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THE PROPHETIC ROLE OF THE ZIMBABWE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (ZCC) IN PROMOTING JUSTICE, PEACE, AND RECONCILIATION IN ZIMBABWE: A THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MATTHEW 5:9

AURTHA GUMBO

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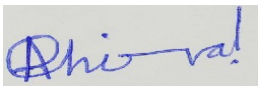
A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF THEOLOGY IN ECUMENISM AND LEADERSHIP OF ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY.

OCTOBER, 2026

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DECLARATION

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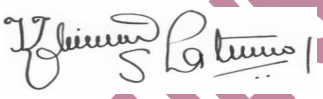
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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AACC	All Africa Conference of Churches
CCC	Citizens Coalition for Change
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
EFZ	Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NGO	Non-profit-making organisations
NPRC	National Peace and Reconciliation Commission
POLAD	Political Actors Dialogue
UDACIZA	Union for the Development of Apostolic and Zionist Churches in Zimbabwe
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WCC	World Council of Churches
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe National Union Patriotic Front
ZCC	Zimbabwe Council of Churches
ZHOCD	Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the prophetic role of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe through a theological analysis of Matthew 5:9. The study was situated within a context marked by political conflict, social division, economic difficulties, and unresolved historical grievances. It examined the theological basis of the ZCC's prophetic role, its forms of engagement, the effectiveness of its interventions, and the contextual factors that shaped its work. A qualitative research design was used, drawing on five semi-structured key informant interviews, identified as Interviewees A–E, 32 open-ended questionnaires, and document analysis. The data was analysed thematically and interpreted through Matthew 5:9, contextual and practical theology, and Conflict Transformation Theory. The findings indicated that the ZCC exercises prophetic ministry through dialogue, mediation, advocacy, civic education, pastoral engagement, and reconciliation initiatives. Participants perceived the ZCC as an important moral and mediating voice, especially in creating spaces for dialogue and community engagement. At the same time, the study found limitations in translating dialogue and public advocacy into longer-term structural and political change. Political pressure, limited resources, denominational differences, and restricted civic space affected the consistency and reach of the ZCC's work. The study concluded that the ZCC makes a meaningful contribution to relational peacebuilding and social healing, but its broader transformative impact remains limited. The theological contribution of the study is that Matthew 5:9 presents peace-making as an active Christian vocation in which justice, truth, reconciliation and restored relationships are joined together. The Zimbabwean case also showed how African churches can embody this vocation while negotiating difficult political and institutional realities. The study recommended stronger grassroots participation, continued ecumenical cooperation, improved follow-up of dialogue processes and peacebuilding approaches that address both relational and structural dimensions of conflict.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....iii
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....iv
ABSTRACT.....v
List of Tables and Figures.....ix
CHAPTER ONE.....1
INTRODUCTION.....1
1.1 Introduction.....1
1.2 Background to the Study.....1
1.3 Statement of the Problem.....4
1.4 Purpose of the Study.....5
1.5 Research Objectives.....5
1.6 Research Questions.....6
1.7 Assumptions of the Study.....6
1.8 Significance of the Study.....7
1.9 Justification of the Study.....8
1.10 Scope and Delimitation of the Study.....9
1.11 Limitations of the Study.....9
1.12 Definition of Terms.....10
Effectiveness.....10
Peace, Justice and reconciliation.....11
Prophetic Ministry.....11
1.13 Conclusion.....11
CHAPTER TWO.....12
LITERATURE REVIEW.....12
2.1 Introduction.....12
2.2 Theological and Biblical Foundations of the Prophetic Role.....12
2.3 Conflict Transformation Theory.....15
2.4 Strategies Employed by the ZCC in Promoting Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation.....17
2.5 Assessing the Effectiveness of the ZCC's Prophetic Role.....19
2.6 Challenges and Opportunities Facing the ZCC's Prophetic Role.....22
2.7 Conceptual Framework.....25
2.8 Research Gap.....28
2.9 Conclusion.....31
CHAPTER THREE.....32

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY....32
3.1 Introduction....32
3.2 Research Design....32
3.3 Target Population and Study Area....34
3.4 Sampling Techniques....36
3.5 Data Collection Methods....36
3.5.1 Semi Structured Interviews....37
3.5.2 Document Analysis....37
3.5.3 Open Ended Questionnaires....38
3.6 Data Analysis and Theological Interpretation....38
3.7 Ethical Considerations....39
3.8 Trustworthiness of the Study....39
3.9 Conclusion....40
CHAPTER FOUR....41
DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION....41
4.1 Introduction....41
4.2 Presentation and Analysis of Findings....41
4.2.1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants....41
4.2.2 Understanding of the Prophetic Role of the Church....42
4.2.3 ZCC Understanding of Its Prophetic Calling....44
4.2.4 Influence of Matthew 5:9 on ZCC Theology and Practice....46
4.2.5 Activities Used by the ZCC to Promote Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation....47
4.2.6 Practical Strategies for Promoting Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation....48
4.2.7 Prophetic Interventions during Times of Crisis....50
4. 3 Interpretation of Findings....51
4.3.1 Theological Basis of Prophetic Engagement....51
4.3.2 Forms of Prophetic Engagement....52
4.3.3 Effectiveness of Prophetic Engagement....53
4.3.4 Challenges and Opportunities....53
4.3.5 Synthesis of Findings....54
4.4 Thematic Analysis of Prophetic Engagement....54
4.4.1 The Church as a Prophetic Voice in Society....55
4.4.2 Dialogue as a Central Mechanism for Peacebuilding....56
4.4.3 Integration of Theology and Social Action....56
4.4.4 Effectiveness of the ZCC: Achievements and Limitations....57
4.4.5 Justice as the Foundation for Peace and Reconciliation....57

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

4.4.6 Contextual Challenges and the Complexity of Prophetic Engagement....58
4.5 Conclusion....58
CHAPTER FIVE....59
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS....59
5.1 Introduction....59
5.2 Summary of Major Findings....59
5.2.1 Understanding of the Prophetic Role....59
5.2.2 Role of the ZCC in Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation....60
5.2.3 Influence of Matthew 5:9....61
5.2.4 Key Themes from Thematic Analysis....62
5.2.5 Challenges and Limitations....63
5.3 Conclusions Drawn....64
5.4 Recommendations....65
5.4.1 Recommendations for Church Practice....65
5.4.2 Recommendations for Policy and Ecumenical Engagement....65
5.4.3 Recommendations for Theological Reflection....66
5.4.4 Recommendations for Political Parties and Government....66
5.4.5 Recommendations for Further Research....67
BIBLIOGRAPHY....69
Appendix I: Informed Consent Letter....73
Appendix II: Research Questionnaire....75

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

List of Tables and Figures

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework.....27
Table 4.1: Participants' Roles
Table 4.2: Thematic Understanding of the Prophetic Role
Table 4.3: Perceived Roles of the ZCC
Table 4.4: Influence of Matthew 5:9 on ZCC Theology and Practice
Table 4.5: Key Activities of the ZCC
Table 4.6: Practical Strategies Used by the ZCC
Table 4.7: Examples of Prophetic Interventions

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Justice, peace, and reconciliation remain pressing concerns in Zimbabwe, given the country's political conflicts, social divisions, historical grievances, and ongoing challenges relating to governance and human dignity. In this context, churches have an important role to play in promoting peace, not only through prayer and pastoral care but also through public witness and practical action. The Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) is among the ecumenical bodies that have engaged in issues of justice, peace, reconciliation, governance, and civic participation. This study examines the prophetic role of the ZCC in promoting these values through the lens of Matthew 5:9. It also assesses the extent to which the Council's interventions have contributed to meaningful peacebuilding in Zimbabwe.

