

After Battles then comes War: Juxtaposing the Role of the Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland in Gukurahundi Healing and Reconciliation



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ABSTRACT

This paper juxtaposed with the unresolved Gukurahundi which affected people from Matabeleland and Midlands between 1982 and 1987. While various attempts have been sought to address the ambivalence faced by the victims, healing and reconciliation have not materialised prompting a need to find alternatives to address the issue. In this case, the paper discussed the various programs by the Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland to contribute the healing and reconciliation. The paper is couched in Juan Luis Segundo's hermeneutics of suspicion. This theory gives a critical framework for examining religious texts and practices to uncover hidden power structures and biases that perpetuate oppression. The paper was guided by the transformative paradigm where qualitative research design was used. Data was collected through interviews and group discussions. The argument of the paper is premised on the notion that Gukurahundi while seems to be an isolated and painful period for the people in Matabeleland and Midlands, has the potential to escalate to other parts of the country as an act of revenge, hence a need to bring all possible mitigation strategies to ensure a healed and reconciled nation and the Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland has a critical role to play in positioning itself as a relevant, responsible and caring institute. The paper contributes to knowledge and practices of addressing Gukurahundi by unpacking the Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland approach to healing through various church social services.

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INTRODUCTION

Gukurahundi refers to a series of political and ethnic massacres that occurred in Zimbabwe between 1983 and 1987, primarily affecting the Ndebele people in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces.¹ The violence was carried out by the Zimbabwean National Army's Fifth Brigade under the pretext of suppressing political dissidents linked to the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), led by Joshua Nkomo.² However, the campaign is widely regarded as a systematic targeting of perceived political opponents and ethnic minorities, resulting in widespread human rights violations, including mass

¹ S.J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Gukurahundi, Genocide, and the Politics of Memory in Zimbabwe," *Journal of Genocide Research* 25, no. 3 (2023): 381–403.

² M. Nyathi, "Transitional Justice and the Gukurahundi Atrocities: Exploring Community-Based Approaches," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 49, no. 2 (2023): 265–83.

killings, torture, and displacement of civilians. The term Gukurahundi, derived from Shona, means "the early rain that washes away the chaff," reflecting the campaign's purported aim of cleansing dissident elements from society.³ The legacy of Gukurahundi remains a highly sensitive issue in Zimbabwe, with ongoing debates surrounding truth, reconciliation, and justice. Gukurahundi despite various interventions remains one of the thorny issues for politicians and religious players in Zimbabwe. For the politicians, it is premised on the notion that some current leaders indirectly participated in the massacre of the Ndebele people and have not apologized for their actions. For the religious players, various churches such as the Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland played a passionate role during the period of 1982 to 1987 to call government to order regarding Gukurahundi.

As Tutu noted, keeping quiet in the face of social injustice implies one has chosen the side of the oppressor. Thus, the church's silence during Gukurahundi or fear of confronting perpetrators brings a dilemma on the relevance of theological orientation to address social problems. It questions the very core existence of the church in responding to the lived realities of the victims of Gukurahundi. However, despite the negativity in the preceding years, churches and religions can contribute a significant role in peacebuilding, trauma healing, and even in preventive measures in potentially political volatile situations.⁴ Thus, this article, agrees with the proposition by Mosti that the Church is an agent of change in society and its proximity to the people and their real-life situations in an invitation to be involved.⁵ While the observation is valid, it has not been materialized and through this article, this study seeks to show how the Anglican church can position itself for relevance through social amenities to contribute to healing and reconciliation. However, this is not easy as it said, it has variables that need to be in place and one of these is justice. Hence, this study confirms the view of De Gruchy who argues that; no reconciliation is possible without justice, and whoever works for reconciliation must first determine the causes of injustice in the hearts and lives of those, of either the persons or groups, who feel themselves aggrieved.⁶ However, the usage of justice in this paper is in line with Biggar thinking that "justice is primarily not about the punishment of the perpetrator but about the vindication of the victims, then about the protection of potential victims and reform of the perpetrators."⁷ Considering the foregoing, the Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland needs to foster healing and reconciliation, while helping the perpetrators to reform which of course it's a turbulent terrain and through their theological orientation, they should negotiate the terrain towards relevance and peace so that this crisis cannot escalate to a war.

