres. Theology, as in Christian thinking, was born out of persecution, those thrown out of the synagogue. Therefore, theology in naming God is not native to any culture or geographical space, it speaks to life situation and how people relate to God and one another. This means that mission theology in the UCCSA must not only be a church theology, but a theology that is built on the voices of the people, a theology with not for.

## **5.6 POST-MODERNITY AS THE CONTEXT FOR DEVELOPING MISSIONAL CONGREGATIONS**

The question that is always asked is: Is there a period in church history where it could be said with conviction that the church was at some point “not missional”. The answer is no. It can be affirmed that the church has always acted missional in one way or another. In that case, being missional also means reading the signs of the time and responding relevantly, as the church expresses the grace and love of God. How the church responds to past times is and must be different to how it would respond now in the postmodern era. It leads to the question of what post-modernity means as missional context and thus becomes the next section.

### **5.6.1 WHAT IS POST-MODERNITY**

The definition of the concept of post-modernity is to avoid committing the fallacy of undefined terms and defines the term “modern” because it goes beyond historical boundaries. It is now used to also refer to the ideologies that are dominant in that particular time, post-modernity, and would thus refer to what is beyond or past modern, both chronologically and intellectually in terms of the mission paradigm shift (Erickson, 1998:158).

The immediate temptation would be to define post-modernity as a paradigm that took up where modernity left off or failed. That would be easy if the missiological scholarship agreed on the scope of the change from modernity to post-modernity or the reason for the change (McCoy, 2001:3). This lack of clarity does not mean that the UCCSA is not in that mission paradigm and it must respond accordingly.

On the point of shifting from modernity to post-modernity, Guder (1998:38) acknowledges that “scholars who trace the emergence of the post-modern condition have reached a clear consensus regarding either the scope of the change or the reason for it”.

The best course is to define post-modernity as growing out of modernity, which was characterised by:

“such features as the dominance of rationality and reason, the development of autonomous self, the distinction between public and private, fact and value, and the notion of social contract as the basis for community.” (McCoy, 2001:4)

Though defined as the opposite, it does not in total address the decline of modernity. McCoy (2001:4) rightly states that:

“it has to do with the recovery of spirituality in the face of modernity’s denial of sacred; it has to do with the celebration of the variety and pluralism in the face of failed ideologies of conformity; it has to do with giving priority to personal preference over impersonal rationality; it has to do with narrative as truth-bearing in the face of abstract theory...it has to do with the search for a sense of belonging in the individualism and the breakdown of the social contract.”

It is this sense of community that is appealing, as it calls for a shift in terms of mission perspective and where it has to fight against “the loss of identity and commitment to ideals, the exaltation of pleasure and consumption over compassion and responsibility, the absence of shared norms and values” (McCoy, 2001:4).

Such a fight will strengthen the understanding of the church of participating in the mission of God. A range of responses to postmodernity theories has been developed, as described below.

### **5.6.2 QUADRIC THEOLOGIC RESPONSE TO POST-MODERNITY**

Since the research seeks to develop a new paradigm within the UCCSA, the church in its bid to respond to the emerging paradigm has four theological options. Firstly, it can either take the route of a deconstructive and eliminative approach. In so doing the church believes that there are some doctrines or practices that need to be eliminated for the success of the programme or missional endeavour. The danger was seen in the missional models, described in chapter two, in that it deemed it necessary to eliminate local beliefs for the progress of the gospel. Secondly, the church may opt to respond constructively or revisionary. In this instance the theology of the church holds that the current worldview cannot be upheld, but a new worldview needs to be constructed on different grounds and with revised concepts. Thirdly, the UCCSA may opt for the conservative or restoration approach, changing some and keeping some elements. All

these speak to the missional and theological bankruptcy of modernism. Fourth, the above argument could work for the church and yet for the development of a missional congregation and its sustainability, a liberationist post-modern theology may be the preferred option for the UCCSA in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Inasmuch as it deals with doctrines, it makes the social transformation as its theological formative factor (Erickson, 1998:174).

The ethos of post-modernity has to do with the recovery of spirituality in the face of modernity's denial of the sacred and its celebration of pluralism. Post-modernity, in response to the individualism (which the study deems un-African), must be encouraged. A sense of belonging dominates the black African teachings and concurs with the *koinonia* in the Bible, especially in the New Testament. This supports the study's call for the recovery of community life, in the bid to develop missional congregations of which the Enlightenment creed taught that:

"every individual was free to pursue his or her own happiness irrespective of what others thought or say...the so called openness of modern liberalism really means people do not take others serious...they do not need others...and is not desirable for community life and indeed missional congregation." (Bosch, 1991:362)

In countering this, the church could take the form of a partnership with shared thought groupings or individuals in the pursuit of participation in the *missio Dei* (McCoy, 2001:4). However, a way to handle the pluralism that comes with this liberal openness needs to be devised.

## **5.7 COMMUNITY AS THE MODEL FOR A MISSIONAL CONGREGATION**

The definition of the community in the UCCSA presents a number of challenges, these are due to the two concepts of autonomy and the residual elements of colonialism and racial imbalances in the church.

There seems to be ambiguity in how the UCCSA sees Congregationalism and the concept of autonomy. The reading of the concept of autonomy of the congregation, contained in the UCCSA Constitution (2009), suggests individualism. According to the process that led to the formation of the UCCSA, autonomy was meant for the amalgamating ecclesiological traditions (LMS, ABM and CUSA). However, it has now shifted to suggest that local churches enjoy autonomy or semi-independence from the central office governance. This has in turn affected the polity of Congregationalism<sup>52</sup>, as the model of a community of believers gathered through God's calling to participate in his mission, and turned into a model of governance that has

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<sup>52</sup> Congregationalism holds the belief that the church is made up of those who has responded to the call of Christ and who have covenanted with Him and each other to walk God's way (Wing, 1986:55).

become a replica of secular democracy. Therefore, Congregationalism becomes a structure for control rather than for mission growth, where individual congregations participate in the spreading of the grace of God as it should be. This expresses the importance of a local church where families participate in the mission of God (UCCSA, 1951; 1956; 1965).

The theological foundation and framework for the community in the missional congregation conversation is based on the doctrine of trinity. The trinity doctrine presents the community of the missionary God who sends his Son to the world and together with God they send the Holy Spirit. The Three send the church as an expression that the *missio Dei* is continuous and permeates all times and space (cf. Bosch, 1991).

## **5.8 MISSIONAL UCCSA IN THE POST-MODERN PARADIGM**

The study re-asserts that post-modernism is a response to the failures of modernism, but also accepts that UCCSA through ancestry (LMS, ABM and CUSA) claims its origin in modernism and its theology is reflective of that period. The assertion intends to put history in the picture context. The study sees the UCCSA's theological historians not reproducing the past, but interacting with it in its dialogue with the present paradigm and shape in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In doing so it rejects *foundationalism*<sup>53</sup> that espouses universal subjectivism and aligns itself with imaginative interpretation of the reality (Erickson, 1998:167). This means that being missional in the current paradigm calls for the church to be both contextual and accept that the interpretation of the reality differs from one synod to the other and even in those synods it differs from one congregational location to the other. This could be further ascribed to racial, tribal or ethnic differences and charismatic leadership cannot be played down either.

The call for being missional means that the UCCSA needs to use the deconstructive theology. The approach reviews the foundational theologies and takes brevity in eliminating or destroying those that it deems no longer relevant to the current realities (Erickson, 1998:167). Unlike Mugambi (1995:33) who speaks of the reconstruction theology as the starting point, the study works on the assumption that some theologies do need deconstruction before there could be talk of a reconstruction theology. In theology the community of faith or academics has a chance to discern and reflect on the Word and will of God. This process of discernment and reflection results in multi-theologies that are context specific.

The logical understanding of deconstruction theology in the UCCSA, as it moves beyond 1967 into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is that it does not adopt maintenance models of mission. The church goes

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<sup>53</sup> This is based on the dialogue of David Hume and Descartes, philosophies that claimed that knowledge is grounded on the sure first principles. "This meant that knowledge was thought to be absolute and unqualified, whereas religion had to base itself on faith" (Erickson, 1998:164).

through its history from inception as demonstrated in chapter two. The church must engage itself in the process of having a dialogue over the mission model that has been employed and drop those that deny the affirmation of life in the fullest, as this is the mission of God (John 10:10). Examples can be found in how feminist liberation theologians have deconstructed paternalistic text and how the liberation theologies (African and black) have used Marxist ideologies to deconstruct oppression (Erickson, 1998:170).

One model in the deconstruction of the theology that the UCCSA needs to deconstruct is the “colonial model”. The model is designed around the concept of winning souls for Christ, technically colonising. It assumed that Africa was dark, destined for condemnation and hell. The reading of Genesis 1:1ff is an account of God’s creation of the earth and how it looked. In deconstruction, therefore, the UCCSA will read the Scripture as referring to the whole earth not the continent. Logically then, Africa and the West were “formless, darkness and the spirit of God was hovering over”. The deconstructive reading of the passage in the missional context suggests that the Spirit of God even hovers over Africa, even the congregations of the UCCSA. This is giving the earth form, missional theology is then transformative and gives the community of faith life and form. It acknowledges that the participation in the transformative mission of God shows that He was busy with this activity before the church or the community of faith.

The next port of call for the church, in applying the constructive theology, is to reignite the liberation theology. The deliberate use of the word “reignite” in this research is as an admission that the liberation theologies were and are in place, but need to be relevant to the current situation. After the rise of nationalism and fall of Western oppressive regimes, the church took a backseat, save for a pocket of voices within the church that never spoke representative of the UCCSA, but out of their individual conviction.

Ukpong (2013:535) rightly argues that during the period 1980-2000, African nations rose up and protested. The uprising was not against Western regimes, but against home-grown dictatorial and corrupt regimes. The two countries worth mentioning, because they are home to two of the UCCSA synods, are Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Discontent is the call for reform in the rule of law and constitution. The church, the UCCSA in this case, is expected to provide theological motivation and inspiration for the struggle. The re-ignition, therefore, suggests to the people that struggle for justice and social transformation is a matter of faith. The church is not expected to voice something hidden from the people, something to be investigated, but what people dare to say and which is against the will of God. It must empower the people to speak and demand their freedom.

Missional congregations provide the environment for reigniting the liberation theologies that do not view oppression from the outside, but from within. It also provides the context for the

theological and religious authenticating of the people's struggle. The liberation theology in the post-modern paradigm shifts from seeing poverty as the fault of the poor, but as a result of economic looting by fellow rich and corrupt citizens or multinational companies aided by the rich (as another face of the Empire). In this case the voice of the missional church is to speak to and against the avarice and greed in society (Mshana, 2013:723). Poverty must not be spiritualised; such action must be condemned as scandalous. It is an economic scandal that society must not embrace and the church must speak to and against.

## **5.9 THE MISSIONAL CONGREGATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE THIRD CHURCH**

The development of missional congregations as mission paradigm in the UCCSA takes place in the context of the Third Church. There has been a pattern in which the Christian mission wave has been defined alongside the industrialisation movement. This has seen forms being created, as opposed to maintaining the old forms. Such a pattern has seen the mention of the "First, Second and the Third Church movements or waves", alongside the "first, second and third world" and speaks of an economic and political paradigm. Such a pattern also shows that socio-economic trends have influence on the mission paradigm (Elwood, 1992:22).