1.2 Background to the Study

Globally, churches and ecumenical organisations have traditionally positioned themselves as moral voices within society by promoting justice, peace, reconciliation, and human dignity. Throughout history, Christian institutions have participated in peacebuilding initiatives, mediation processes, and advocacy against oppression and injustice. In many societies affected by political conflict and social instability, churches have served as important agents of reconciliation and moral transformation. The World Council of Churches (WCC), for example, has consistently engaged in global peace initiatives aimed at promoting human rights, justice, and non-violent conflict transformation in countries affected by war and political instability (Hays, 2021: 331–333).

Within the African context, churches played a significant role in resisting colonialism, apartheid, authoritarian governance, and social injustice. African theologians such as Boesak (2015: 2-7) and Mugambi (2003: 210-212) argued that the prophetic mission of the Church involved confronting oppressive systems. While simultaneously promoting reconciliation,

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justice, and social transformation. Churches across Africa became active participants in mediation, civic education, humanitarian support, and advocacy for democratic governance. Ecumenical organisations such as the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) contributed significantly to peacebuilding efforts in countries such as Sudan, Nigeria, Kenya, and the Democratic Republic of Congo through dialogue facilitation, reconciliation programmes, and human rights advocacy (Chitando and Gunda, 2020: 88–95).

In Zimbabwe, the Church has historically occupied an influential position within both political and social life. During the colonial period, some churches challenged racial segregation and defended human dignity, while others remained closely aligned with state structures. Following independence in 1980, churches continued to engage public issues such as poverty, governance, human rights, violence, and national reconciliation. Among the major ecumenical bodies in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) emerged as a significant actor in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation through advocacy, mediation, pastoral engagement, and civic education initiatives (Masengwe, 2022:13–16).

Zimbabwe's post-independence history has been characterised by periods of political conflict, electoral violence, economic decline, and social fragmentation. Events such as the Gukurahundi disturbances of the 1980s, the land reform conflicts of the early 2000s, and the 2008 post-election violence contributed to deep political divisions and unresolved historical grievances within the country. These crises raised important theological and ethical questions concerning the role of the Church in confronting injustice and promoting national healing. Within these contested political contexts, the ZCC increasingly understood its mission in prophetic terms by advocating for peace, justice, reconciliation, and accountable governance.

The theological centre of the study is Matthew 5:9: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." The verse is read within the Beatitudes and the wider Sermon on the Mount. Peacemaking therefore means more than keeping away from conflict. It

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involves entering broken situations, seeking reconciliation, addressing injustice, and helping to restore relationships. The expression "children of God" also points to Christian identity. Those who make peace reflect the character and work of God. For the Church, this gives peacemaking a theological and prophetic character.

The prophetic tradition within Scripture further strengthened this theological understanding. Old Testament prophets such as Amos, Hosea, and Nathan confronted injustice, corruption, and abuse of power while calling societies towards righteousness and moral renewal. Amos demanded that justice should "roll on like a river" (Amos 5:24), while Nathan courageously confronted King David regarding abuse of power (2 Samuel 12:1–14). These biblical examples shaped African theological understandings of prophetic ministry as active engagement with political, social, and ethical realities. Within Zimbabwe, the ZCC drew from this prophetic tradition in its engagement with issues of violence, reconciliation, governance, and national healing.

Despite the visible involvement of the ZCC in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes, Zimbabwe continued to experience political polarisation, social fragmentation, and recurring tensions. Existing scholarship largely focused on descriptive accounts of church involvement in socio-political affairs without critically evaluating the effectiveness of prophetic engagement in producing sustainable peace and structural transformation. Furthermore, some studies tended to romanticise ecclesial peacebuilding while paying limited attention to institutional weaknesses, political limitations, and contextual challenges affecting prophetic witness in Zimbabwe.

This study sought to analyse the prophetic role of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe in light of Matthew 5:9. By integrating biblical theology, contextual theology, and Conflict Transformation Theory. The

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study examined how the ZCC interpreted and embodied its prophetic mandate within Zimbabwe's complex socio-political environment.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) has played an active role in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. However, the country continues to experience political polarisation, social divisions, unresolved historical grievances, electoral tensions, and recurring violence. Since independence, Zimbabwe has faced various socio-political crises that have weakened national cohesion and undermined sustainable peace. In response to these challenges, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) has positioned itself as a prophetic voice through advocacy, mediation, civic education, peacebuilding initiatives, and reconciliation programmes. These interventions are grounded in biblical teachings such as Matthew 5:9, which calls Christians to become peacemakers within society.

However, despite the visibility of the ZCC's interventions, there remains a limited critical and empirical evaluation of the effectiveness of its prophetic role in transforming conflict and promoting lasting justice, peace, and reconciliation within Zimbabwean society. Existing scholarship has largely focused on descriptive accounts of church involvement in socio-political affairs and broad discussions of church–state relations. Insufficient attention is given to how the ZCC's prophetic theology is translated into practical peacebuilding outcomes within communities and national structures. Consequently, there is inadequate scholarly understanding regarding the extent to which the ZCC's prophetic engagement has contributed meaningfully to social transformation, reconciliation, and national healing.

Furthermore, the ZCC's prophetic mission has operated within a politically sensitive environment characterised by state pressure, economic instability, denominational divisions, limited resources, and accusations of selective engagement. These challenges have affected the consistency, credibility, and effectiveness of the Church's prophetic witness in addressing

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injustice, violence, and governance issues within Zimbabwe. As a result, important theological and practical questions remain concerning the relationship between prophetic ministry and sustainable peacebuilding within contemporary Zimbabwe.

This study seeks to analyse the prophetic role of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe in light of Matthew 5:9. The findings may help strengthen the Church's contribution to peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts in the country. This is done by examining its theological foundations, forms of engagement, effectiveness, and contextual challenges within Zimbabwe's socio-political environment. The study also seeks to assess how the ZCC has interpreted and implemented its biblical mandate of peace making within contexts marked by political conflict, social fragmentation, and historical injustices. In addition, the research examines whether the Church's prophetic interventions have contributed meaningfully to conflict transformation, national healing, social cohesion, and sustainable peace within Zimbabwean society.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyse the prophetic role of the ZCC in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe in light of Matthew 5:9. The study examined the theological foundations underpinning the ZCC's prophetic engagement, the forms and strategies employed in peacebuilding initiatives, and the effectiveness of these interventions within Zimbabwe's socio-political context. It also assessed the contextual, institutional, and political factors influencing the Church's prophetic witness and peace-making mission.

1.5 Research Objectives

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the theological foundations underpinning the prophetic role of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) in light of Matthew 5:9.

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2. To analyse the forms and strategies of prophetic engagement employed by the ZCC in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of the ZCC's prophetic interventions in addressing conflict, fostering reconciliation, and promoting social transformation.
4. To assess the contextual, institutional, and political factors influencing the ZCC's prophetic engagement in Zimbabwe.

1.6 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How did Matthew 5:9 inform the theological understanding of the ZCC's prophetic role in Zimbabwe?
2. What forms and strategies of prophetic engagement did the ZCC employ in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation?
3. To what extent did the ZCC's prophetic interventions contribute to conflict transformation, reconciliation, and social cohesion in Zimbabwe?
4. What contextual, institutional, and political factors shaped the effectiveness of the ZCC's prophetic engagement in Zimbabwe?