While there is an appreciation of various studies conducted on Gukurahundi, the study is unique in various ways, firstly it uses Segundo thinking as a departing point to enact healing and reconciliation. Secondly, it taps into already existing Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland practices to call for healing and reconciliation by reexamining theological underpinnings to align them with tenants' such as social justice, forgiveness and social responsibility to mitigate pain and anger that might escalate to produce further conflict.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The paper comes against the background that various studies have been conducted on Gukurahundi from different dimensions with the intention of bringing reconciliation and healing to the victims. For example, a study by Dumisani Ngwenya in 2014 focused on the healing of the Wounds of Gukurahundi where he provided critical information about the damage Gukurahundi did to the people of Matabeleland. He further explored historical events of ethnic conflicts in Matabeleland and their impact on the social, economic and psychological life of the survivors of the tortures and beatings due

³ B. Mpofu, "Reckoning with Gukurahundi: Memory, Silence, and the Politics of Reconciliation in Zimbabwe," *African Affairs* 121, no. 484 (2022): 540–61.

⁴ Michelle Garred and Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *Making Peace with Faith: The Challenges of Religion and Peacebuilding* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2018); Khuzwayo Khethokuhle, "The Role of Trauma Support Work in Peace-Building" (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2013), <https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/items/83c2932d-8d6f-46b2-87a7-0ff13514dc74..>

⁵ Raymond Givemore Motsi, *The Trauma Caused by the Matabeleland Massacre of 1982–1987 in Tsholotsho Zimbabwe and How the Church Can Bring Transformation Using Pastoral Care* (University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2010).

⁶ J. W. De Gruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Broken Relationships* (Grand Rapids: MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

⁷ Nigel Biggar, "Peace and Justice: A Limited Reconciliation," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 5, no. 2 (2002): 167–79, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1016080506795>.

to ethnic and political violence. He proposed a strategy referred to as grace to heal which seeks to foster reconciliation among people living in ethnic tensions. Another study conducted by Gusha utilizes the concept of memory cues, those things that keep on reminding us of the past and painful events.⁸ He argues that ignoring or suppressing the past evils is not conducive to reconciliation, but rather a hindrance. Through his research, he appraises possible reasons why the promised bliss through reconciliation did not materialise. Among the reasons cited in this paper are the lack of a serious Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the phenomenon of amnesia as the major contributory factors to this cycle of violence. Thus, he advocated for a more open and honest dialogue about past atrocities, with a view to achieving true and lasting healing and reconciliation. This thinking is in line with Segundo's theorisation that healing cannot happen without justice and as such all efforts for reconciliation should be premised on justice. A related study was conducted by Raymond Motsi where he interrogated the Trauma Caused by the Matabeleland Massacre of 1982-1987 in Tsholotsho Zimbabwe and how the Church can bring transformation using pastoral care. His work presents a confident perspective on the positive influence that the Church can have in society if it becomes faithful to its mandate. In addition, a study by Ndlovu critiques how online participants employ news websites to recollect and negotiate the memories of Gukurahundi that are repressed in official circles.⁹ He argued that forgiveness is being reproduced and shaped on selected Zimbabwean news websites as online participants attempt to deal with the painful Gukurahundi past. In more recent studies, Chitando and Taringa explored some of the key themes that have emerged from the churches' engagement with Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe in the context of reflecting on forgiveness.¹⁰ The major observation from their study is the church has been silencing propelling victims to have a feeling of deep anger and pain. They argued that there is a need for an apology, and use of indigenous concepts and practices to foster forgiveness.

The Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland

It is important to contextualise readers on the Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland in Zimbabwe and their activities to contribute to solutions to human problems. The year 1988 marked the centenary of the entry of Anglican Bishop G.W.H. Knight-Bruce into what is now Zimbabwe as the first European missionary to undertake extensive work among the Shona people.¹¹ To consolidate the influence of the church, between June and September 1988, Knight-Bruce, accompanied by ten African helpers, travelled extensively in Mashonaland by wagon and on foot, familiarising himself with the country and visiting chiefs with proposals for opening Christian work among them.¹² However, Bruce faced a lot of health problems but was very clear about consolidating the Anglican church in Zimbabwe. According to Chawarika, Bruce was not alone in building the Anglican church, Bernard Mzeki was one of the people who was a harbinger of the Anglican church and was very influential in spreading the gospel.¹³ However, Mzeki was assassinated along the line but did not root out the growth of the Anglican church. It grew over the years to build schools, clinics and hospitals. To date, the Anglican church has 5 dioceses across the country which are Matabeleland, Central Zimbabwe, Masvingo, Harare and Manicaland.

The Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland was formed in 1953 and is one of the 15 dioceses of the Province of Central Africa of the Anglican Communion. To narrow the discussion of the Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland, which is a case study, it is important to note that the Anglican Diocese of

⁸ Isheanesu Gusha, "Memories of Gukurahundi Massacre and the Challenge of Reconciliation," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 45, no. 1 (2019): 1–14.

⁹ Mphathisi Ndlovu, "Facing History in the Aftermath of Gukurahundi Atrocities: New Media, Memory and the Discourses on Forgiveness on Selected Zimbabwean News Websites," *Peace and Conflict Studies* 24, no. 2 (2017): 3.

¹⁰ Ezra Chitando and Nisbert T Taringa, "The Churches, Gukurahundi, and Forgiveness in Zimbabwe," *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 45, no. 2 (2021): 187–96.

¹¹ Titus Presler, "Missionary Anglicism Meets an African Religion: A Retrospect on the Centenary of Bishop Knight-Bruce's Entry into Zimbabwe," *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 17, no. 3 (1989): 162–75.

¹² Presler, "Missionary Anglicism Meets an African Religion: A Retrospect on the Centenary of Bishop Knight-Bruce's Entry into Zimbabwe."

¹³ John Chawarika, "The Identity of Bernard Mzeki from the Formative History of the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe (1890-2013): Retracing His Life, Martyrdom and Influence" (University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2017).

Matabeleland runs Six Schools in Matabeleland North. In the Jambesi area near Victoria Falls, there is St Christopher's Mission, there is Mashake High School, and Ndimakule Primary. At Lupane, there is St Cecilia Mission where there is St Cecilia High School and Kabela Primary School. At Nyamandlovu there is St James High School and St James Primary School. In Bulawayo, there is St Columbas High School, St Clares Primary, and St Gabriel's Learning Centre. In Matabeleland South, the Diocese runs Cyrene Mission High School, Plumtree High School (associate), and St Marks Primary School. Through the provision of education, the Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland is positioning itself indirectly to contribute to healing and reconciliation by addressing pressing issues of the day such as education and health. Through these acts, as would be discussed, the Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland is re-examining its theology from being a church of the coloniser that was silent in Gukurahundi to a church that rethinks its theology towards social justice and social relevance to prevent further damage of Gukurahundi to the people of Zimbabwe.