However, it is difficult to follow the same thought pattern within the 21<sup>st</sup> century paradigm, which is the context of the missional congregation as the proposed mission paradigm for the UCCSA. Firstly, some third world countries are now considered to be first world. For example South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore are no longer deemed third world countries, because of their economic growth. Secondly, the study argues that it is the collapse of the communist bloc nations that signalled the shift in the third world. These two reasons make it difficult to speak of the same pattern in mission of the First, Second and Third Church. This also means it is difficult for the missional paradigm to be developed alongside the socio-economic and political trends that seem to have lost the sequence following the economic reversal. However, such socio-economic and political paradigm shifts cannot be disregarded, as it proves the current axis of the issues that define the prophetic ministry of the church and provide the basis for the development of missional congregations. The argument on the First, Second and the Third Church indicates the shift in the Christian paradigm and how the church responds to the realities of the time (Elwood, 1992:21).

### **5.9.1 THE FIRST CHURCH**

The First Church is traditionally referred to as the Eastern Church (0-1000AD). The theology of the First Church was dominated by their beliefs and had developed an apologetic or defensive approach. Unity and purity of faith were paramount. As a result, seven councils were called to defend the Christian faith against heretics. They were the Council of Jerusalem (49 AD, cf. Acts

15:1-29) that took place before the end of the Roman persecution, Council of Nicaea (325AD), Council of Constantinople (381AD), Council of Ephesus (431AD), Council of Chalcedon (451AD), Second Council of Constantinople (553AD), Third Council of Constantinople (680AD) and the Second Council of Nicaea (787AD). All the councils, with the exception of the Council of Jerusalem, were binding to both the Eastern and the Western churches and thus considered ecumenical. The First Church preached to the Second Church, i.e. the Western church (Elwood, 1992:21). This does not suggest the First Church is completely dead, it still exists today, but is considered a sleeping church. Elwood (1992:22) describes it as “the church of silence...[which] remains largely a priestly church that seems to have lost sight of its prophetic mission and social influence”. The study argues that the church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century cannot be solely priestly, but needs to be a vocal and confronting church.

This paradigm or church can geographically be referred to the church of the East or the one that still subscribes to the teaching and practices of the church of the first millennium.

### **5.9.2 THE SECOND CHURCH**

The Second Church is traditionally referred to as the Western church (1000-2000AD). The doctrine of Trinity was emphasised, but the West and the East did not hold the same belief: for the Western Church the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, while for the Eastern Church the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father only. This has bearing on the interpretation of the Trinity as the praxis of missional congregations. According Moltmann (1977), quoted in Bosch (1991:390), Trinity explained missiologically and “is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church”.

Such formulation is a shift from the doctrinal emphasis on the Trinity of the First and the Second Church. It is within this paradigm where trinity is defined in terms of mission, as movement of God’s love and saving grace to the world that the Second Church is credited for the evangelisation of the of the Third Church. This can be argued to be the church of the West or second millennium, arguably the centre of world Christianity. It is now experiencing numerical growth and social influence (Elwood, 1992:22).

### **5.9.3 THE THIRD CHURCH**

The Third Church is traditionally and geographically referred to as the Church of the South (2000 to date). The pattern that follows the socio-political wave would refer it to the third world church, as a result of missionary society evangelisation. However, its rise can be discussed within the decline in the numbers and spiritual life of the European church (First and Second Church). It would be to miss the point if the study only argues in reference to the decline in the

Eastern and the Western Church, because the rise of the Third Church is influenced by the re-evangelisation of the whole world.

The Third Church provides the locus for the development of missional congregations as the mission paradigm of the UCCSA. The Third Church does so because it acknowledges that the First Church still exists today, but it is a “sleeping church...the church of silence...(and) it remains largely a priestly church that seems to have lost sight of its prophetic mission” (Elwood, 1992:22).

This has challenged the rise of the Third Church and the study argues that the UCCSA, as church and as a subscriber to ecumenical theology, finds itself faced with that challenge. The development of the missional congregation in the UCCSA also acknowledges that the centre of gravity in world mission has shifted and social paradigms have a say in defining the mission of the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The UCCSA, therefore, in this context has struggled with the following question of mission:

“How much influence will Christian thought and action [*of the UCCSA*] have in shaping of the new era?...should the third church [*UCCSA*] merely ride the wave or should it not also be making waves, that is, shaping those new waves?”<sup>54</sup> (Elwood, 1992:24)

It is through self-interrogation that the UCCSA may see itself as the symbol of radical hope and salvation in a hurting world. This must be placed within praxis that argues that mission belongs to God (*missio Dei*), as per Acts 5:38ff, and which points to mission’s success.

## 5.10 CONCLUSION

The study proposes a new paradigm for the UCCSA as it participates in the *missio Dei*. The following comes to the fore in the analysis: Firstly, missional congregations are organic in nature; and secondly, they are developed within the context of a community, whereby the experiences of the community and individual inform the mission-focused church. Such thinking or paradigm will assist the UCCSA as it participates in the mission of God, with the Triune community, beyond 1967 and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The question that needs attention is that inasmuch as the proposal has been put forward, how can a missional congregation be developed? This is the task of the next chapter.

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<sup>54</sup> Words in italics added by the author.

## **CHAPTER 6 DEVELOPMENT OF A MISSIONAL CONGREGATION IN UCCSA**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter builds on the argument of chapter five and attempts to develop missional congregations in the UCCSA. The chapter wrestles with the question as how such a proposal can be developed. In so doing it deals with the following: how missional congregations are developed, envisioned and empowered, which is achieved this by focusing on the possible hurdles in the development of a missional congregation and the mission frontiers in the new paradigm, the margins as the reality in the paradigm. Then the modes of developing the missional congregation through community engagement are examined. The chapter then proceeds to look at discipleship (organic discipleship), i.e. community engagement that will allow the development of transformative theology that finds its basis in oral theology, both reflective of the church's ability to read the signs of the time and acting accordingly and relevantly.

### **6.2 POSSIBLE HURDLES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MISSIONAL CONGREGATIONS IN THE UCCSA**

There is a need to development missional congregations as the model for the UCCSA's participation in the *missio Dei*. However, the study also argues that such development has to deal with certain realities in the church that may impede such an exercise, as explained under 6.2.1 to 6.2.3.

#### **6.2.1 OVER-INSTITUTIONALISATION OF THE CHURCH**

Jesus' mode of operation was to call the disciples to be his missionary assistance. He taught them as his students (disciples). The cursory readings of the ministry of Jesus Christ, as contained in the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), do not suggest that Jesus sought to form a church let alone invent a religion. Jesus' use of the term church in Matthew 16:18 (cf. Matthew 28) needs to be noted: "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will built the church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

The study further argues and in agreement with Bosch (1991:82) that Jesus was not referring to the institution of church, but the concept of church is "found where disciples live in community with one another and their Lord...seeking to live according to the will of the father".

The identity and definition of the church cannot, therefore, be that of or be limited to an institution. It is a community of presence, witness and communication of the gospel to transform society.

Peter understood his ministry within Judaic teaching and scriptures. The idea of institutionalising Christianity is reflected in Acts 15 (cf. Galatians 2), whereby there is a shift from Mark 16:15-18 and Matthew 28:16-20: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

Admission into the Christian faith came with believing in Jesus as the Lord, but now the expectation, as taught to the church in Antioch by apostles from Judea (Acts 15:1), was to follow the statutes like the circumcision and eating the prescribed types of food. Acts 15:19-22 sets out these statutes as follows:

"It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath. Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders among the brothers."

Clearly, Jesus demanded obedience from those He called and they were to help each other discern the will of God, especially in the face of factional issues. They must not impose, but through discernment be able to come to a conclusion that allows the growth of the community of faith.

Institutionalisation operates on the understanding that God deposited the truth into the institution (church). The revelation or knowledge about and of God can be gained through that institution and this leads to the claim that there is no salvation outside the church, denomination ("extra ecclesiam nulla salus"; there is no salvation outside the [Catholic] church) (Erickson, 1998:118; cf. Bosch, 1991:218).

The objective of the LMS was never to form a local church (in Africa), such an idea was secondary and mostly left to the gathered community, as Haile (1951:1) indicates:

"As union of Christians of various denominations...[we are not] send[ing] Presbyterianism, independence, Episcopacy or any other church order and government...but the Glorious Gospel of the Blessed God to the Heathen."

The LMS did not want to form a local church, nor sought to prescribe the church polity. They were not intent on replicating their own model of church government and thus, within the context of this discourse, they did not seek to institutionalise it.

This means that the concept of mission as preaching to the heathen, the “unchurched”, was central and not the church order. Placing emphasis on the church order, in dealing with mission issues, may go against the very purpose the church strives to achieve. The church, as an institution, must play a facilitative role to make sure that mission programmes are well equipped with both material and human resources. Great caution must be taken to avoid prescribing, given that programmes need to be born out of a specific context and need. This does not prohibit local churches from gathering to discern the will of God for the benefit of all.

The formation of the UCCSA confirmed a shift from the principles of the LMS to the new ecclesiastical order. The driving force was then “what can keep us together not what can we do together” to win over the hurting world for Christ, as with the LMS (cf. Briggs, 1970).

### **6.2.2 NATIONAL CHURCH VERSUS CENTRAL OFFICE**

The formation of the UCCSA is to be viewed in context of three scenarios: The Congregational Union of South Africa (CUSA) and the Bantu Congregational Church (BCC) were not transnational, but basically South African. Furthermore, the CUSA predominately comprised coloured members and the BCC predominately Zulu. The LMS was also transnational and transcultural.

The second scenario is that Botswana and Zimbabwe are the products of the LMS’ mission work, strictly speaking working with different church traditions was never experienced at local or national level in these countries. Though there was great interaction between Inyathi (Zimbabwe), Shoshong (Botswana) and Kuruman in South Africa, it was restricted to administrative activities and Moffat complained that it was strenuous and unsustainable (Du Plessis, 1965; Briggs & Wing, 1970). While the experience was with one tradition, the cross-cultural and multinational exposure was evident. This would suggest that they (Botswana and Zimbabwe) had no difficulty in working with one centre of power; central office, but South Africa struggled. This is because CUSA, ABM and LMS all operated in South Africa, while in the mentioned countries it was only the LMS. Secondly, South Africa was organised into the autonomous synods of the Free State, Transvaal, Transkei and Natal, while other countries had single national synods. Hence the aspect of dealing with a single centre of power.

The third scenario is that during this period of formation there was a rise in nationalism. The phenomenon did not spare the theological discourse of the church, a reality that put a great deal of emphasis on the national issues of the church, the socio-political and economic and how

each synod responded. The pronouncement of liberation theology took a national outlook. This cannot be completely hitched onto the development of the missional congregation, which argues that these realities cannot be dismissed in the process:

“We cannot strive for Christian unity without equally striving for justice and integrity of all God's people, and that unity in word and deed among Christians is more important than structural unity between denomination(s) and or local churches or synods.” (Van der Water, 1994:1)

The purpose of the unity was to be “according to Main<sup>55</sup>...a more effective witness in the world in which God has set us, in an age in which God has called us” (UCCSA, 1967).

These two quotations seem to suggest that the unit was structural rather than missional, as Main in the 1967 assembly would have dreamt of each “denomination”. There is a possibility also that the argument can be designed to suggest the effectiveness of the structure, where there is a flow of ideas through to the denomination or assembly. The term “denomination” is used provocatively to suggest that the church still maintained the denominational structure and autonomy they enjoyed prior to 1967. This can be interpreted to mean that the unit was an experience of the assembly or administratively of the central office, not local churches or synods. If this is the case, the covenant model needs to be redefined and the mission perspective must be emphasised.