1.7 Assumptions of the Study

This study assumes that the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) possesses a theologically grounded prophetic mandate derived from Matthew 5:9, which informs its engagement in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. The study further assumes that the ZCC's peacebuilding initiatives, advocacy programmes, and reconciliation efforts have had some influence on communities and public discourse, although the extent of their effectiveness may vary depending on political, institutional, and socio-economic factors. In addition, the study assumes that participants selected for the research are knowledgeable

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about the ZCC's activities and are able to provide credible and relevant information regarding its prophetic engagement within the Zimbabwean context.

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it contributes to theological scholarship, peacebuilding studies, and public discourse on the role of faith-based organisations in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation within politically fragile societies. By critically examining the prophetic role of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) in light of Matthew 5:9, the study deepens understanding of how biblical principles of peace-making can be interpreted and applied within contexts marked by political conflict, social fragmentation, and historical injustice. The study therefore contributes to contextual and practical theology by demonstrating the relationship between theological reflection and social transformation.

The findings of this research are expected to benefit church leaders, ecumenical organisations, and theological institutions by providing insights into how prophetic ministry can be strengthened through advocacy, mediation, reconciliation initiatives, and civic engagement. The study also offers practical knowledge to policymakers, civil society organisations, and peacebuilding practitioners concerning the constructive role that faith-based organisations can play in conflict transformation, national healing, and social cohesion. In addition, the research contributes to broader discussions on religion and politics in Africa by critically evaluating the opportunities and challenges facing churches operating within contested political environments.

Academically, the study addresses a gap in existing literature by moving beyond descriptive accounts of church activities toward a critical evaluation of the effectiveness of prophetic engagement in Zimbabwe. It further contributes to scholarship on Conflict Transformation Theory and faith-based peacebuilding by examining how theological convictions shape practical interventions in justice and reconciliation processes. The study may

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also provide a foundation for future research on ecumenical peacebuilding, public theology, and church–state relations in Zimbabwe and other African contexts.

1.9 Justification of the Study

The study is first justified by the Zimbabwean context. Political polarisation, unresolved historical grievances, recurring violence, and weakened social cohesion continue to raise questions about the public responsibility of the Church. Although the ZCC has participated in peacebuilding, reconciliation, and advocacy, there is limited critical and empirical research assessing the effectiveness of its prophetic engagement. The study therefore responds to a contextual need to examine how ecclesial witness operates within a politically contested society.

Theologically, the study is justified by the need to examine Matthew 5:9 as more than a general call for peaceful coexistence. The verse provides a basis for understanding peace-making as an active vocation involving justice, reconciliation, truth, restored relationships, and responsible engagement with social conflict. By placing Matthew 5:9 in conversation with prophetic ministry and Conflict Transformation Theory, the study examines how biblical theology can illuminate concrete ecclesial responses to conflict and injustice in Zimbabwe.

Ecumenically and in relation to church leadership, the study is justified by the strategic position of the ZCC as an ecumenical body bringing together churches for public witness and peacebuilding. Examining its prophetic role provides insight into how ecumenical cooperation can strengthen dialogue, mediation, civic engagement, and reconciliation. The study may also assist church leaders in reflecting critically on the balance between prophetic courage, political sensitivity, institutional unity, and continued access to spaces of dialogue. In this way, the research contributes to contextual theology, ecumenical leadership, and practical approaches to peacebuilding without assuming that findings from the ZCC can be generalised to all African churches.

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1.10 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The study focused on the prophetic role of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. It examined theological foundations, prophetic strategies, and the effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions. Geographically, the study was limited to selected areas in Zimbabwe where the ZCC had been actively involved in peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives. These included communities affected by political conflict, civic education programmes, and mediation activities. The study covered the period from 2008 to the present, which was selected because of the 2008 post-election violence marking a significant turning point in Zimbabwe's political history and intensified church involvement in peacebuilding processes.

The study was limited to the Zimbabwe Council of Churches. However, reference was made to ecumenical bodies such as the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations (ZHOCD), the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), and the World Council of Churches (WCC) for comparative purposes. The scope was further restricted to issues of justice, peace, reconciliation, and prophetic engagement. It did not explore broader ecclesiastical or doctrinal issues unrelated to the research objectives. This ensured focus, depth, and analytical clarity.

1.11 Limitations of the Study

The study encountered several limitations during the research process. One major limitation was the sensitive political environment within Zimbabwe, particularly concerning issues related to church-state relations, governance, justice, and reconciliation. Some participants were hesitant to provide detailed information or openly express their views due to fear of political repercussions, victimisation, or possible misinterpretation of their responses. This affected the depth and openness of certain responses, especially on politically contested issues and matters involving state institutions and political actors. Nevertheless, the researcher

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created a confidential and respectful research environment in order to encourage participants to provide honest and meaningful information.

The study also faced financial and logistical constraints, which limited the researcher's ability to conduct extensive fieldwork across all provinces of Zimbabwe. Due to limited resources and time, the research focused on selected communities and participants who were directly involved in or familiar with the peacebuilding and reconciliation activities of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC). Although this limited wider geographical coverage, efforts were made to ensure diversity in participant selection so as to obtain balanced, credible, and representative views concerning the prophetic role of the ZCC within different contexts.

In addition, the study relied mainly on qualitative data collected through interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis. Qualitative research is largely dependent on participants' personal experiences, perceptions, and interpretations, which may sometimes introduce subjectivity and personal bias into the findings. However, the researcher minimised this limitation through triangulation of data sources and methods in order to improve the credibility, reliability, and validity of the study findings. Despite these limitations, the study remained significant because it provided valuable theological, social, and contextual insights into the prophetic role of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation within Zimbabwe.

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1.12 Definition of Terms

Effectiveness

Effectiveness refers to the extent to which ZCC interventions contribute to meaningful peacebuilding outcomes, it is not assumed simply because an activity took place. The study distinguishes activities, participants' perceptions, observable outcomes, longer-term effects, and theological interpretation. This prevents activity from being treated as proof of success.

Peace, Justice and reconciliation

Peace is understood as more than the absence of violence; it includes right relationships, justice, security, dignity, and conditions that allow communities to live together without fear. Justice refers to fair treatment, accountability, protection of human dignity, and attention to structural conditions that produce exclusion or harm. Reconciliation refers to addressing broken relationships through truth, acknowledgement, accountability, forgiveness, healing, and renewed relationships.

Prophetic Ministry

Prophetic ministry in this study means the Church's biblically grounded responsibility to speak and act truthfully in situations of injustice, conflict, and social brokenness. It includes discernment, truth-telling, moral challenge, advocacy, reconciliation, and practical efforts to change harmful relationships and structures.

1.13 Conclusion

Chapter one established the foundation of the study by presenting the context, research problem, purpose, objectives, research questions, significance, scope, and key terms. It also clarified the theological significance of Matthew 5:9 and the meaning of effectiveness in relation to the ZCC's peacebuilding work. The chapter provides a clear framework for examining the prophetic role of the ZCC in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. It therefore provides the basis for the literature review, methodology, and analysis of the findings in the subsequent chapters.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on the prophetic role of the Church in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation. It examines the biblical foundations of prophetic ministry, the peacebuilding work of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, and the challenges of prophetic engagement in Zimbabwe. The chapter also considers Conflict Transformation Theory and identifies gaps in existing scholarship that support the present study.