Theorisation: Segundo Hermeneutics of Suspicion

This study is in the theorisation of Juan Luis Segundo's especially on his concept of hermeneutics of suspicion. The theory provides a critical framework for examining religious texts and practices to uncover hidden power structures and biases that perpetuate oppression.¹⁴ Critical to this theory in locating the study is the notion that it ensures that theological interpretations do not reinforce unjust socio-political dynamics. Thus, any use of theological orientation should move towards enhancing social justice, emancipation and goodwill of people. Thus, the use of theological texts in relation to social justice is "concerned quality in the distribution of an education service, and it also concerns the nature of the service itself and the consequences for society through time."¹⁵ Segundo argues that theology must be constantly re-evaluated considering new historical and social realities to prevent the perpetuation of oppressive ideologies.¹⁶ This manner of theorisation is consistent with the observation of Mahlomaholo, Nkoane, and Ambrosio that it enables societies to enhance and protect human dignity, equality and freedom for all.¹⁷ Segundo discusses the importance of evaluating hidden ideologies within religious frameworks in his treatment of Latin American theology.¹⁸ Thus, this theorisation is relevant to address the ambivalence of Gukurahundi among the victims since it enabled the researcher through theological reflection to critique and reinterpret traditional Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland theological beliefs and practices considering social justice issues. Having such an approach is critical for the Church to genuinely contribute to humanization efforts and in this case, reconciliation and healing of the victims affected by Gukurahundi.¹⁹

METHODOLOGY

This paper was positioned in a transformative paradigm that underpins the need to change circumstances for the better underpinned by social justice.²⁰ Using this paradigm was very important as it ensured that the theological orientation possessed by the Anglican church is relevant, doable, and responsive to the needs of the victims while promoting social justice. In implementing the transformative paradigm, the study used qualitative research design to collect data from 20 participants who consisted of bishop, church leaders, teachers and community members who were purposely sampled. Matabeleland was used as a case study largely because it houses victims of Gukurahundi and most have not experienced either justice, healing, or reconciliation. The use of the case study is underpinned by the notion that it is holistic and in-depth and allows the researcher to examine a complex issue within its natural setting with the intention of providing sustainable solutions that are

¹⁴ Juan Luis Segundo and John Drury, *Liberation of Theology* (NY: Orbis Books Maryknoll, 1976), 13.

¹⁵ Raewyn Connell, "Just Education," *Journal of Education Policy* 27, no. 5 (2012): 681–83.

¹⁶ Juan Luis Segundo and Alfred T Hennelly, "Signs of the Times: Theological Reflections," *Sal Terrae*, 1986, 473–82.

¹⁷ Sechaba Mahlomaholo, Milton Nkoane, and John Ambrosio, "Sustainable Learning Environments and Social Justice Comment," *TD: The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa* 9, no. 3 (2013): V–XIII.

¹⁸ Segundo and Hennelly, "Signs of the Times: Theological Reflections."

¹⁹ Segundo and Hennelly, "Signs of the Times: Theological Reflections."

²⁰ Bekithemba Dube and Dipane Hlalele, "Engaging Critical Emancipatory Research as an Alternative to Mitigate School Violence in South Africa," *Educational Research for Social Change* 7, no. 2 (September 1, 2018): 74–86, <https://doi.org/10.17159/2221-4070/2018/v7i2a5>.

aimed at promoting healing and reconciliation.²¹ In this paper, two methods were used to collect data, which are interviews and focus group discussions over a year. For the purpose of the study, the participants responded to two questions, which are what are the challenges of the silent church in Gukurahundi and how can Anglican theological approach contribute to healing and reconciliation?

The data was analysed through a thematic approach which involves identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data.²² The thematic analysis allowed the researcher to systematically code the data, categorize the information into themes, and interpret the underlying meanings. This method was particularly suited to qualitative research as it provided a flexible yet rigorous approach to data analysis, enabling the researcher to derive comprehensive insights from complex qualitative data.²³ The paper adhered to ethical requirements stipulated by the University of Zimbabwe which include respect for the participants, hiding their identities, and assuring them that the data is used for academic purposes and to create conditions that would enhance healing and reconciliation.²⁴ As part of the data credibility for this study, member checking and stepwise validation were used.²⁵ The two concepts of data credibility are centred around returning the analysed data to the participants to confirm if or not represented their views on Anglican and Gukurahundi.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings which relate to the two themes which informed the data collection of this paper. The first question assessed the challenges of the silent Anglican church during the Gukurahundi massacre.