The other four synods (Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana and Namibia) had enjoyed being liberated (political<sup>56</sup>) for some time, while South Africa was indirectly under the administration of the central office until they became a synod in 2002. This meant that since 1967 it was in the shadow of the denominational administration and this created a “big brother” synod<sup>57</sup>. It began to be felt after the formation of the South Africa synod, with all synods now equal before the denomination, the central office had to deal with the ever-present old question: What keeps us together? The study asserts that the mission-focused church must rather address the question of “what can we do together”, as the legacy of the LMS's fundamental principle. This question must cut across geographical, political, class, racial and economic lines. It could also tackle the question of the national church against the central office<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> Main was the first elected president of the UCCSA upon its formation on 3 October 1967.

<sup>56</sup> It must be mentioned that when the UCCSA was formed only the Botswana synod was from a liberated country.

<sup>57</sup> The South Africa synod had a large delegation, which ensured that votes always went its way. Secondly, the South African synod's proximity to the office and the number of leaders it contributed made the whole structure seem South African (Read with first preise).

<sup>58</sup> Central is used interchangeably with denominational office.

### **6.2.3 AMBIGUITY OF EVANGELISM VERSUS DISCIPLESHIP**

As the church moves towards building missional congregations, the two models of evangelism and discipleship cannot be left unscrutinised.

Firstly, there is need to look at the concept of evangelism. The Pastoral Plan for Transformation when it was launched defined evangelism as:

“the sharing of the good news of Jesus Christ – His life...to teach and baptize and nurture the new believers. To respond to human needs by loving services...to seek to transform unjust structures of society.” (UCCSA, 1990:2)

The Pastoral Plan for Transformation contended that evangelism is the primary task of the church to build a new community of believers.

Secondly, the concept of discipleship was not discussed, but only mentioned as evangelism being a process that aims to make disciples. It is, however, addressed in detail as one of the recommended modes for developing missional congregations under the heading of organic discipleship.

### **6.3 FRONTIERS IN THE NEW PARADIGM**

Reading the signs of the time means that the church needs to look at itself and its preparedness to confront these signs, should there be a threat to the mission and motivated toward the salvation of God, which is a better life for the people (cf. John 10:10). In 1995 the church produced a document (as alluded to in chapter one) in response to the need to “reshape the church for mission”. At that particular time, such reshaping was defined as the re-evangelisation of the church’s membership. The project rang of spiritual laxity within the church and its para-ministries. The reading of the document does not detail the mission plan beyond the reshaping. However, there is a clear desire for “spiritual disciplines...to discern the Lord’s will and obey his desires...[and] our challenge is to do everything in our power to proclaim the word of God in word and action” (De Gruchy, 1995:31).

The church also conveyed the same mission sentiments in its 2014 executive<sup>59</sup> declaration. According to the minutes (UCCSA, 2014), the church is being challenged to, firstly, revisit the concept of Congregationalism and secondly, to talk about stewardship. Thirdly, the meeting spoke of building inclusive churches, reviewing theological training needs within the current paradigms and there was a suggestion of establishing the second (Federal Theological

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<sup>59</sup> Refer to the structure of the church in chapter three of this study.

Seminary) FEDSEM. The meeting did not suggest the format of the second FEDSEM and the reason for such an initiative.

The minutes read together with the General Secretary's minister conversation address (19-23 January 2015), titled *Towards a missional ministry*<sup>60</sup>, all points to the frontiers that are changing or needs to change and define a missional church in the UCCSA perspective.

### **6.3.1 INCLUSIVE CHURCH**

The inclusive church as a new frontier is also based on discussions taking place in the denominational executive meetings (UCCSA, 2014). The minutes, however, do not define what an inclusive church is and how it is going to be modelled, neither does it explain the reason for such an inclusive church. Whatever the case may be, the term "inclusive" could be meant here as the opposite of "exclusive". What becomes of interest is the source of the call for the inclusive church or the why now. The UCCSA and indeed its parent associations are built on the principle of ecumenism. Though not the same as inclusiveness (cf. Lovetta, 1899; Haile, 1951; Du Plessis, 1965), the call for an inclusive church is of interest. The possible reason why the church is or may be making such a call is to avoid the pitfall of generalisation. In the inclusive community the fight against any form of discrimination becomes paramount and the following are forms of discrimination.

#### **6.3.1.1 Financial power is an element of exclusion**

The assumption in this section is that financial access enables the exercise of power. Those with the financial might or power will dominate the decision-making process and those without it will be excluded. This could be demonstrated in the composition of the members in the decision-making bodies and even if they don't (financial-abled people) serve on such bodies, they can still influence the affairs of the institution. This does not necessarily define the position of the UCCSA as a church, but it is a generic demonstration of how the financially strong can dominate institutions.

Ducker (2008:7) argues that financial might has been used in the sending churches to maintain dominance and this also reflects in the positioning of the headquarters of the institution. The question raised, in an attempt to understand the inclusive church, is based on the synods with good financial positions. This also raises the question of the economic wellbeing of the country, for example in the UCCSA, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa are better positioned in terms of economic performance.

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<sup>60</sup> Paper presented by the UCCSA General Secretary, Rev. Alistair Arends, during the UCCSA ministers' convention in January 2015.

It is further perceived that if the UCCSA intends to be an inclusive church, over and against financial dominance as an element of exclusivity, it must emphasise the need for partnership with God and also with all Christians (Greenway,1999:11) as the pillars of the missional congregation.

#### **6.3.1.2 Structural order as elements of exclusion<sup>61</sup>**

This section seeks to pose and answer the questions that might speak to the “inclusive church”: What were the changes in and after 1967 and has the church not maintained the structures that were considered tools of oppression before, only changing their appearance? Answering these questions will allow the church to interrogate its structures to see whether they are inclusive or not.

A possible way of understanding structure as an element that calls for inclusion is to look at how gender, race, tribe, youth participation and the physically disabled are accommodated as the opportunity to serve in the position that influenced the mission of the church, as it participates in the *missio Dei*.

#### **6.3.1.3 Conceptual beliefs as elements of exclusion**

The concept of beliefs as element of exclusion in building the missional congregation is based on the fact that some thoughts are considered normative, while others are abnormal and inferior. Ducker (2008:8) explains as follows:

“Much of the way we interact cross-culturally continues to be filled with an ‘our way is the best’ mentality...A subtle sense...that we have the ‘right’ culture and this need to ‘convert’ others to our ways still permeates much of our cross-cultural perspective and practice.”

The UCCSA is a multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-tribal and multi-national church. Its outlook must reflect such composition. The induction of the LMS mission in Africa in 1799 was on the principle of preventing “if possible, any cause of future dissention [*exclusion*] it is declared to be a fundamental principle...is not send...any other form of church (*concept*)” (Haile, 1951:1).

Conceptualisation or theological differences were always to be avoided and seem to exclude other missionaries from participating in the *missio Dei* from the onset. For the church to be successful in its call to build an inclusive church/community, it must deal with the conceptual and theological differences with honesty and urgency.

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<sup>61</sup> Goba (2007) argues that the church is slowly being *clergerised*. The laity is slowly being excluded from the key leadership position, e.g. the chairperson of the local church is reserved for the minister. This means that even if there is a layperson who is qualified and talented, he/she cannot share his/her experience with the local congregation.

### **6.3.2 STEWARDSHIP AS A FRONTIER IN THE NEW PARADIGM**

The term stewardship in the UCCSA has been narrowed to a one-concept meaning and remains a frontier to be addressed in the new paradigm. It has been used to refer to the financial issues in the church and the members contribute either through giving (tithing or free-will offerings - tithing can be prescriptive and legislated, while free-will offerings can be tithing, but is not limited to a certain amount and can be above or below the tithe) or income-generating projects. The church is challenged to look beyond defining stewardship in simple monetary terms. This argument is based on the executive meeting in September 2014, where the Botswana synod seemed to understand stewardship as:

“to optimize investment returns by investing on the property and the synod has started on the program of identifying development partners. The synod is developing one of their plots into a multi residential accommodation for students.” (UCCSA, 2014)

The understanding of stewardship in the UCCSA, in reference to the minutes, is purely commercial and is a business transaction. The church is challenged to shift from such an approach and perspective. Missional stewardship begins with the understanding of God's purpose in creation and the use of resources in his redemptive plan, both human resources and otherwise (Wright, 2006:62).

Out of the above, the church is challenged to redefine stewardship within the missional context. Such an understanding of stewardship is limited in scope and thrust. Stewardship as paradigm in a missional congregation endeavours to answer the questions that individual members of the congregation must ask about its purpose. Stewardship does not only mean giving God part of our income, our entire lives are entrusted to us by God and belongs to God to be used in service to his glory (Erickson, 1985:511). Humanity and its wealth is not the total definition of stewardship, everything on earth belongs to God and humanity is but a part of the whole. Stewardship is to care for the whole environment, to take care of God's creation and make sure that nature is not exploited or neglected.

The reading of Exodus 19:5-6 provides a theological point of departure in the discourse on stewardship in the missional context. Scripture affirms that God owns the universe and the earth or the land provides a sense of identity to the people of God.

#### **6.3.2.1 Stewardship and the land**

This section is included under stewardship, especially in terms stewardship as the frontier in the new paradigm and for the following two reasons. Firstly, during the formation of the UCCSA in 1967, Southern Africa was engaged in the politics of liberation and nationalism. The theology of

the time, liberation theology, was influenced by socio-political activities and at the centre of the liberation struggle was the issue of land. The failure to address the land issue upon gaining independence by some African countries (especially where the UCCSA is found), i.e. South Africa and Zimbabwe, has given the new political paradigm an agenda and that must influence the mission theology of the church.

Secondly, the land belongs to God and is a divine gift to his people, for them to take care of and keep for the future generations. These reasons for the stewardship by the church in the missional paradigm cannot be complete if it does not speak to participation in the *missio Dei* and its relevance to the current issues of the community to and with which the church is ministering.

In missional stewardship, the land issue is discussed from two perspectives: theological and economic. However, this doesn't seek to dichotomise them, as they cannot be divided. The aim is instead to demonstrate that land is critical and can be discussed broadly, yet admitting that it belongs to God and humankind only as its stewards.

#### **6.3.2.2 Theological perspective of land**

According to Von Rad (1975:297), land provided two important pillars of faith. Land was the emblematic concept of conquest and also considered the symbol of salvation in the Old Testament's concept of the Promised Land. The question of land and its promise defined the faith of Israel, it was the anticipation of the Promised Land that kept their faith and relationship with God strong at all times. This aspect is also informed by the Exodus narratives, which affirms land as owned by God and as his divine gift to his people.

The question of land especially, as a new frontier in the new paradigm of the UCCSA mission, needs to be treated with care. The over-simplistic use of the exodus motif seems to be exclusive of the indigenous people. Anderson (1975:110) argues as follows:

"The struggle for land has always been one of the most powerful drives in the national history (*any nation*)...this is...true...in the case of United States. Americans rehearse the stirring epic of the immigrants who landed on the Atlantic seaboard and, at the cost of great hardship and often fierce warfare...The tragic side of the story...is that the native Indians who had developed their own culture on the land, were dispossessed and almost exterminated...in times of thanksgiving Americans affirm their belief that, despite the sordid aspects of injustices and violence, the hand of God was guiding the 'pilgrim feet'."

The theology of land as a frontier in the new mission paradigm of the UCCSA needs address all these aspects, especially in the building of the inclusive church.