2.2 Theological and Biblical Foundations of the Prophetic Role

Prophetic ministry is a recurring theme in biblical theology. It is not limited to predicting future events. It includes speaking truth in situations of injustice, calling people back to faithful relationships with God, challenging abuse of power, and presenting a better social vision. Brueggemann describes prophecy in terms of criticism and alternative imagination (Brueggemann, 2019 39–45). This is useful because prophetic ministry involves both naming what is wrong and helping society imagine a better way.

The Old Testament provides several examples. Amos connects worship with justice and condemns systems that exploit the poor (Amos 5:21–24). Hosea links social disorder with a failure of covenant faithfulness (Hosea 4:1–3). Nathan confronts David after the abuse of political power (2 Samuel 12:1–14). These texts show that biblical faith has public consequences. Boesak argues that this tradition remains relevant in African societies where churches are expected to challenge injustice and defend vulnerable people (Boesak, 2015: 7). Yet prophetic courage must also be considered alongside political restrictions that may limit direct confrontation.

Matthew 5:9 gives this study its central New Testament text: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." The verse occurs within the Beatitudes

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(Matthew 5:3–12), where Jesus describes the character of people who belong to God's kingdom. It should not be treated as an isolated statement. Davies and Allison (1988) and Luz (2007) stress the importance of the literary and theological setting of the Beatitudes and the wider Sermon on the Mount. The teaching that follows also calls for reconciliation (Matthew 5:23–24), non-retaliation (5:38–42), and love for enemies (5:43–48). Matthew 5:9 therefore forms part of a wider pattern of discipleship.

The word "peacemakers" points to people who work for peace. A peacemaker does not merely avoid conflict or remain silent when wrong is being done. Peacemaking requires movement towards broken relationships and contested situations. It can involve listening, dialogue, truth telling, forgiveness, reconciliation, and action against conditions that produce violence. Peace is therefore more than the absence of open conflict. It includes restored relationships and a social order in which people can live with dignity. A situation may be quiet and still lack genuine peace if the causes of injustice remain.

The expression "children of God" gives peacemaking an identity dimension. It links the conduct of the peacemaker with the character of God. To be called God's children is to display, in human relationships, something of God's reconciling purpose. Christian identity is therefore connected to public conduct. For the Church, peacebuilding is not simply an extra social programme. It can be an expression of what the Church claims to be. This gives the Church a prophetic responsibility to challenge division, defend human dignity, encourage reconciliation, and seek changes that make peace possible.

Matthew 5:9 also provides a theological bridge to prophetic ministry. Prophecy and peacemaking are not identical, but they meet where peace requires truth and moral courage. A Church cannot make lasting peace by asking people to remain silent about injustice. At the same time, prophetic ministry should not be reduced to confrontation. The text points towards

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witness that seeks to repair relationships while addressing the wrongs that damage them. The prophetic vocation is therefore both critical and constructive.

African theological perspectives deepen this reading. Mugambi's reconstruction theology calls African Christianity to move from resistance towards rebuilding communities and institutions after conflict (Mugambi, 2003:210). Banana similarly connects Christian faith with political and socio-economic realities while stressing the rebuilding of society (Banana, 1996: 34). These perspectives are important for Zimbabwe because historical wounds and political divisions require more than public statements. Prophetic ministry must include healing, reconstruction, community participation, and responsible public engagement.

Within Zimbabwe, the ZCC has sought to translate this theological vocation into advocacy, mediation, civic education, pastoral engagement, and reconciliation programmes. Masengwe (2022: 14–16) highlights these forms of engagement, while Chitando and Manyonganise (2021: 120–123) draw attention to institutional and political pressures that can weaken a united prophetic voice. The literature therefore contains both affirmation and critique. The ZCC should not be judged only by the presence of programmes or statements. The more important question is what those interventions achieve, for whom, and for how long.

The hermeneutical movement in this study is therefore from text to context: Matthew 5:9 provides the biblical text; theological interpretation understands peacemaking as active, justice-conscious, and relational; ecclesial reflection asks how the Church embodies that calling; and contextual analysis examines how the ZCC performs this vocation in Zimbabwe. This movement prevents the verse from being used as a general slogan. It provides the theological basis for evaluating whether the ZCC's public engagement reflects Christian peacemaking and whether that engagement contributes to meaningful peacebuilding outcomes.

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

2.3 Conflict Transformation Theory

This study adopted Conflict Transformation Theory as the analytical framework for understanding the relationship between the prophetic role of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches and peacebuilding outcomes in Zimbabwe. Primarily John Paul Lederach, who argued that sustainable peace requires more than the temporary resolution of conflict, developed the theory. Instead, conflict transformation focuses on long-term changes in relationships, social structures, attitudes, and systems of power that generate violence and injustice (Lederach, 1997: 84).

Unlike conflict management approaches that seek merely to contain violence, Conflict Transformation Theory emphasises relational healing, structural justice, dialogue, and social reconstruction. Lederach identified several dimensions of transformation, including personal transformation, relational transformation, structural transformation, and cultural transformation (Lederach, 1997: 26–30). These dimensions are particularly relevant within Zimbabwe's socio-political context where political violence, mistrust, exclusion, and historical grievances continue to affect communities.

The theory provides an important lens for analysing the prophetic role of the Church because it aligns closely with biblical understandings of reconciliation and peace making. Matthew 5:9 presents peace making as an active process requiring intervention within broken social realities. Similarly, Conflict Transformation Theory insists that sustainable peace emerges through justice-oriented engagement rather than silence or neutrality.

Several scholars have applied Conflict Transformation Theory to peacebuilding and reconciliation processes in Africa, including Galtung (1969), Kriesberg (1998), Lederach (1997), and Miall (2004). These scholars argue that sustainable peace requires more than the absence of violence; it requires the transformation of relationships, social structures, and institutions that perpetuate conflict. Galtung's concept of structural violence is particularly

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

relevant because it highlights how injustice can be embedded within political, economic, and social systems that marginalise certain groups (Galtung, 1969: 171). Similarly, Lederach (1997) emphasises the importance of rebuilding relationships and creating long-term processes that address the root causes of conflict. This theoretical perspective provides an important framework for evaluating whether the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) merely responded to visible manifestations of violence or addressed deeper structural issues such as exclusion, corruption, and abuse of power.

However, despite the relevance of Conflict Transformation Theory, the literature reviewed in this study reveals that several Zimbabwean studies have engaged peacebuilding and reconciliation largely at a conceptual level without fully integrating the theory into their analysis. Machingura (2010) discusses reconciliation and national healing in Zimbabwe, but provides a limited examination of how church interventions contributed to structural transformation, relational healing, or institutional reform. Consequently, Conflict Transformation Theory often remains descriptive rather than analytical within the Zimbabwean literature. This study seeks to address this gap by applying the theory as an analytical framework for assessing the effectiveness of the ZCC's prophetic role in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe.

This study therefore integrates Conflict Transformation Theory more systematically by using it to analyse the relationship between the ZCC's prophetic engagement and peacebuilding outcomes. The theory guides the evaluation of whether the Church's interventions contributed to relational healing, reduction of political violence, social cohesion, and structural transformation within Zimbabwean society. The theory also helps explain why prophetic interventions may succeed or fail within particular contexts. Political intimidation, institutional weakness, economic instability, and denominational fragmentation can limit transformative outcomes even when churches possess moral authority. Consequently, the study examines not

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

only the activities of the ZCC but also the contextual factors influencing the effectiveness of prophetic engagement.