1. Challenges of the Silence Anglican Church during the Gukurahundi Massacre

The first challenge that is brought by a silent church is it enacts among its followers a feeling of betrayal.

a. Silence enacts feelings of betrayal to its followers.

Silence in the context of oppression has never produced good results. It presupposes that a quiet observer is commending the efforts of the perpetrator of social injustice indirectly. With reference to the Gukurahundi massacre, the silence of the Anglican church has not only contributed to feelings of betrayal but has also eroded the trust between the Church and the communities it serves. The question is how could the church that values life become silent and is the church part of the grand plan? Thus, to elaborate on the displeasure of betrayal, a participant in a focus group discussion referred to as Mpala noted that “*Apologizing for betraying people is important; the Church must admit that it made a mistake. They must say, ‘We are sorry for not doing anything during such a terrible time.’*” In an interview, one participant referred to as Ndlovu noted “*How do we reconcile when the Church has not said ‘sorry’ for keeping quiet while we were being killed.*” In addition, a participant named Dube posed a question, “*We are grateful that we can now bury our dead, but we are asking when the Church will come to apologize.*” It is very clear from the participants that there is some degree of disappointment in the conduct of the church which can be summed up as a betrayal of the prophetic mandate of siding with the people in the context of injustice. Thus, betrayal is not in line with Segundo's theory of hermeneutic suspicion which argues that religious texts should be implemented within the context of championing justice instead of betrayal as noted by the participants. The second challenge noted by the participants is that silence is a form of indirect approval.

²¹ Tom Clark et al., *Bryman's Social Research Methods*, 6th ed. (Oxford University Press, 2021).

²² Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology,” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101.

²³ Lorelli S Nowell et al., “Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16, no. 1 (2017): 1609406917733847.

²⁴ K. Fritz, *Ethical Issues in Qualitative Research* (Bloomberg: John Hopkins University, 2008).

²⁵ Linda Birt et al., “Member Checking: A Tool to Enhance Trustworthiness or Merely a Nod to Validation,” *Qualitative Health Research* 26, no. 13 (November 10, 2016): 1802–11, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870>.

b. Silence Implies Indirect Approval

Related to the above, the silence of the Anglican church can be perceived as an indirect approval of the massacre of the Ndebele people. One of the participants in the focus group noted *“The Church was silent. Were those not its children who were being killed? We waited for the Church to stand up with courage and say, ‘Enough is enough!’ But it remained silent.”* This study problematises the silence of the Anglican church along the lines of Bonhoeffer's ethical thinking which posits that silence in the face of evil is itself an action, and often a complicit one.²⁶ Thus, Chitando is right to argue that this reflects a critique often levied against religious institutions in post-colonial African contexts, where some churches have been accused of aligning themselves with authoritarian regimes for political and material gain.²⁷ However, this study submits that the Church must continually recall its centre as harbingers of God's grace and peace despite the situation.²⁸

c. Silence Creates a Moral Vacuum

Since time immemorial, the church in general has been seen as a harbinger of moral advocacy. Part of moral advocacy is standing up against injustice against all people, especially the weakest members of the community. Thus, a church like Anglican justifies its moral validity by calling for morality in society. However, during the Gukurahundi, the moral fiber of the church was lost. Its approach was contrary to the theological stance located in Exodus 3v7-9 which posits that ‘I have heard the cry of my people, ... I have seen their suffering, and I have come down to liberate them’ (Exodus 3 verses 7-9). To expand this further, one participant in an interview noted that *“The Church is supposed to be the light, but during Gukurahundi, it hid its light. Now, they want to talk about forgiveness, but forgiveness starts with admitting you were wrong.”* Thus, it is clear that the church was morally wrong for being silent thus efforts for seeking forgiveness should resonate with the need for confession from the church. It remains unclear if the church is willing to clearly apologise for being silent, however, this article submits that for the community to forgive the Anglican church, it must make a public confession to people as an act to foster healing and reconciliation. In light of the foregoing, the study agrees with Mashingaidze, who argues that true reconciliation in post-conflict societies requires both acknowledgment of past wrongs and tangible efforts toward justice, including reparations and legal accountability.²⁹