The other challenge raised in the reading of the exodus motif and the question of land is that it presents a God who participated in the ruthless killing of the indigenous Canaanites, robbing them of their land<sup>62</sup> and giving it to Israel (Deuteronomy 6:21-23). He brought them out of Egypt and settled them into the Promised Land, as Anderson (1975:111) explains:

“They were first landless people...They belonged to the floating population, the unsettled elements of the society. These wanderers were seeking land, in order that they may participate fully in the society and fulfill their historical destiny. Their struggle to obtain land entailed much suffering and bloodshed, and the slaughter of many Canaanite natives.”

This view of land in the context of Exodus gives a negative picture of the missionary God<sup>63</sup>, but as frontier in the new mission paradigm it accords the church an opportunity to re-appropriate a seemingly celebrated story of the liberator God. In the re-appropriation and the reading of the whole narration of God’s mission, the church must make the community see the grace and saving of God as well.

It must be noted that the following can be said about God: Firstly, He keeps his promises; secondly, He liberates and sustains, providing an alternative; and thirdly, God gives the people a chance to repent and He is patient (Genesis 15:16). However, the land of the native Canaanites as alternative is a bit problematic. Exodus 6:8 states: “I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.”

The text does not mention the inhabitants of the land in God’s plan and is deemed the weakness of presenting the exodus as a liberation motif. It seems to suggest a mission model of conquer and assimilate, which means that the question of land is not seen from the *missio Dei*’s perspective and is why Israel squandered it and used it for their own glory. It must, however, always be kept in mind that the land belongs to God and all that is in it (Psalm 37:3; Leviticus 25:23; Psalm 50:10-12).

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<sup>62</sup> It must be appreciated that the issue of land, especially occupied land, is highly contentious and it has drawn nations into racial division.

<sup>63</sup> The issue of land in post-colonial Africa has become sensitive and more politicised (here reference is made to the countries where the UCCSA is found). The best option in the missiological approach and discussion is, firstly, to see God as a just judge that must punish the disobedience of the people and calling everyone to repentance regardless of race, sex and political affiliation. All must live with Him. Those that do not respond to his grace must bear the consequences. What is also important is that the time of the Old Testament is unique, because God reveals it and gives 400 years for repentance. It is also clear from the history of Israel that they lost the land, due to disobedience. Today the land cannot be taken because of the sins of the people, but people who don’t fulfil their role as stewards of the land will lose it. Secondly, land is admittedly not an easy topic. Colonial times and change in the political landscape will continue to pit people against each other, since politicians have realised that land is both an economic asset and also the source of power and political influence.

It is out of and through the Exodus narratives that God “Yahweh” is made known to foreigners. In what could be taken as response to this debate, Wright (2006:271) argues that the Exodus narratives are given to demonstrate that God’s redemption of Israel was a comprehensive response to their needs.

It must be borne in mind that in dealing with the concept of poverty, land becomes a critical component of the theological point of departure. The starting point would be to accept that the land belongs to Yahweh and Canaan too. There looking or fighting for land is a bid to get a place for people to worship God (gods). This can be interpreted to suggest that to be outside of such designated land was to be far from the face of Yahweh (cf. 1 Samuel 26:20) and to belong to Yahweh gives one the privilege to claim a portion of his land (cf. Joshua 22:25) (Von Rad, 1975:300).

Leviticus 25:23-24 says the following:

“The land must not be sold permanently because the land is mine and you are but aliens and tenants. Throughout the country that you hold as a possession you must provide for the redemption of the land.”

This means that people are only its stewards, commissioned and commanded to take care of it as well as fight against environmental injustice. People are stewards who use the land to glorify God, as the providence God. It is the commercialisation of land and its use as symbol of power that has condemned some people to poverty. This becomes one of the issues that the prophet Amos speaks against.

It must be noted that the prophet Amos prophesied to Israel during the reigns of Uzziah (792-770BC) and Jeroboam II (793-753BC). This was a time when the two kingdoms were enjoying stability, prosperity and expansion. However, in spite of this material prosperity, Israel was in an advanced state of decay (socially, morally and religiously) and the prophet Amos raised his voice in protest against the religious and moral corruption of his day by condemning the sins of exploitation and oppression of the poor and needy (Amos 4:1; 5:11; 8:4,6); corrupt and degenerate religious practices (Amos 2:4,6,8; 4:4); corruption of justice and honesty (Amos 5:7-10; 6:12); excessive indulgence (Amos 6:4); and general disregard for the laws of God (Amos 2:8; 8:5). This led to the clash with Amaziah who refused to acknowledge in any way the divine source of Amos’ prophecies, but considered him a political agitator (Amos 7:12). Within this framework land would be for monetary gain.

It should be noted that God’s land is given that its beneficiaries may glorify Him through it. If they misuse it, they will be sent into exile or exposed to attack and defeat by other nations and this is evident also in the history of the Israelites.

### 6.3.2.3 Economical perspective of land and stewardship

This section is necessitated by the church's emphasis on stewardship in terms of commerce (cf. UCCSA, 2014). It challenges this narrow and limited teaching of stewardship on the part of the church and its synods. The premise is that if UCCSA works towards being missional it must move away from the concept that land belonged to kings and nobles, while ordinary people were living as tax-paying tenants, and this challenges the UCCSA to advocate for the position where land is a divine gift from God to all earth's citizens (Wright, 2006:291). While the reading of Numbers 26:52-56 and Joshua 13-21 suggests that the intention of God was for the land to be distributed to clans and households, based on their needs, not to be taken as a business transaction that must inform the position of the missional church. As indicated in the previous section, it is the commercialisation of land and its use as political agenda that challenges the prophetic ministry of the church. It is a gift from God that is meant to benefit all the inhabitants of that particular geo-space and speaks against the privatisation of land.

The economic policies of the liberated Africa, especially those countries where UCCSA ministers need to address the question as to why some people have remained on the margins, long after independence. It is also necessary to determine whether new policies and perspectives (religious, political and economic) continue to disfranchise the poor. The poor or certain sectors of society (the youth and women) were deliberately pushed out of the mainstream economy. In drawing them back in, the centre has to be redefined.

## 6.4 THE MARGINS HAVE COME TO THE CENTRE

The other frontier that the church has to face in the proposed mission paradigm is the social settlement pattern that has emerged in post-colonial times in the UCCSA (national) synods. Those who were on the periphery are now in the centre. The church is here challenged to devise a mission strategy. Those who were pushed out and silenced by the politics of oppression, can now be heard and have a voice. They can be found on street corners begging, building their "homes" under bridges.

From the life and experiences of these people, a new theology must be developed in and within the UCCSA. A theology that is victim centred. According to Wright (2015:61), as the church participates in this new mission challenge, the world will see and witness the movement from God's silence to the Word of God. The UCCSA, as a missional church, needs to unpack this missional pronouncement as an expression of its prophetic ministry. What this argument means within the context of the *missio Dei* is that it must not be seen to suggest that God is not unaware of the plight of the people. A simplistic interpretation would suggest that there was a time in human history or context when God was absent in their lives. It actually means that

when the people speak, God does not interrupt, confront or offer excuses and in his own time makes a point or impact in people's lives. When He speaks through his vessels (prophets), it becomes evident that those considered to be powerless and voiceless are now at the heart of the economic and political activities and they have found favour with God, not the church or a political party. They could hear God speaking to their situation saying "carry your cross and follow me". Carry your pains, suffering, rejection, grief and follow God, in Jesus. The church must be able to hear the voice of God among the masses, as it listens to the new commandment and commission (Wright, 2015:61).

As the church moves through the 21<sup>st</sup> century it will continue to be quizzed by the quest of the margins. What is urgent in this question is determining what defines the margins and who defines them. This will always be the debate in theology. The collapse of the "West-reaches-the-rest" mission model and the emerging of the missionaries from everywhere to everywhere (as discussed in chapter four of this research), however, shows that mission from the margins is possible (Tennent, 2010:21; cf. CWM, 2010). It is in this margin that we can experience the groaning God, as such mission needs to be understood and conceptualised differently as a result.

The question is whether the UCCSA participates in mission of God within that reality or have they become a middle class church that does not take part in the mission of God for the marginalised. The mission-ecclesiological perspective of the church needs to include the following: Firstly, the church must be bold enough to confront the structures and cultures within and outside the church that provide fertile ground for oppression and dehumanising practices. Secondly, the previously marginalised and those still marginalised can be partners in the *missio Dei*, in the post-modern paradigm. Thirdly, as the margins come to the centre, the church is challenged to acknowledge the gift of the oppressed and the suffering people to know what good news is and what bad news to them is. Fourthly, by including those who were and still are on the margins, the church develops a transformative mission that affirms as well as resists respectively: God's economy of love and justice and the idolatry of the free-market economy that benefits the few. This will see them become partners in the *missio Dei*.

## **6.5 MODES FOR DEVELOPING MISSIONAL CONGREGATION**

### **6.5.1 PARTNERSHIP IN MISSIONAL CONGREGATION**

The reading of Amos 3:3, "Do two people walk together unless they agreed to do so", paints a picture of a partnership and the importance of agreement in partnership. Scripture does provide the basics of partnership, but there is the possibility of reading into the text that both partners move in and work towards the success of the project, in this case the *missio ecclesia* (mission

of the church). It is a way of participating in the mission of God as the author of mission and the church given the privilege of participating in it.

The emphasis on community has been advocated throughout, especially in the post-modern period. This finds its basis in the community of the Trinity (God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit). Addressing partnership raises the following provoking, but guiding, questions. Can the UCCSA do all the mission work or participate in the mission of God in Southern Africa (five countries of their constituency) by itself? How can the UCCSA explain the emergence of other churches within its constituencies? Is there a biblical basis for partnership in missional work in the UCCSA? Who partners with whom and why?

#### **6.5.1.1 Biblical foundation for partnership**

It must be appreciated that partnership is a project started by Jesus Christ Himself in his relationship with God, in creating the earth, and with the disciples, when He proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God. It must be noted, however, that in terms of Trinity the partnership is better explained in relational terms. The Bible defines partnership in terms of sharing. It is best explained in terms of *koinonia*, translated to mean “partaking together in a group that has a common identity, goals and responsibility” (Kirk, 1999:188).

According to Erickson (1998), *Koinonia* refers to “having or holding things in common” (Erickson, 1998:1064). Out of the definition given by Erickson (1998) and Kirk (1999), the concept of companion can be deduced to refer to those who broke bread together and worked together, as commissioned and commanded by God. *Koinonia* may thus refer to sharing of resources and solidarity, community strength.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the concept of sharing to define partnership was started by Jesus Christ. The reading of Mark 14:17ff, Matthew 26:20-30, Luke 22:14-30 and John 13:21-30 points to the fact that partnership must be with Christ first. Out of the reading of these passages, it is clear that the nature of the partnership is very close as it is sharing the blood and body of Jesus Christ. However, if one does not want to partake in this partnership, this close encounter with Christ drives him out. Judas left the partnership upon dipping his bread with Christ in the same bowl. Partnership is a project initiated by Jesus and that finds fulfilment in Him.

The gospel writers seek in the above range of Scripture passages (Mark 14:17ff, Matthew 26:20-30, Luke 22:14-30 and John 13:21-30) to present Jesus sharing a meal with his disciples, a sign of unity, togetherness and fellowship. According to Luke, this is a farewell speech (Luke 22:15) before He suffers. In these texts the value of partnership is defined by honest, loyalty

and trust, hence the one who was to betray Him was thought of as having allowed the devil to control him. Partnership in a missional congregation is a common project

Philippians 1:1, 5 starts with a reference to partnership: "To all saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons...I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."