2.4 Strategies Employed by the ZCC in Promoting Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation

The Zimbabwe Council of Churches employed several strategies aimed at translating its prophetic mandate into practical peacebuilding interventions. These strategies reflected the Council's understanding that peace-making required active engagement with social, political, and institutional realities rather than passive spiritual observation.

One major strategy involved mediation and dialogue facilitation. During periods of political violence, particularly the 2008 electoral crisis, the ZCC collaborated with the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations (ZHOCD) to convene dialogue platforms between political actors and affected communities (Chitando and Togarasei, 2010: 28). These initiatives aimed to reduce tensions, encourage non-violence, and create opportunities for reconciliation. Scholars generally acknowledge that church-led mediation created spaces for communication in highly polarised environments. However, Phiri and Werner argued that many of these interventions remained short-term and lacked mechanisms for sustaining long-term reconciliation (Phiri and Werner, 2021, p. 105).

Another important strategy involved civic education and public advocacy. The ZCC educated communities on democratic participation, human rights, and peaceful political engagement. This reflected the prophetic understanding that justice and peace required informed and active citizenship. Nevertheless, critics argued that civic education programmes sometimes struggled to influence national political structures because of state resistance and restricted civic space (Masengwe, 2008: 24).

The Council also implemented community-based reconciliation programmes, including trauma healing workshops, prayer gatherings, and peacebuilding initiatives within affected communities. These programmes attempted to rebuild trust among victims of political violence

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

and encourage social cohesion. Chitando and Manyonganise observed that church-led reconciliation initiatives often enjoyed greater public trust than state-led processes because churches were perceived as morally credible institutions (Chitando and Manyonganise, 2021:123). However, this credibility was not always consistent. In some cases, perceptions of political alignment weakened public confidence in ecumenical institutions.

Regionally and globally, the ZCC drew inspiration from ecumenical organisations such as the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC). These organisations promoted advocacy, mediation, interfaith dialogue, and peacebuilding across conflict-affected African societies (Chitando and Gunda, 2020:90). Comparative literature demonstrates that ecumenical collaboration strengthened knowledge exchange and increased institutional support for local peacebuilding initiatives.

Despite these efforts, existing scholarship reveals important weaknesses within ZCC strategies. Much of the literature focuses on describing interventions rather than evaluating measurable outcomes. Scholars frequently assumed that church involvement automatically produced reconciliation without critically examining whether structural injustices were transformed. Furthermore, some studies failed to consider how political intimidation, financial limitations, and denominational fragmentation constrained the effectiveness of peacebuilding programmes.

Conflict Transformation Theory provides a useful framework for evaluating these strategies because it shifts attention from activities to transformation outcomes. From this perspective, the effectiveness of ZCC interventions should be assessed according to whether they promoted relational healing, reduced structural violence, strengthened social trust, and contributed to sustainable peace.

The literature therefore suggests that while the ZCC demonstrated significant commitment to justice, peace, and reconciliation, questions remain concerning the

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

sustainability, depth, and transformative impact of its interventions. This study seeks to contribute to existing scholarship by critically examining the relationship between prophetic engagement and measurable peacebuilding outcomes within Zimbabwe's socio-political context.

2.5 Assessing the Effectiveness of the ZCC's Prophetic Role

Assessing the effectiveness of the ZCC's prophetic role requires more than listing programmes or public statements. In this study, effectiveness means the extent to which prophetic interventions contribute to meaningful peacebuilding outcomes. Five levels are distinguished that are activities; participants' perceptions; observable outcomes; longer-term social or political effects; and theological interpretation in light of Matthew 5:9. Evidence for longer-term effects is treated cautiously because the study is qualitative and geographically limited.

This distinction is important because an activity does not automatically prove effectiveness. A dialogue meeting may create a useful space without changing political behaviour. A pastoral letter may express a strong prophetic position without producing policy reform. A reconciliation programme may improve relationships without resolving structural causes of conflict. Conflict Transformation Theory strengthens the evaluation by directing attention to changes in relationships, structures, attitudes, and power. Lederach argues that sustainable peace requires long-term transformation rather than temporary control of conflict (Lederach, 1997: 84).

Literature indicates that the ZCC achieved varying levels of success in different areas of peacebuilding. During the 2008 electoral violence, the ZCC and other ecumenical bodies under the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations (ZHOCD) facilitated dialogue forums, promoted non-violence, and encouraged peaceful political engagement (Chitando and Togarasei, 2010: 29). These interventions helped reduce immediate tensions and created spaces

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

for communication between political actors and communities. In this regard, the Church demonstrated its relevance as a mediator and moral voice during moments of national crisis.

However, several scholars questioned the long-term effectiveness of these interventions. Phiri and Werner argued that although church-led mediation contributed to temporary de-escalation of violence, it achieved limited structural transformation because underlying political tensions remained unresolved (Phiri and Werner, 2021:108). This critique is important because it highlights the distinction between short-term conflict management and sustainable peacebuilding. While the ZCC succeeded in calming tensions during crises, existing literature suggests that deeper issues such as political intolerance, corruption, and institutional violence persisted beyond church interventions.

At community level, the ZCC's reconciliation programmes appeared to produce more visible outcomes. Trauma healing workshops, community dialogues, and pastoral counselling initiatives helped rebuild interpersonal trust among communities affected by political violence. Chitando and Manyonganise observed that church-led reconciliation programmes often enjoyed greater legitimacy than state-led initiatives because churches were perceived as relatively trustworthy institutions within local communities (Chitando and Manyonganise, 2021:123). By grounding reconciliation in biblical teachings on forgiveness and restoration, the ZCC contributed to healing emotional and social wounds created by political conflict.

Nevertheless, the impact of these initiatives remained largely localised. Existing studies provide limited evidence that community-level reconciliation translated into broader national transformation. Masengwe noted that although the ZCC consistently issued pastoral statements condemning violence and injustice, these pronouncements rarely resulted in significant policy reforms or institutional accountability (Masengwe, 2008: 27). This limitation raises critical questions concerning the relationship between prophetic voice and prophetic impact. A strong

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

moral statement does not necessarily produce structural change, especially within politically restrictive environments.

Another concern raised within literature relates to the consistency of prophetic witness. Some scholars argued that denominational divisions and fears of political retaliation weakened the Church's ability to speak boldly against injustice. Banana maintained that churches sometimes adopted cautious approaches in order to preserve institutional survival rather than confront oppressive political systems directly (Banana, 1996: 41). This criticism challenges idealised portrayals of prophetic ministry by acknowledging the practical tensions churches face when engaging political power.

Comparative studies involving regional and global ecumenical organisations provide important insights into evaluating the effectiveness of the ZCC, AACC and WCC have played significant roles in peacebuilding initiatives across Africa, including in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, and Cameroon, through advocacy, mediation, ecumenical diplomacy, and human rights monitoring (Chitando and Gunda, 2020: 94). Primary organisational reports further demonstrate that the AACC consistently promotes ceasefire advocacy, civilian protection, and inclusive political dialogue as essential foundations for sustainable peace (AACC, 2021; AACC, 2023).

Similarly, the WCC has supported conflict transformation processes in Africa through interfaith dialogue, accompaniment of local churches, and advocacy for reconciliation, human rights protection, and democratic stability, particularly in Sudan and South Sudan (WCC, 2022; WCC, 2023). Collectively, these organisations adopt a holistic approach to peacebuilding that integrates advocacy, mediation, and structural engagement with conflict contexts. In comparison, the ZCC operated within more restrictive political conditions and with fewer financial and institutional resources. The factors that significantly affected the scale, sustainability, and influence of its interventions. Nevertheless, the experiences of the AACC

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

and WCC provide useful benchmarks for assessing both the opportunities and constraints facing church-led peacebuilding efforts in Zimbabwe.