d. Silence Negates the Prophetic Role of the Church

One of the major characteristics of the Old Testament prophets was that they embraced prophetic mandate which allowed them to castigate kings for injustice. Solid examples are prophets like Jeremiah and Isaiah who demonstrated that kings should be openly castigated for evil. Since the Anglican church bases its theological orientation on the Bible, it follows that its leaders should embrace a prophetic mandate to speak against Gukurahundi and other social injustices that are committed by the government of the day. So far within the Zimbabwean context, it is the Catholic Bishops that have maintained the prophetic mandate through various letters such as the March has not ended.³⁰ While this may appear simple, the Catholic church has had its fair share of problems by assuming the prophetic role of the church, thus, it could explain the silence of the Anglican church. There is general fear by religious leaders including in the Anglican church to directly confront the government over Gukurahundi. To elaborate on this point, one participant in an interview, noted that *“the priests were silent, claiming they were following Christ, but it was because they feared the government.”* There is an indication that people fear their government instead of seeking protection from it. However, Mandaza is of a different opinion from the priest since he argues that religious institutions cannot

²⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: Prayerbook of the Bible*, vol. 5 (Fortress Press, 1996).

²⁷ S. Chitando, “Towards a Theology of Reconciliation in Zimbabwe: A Critical Analysis of the Role of the Church in Fostering Peace and Reconciliation,” *Journal of Theology and Religion in Africa* 44, no. 1 (2023): 12.

²⁸ Philip G Ziegler, “A Brief Theology of Reconciliation,” *Touchstone*, 2016.

²⁹ Terence Mashingaidze, “Zimbabwe: Gukurahundi Victims’ Monologues, State Silences and Perpetrator Denials,” *Conflict Studies Quarterly*, no. 32 (July 5, 2020): 3–20, <https://doi.org/10.24193/csq.32.1>.

³⁰ Bekithemba Dube, “‘To Hell with Bishops’: Rethinking the Nexus of State, Law and Religion in Times of Crisis in Zimbabwe,” *Religions* 12, no. 5 (April 26, 2021): 304, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12050304>.

excuse their inaction on the grounds of fear when human lives are at stake.³¹ While appreciating Mandaza's articulation, Mthethwa, a participant in the study, noted that *"sometimes we are caught between the needs of our people and the demands of the politicians. There is a lot of pressure to remain silent about certain issues, and that is not true leadership."* The foregoing presents complications that the church faces when dealing with the government on issues that affect people such as Gukurahundi. However, the study's position is that the church should amass courage to speak out against social injustice and this would align the church with Segundo's theorisation on the hermeneutics of suspicion.

The Contribution of the Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland to Healing and Reconciliation

This section presents some of the efforts by the Anglican church to remedy the above-noted challenges of the silent church.

a. Participation in community initiatives

The Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland has undertaken various initiatives that aim to foster positive peace and reconciliation in the region. The involvement of the church in various initiatives is an indirect communication to the community that they are concerned with trajectories such as Gukurahundi and they are doing all possible to eliminate any possible threats of war that can emerge because of unresolved conflict such as Gukurahundi. The initiatives in which the Anglican church is involved include interfaith dialogues, community engagement programs, advocacy for justice, and the promotion of cultural inclusion. The Anglican Church has been instrumental in organizing interfaith dialogues and community engagement programs that encourage interaction and understanding between different ethnic and cultural groups. These dialogues are designed to dismantle stereotypes, foster empathy, and create a shared narrative of healing. By bringing together people of diverse backgrounds, the Church seeks to challenge the historical animosities rooted in the Gukurahundi conflict.³² Thus, in an interview, Phiri noted that *"issues that affect humanity and the sanctity of life must motivate the Anglican Church's involvement in bringing about reconciliation and unity in the nation."* Considering the foregoing point, this study confirms the views of Jeranyama and Mpofu-Hamadziripi, that churches are expected to act as intermediaries during times of conflict, offering not only spiritual guidance but also acting as advocates for peace and justice.³³