The place was rich and prosperous. It was the location of the first church that Paul planted in mainland Europe and thus special to him. This was also the home of the business woman Lydia. The fact that the community was well resourced meant that they could fund the missionary work of Paul and it also provided a strategic position to reach other areas. It was in the commercial route, Ignatia Way, connecting east to west and thus a mission gateway to the west. It was, therefore, critical for Paul to emphasise partnership in that community and the role each can play in the success of the church (Pawson, 2007:1060). The gentle tone expresses the type of relationship Paul had with the community. He perceived the community of equality, the community that emptied itself and always fought for the common good (Johnson, 1999:375).

Paul thanks the local people of Philippi and their leadership for their partnership and sharing in the common gospel, saying "they are partners (*sunkononia*) with him (Paul) in the defense (*apologia*) and confirmation (*bebaiosis*) of the gospel" (Kirk, 1999:188).

He emphasised the importance of partnership with the locals again in Philippians 4:15 as follows:

"Moreover as you Philippians know, in early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only."

In the process of sharing, as the defining element of partnership, all parties stand to benefit. The book addresses Paul and Timothy as the servants of God though and it is their task as missionaries that gives them equal status. The list that includes the deacons and the overseers sees partnership as both an institutional and community programme.

This section challenges the missional mentality of the UCCSA to shift from the LMS's concept of partnership with the local people, where the locals were considered as having nothing to offer and only served as auxiliary personnel in the mission activities of the LMS. Local congregations must be taken on as partners in mission, not as subjects to be governed. It is the shift from the LMS paradigm, where local human skills were only considered fit for being a teacher-evangelist or wagon drivers, who covered whole journeys on foot, nothing more. They were not recognised as partners, sharing in the common project of the mission of God. They were

referred to as slaves to the missionary (in the case of the wagon drivers), never the slaves of God or the gospel (cf. Lovetta, 1899; Haile, 1951; Du Plessis, 1965).

#### **6.5.1.2 Partnership as sharing of gifts in the missional church**

The point of departure is to admit that the gifts of the church are given by God, through the Holy Spirit, for the fulfilment of his mission (*missio Dei*). As it is written in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10:

“To one there is given through the spirit the message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same spirit, to another faith by the same spirit, to another the gift of healing, to another miraculous power, to another prophecy.”

The letter may have been written to encourage unity in the midst of division. It can be assumed that those of pagan background were not deemed to contribute to the spiritual growth of the church, hence the letter intends to address the issue. According to Paul (1 Corinthians 12:8-10), everyone has something to contribute to the life and work of the church and the contribution is progressive.

The sharing of human skills attempts to cultivate the concept of interdependence among the local churches, regions and synods of the UCCSA. Not only that, it acknowledges that the church is one institution that has almost all the professions that the world needs. The question would, however, be to determine how these human and material resources could be shared to realise the glory of God.

#### **6.5.1.3 Partnership as sharing material resources**

Having served the church (UCCSA), in different capacities and countries, it has been observed that the para-ministries (*Isililo/Manyano/Bomme*, women's fellowship, youth, Sunday school (children ministry) and the Soldiers of Christ) are well funded, while the church is failing to pay its bills. As mentioned earlier, the UCCSA is organised into synods (in five countries). The central office may be struggling to pay the denominational staff, while the synods and their local church have property and investment accounts. These examples are offered against the principle of “covenant church” and the legal status of “autonomy”. The autonomy observed is being interpreted out of its framework. When the three ecclesiastic traditions (LMS, ABM and CUSA) came together, the committee agreed that they would enjoy autonomy within the union. However, it has been interpreted to mean that the congregations are autonomous.

The churches, as they enter into partnership with one another and the structures of the church, are not only partnering with one another but also with God: as individual congregation and as a denomination (UCCSA), the initiator (God) and the creator of the church through his Son Jesus

Christ. The churches as they partner are also becoming co-workers with God in the mission field (Kirk, 1999:190).

The partnership referred to is modelled around the mission strategy that was adopted by the Jerusalem Conference in 1928. The delegates agreed that the indigenous churches, most probably speaking of those from the former “heathen” continents, must be given independence and authority. The conference adopted the “partnership in obedience model” (Beaver, 1992:B71; cf. Du Plessis, 1965; Haile, 1951).

Attempts are made in the UCCSA to share resources, though no standard practice has been set throughout the denomination (all synods). Zimbabwe manages a Pastoral Fund, which is called the Central Fund in the Botswana synod. The purpose of these funds is to assist the small and poor congregations to employ ministers to shepherd them. In South Africa and Namibia, however, the congregations have direct contracts with the ministers who serve them, they employ their own ministers (calling). Each congregation raises its own resources through tithes and other fundraising activities, as the local church sees fit (UCCSA, 2009:33).

#### **6.5.1.4 Partnership in sharing suffering**

This looks at the issues of fellowship and solidarity and builds the discourse on *koinonia*. However, this time the partnership is with the broken and hurting body. Kirk (1999:190) argues:

“Participating in suffering and struggle is at the heart of God’s mission and God’s will for the world. It is central for our understanding of the incarnation, the most glorious example of participation in suffering and struggle. The church is sent in the way of Christ bearing the marks of the cross in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 20:19-23).”

It is through incarnation of the gospel in the life and the work of the church as partners with God that they are seen fighting the evil in their communities, as one of the priorities of God’s salvation plan that is especially attentive to the suffering of the community.

#### **6.5.1.5 Partnership with whom and why in missional church?**

The formation of both the UCCSA (1967) and its parent organisations, the LMS (formed 1795) and ABM<sup>64</sup> (formed 1810), was based on partnership for mission in accordance to the Great Commission.

Another consideration that rendered these seasons unspeakably delightful was the invisible union of ministers and the Christians of all denominations in the time of coming together; who,

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<sup>64</sup> The American Board Mission started working in South Africa in 1835 (Wing, 1986:49).

for the first time, forgetting their party prejudices and partialities, assembled in the same place, sang the same hymns, united in the same prayer and felt themselves as one in Christ. This sentiment was so universal that even Mr. Bogue of Gosport (in Hampshire, United Kingdom), in the course of his sermon, said “we are called together this evening to the funeral of bigotry and hope it would be buried so deep as never to rise again” (Van der Water, 2008:316; cf. Lovetta, 1899:38).

This was able to make the union for the preaching of the gospel intentional and all those present made a commitment.

It is true that most writers (Lovetta, 1899; Bosch 1991; Van der Water, 2008) discuss partnership as ecumenism or within ecumenism. This is a well celebrated move when the doctrine that divides the denomination is put aside, for the furthering of the gospel and loyalty to the Great Commission and partnership with those whose condition is of preferential interest to God.

#### **6.5.1.5.1 Partnership with the poor: a missional option**

It has already been indicated that the recommendation for the UCCSA to develop the missional congregations is taking place in the post-modern paradigm, where the sense of belonging is central. The missional congregation, within the context of post-modernity, needs to work towards providing the poor with a sense of belonging. The Council for World Mission (2010-2019) states their goal in their strategies document as:

“To live as a community committed to resisting the Empire, stand alongside the vulnerable and those faced with crises and injustices, modelling life-giving alternatives and aspiring to always keep alive in our midst a prophetic consciousness.”

The church must define poverty in material possessions, which makes poverty an economic outrage. Kirk (1999:97) argues that when the poor is measured on the national average income, their income is half the average. Such calculations suggest that 75% of the world lives in poverty. It must also be argued further that in the post-modern age poverty is not only limited to the material definition, as with Kirk (1999:97), but also refers to those whose voice is perpetually silenced.

The study includes what can be referred to as the ultra-poor or the vulnerable and speaks of the elderly, women, children, disabled, the poor in health and those without access to good medical care. The discriminated against and oppressed also fall into this category, although they would rather be called the disadvantaged or oppressed. The World Council of Churches (WCC) rightly affirms, in *Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in the changing Landscape* (2012), how

poverty can also refer to the limitation of having life in all its fullness and further argues (WCC, 2013:5) that even from the poor or among the poor the good news can be told.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) argues that the starting point in discussing mission and the margins must be based on the premise that the “God’s purpose for the world is not to create another world, but to re-create what God has already created in love and wisdom” (WCC, 2013). The purpose of God is seen and understood within the context of Jesus who did “mission by opting to be with the marginalised people of time not out of paternalistic charity but because their situation testified to the sinfulness of the world and their yearning for the life pointed to God’s purpose” (WCC, 2013:15). The study concurs with the WCC that this must define the mission from the margins as the solidarity with the poor. The participation in the mission of God means confronting the elements and forces that deny and keep the poor on the margins.

There must also be appreciated that it is not always about what the church can do for the people on the margins, but to accept that those from the margins have something to offer as the community participate in the mission of God. The mission from the margins is characterised by its understanding of the complexity, global systems and structures and local realities. The WCC rightly asserts that “mission from the margins seeks to counteract injustice in life, church and mission. It seeks to be an alternative missional movement against the perception that mission can only be done by the powerful to the powerless, by the rich to the poor, or by the privileged to the marginalised” (WCC, 2013:15). This means that to be on the margins is to know what exclusionary forces are threatening their survival and this describes the struggle that differs from the way Sanneh (2012) defines the margins.

Sanneh (2012) describes the place he comes from as one where the natives were to be kept pacified. Gambia was not colonised for some time, because most of the residents were escaped slaves from the Freetown. They were then considered as outcasts and thus “the outcast of an older society cannot form the foundation of the new one...therefore it is impossible to form a colony solely of convicts” (Sanneh, 2012:6). It must be realised and appreciated that some of the margins are colonial legacies and he argues that “living from the margins is not a life of choice but circumstantial” (Sanneh, 2012). Yet the mission from margins shows that there is hope on the margins and that those on the margins must participate, as Sanneh explains how “I was haunted by the sense of impending change in which I knew I had meaningful role to play” (Sanneh, 2012:63). Those on the margins must join God in his mission as He liberates them.

In this mission then the church must affirm that “We believe in Jesus Christ, the Life of the world, the incarnation of God’s love for the world” (John 3:16). Affirming life in all its fullness is Jesus Christ’s ultimate concern and mission (John 10:10). A denial of life is a rejection of the God of life. God invites us into the life-giving mission of the Triune God and empowers us to

bear witness to the vision of abundant life for all in the new heaven and earth. “How and where do we discern God's life-giving work that enables us to participate in God's mission today?” (WCC, 2013:4).

Poverty creates the sense that the community unconsciously sees the poor as irrelevant flotsam and jetsam, with nothing good and useful to offer. This derogative mentality denies society the human skills that can come from the margins. As the church reaches out to partner with the poor, it acknowledges that they are also subjects in the mission of God.

In the post-modern age there has been a change in terminology, i.e. a shift from the marginalised to those on the periphery. Change in terminology is nothing but cosmetic, because they remain excluded from the mainstream of society and out of reach of material means.

The partnership with the poor in the UCCSA shows that the church is undertaking the quest towards justice. The quest for justice is central to the agenda among and with the poor, not for the poor. The partnership with the poor challenges the ideology of the church for the poor and creates a church with the poor. This is a shift from the metaphorical language that describes the poor and defining poverty as a spiritual condition must cease. Through the process the poor start to discover themselves and refuse to be defined by the oppressor and the rich. This would be the point where the poor stops being the objects of mission and become the agents of mission (Bosch, 1991:436). It is also seen as a shift from the donor world mentality, where the poor are deemed the recipients of the rich world that makes them objects of public sympathy and subject to a “we know what is good for you” attitude. The fact that the church will partner with the poor is the acknowledgement that they are now agents of mission and are no longer without a voice. They can express their faith within their socio-economic and religious context.