Furthermore, this indicates that the ZCC lacked comprehensive monitoring and evaluation mechanisms capable of measuring long-term peacebuilding outcomes. UNDP observed that many faith-based peace initiatives rely heavily on qualitative narratives and theological assumptions without developing systematic indicators for assessing transformation (UNDP, 2023). This weakness makes it difficult to determine the extent to which prophetic interventions contributed to measurable improvements in justice, reconciliation, and social cohesion.

Overall, the reviewed literature demonstrates that the ZCC achieved moderate success in promoting dialogue, reducing immediate tensions, and facilitating community reconciliation. However, its effectiveness in transforming structural injustices and influencing national political systems remained limited. Existing scholarship therefore reveals an important gap between theological aspirations and measurable peacebuilding outcomes. This study seeks to address this gap by critically examining the practical effectiveness of the ZCC's prophetic role within Zimbabwe's socio-political environment.

2.6 Challenges and Opportunities Facing the ZCC's Prophetic Role

The prophetic role of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches has operated within a complex socio-political environment characterised by political contestation, economic instability, and social division. While the Church derived its mandate from biblical teachings on justice and peace, the practical implementation of prophetic ministry has been shaped by numerous contextual challenges and opportunities. Understanding these dynamics is important for evaluating both the limitations and potential of ecclesial peacebuilding within Zimbabwe.

One of the major challenges confronting the ZCC has been political pressure and state intimidation. Literature on church-state relations in Zimbabwe consistently demonstrates that

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

churches engaging in public criticism of government policies often faced hostility, surveillance, or accusations of political partisanship (Masengwe, 2022: 20). In politically polarised environments, prophetic engagement frequently exposed church leaders to intimidation and public attacks. This situation created fear and caution among some religious institutions, thereby weakening the consistency and boldness of prophetic witness.

This challenge contrasts sharply with biblical models of prophecy where prophets mostly openly confronted injustice regardless of political consequences. Amos condemned exploitation and corruption without compromise, while Nathan confronted King David directly concerning abuse of power (2 Samuel 12:7–9). However, contemporary church leaders often operated within restrictive political environments where direct confrontation carried significant institutional risks. Boesak argued that modern prophetic ministry requires courage to challenge unjust political systems despite the dangers associated with such engagement (Boesak, 2015: 8). Nevertheless, Boesak's perspective may underestimate the extent to which authoritarian political structures constrain ecclesial action in contexts such as Zimbabwe.

Another major challenge involved denominational diversity and internal fragmentation within the ecumenical movement. The ZCC brought together multiple denominations with differing theological traditions, political perspectives, and institutional priorities. While ecumenism strengthened collective Christian engagement, it also created tensions regarding how openly the Church should confront political authorities. Chitando and Manyonganise observed that some member churches preferred pastoral neutrality and cautious diplomacy, while others advocated stronger prophetic confrontation against injustice (Chitando and Manyonganise, 2021: 126). These differences sometimes weakened institutional unity and diluted the clarity of prophetic statements.

Limited financial and institutional capacity also affected the effectiveness of the ZCC's peacebuilding initiatives. Many church programmes relied heavily on donor funding, making

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

sustainability difficult during periods of economic decline. In addition, inadequate monitoring and evaluation systems restricted the Church's ability to assess long-term impact. Phiri and Werner noted that although the ZCC implemented important grassroots programmes such as dialogue forums and trauma healing workshops, many of these initiatives remained localised and short-term because of limited resources (Phiri and Werner, 2021: 110). From a Conflict Transformation Theory perspective, sustainable peacebuilding requires long-term institutional engagement rather than temporary interventions.

Despite these challenges, literature also highlights significant opportunities available to the ZCC. One major opportunity lies in the moral credibility that churches continue to enjoy within many Zimbabwean communities. In contexts where political institutions are often distrusted, churches remain among the most respected social institutions (Masengwe, 2008: 15). This moral authority positions the ZCC as a potentially important mediator capable of facilitating dialogue between divided communities and political actors.

Another opportunity involves regional and global ecumenical cooperation. Organisations such as the AACC and WCC have expanded their support for peacebuilding and justice initiatives across Africa. Through these partnerships, the ZCC gained access to international networks, technical expertise, advocacy platforms, and financial assistance (Chitando and Gunda, 2020: 98). Such collaborations strengthened the visibility and legitimacy of the Church's peacebuilding efforts.

The growing recognition of faith-based organisations within global peacebuilding frameworks also created important opportunities for ecclesial engagement. Sustainable Development Goal 16 emphasises the promotion of peaceful, just, and inclusive societies, thereby recognising the contribution of civil society and religious institutions in conflict transformation (UNDP, 2023). This international recognition provides opportunities for

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

churches to participate more actively in governance, reconciliation, and development processes.

Furthermore, African theological scholarship increasingly supports contextual and transformative approaches to prophetic ministry. Mugambi's reconstruction theology encouraged churches to move beyond crisis response toward long-term rebuilding of communities and institutions (Mugambi, 2003: 210). Similarly, Banana argued that African Christianity should address practical social realities including injustice, poverty, and political oppression (Banana, 1996: 44). These theological developments strengthen the intellectual and moral basis for prophetic engagement within Zimbabwe.

The reviewed literature therefore demonstrates that the ZCC's prophetic role has been shaped by both severe constraints and meaningful opportunities. Political intimidation, denominational fragmentation, and institutional limitations weakened the Church's effectiveness in some areas. However, moral credibility, ecumenical partnerships, and theological renewal created possibilities for stronger prophetic engagement. Existing studies often discuss these factors separately without sufficiently analysing how they interact to shape peacebuilding outcomes. This study seeks to bridge that gap by critically examining how contextual realities influence the effectiveness of the ZCC's prophetic mission in Zimbabwe.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

This study is guided by a conceptual framework that explains the relationship between the prophetic role of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches and its contribution to justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. The framework is grounded in the biblical teaching of Matthew 5:9 and informed by Conflict Transformation Theory. It demonstrates how theological convictions shape prophetic engagement and how contextual realities influence peacebuilding outcomes. The framework assumes that the prophetic role of the ZCC functions as the independent variable influencing justice, peace, and reconciliation outcomes within

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

Zimbabwean society. Prophetic engagement includes advocacy, mediation, civic education, peacebuilding initiatives, reconciliation programmes, and pastoral engagement. These activities are rooted in the theological understanding that Christians are called to become active peacemakers within society.