b. Promoting Advocacy

The Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland has also been actively involved in advocacy efforts that seek justice and accountability for the victims of Gukurahundi. The Diocese has supported civil society organizations, such as the Matabeleland Collective, in engaging with the government to address past atrocities and demand reparations. The Church's involvement in these efforts highlights its commitment to transitional justice as a cornerstone of reconciliation.³⁴ For instance, the diocesan reconciliation and advocacy programs, which integrate storytelling, communal worship, and restorative justice mechanisms, demonstrate a practical embodiment of the Biblical concept of shalom—peace that encompasses wholeness and justice.³⁵ Considering this, Ngulube a participant noted that *"The Church is doing good work, but it needs to be more outspoken about the injustices that continue to affect us today than to merely want us to forget the past and move forward."* The Church cannot afford to be silent in the face of social, economic and political challenges that degrade the people of Matabeleland all emanating from the dark past associated with the Gukurahundi tragedy. Thus, Gumede in an interview noted *"We must reclaim our narratives. By telling our stories and listening to others, we create a pathway toward healing."* Through storytelling, the church has an

³¹ Ibobo Mandaza, "The Crisis in Zimbabwe. A Paradigm Shift," Good Governance Africa, 2021, <https://gga.org/a-paradigm-shift-from-false-expectations-of-reform-in-a-securat-state-to-a-conference-to-resolve-it/>.

³² S. Moyo, "The Church's Contribution to the Socioeconomic Recovery of Gukurahundi Victims in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe," *African Studies Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (2019): 41–58.

³³ Deliah Jeranyama and Nomalanga Mpofu-Hamadziripi, "Traditional Conflict Prevention and Resolution Strategies among the Manyika People of Zimbabwe: A Spiritual Dimension," *The Fountain: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 6, no. 1 (2022): 85–98.

³⁴ Dumisani Maqeda Ngwenya, "The Challenges and Opportunities for Civil Society in Peacebuilding: Lessons from the Matabeleland Collective, Zimbabwe," *Civil Society and Peacebuilding in Sub-Saharan Africa in the Anthropocene: An Overview*, 2022, 319–35.

³⁵ Joseph Muwanzi and Dorothy Goredema, "The Relevance of Inclusivity in Mediation and Negotiation Processes: A Reflection," 2023.

impetus to reconfigure its existence by establishing trust while being courageous to challenge injustice and call for the prosecution of the perpetrators. The foregoing submission is buttressed by Nyoni who in an interview noted that “*The church has a crucial role to play; we cannot be silent when our communities are hurting.*” Considering the foregoing, the study concludes this point by noting that the Church’s prophetic voice must confront the silence and denial that often surround issues such as the Gukurahundi. It is through this courageous engagement that the Church can genuinely serve as a beacon of hope, embodying the redemptive mission of Christ while fostering healing and transformation.

c. Infrastructure Development and Access to Essential Services

Apart from advocacy, the church has played a very important role in addressing the needs of the people in Matabeleland. One of the key areas where the Diocese has made significant contributions is in the development of critical social institutions. By improving access to essential services, the Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland seeks to address some of the socio-economic inequalities that have historically marginalized the Gukurahundi-affected communities in Matabeleland. The construction of schools and healthcare facilities not only provides immediate relief but also serves as a long-term investment in the human capital of the region. According to Muvengei, these projects are instrumental in restoring a sense of normalcy and dignity among the survivors of the Gukurahundi conflict.³⁶ One project of note by the Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland is the Matabeleland Development Initiative (MDI). This is a flagship project of the Diocese that aims to empower local communities through innovative, scientific, and collaborative approaches to education, health, and entrepreneurship. Moyo emphasizes that the MDI’s emphasis on collective action and expert collaboration has empowered communities to tackle their challenges with renewed hope and confidence.³⁷ Even though efforts such as building schools and hospitals do not directly address Gukurahundi, there is an indication that the church wants to be socially relevant, and responsive to address challenges faced by the people of Matabeleland. It is hoped that such acts would be seen and interpreted as the starting point Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland from being a church of the oppressor to a church of the liberated and liberators.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Intensify Advocacy on Social Healing and Reconciliation to Break the Silence

The Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland should take an active role in advocating for social healing and reconciliation by openly addressing the injustices of Gukurahundi. This can be done through sermons, community discussions, and public engagements that highlight the importance of truth-telling and justice. The Church should leverage its moral authority to encourage dialogue, promote forgiveness, and offer pastoral support to survivors and affected communities. Additionally, collaborating with media outlets to publish articles, organize radio discussions, and produce documentaries can help break the silence surrounding Gukurahundi, fostering a culture of remembrance and healing.

2. Create and Run Practical Projects to Enhance Social Cohesion and Integration Among Members

To foster unity and healing, the Church should initiate and sustain community-based projects that bring together victims, survivors, and other members of society. These may include economic empowerment programs, interfaith dialogues, trauma counseling services, and skills development initiatives that create a shared sense of purpose and interdependence. The Diocese can also establish cultural and artistic platforms such as storytelling forums, music, and theatre performances that allow communities to express their pain, reconcile, and work towards a common future. Additionally, organizing annual commemorative events where victims share their testimonies can further contribute to social cohesion.

³⁶ J. Muvengei, “The Role of the Anglican Church in Promoting Reconciliation in Zimbabwe: A Case Study of the Matabeleland Diocese,” *Journal of African Studies* 40, no. 3 (2017): 435–52.

³⁷ Moyo, “The Church’s Contribution to the Socioeconomic Recovery of Gukurahundi Victims in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe.”

3. **Boldly Collaborate with the Government and Civic Organizations on Healing and Reconciliation**

The Church should actively engage with the government and civil society in designing and implementing healing and reconciliation frameworks. While maintaining its prophetic voice, the Diocese must be bold in calling for accountability and justice while working collaboratively with national truth and reconciliation initiatives. Engaging organizations specializing in trauma healing, legal support, and human rights can enhance the Church's capacity to facilitate restorative justice. Furthermore, participating in national dialogues, policy discussions, and community peace-building workshops will strengthen the Church's influence in shaping a more inclusive and reconciliatory national narrative.

4. **Set Up Structures to Support Healing and Reconciliation**

Institutionalizing reconciliation efforts within the Diocese is critical for sustaining long-term healing. The Church should establish dedicated committees, reconciliation centers, and pastoral care units tasked with overseeing healing programs. These structures should include trained clergy, psychologists, social workers, and community leaders who provide counseling, mediation, and advocacy services. Additionally, the Diocese should develop educational materials, theological reflections, and liturgical frameworks that incorporate reconciliation themes, ensuring that future generations understand the significance of peace, justice, and social harmony. Establishing partnerships with academic institutions to conduct research on faith-based reconciliation can also provide valuable insights for policy and practice.

CONCLUSION

The Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland church has a role to contribute to healing and reconciliation. In doing this, it would contribute to the building of a healed country that can forgive and reconcile. Failure to do so, another format of Gukurahundi would emerge. Thus taking a pro-active stance such as advocacy, participation in healing, and reconciliation, the church positions itself to create a better Zimbabwe. This argument comes against the background that the church was silent during the Gukurahundi, and it cannot afford to be silent anymore. Thus, the church has come up with various church programs such as schools, and the Matabeleland Development Initiative to ensure that victims see an active church that can contribute significantly to the development of the people of Matabeleland and Zimbabwe as a whole. This paper concludes that a silent church in times of crisis, would in many ways be irrelevant in modern-day society, thus all efforts in churches such as in the Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland should be geared towards healing, reconciliation, and justice which resonates with Segundo's Theory.

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