The extreme interpretation of God's preferential treatment of the poor creates the impression that God hates the non-poor. This is not true. The material things people have, as long as that wealth was acquired in an orthodox way (*right teaching*) and used for the advancement of the Kingdom of God, is a blessing from God. What would be wrong is the idolisation of money, as in the consumer cult (Bosch, 1991:437). The concept of “daily bread” must be dealt with contextually in order to discern the impact of its absence and shortage. A new theological perception must be born out of this engagement, a victim-centred theology. This perspective flows from the realisation that those on the margins or the poor have something to offer to the betterment of the community.

## 6.6 TRINITY AS THE MODEL OF MISSIONAL CONGREGATION

The doctrine of trinity finds definition and purpose in the missionary God. The trinity model seeks to describe mission as participating in the *missio Dei* through a community approach. In the Holy Trinity, the Father sends the Son and the Father and Son send the Holy Spirit; while the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit send the church to the troubled and broken world to heal it (Bosch, 1991; cf. John 3:16). This is an expression of God's life, his very nature and his love for the world. The UCCSA is privileged to participate in that community as church and as a body of Christ, who is a member of the triune community. The dynamic communion with God is drawing humanity and creation in general into his communion with God's very life (Spencer, 2012:88).

The reference to trinity in the context of mission is a correction of the migration of the usage of the word from theocentric to anthropocentric, in which it is supposed to be theocentric. The shift started with the Jesuits in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Mission was spreading the gospel to the people who were not Christians. However, mission must be understood as the redemptive plan and action of God, not about the people and their actions (Tennent 2010:54; cf. Bosch, 1991:1).

The reading of John 20:21-22 suggests that the sending authority in mission is from God. It also implies that those who are sent can send. This encourages the church to be sending communities. The second element of trinity brought in is the Holy Spirit. When Jesus was sending, He breathed the Holy Spirit to them and empowered the sent community by the Holy Spirit for mission.

Tennent argues that this text demonstrates the continuity of mission from God to the Son and to the church (Tennent, 2010:67) and places trinity as the starting point in mission:

"Mission must flow out of mission, which means that we have no missional authority apart from the mission of the triune God"

Trinity is not a vague confusing theological conundrum, but the authority through which we preach the gospel. God is the initiator and source of mission and those who participate in his mission draw authority for this. This is why Bediako argues that Western missionaries did not bring God to Africa, but instead God brought them to Africa. It reminds the communities of faith that God is the source, not human beings, and hence trinity stands as the model through which the communities of faith draw authority and strategy (Bediako, 1995:122).

The church sending missionaries is not only obeying the commandment of Jesus Christ, but also reflecting on the very glory of God (Tennent, 2010:77). In trinity the church can learn that mission is forward looking, always geared to face and challenge new realities.

The study argues that there is no need for the UCCSA to abandon its “covenant model”, but to redefine it within the boundaries of the trinity family (Son, God and the Holy Spirit). The reason being that one of the basic elements of defining a covenant church for the UCCSA is that “it must acknowledge that it is Christ’s presence among his people which gathers them from the world and forms them into the church” (Briggs, 1996:1).

It means that the covenant within the doctrine of trinity gives the church its form and mission purpose, in which salvation is the ultimate goal of the *missio Dei*. This can be seen in the covenant with Abraham, where the Triune God made a covenant with Abraham to be a blessing for all the nations.

In a missional congregation, it is the community (here identified as the church) that is the bearer of mission (Bosch, 1991:472). The community is made up of men and women, rich and poor, young and old. This is also the reason why the breakthrough in women’s ordination and the participation of the youth in the church’s life is a well-celebrated achievement.

## **6.7 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AS A MISSIONAL PROJECT**

Community engagement, as *modus operandi* of the missional congregation, builds on the principle of *koinonia* (fellowship). It is very important to reiterate the fact that the postmodern context of developing a missional congregation places great emphasis on community, as opposed to individualism. The membership to the *koinonia* is built on repentance, forgiveness and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

### **6.7.1 WHY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN MISSIONAL CONGREGATIONS?**

The study raises this self-to-answer hypothetical question in order to argue for the missiological relevance of community engagement as mode of missional work. Previous chapters argued that missional congregation is communal in nature and by context, i.e. it falls within the post-modern mission paradigm that focuses on community involvement in the mission project (McCoy, 2001:4). There are two reasons for this: Firstly, community engagement is place based. In other words, community engagement in missiology occurs in a particular place to benefit that particular community and be a blessing to others. This engagement takes context seriously and mission is presumed to play a transformational role in the community, all in an effort to effect change (McCoy, 2013:524).

The second reason of yoking community engagement in a missional congregation is that it keeps the institution from institutionalising mission and also the central office (of the UCCSA) from adopting a “we know what is good for you” attitude. The plan is based on the day-to-day

realities of a particular congregation. The resultant theology is defined by the experiences of the community and their struggles in life (Hatcher, 2013:3).

### **6.7.2 PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN A MISSIONAL PROJECT**

The success of any programme rests on set philosophies and ideologies, as guiding principles. The development of a missional congregation is no exception, especially when sociological tools such as community engagement are to be used.

There is a need to understand the communities to be engaged, in this case local churches, where the regions and synods provide mission support (advice and resource mobilisation) in terms of their economic and political situation as well as their social norms and values in the process. The church, as the engaging agent, must make an effort to gain insight into the community's perception of the mission of God and how they define partnering with Him (Hatcher, 2013:3).

For the engagement to succeed, however, it is necessary for the engaging group to accept that the community's self-determination is the responsibility and the right of the members to be engaged. The engagement discourages the external perception that the external structure can drive the congregation to act missional (Hatcher, 2013:5). The argument is that the local people, as the engaged group, have the potential to empower themselves. Thus the argument does not externalise the central office (of the UCCSA) from its constituencies, but makes the point that even in the part of the organogram the local community may feel that the central office imposes its ideas that may not necessarily speak to the realities on the ground. It should be pointed out that issues, problems and potential mission models must be defined by the community and its context as well as how to discern God's will and participate appropriately. This will allow the congregation to own the mission and be able to name the possible hurdles and identify mission action areas. The strategies adopted become reflective of the congregation's socio-political and economic reality as the context of mission work.

For the community rendezvous to occur as expected in the missiological context, partnership (as mentioned in this chapter) is very important for the causes of engagement in mission. It creates an environment that allows transformation and at the same time to build trust. The local congregation will no longer feel like consumers of the theological assumptions of the office, which may be far removed from their reality, but like real co-workers (1 Corinthians 3:9), co-sufferers (Colossians 1:24-25) and co-witnesses (John 15:26-27) in the *missio Dei*, as the key elements in the co-missioning, one of the defining concept of missional congregations (Greenway, 1999:13, cf. Hatcher, 2013:6).

Secondly, in the process of engagement sensitivity to the cultural diversity of the denomination (UCCSA) is essential. Cultural sensitivity must not only be evident during engagement, but in the design of the programmes. The engagement must also factor in the aspects of education and economic background of the group.

The community will always want to avoid the feeling of being used by other forces, whose agenda may not be life affirming. The models applied may be right, but the intention is not missional.

The study believes and as the CWM (2013) puts it that a missional congregation:

- “Lives a spirituality of engagement, that is reflected in its worship, and in the nurture and support of its members
- Is attuned to the communities in which it is set and alert to the needs of the world, so that it is willing to stand alongside and speak out with those who are suffering or are marginalized
- Does not work alone, being in active partnership with other groups who share similar concerns
- Is a learning community, with its members taking seriously their reading of the Bible and their reflection on their experience, both as individuals and as a community?
- All of which leads the congregation to be a community of transformation, manifesting the reign of God in its midst as lives are made new and justice is realised for those who have been denied fullness of life.”

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to speak of the development of a missional congregation without advocating for missional leadership. Such an omission may steer the programme of development off track, hence the focus on leadership in the next chapter.

## **6.7 CONCLUSION**

The development of the missional congregation must take cognisance of the current state of the theological engagement and discourse within the UCCSA as well as the possible challenges the church may face as it adopts a new mission approach and engagement. The chapter concludes that the missional congregation takes community engagement seriously, as a method of public theology and as it deals with frontiers (margins, poverty, new face capitalist and economic injustices) that confront the church and the community. The chapter goes beyond defining missional congregation as a paradigm and even addresses how it engages the

context. The key question that needs to be addressed is the centrality of leadership in the development of a missional congregation as the drivers of the mission project and the discernment of the will of God. This is addressed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 7 CENTRALITY OF LEADERSHIP IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MISSIONAL CONGREGATION**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

The UCCSA speaks of the covenant and congregational models, in which Congregationalism has been confused with secular democracy. It has been argued that the UCCSA needs to adopt the missional congregation approach as paradigm for participation in the *missio Dei*, as it moves forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In dealing with this, the chapter wrestles with the centrality of leadership to facilitate the paradigm transition and sustain the proposed paradigm in the context of the Empire. In achieving this, the chapter looks at the following: the current leadership philosophy within the UCCSA and the definition of the missional leadership desired for the proposed paradigm, to illustrate the shift from maintenance to organic leadership with deliberate focus on facilitative leadership.

### **7.2 THE CURRENT LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY IN THE UCCSA**

The UCCSA subscribes to two traditions that have been of great influence in the ecclesiastical leadership philosophy of the church: Congregationalism and Reformed theology. Both traditions believe Jesus Christ to be the Head of the church where “God’s authority is ultimate (and) it is revealed and exercised in Christ” (Wing, 1980:3).

There is a conceptual misconception within the UCCSA that is based on the premise that the ecclesiology of Congregationalism gives members control through delegated committee members, i.e. viewing Congregationalism the same as secular democracy. Inasmuch as both speak to the local community having the power and challenging them to participate in the issues that involve their lives, Congregationalism is primarily about discerning the will of God (Winslade, 2009:3). The mission mandate comes from God and not the voting members, as with a secular democracy. Leadership would be expected to guard against external influence from socio-economic circles. Most often such external influence would refer to the secular institution (government) and other institutions that may detract from the missional role of the leader. This is done that the church may remain prophetic and challenge oppressive and other forms of activities and ideas that deny people a better life. The local church, as the focal point of Congregationalism and its autonomy as the defining pillar, does not create problems in the missional congregation as the paradigm that finds meaning in the community (Du Plessis, 1965:110). This will allow people to discern the will of God wherever they are. The two, i.e. Congregationalism and the missional congregation, must be in dialogue with each other.

The concept of autonomy as practised in the UCCSA, in the context of Congregationalism, problematises the leadership style of the UCCSA. It creates loose structures within the church. Wing (1982:49) argues for the oversight approach to leadership, as opposed to fragmented autonomous congregations. It is made necessary by the amount of coordination required once the experiences of the people in the participation in the *missio Dei* becomes apparent.

The missional church, as model for participation in the mission of God, is a new concept to the UCCSA. It comes to a community that is already subscribing to certain models of governance, mission and leadership philosophy. Its adoption means that some of the concepts must be well defined and some will have to be re-appropriated or eliminated altogether.