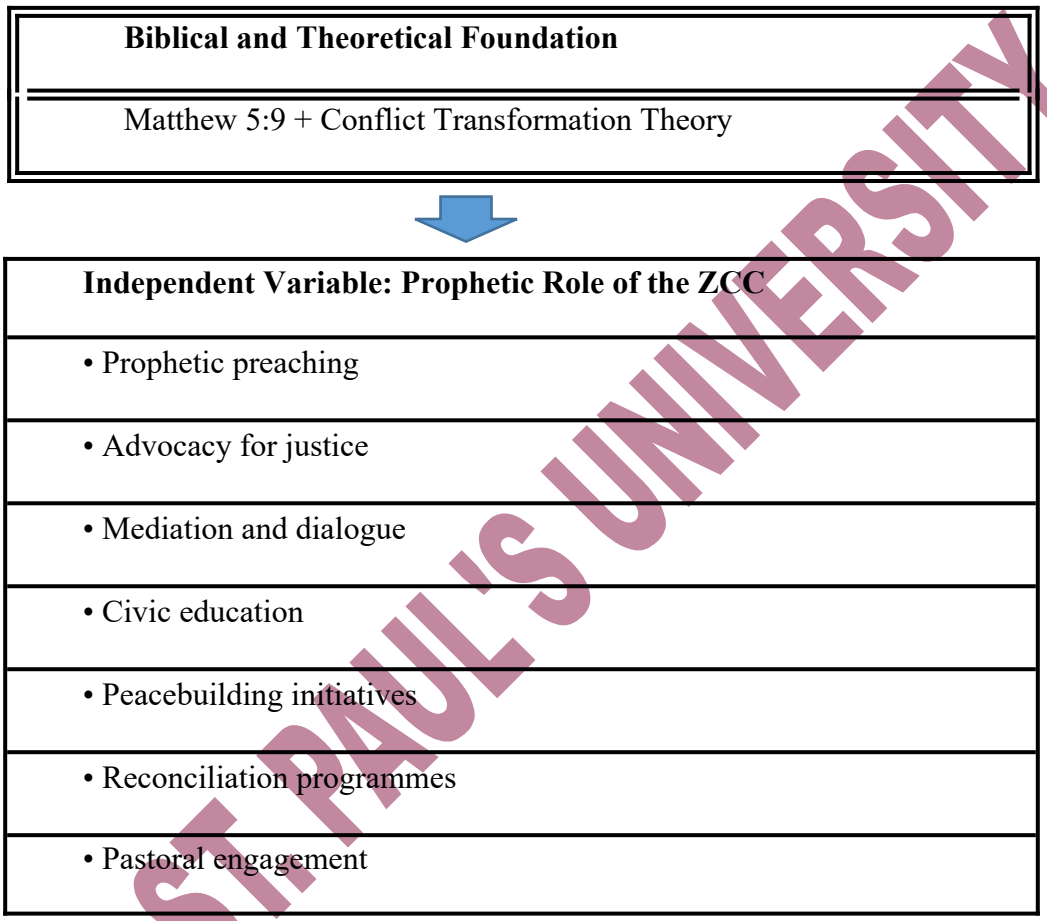
Conflict Transformation Theory strengthens this framework by emphasising that sustainable peace requires transformation of relationships, systems, and social structures rather than temporary conflict management (Lederach, 1997: 84). The theory therefore provides the analytical basis for examining whether the ZCC's interventions contributed to relational healing, reduction of violence, social cohesion, and structural justice. However, the framework recognises that prophetic engagement does not occur in isolation. Several intervening variables influence the effectiveness of the ZCC's peacebuilding efforts. These include political conditions, state interference, denominational divisions, financial capacity, public trust, ecumenical cooperation, and broader socio-economic challenges. Such factors may either strengthen or weaken the Church's prophetic impact.

The dependent variable within this framework consists of justice, peace, and reconciliation outcomes. These outcomes include conflict transformation, national healing, and reduction of political violence, restoration of social trust, community reconciliation and promotion of human dignity. The framework therefore views peace not simply as absence of violence but as the presence of justice, accountability, healing, and social cohesion. The conceptual framework further assumes that biblical theology and social transformation are interconnected. Matthew 5:9 provides the theological foundation for peace making, while Conflict Transformation Theory explains the practical processes through which peacebuilding may occur within conflict-affected societies. The interaction between theology, prophetic engagement, and contextual realities ultimately shapes the effectiveness of the ZCC's contribution to peace and reconciliation in Zimbabwe.

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

The framework therefore demonstrates that the effectiveness of prophetic ministry depends not only on theological commitment but also on contextual realities that either facilitate or constrain peacebuilding processes. This study applies the framework to critically examine how the ZCC's prophetic engagement contributed to justice, peace, and reconciliation within Zimbabwe's socio-political environment.

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework



ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

• Political environment
• State interference
• Denominational divisions
• Financial resources
• Public trust and credibility
• Ecumenical cooperation
• Socio-economic conditions



Dependent Variable: Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation Outcomes
• Conflict transformation
• Social cohesion
• National healing
• Reduction of political violence
• Community reconciliation
• Promotion of human dignity
• Sustainable peace

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

2.8 Research Gap

The reviewed literature shows that churches and ecumenical organisations play an important role in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation in Africa and beyond. Many scholars agree that the Church has moral authority that can influence peacebuilding, mediation, advocacy, and social transformation. In Zimbabwe, the ZCC has been recognised as an important ecumenical body involved in civic education, reconciliation initiatives, public

advocacy, and mediation during periods of political instability (Masengwe, 2022: 18). Regional and global ecumenical organisations such as the All Africa Conference of Churches and the World Council of Churches have also contributed to peacebuilding efforts in countries affected by conflict and political violence (Chitando and Gunda, 2020: 94).

Despite this substantial body of scholarship, the literature revealed several conceptual, theoretical and methodological weaknesses. One major weakness involved the overdependence on descriptive analysis. Many scholars focused on outlining church activities and theological intentions without critically evaluating the practical outcomes of prophetic engagement. Studies frequently described pastoral statements, mediation initiatives, and reconciliation programmes while giving limited attention to measurable transformation within communities and political systems. As a result, prophetic effectiveness was often assumed rather than empirically demonstrated.

For example, Masengwe highlighted the visibility of the ZCC's interventions in justice and peacebuilding processes, particularly during periods of political crisis (Masengwe, 2022:14-16). However, the study gave limited attention to assessing whether these interventions resulted in sustainable reconciliation, reduction of political violence, or structural transformation. Similarly, Chitando and Manyonganise acknowledged the moral authority of churches within Zimbabwean society but argued that denominational fragmentation, political fear, and institutional limitations weakened the consistency of prophetic engagement (Chitando and Manyonganise, 2021: 120123). This critique challenged earlier scholarship that tended to romanticise ecclesial peacebuilding without sufficiently examining its practical limitations.

Another important weakness in the existing literature was limited theoretical integration. Although several studies referred to Conflict Transformation Theory, many failed to apply it analytically when evaluating church interventions. Conflict transformation concepts such as structural violence, relational healing, reconciliation, and institutional transformation were

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

often mentioned superficially, without explaining how these processes were achieved through ecclesial peacebuilding initiatives. Consequently, the relationship between prophetic theology and social transformation remained underdeveloped within Zimbabwean scholarship.

Biblical theology provides an important foundation for the Church's prophetic engagement in Zimbabwe. Matthew 5:9, Amos 5:24 and Hosea 4:1–3 support Christian involvement in justice, peace and reconciliation. Masengwe (2022: 14-16) highlights the ZCC's peacebuilding interventions, while Chitando and Gunda (2020: 94) discuss the contributions of regional and international ecumenical organisations. However, biblical mandates do not automatically produce effective peacebuilding. Further critical analysis is needed to establish how theological commitments shape institutional decisions, practical strategies and long-term transformation. This is particularly in politically contested environments where churches must balance prophetic criticism, dialogue and reconciliation.