As stated previously that the UCCSA subscribes to the Congregationalism model of governance. This model supposedly places the power, the decision-making ability, with the congregations and yet that has not been found to be the case in the UCCSA. The courts of the church (church council, regional council, the synod and the denominational assembly committee) have the responsibility to discern the mind of Christ and enable faith and obedience. The promise “where two or three are gathered in my name” (Matthew 18: 20) means that Christ is present through his Word and Spirit, to guide the church according to his will. This is not a democratic form of church governance, it is the church governed under the guidance and authority of Christ (UCCSA, 1980). The minutes also say “no church body can set itself up as an absolute authority”. It would seem that the ministers of the UCCSA are, in the context of Congregationalism, allowed and wrongfully so to claim and amass power. It is creating a centre of power by default; as in Acts 20:17 and 28, where it is written to “keep watch over yourselves and the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers...Be the shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”

The concept of missional leadership is brought mindful of the teaching of the UCCSA that Christ is the Head of the church (Wing, 1986:32; cf. Erickson, 1998:1089). Inasmuch as this could be understood to suggest that the minister holds the power, as alluded to above, the church does teach that Christ remains the Head of the church and the minister must be guided by the Spirit, who has never been at cross-purposes with the Father and the Son. The missional leader will always follow in the steps of Christ and seeks to discern his will.

The study, therefore, concurs with the teaching of the UCCSA that Jesus Christ is the Head of the church and He rules the church through his Word and Spirit. The local congregation, under the leadership of the local minister, must discern God’s will and mission in the church and community and how they must take part in it. The expectation of the synod and higher court of the UCCSA must be to guide the local congregation in their discernment. They must be of service in their rule, making ministers into servant leaders and not rulers.

According to Goba (2007:2), who is also a minister of the UCCSA, the current leadership style is problematic in practical terms. The practice follows the *dikgosi/amokhosi* (kings) approach, giving exclusive knowledge and power. The community revolves around the personality of the minister. This could create a lack of sharing of vision, either by the ministers or the members. It operates according to the wrong interpretation of ordination. The interpretation would assume that because a minister is ordained, he/she has knowledge and power, which makes him/her a good leader. While in actual fact, he must be a servant working with the congregation to discern the will of God.

The missional congregation cannot succeed on heroic leadership, celebrated ministers, but calls for partnership or distributed leadership as Goba (2007:5) puts it. The minister must be a servant coach, an organic coach, ready to produce more Christ-like leaders.

### 7.3 DEFINITION OF MISSIONAL LEADERSHIP

Mission-shaped (missional) leadership can be developed based on the concept of the missional congregation and its activities, as argued in the community engagement section. The orthodox understanding of leadership, within the polity of the UCCSA, is defined within the dictates of the covenant model. The model speaks of covenant responsibility, where every member has the responsibility to take care of, love and sacrifice for the other in the local church (Briggs, 1996:44). Briggs (1996) does not define covenant leadership at all. There is the sense that the leader must take care of, sacrifice for and even die for the flock. It is modelled around the activities and ministry of Jesus Christ. Briggs (1996) also suggests that at local church level, though the understanding of the covenant defines the ecclesiological pastoral and witnessing approach, it is primarily the duty of the minister to look after the sheep (cf. 1 Peter 5:1f). Missional leadership comes out of the community (covenant) and serves the community.

According to the CWM, of which UCCSA is an affiliated ecumenical member, missional leadership is fluid in its manifestation and missional leaders must be pioneers, “mission entrepreneurs”<sup>65</sup> (CWM, 2013). Building the definition from the previous chapter on community engagement as one of the working modes of the missional congregation, however, the following points are argued.

Firstly, the missional leader must take sin seriously. This presents a great challenge to the church, because it would be necessary to redefine sin in order to name it and subsequently take it seriously (cf. chapter five, regarding the naming of God). When the UCCSA was formed in 1967, in addition to sin as defined in Exodus 20:1-17, oppression and human rights abuses

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<sup>65</sup> As borrowed from the business practice, it refers to the leader who is not afraid of taking risks in mission ventures.

would also have been included. The fact that the church is now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires the list to be re-appropriated to include *inter alia*: domestic violence, corruption, a tilting political landscape and economic injustices. The missional leader takes these very seriously and they must form his public theology engagement (Dunbar, 2007:2), as the missional leader becomes aware of the multi-faceted nature of sin and how it manifests itself. The leader then guides the congregation to unearth or discover all hidden forms of sin in the church or community to address them.

Secondly, the missional leader takes the grace of God seriously. The theological point of departure is that grace is meant for sinners. It is the escalation of sin that challenges the church to speak of the grace of God (Dunbar, 2007:2), reflected in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."

Leadership plays an evangelical role as the exponent of the love and grace of God.

Thirdly, leaders who only give prominence to the intellectual gospel without deeds, will not further the missional activities of the congregation. This suggests that both orthodoxy and orthopraxis are important to a missional congregation and its leaders. At this stage it seems that more emphasis is placed on the right beliefs and not so much on deeds, which must be avoided in favour of balance. James 2:26 after all says "as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead".

It is shifting from only focusing on orthodoxy, as the only defining concept of the theological exercise, to action as reflected in community engagement. This reflects the church's interest in the daily lives of the people of their world (Dunbar, 2007:3).

The forensic test of the ecclesiological analysis of the UCCSA cannot, however, be complete and true without the liberation theology. This is the period when the theology and worship of the church were influenced by social activism. The expectation would be that a missional leader of the UCCSA must be interested in prophetic witness, as guiding principle of the church participation in the *missio Dei*. The biblical exemplification can be drawn from the New Testament.

### **7.3.1 MISSIONAL LEADERSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION**

The leadership in the New Testament argues for a communal approach, as opposed to ordained ministry alone. As the church grew, there was a shift. Lay leaders were introduced specifically to address issues that were hindering the proclaiming of the gospel. Acts 6:1-2 tells

us that “in those days when the number of the disciples was increasing...the disciples...said...’it is not right to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables”.

It must not be construed that the lay ministry is to deal with disputes, but it shows that the cries of the people are part of the mission God assigned to the church and this must be one of the characteristics considered in advocating for missional leadership in the UCCSA, as it enters into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The growth also brought with it multi-ethnicity, as shown in the church of Antioch. The leadership of the church of Antioch was made up of prophets and teachers (Shaw, 2013:134; cf. Acts 11:27-28; 13:1).

In Acts 14:14 the office of the “apostle” moves outside the circle of the twelve disciples, Barnabas is referred to as apostle. Paul argues in 1 Corinthians 12:28 that all teachers, prophets and apostles are appointed by God and the same sentiment in Ephesians 4:11 suggests that these positions were permanent (Shaw, 2013:134). The office of missional leader is a calling from God. It is not limited to, but at the same time not exclusive of, what Paul describes as workers in the mission of God, i.e. teachers, prophets and apostles. They are all appointed by God for his missional purpose.

The above shows that as the church reached a certain stage in its lifecycle, leadership was re-appropriated either by replacing the existent model or redefining the old model in order to address the current reality of church activities, as it serves the community of faith.

An example could be, though not limited to, the selection of leadership in the early church. Their roles were not limited to dealing with doctrinal issues, but also the health of the church. Acts 6:1-3 explains as follows:

“Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, ‘It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task.”

The missional leadership therefore, as drawn from the New Testament is not limited to apologetic theology (defending the doctrines), but solidarity and fellowship.

#### **7.4 A SHIFT FROM MAINTANCE TO ORGANIC LEADERSHIP**

The section denies an all-season leadership, based on the premise that leadership must speak to and be shaped by the circumstances of its day-to-day world. It must be mission-shaped leadership and so must the leadership philosophy and style.

The shift is also influenced by the call made by Rev. Goba (2007:2) that nothing remains the same when the world changes and new life challenges arise. He defined the desired leadership as “someone who is able to develop and communicate a vision which gives meaning to the work of others”.

The vision is understood as a clear mental picture of the preferable future, communicated by God to his chosen servant leader, based on an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances. The desired missional leader in the mission-shaped UCCSA is the person, whether lay or clergy, man or woman, who can visualise the future, have a relationship with God and be able to be in dialogue with the circumstances in his/her context of mission (Goba, 2007:2). The missional leader is able to engage with the congregation and together they discern the will of God and visualise what God seeks for the future. A missional leader must always interact with the congregation and realise that this is not a one-man show.

Based on the definition of “missional”, given in Bevins (2007:28), being missional means actually doing mission right where you are. Missional means adopting the posture of mission orientation, learning and understanding the culture around you, while remaining biblically sound. This could be the desired leadership that would see the development and the activities of the missional congregation in the UCCSA beyond 1967 and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The leadership required must keep the church on a biblically sound course and be transformative in its intention and action.

The definition of mission-shaped leadership, as detailed in the previous paragraphs, has its activities right where it is and this suggests that the leadership must be transformative in approach. This is necessitated by the fact that the new epidemic in Southern Africa is poverty and hunger, e.g. economic refugees. The missional question would be “where do the poor and the economically displaced find their neighbour?” The role of the church leadership would be that of social transformation and calls on the church to develop local leadership, i.e. to invest in lay-leadership.

## 7.5 MISSIONAL LAY LEADERSHIP

Ministry assignments in the UCCSA are often the rural areas<sup>66</sup>. In these places the churches or congregations are many and spaced, i.e. far from each other geographically. An example would be Nkayi in Zimbabwe, where 32 congregations are served by one minister. The only time they meet with the minister for fellowship is during administrative meetings and at times to discuss disciplinary issues during Easter services. Great care needs to be taken, because this can turn the church programme more into a papal church polity. It is, however, a convenient time. This is when all the congregations come together for fellowship and to share experiences and encourage one another in participation in the *missio Dei*. The reports show that services are conducted regularly, funerals are held and the worship services are conducted accordingly. As stated earlier, the missional congregation considers worship as a moment of celebrating their participation in the mission of God during the week. It is these moments where the congregation must share their joys and sorrows with fellow kinsmen, in the spirit of fellowship (Belmont, 2010:2). The study views leadership as the critical and pivotal aspect of the work of the local deaconate.

Leadership that can assist in the development and activities of the missionary congregation must emerge from the local church communities.

Organic leadership (as described under 7.3 of this chapter) in the development of the missional congregation must be able to grow and reproduce by definition. Jesus expected his disciples to produce his “likeness in others” (Bevins, 2009:54). It is through reproduction that the missional church can be developed and the “missional genes” of the likeness of Jesus can be maintained. This all starts with a leader that has the likeness of Jesus to reproduce it further in the chain to also have that likeness (cf. John 15:1-17; Matthew 9:37-38; Luke 10:2). The organic analogy of both leadership and congregation presupposes that it has to bear fruit and be harvested.

Goba (2007:5) argues that churches have created a monarchic clergy in their structures, something that has left the laity out of the participation of the mission of the church and subsequent the participation in the *missio Dei*. Goba (2007:5) states, however, “a missional ecclesiology calls for a rethinking of the leadership of the laity from complementing the rule of monarchical clergy to developing mission and ministry teams in the world (cf. Romans 12:8)”.

Such a shift does not only recognise the laity, but exploits the spiritual gifts in the church and thus defining the very nature of the church. In the new paradigm, therefore, leadership is defined in terms of servant. The difference between the lay and ordained ministry is seen in terms of area of focus and specialisation, rather than superiority. All work together for the

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<sup>66</sup> The author of this study worked in rural districts in Zimbabwe and Botswana.

success of the mission of God within the locality, all as servants of and search partners of God as He seeks to save His creation.

## **7.6 MISSIONAL LEADERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EMPIRE**

The purpose of this section is not only to define the Empire, but to discuss how the leader can act prophetic as he/she assists the community to deal with their current situation, to empower and transform it. The section argues that there is a need for the church to shift from the exodus motif. The motif focuses on getting the children out of Egypt, the land of suffering and to the land of freedom and plenty. It was leaving the yoke of the Roman Empire during Jesus' time and taking on the yoke of the Lord, which is light. This influenced the action and the theology of the UCCSA in its formation, where there was a rise in nationalism during the fight for national liberation (cf. Briggs, 1996; Wing, 1986; Van Water, 2008), but now the situation has changed economically and politically. It cannot be denied that the church still participates in the mission of God in the context of Empire, but it must accept too that the Empire has changed in face and approach.

Missional leadership implies that the person remains loyal to the model of Jesus Christ, as guiding principle, but focuses on the Easter passages: the themes of the cross and suffering. It also then speaks to resurrection and points to a new life. The Jesus who confronted the money changers, who cleansed the temples and confronted the cross (the symbol of shame and suffering) is the desired model. The leader must be the one who subscribes to the philosophy that frees the people and urges them to remain committed to transforming their situation. It calls for the leader who confronts the Empire with the intent to change the circumstances for both. The missional leader strives after a better life for all, the Empire included, and this means following and loyalty to the life and work of Jesus (John 10:10). Missional leadership must also endeavour to understand theology that negates the Empire and the *modus operandi* of the Empire.

According to the gospel of John, Jesus is described as the Good Shepherd. The model incorporates wisdom, priestly in relation to his disciples and followers, prophetic as expressed in the cleansing of the temple and the confrontation with both the religious (Pharisees and Sadducees) and political leadership (Roman Empire). This is prototypical for both laity and clergy in the local congregation and institutional church and defines the good shepherd leader in the mission-focused church (Gerkin, 1997:27). The shepherd needs to be aware that he does not own the flock, they belong to God and, therefore, good or bad is the judgement of God. This means remaining loyal to the mission of God: looking after the flock makes the shepherd a good servant (Erickson, 1998:1091). It makes the shepherd model still relevant today, but needs to be explained and practiced within current trends lest it be considered archaic.

The mission-focused leader must realise the shift in the outward face of post-colonial society. Previously the marginalised were kept out of sight of the world (international community). The city centres were deemed the preserve of the elite, the ruling race, now the margins have come to the centre. The city centre now sports beggars, informal traders. They are all the faces of suffering and poverty. This challenges the leadership philosophy of the leader to find the mission intention of God in that situation, to save his creation.

The leadership as shepherd must speak the language of the people. Even those whose situation has condemned them to death, must hear the voice of the church. John (5:28) says: "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves (difficult and hopeless situations) will hear his voice, and come out."

The evangelist was referring to the authority given to Jesus, by God, whom John described as having life in Himself. It is inferred that those in grave situations (without life in them) must hear the Word of God that speaks to their situation that brings hope of life. The voice of the missional leader is not rhetoric, but it powers them to come out of the graves and follow Jesus in partnering with God in the mission. They become liberated liberators.

John 10:4 says that "when he has brought out his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice [language]".

In the process of speaking the language of the marginalised and the rejected of society, the church must avoid creating a voiceless and dependable community that cannot defend and feed itself. The institution must avoid situation where it is perceived as keeping the presence of the marginalised as relevant, without helping them, the church is to celebrate their participation and partnering with God in his mission. Those who can speak the language of their community and aid the needy (Abraham models), preferably all members, because one God blesses (right teaching) must be a blessing to others.

This chapter endeavoured to argue for the needed or desired leadership within the current mission calling for the churches, the UCCSA in particular. In correlation with the above definition of missional leadership, as found in the New Testament, it is about determining how it ties into the current mission paradigm, with emerging ecumenism (Bosch, 1991) and the rise of the Empire (CWM, 2010). Missional leadership, though it shares characteristics with any other church leader, is mission focused and aware that the mission belongs to God. Missional leadership that can guide the UCCSA beyond 1967 and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century must be made up of men and women, young and old who are led by the Spirit, always seeking and discerning the work of God inside and around them in order to join Him in his salvation plan. This will make missional leadership different from any other kind.

## **7.7 CONCLUSION**

The chapter concludes that the missional congregation is a complex concept and it, therefore, needs a leader who will be able to discern the will of God and facilitate an appropriate response. The chapter concludes that the UCCSA has to re-image its leadership to deal with the current realities. This will help the church as goes into the 21<sup>st</sup> century

## CHAPTER 8 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

### 8.1 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

This study looked at the history of the evolution of the LMS to the UCCSA (1799 to 1967). Through this critical analysis of history, it identified the following mission models of the LMS: the voluntaristic model, which mostly related to recruitment; *kerugma* model, where the preaching of the gospel to the heathen land was the mission priority; and Abrahamic model, upon the formation of the society it set out to bless others as God had blessed them. Another model found to be in play was the needs-based approach. This is supported by the request of Chief Mothibi of Kuruman for teachers among his subjects. The last model identified was the prophetic model, a fearless preaching of the liberating and transforming Word of God (Luke 4:18ff). It manifested itself in the way the missionaries fought for the rights of the local people. The study concluded that the society defined mission in terms of the Great Commission (Matthew 28) during this period.

A critical analysis of the history provided an appreciation for where the church is coming from and to see how the mission trends have been shifting, following the socio-economic and political trends. The discussion then focused on the formation of the UCCSA as a church. It was a process that chiefly involved three mission movements: The London Missionary Society (LMS), the American Board for Foreign Mission (ABM) and the Congregational Union of South Africa (CUSA). It looked at the context, during the time of formation, focusing on the socio-political and theological context. The study realised and described how the UCCSA was using covenant model on coming together and in governance the UCCSA subscribed to Congregationalism. The effort was made to show the difference to democracy, since they could be misconstrued as the same.

The discussion also took a look at how the UCCSA responded to social issues within its constituencies. In 1994<sup>67</sup>, the church drew up two defining programmes, the first of which was reshaping the church for mission and the other was *Hamba/tsamaya/beweeg with the gospel* (Petersen, 1995), through which they argued that their members needed to be re-evangelised. This formed the basis for calling for a paradigm shift. The study submits that the church was experiencing a spiritual crisis and lack of missional enthusiasm. The readings of the Bible and other theological discourses have influenced the advocating for the concept of contextualisation when engaged in mission work and participating in the *missio Dei*.

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<sup>67</sup> Coincidentally this is the independence year for South Africa.

This discourse led to proposing a missional congregation as the mission paradigm of the UCCSA in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The missional congregation was analysed within the context of the post-modern era, focusing on the community as the model for the missional church. The next premise of the argument was how to develop or influence the establishment of such missional congregations, within the UCCSA arena. Two aspects were considered and proposed, i.e. partnership and community engagement.

Lastly, the leadership is central in the success of these proposals. Such leadership is defined as missional and organic. Out of these strands of discussion, it further observed and concludes the following.

## **8.2 MISSIONAL CONGREGATION IS THE INITIATING ACTION OF GOD**

From the beginning of the missionary work of the LMS (1794), it was the reading of Scripture (Matthew 28) and the blessing of Abraham (Genesis 3) that formed the basis for mission work during that period (cf. Lovetta, 1899; Du Plessis, 1965). Therefore, the theological thought that has run through is:

“God is continually active in the affairs of men [*and women*], creating possibilities for the wholeness of life in human communities...the decisive locus of God’s activity is seen in the historical...order.” (Sleeper, 1969:72)

The acknowledgement that a missional congregation is initiated and sustained by God argues for the centrality of the doctrine of trinity as the sending community.

## **8.3 THE SHAPING OF CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IS THE RESPONSIVE ACTION OF HUMANKIND**

The study looked at partnership with God and with one another as one of the defining approaches to a missional congregation in the UCCSA. The UCCSA is called to partner with other churches (ecumenism) and to partner with the poor and the marginalised, in order to give them a voice (partnership as empowerment). It is through community engagement in the context of the Empire that the church partners with God. As God cares for the community in all its problems, engagement in the community in context of Empire is to partner with God (to take part in the *missio Dei*). This kind of community engagement is guided by the transformative theology. The missional congregation is the salt of the earth and gives meaning and context to the mission of God in people’s lives, but “the actual shaping and creating of communities in which human life can find fulfilment is the work of men as they respond to the divine initiative” (Sleeper, 1972:72). In establishing a missional congregation there is the:

1. need to be faithful to God in the church's response;
2. call for total commitment to fulfilling the mission assigned; and
3. need to exclusively worship God, but inclusively work towards the granting of justice to the oppressed and the neglected of the community.

The possibility of changing the complex mission, polity and theological paradigm of the church must be sought in the initiatives of God, as man can only predict doom (Sleep, 1969:80). The mission direction and focus must be sought in the salvific plan of God and in partaking in the *missio Dei*.

Out of the discussion the missional congregation, as mission paradigm of the UCCSA, is modelled around the Holy Trinity and God is seen as a missionary (Stott, 1992:A4), who together with the Son send the Holy Spirit. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit then send the church (Bosch, 1991). The missional church draws its mission mandate from the Triune God and has its local community's experiences as the mission context. It is on this basis that it is assumed and argued that a missional church finds its nature in the participation of the *missio Dei*. The church came into being as the result of the mission of God, in which it is in turn privileged to participate.

The study showed that the 21<sup>st</sup> century paradigm is complex, given the structuring and ecclesiological nature of the UCCSA, and it needs missional leadership who would be able to challenge the current patterns of mission. The type who can do this is the one that is not afraid of making mistakes and is prepared to be corrected. Secondly, that the leadership must be able to take risks and be innovative, through a mission-enabling approach and thirdly they must be able to discern the will of God, together as the congregation, as the first step and then bring about organic transformation in the UCCSA.

#### **8.4 WHAT (CAN) MAKES UCCSA MISSIONAL?**

Answering this question requires demonstrating an understanding of the concept of being missional.

The aim is to propose a mission paradigm for the UCCSA for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and it recommends missional congregations. The study, therefore, concludes that a *church* that places its commitment to participate in God's mission in the world at the centre of its life and identity must be considered as a missional church. The participation in the *missio Dei* places the focus on God's will in the world, recognising that God's mission is always ahead of *the church*.

Firstly, the UCCSA mission and theological discourse must be grounded in its spirituality, how they connect with the divine. This will assist the church discern the will of God and be able to read the signs of the time. Spirituality affords the church the ability to repent. It is the transformed (repented) church that can transform the world. The spirituality becomes the most important defining factor of the missional church and the UCCSA cannot afford the luxury to play it down. It allows the church to ask the question “what does God wants us to notice and to take part in the mission of God in the context of commission?” (Berlin, 2011:1)

Secondly, through community engagement and a true understanding of the nature of a missional congregation, the study concludes that missional activities are people centred and the experience of the people for the agenda of the *missio ecclesiae*, as it participates in the *missio Dei*. The missional church does not simply do anything, but carries out and follows the salvation plan of God as the Author and Initiator of mission.

Thirdly, learning from the formation and the activities of the LMS (cf. Lovetta, 1899; Du Plessis, 1965) it shows that strategic planning is important, as it facilitates the communication of the vision of the church.

Fourthly, just as exemplified in the Triune community, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are never at cross-purposes, a missional church works in partnership with those who shares its vision. It even goes beyond that by partnering with whomever God seeks to save. This makes missional theology victim centred, as it also intends transforming the oppressor (De Chickera, 2015:65; cf. Berlin, 2011).

It must be further noted that a missional church uses the public theology and witnessing as its model, while they engage in the world with and to which it ministers. The proposed paradigm must be understood within the context of the Third Church, where the gravity of Christendom has shifted both spiritually and geographically. Initially, the Second Church evangelised the Third Church, i.e. the mission activities were moving from west to south, now it is the opposite and the UCCSA must be prepared to participate in this global wave. The argument rests on the question whether the Third Church will ride the wave or participate in its creation (Elwood, 1992:21). A further question, a possible theme for future research, is: Is the church able to create a mission wave or does it wait to surf the next mission wave that comes along? This would also be a call for a shift in the mission paradigm.

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