Another limitation concerns the comparison of Zimbabwean ecumenical practice with wider African and international peacebuilding experiences. Chitando and Gunda (2020: 94) recognise the contributions of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC), while UNDP (2023) highlights the importance of assessing peacebuilding outcomes. Further research is needed to examine how the ZCC's approaches compare with those of these organisations in mediation, advocacy and reconciliation. Such comparison could identify useful practices while recognising Zimbabwe's distinct political and ecclesial context. This study therefore examines the relationship between the ZCC's biblical foundations, practical interventions and contribution to sustainable peace and social transformation.

Methodologically, many existing studies relied heavily on theological reflection and qualitative narratives without systematic frameworks for evaluating impact. UNDP observed that faith-based peacebuilding initiatives frequently lacked monitoring and evaluation systems

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

capable of measuring long-term outcomes in justice, reconciliation, and institutional transformation (UNDP, 2023). This weakness made it difficult to determine whether church interventions produced sustainable change or merely temporary conflict management.

The reviewed literature discovered a significant research gap concerning the practical effectiveness of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches' prophetic role in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation. Existing studies generally focused on describing prophetic activities rather than critically examining their outcomes, limitations, and transformative potential within Zimbabwe's socio-political context. This study sought to address this gap by integrating biblical theology, Conflict Transformation Theory, and contextual analysis in order to critically evaluate the effectiveness of the ZCC's prophetic engagement. Unlike previous studies that concentrated mainly on theological intentions or descriptive accounts, this research examined the relationship between prophetic ministry and measurable peacebuilding outcomes. In doing so, the study contributed to scholarship on religion, peacebuilding, and ecclesial engagement within Zimbabwe and the broader African context.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed literature on the Church's prophetic role in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation, focusing on the ZCC. It examined Matthew 5:9 and the Sermon on the Mount as foundations for Christian peacemaking, alongside Conflict Transformation Theory. The literature highlighted the need to restore relationships and address social challenges, but revealed limited empirical research on the effectiveness of ZCC interventions in Zimbabwe. This gap provides the basis for the present study.

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology used to investigate the prophetic role of the ZCC in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. It discusses the research design, study area, target population, sampling procedures, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques. It also explains the ethical considerations and measures taken to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the study. The methodological choices were guided by the study objectives and were intended to provide in depth understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and practices of stakeholders involved in ZCC peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive research design. The choice of a qualitative approach was informed by the nature of the research problem, which required an in-depth examination of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches' (ZCC) prophetic engagement in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation. While quantitative approaches can identify patterns and trends, they are less suited to exploring the meanings, perceptions, experiences, and institutional dynamics that shape ecclesial peacebuilding processes. Qualitative research therefore provided a suitable framework for critically examining not only the activities of the ZCC but also participants' assessments of their effectiveness, limitations, and impact within Zimbabwe's socio-political context (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018: 12).

The exploratory dimension of the study enabled the researcher to investigate aspects of prophetic ministry that have received limited critical attention in existing scholarship. As demonstrated in the literature review, many studies focus on the normative role of churches as agents of peace and reconciliation but provide less critical evaluation of the outcomes, challenges, and contradictions associated with ecclesial peacebuilding. An exploratory

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

approach therefore facilitated a deeper investigation into the theological motivations, institutional practices, successes, and constraints that have shaped the ZCC's prophetic engagement within Zimbabwe's contested political environment (Stebbins, 2017: 7).

The descriptive aspect of the design allowed for a detailed examination of the ZCC's peacebuilding strategies, mediation efforts, reconciliation programmes, civic education initiatives, and advocacy activities. Descriptive qualitative research seeks to present social realities as experienced and interpreted by participants within their natural settings (Neuman, 2014: 39). This approach was particularly relevant for capturing diverse perspectives on the extent to which the ZCC's interventions have contributed to justice, peace, and reconciliation at both institutional and community levels.

The study was further informed by practical and contextual theology. Practical theology examines how Christian beliefs and biblical teachings are interpreted and enacted within concrete social realities (Osmer, 2008: 5), while contextual theology emphasises that theological reflection emerges from specific historical and socio-political circumstances (Bevans, 2016: 9). Matthew 5:9 served as a theological lens through which the Church's peacebuilding mission and prophetic responsibility were interpreted and assessed within the Zimbabwean context.

The qualitative approach also complemented Conflict Transformation Theory, which emphasises the importance of analysing relationships, structures, perceptions, and processes that sustain conflict and peacebuilding efforts (Lederach, 1997: 26). By examining participants' experiences and evaluations of the ZCC's interventions, the study moved beyond merely describing ecclesial peacebuilding activities to critically assessing their contribution to relational healing, social justice, reconciliation, and broader processes of societal transformation. In this way, the research sought to address the gap identified in the literature

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

regarding the limited critical evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of prophetic ministry in Zimbabwe.

3.3 Target Population and Study Area

The target population for this study comprised individuals who possessed direct knowledge, experience, or professional involvement in the peacebuilding, justice, and reconciliation initiatives of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC). Given the wide range of stakeholders associated with ecclesial peacebuilding in Zimbabwe, it was neither feasible nor methodologically necessary to include all potential participants. Instead, the study focused on carefully selected categories of participants whose experiences and expertise were considered most relevant to addressing the research objectives and answering the central research questions.

Participant selection was guided by clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Participants were required to meet at least one of the following criteria: direct involvement in the design, implementation, or coordination of ZCC peacebuilding and reconciliation programmes; participation in ZCC-led initiatives at community level; recognised expertise in theology, peacebuilding, conflict transformation, governance, or church-state relations; or substantial knowledge of the political and social contexts in which the ZCC operates. Individuals who lacked direct knowledge, experience, or involvement in the ZCC's prophetic ministry were excluded from the study. These criteria helped ensure that the data were obtained from participants with relevant experience and informed perspectives on the effectiveness of the ZCC's peacebuilding interventions.

Based on these criteria, the study included ZCC national and provincial leaders, leaders from member churches, programme officers, grassroots community members, political actors, theologians and peace and legal practitioners. ZCC leaders and programme officers were selected because of their direct involvement in the design, coordination, and implementation

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

of peacebuilding programmes. Church leaders from member denominations were included due to their role in translating ecumenical initiatives into congregational and community practice. Grassroots community members were selected because they had participated in, or been affected by, ZCC peacebuilding activities and were therefore well positioned to assess their practical significance and impact. Political actors were included to provide perspectives on how church-led interventions were perceived and received within politically contested environments. Theologians, peace practitioners, and legal experts were selected because of their specialised knowledge of prophetic ministry, conflict transformation, governance, and reconciliation processes in Zimbabwe.

The study employed 32 questionnaire respondents selected from church leadership, theological academia, peace practitioners, community structures, and other participants with relevant knowledge of the ZCC's peacebuilding work. In addition, five key informants were selected for semi-structured interviews. The composition of the sample was guided by information richness rather than statistical representation. The intention was to obtain diverse and complementary perspectives capable of generating a comprehensive understanding of the ZCC's prophetic engagement in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation.

Geographically, the study was conducted within Zimbabwe, focusing on contexts where issues of conflict, political contestation, social fragmentation, and reconciliation have been particularly significant. The selection of study sites was informed by their relevance to the objectives of the research and by the presence of ZCC peacebuilding initiatives. Particular attention was given to areas affected by electoral violence, political polarisation, and the enduring legacy of Gukurahundi, as these contexts provided important opportunities for examining the practical realities and effectiveness of church-led peacebuilding efforts. Consideration was also given to ethnic, cultural, and regional diversity in order to capture a

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

broad range of experiences and perspectives regarding justice, peace, and reconciliation within Zimbabwean society.

3.4 Sampling Techniques

The study employed non-probability sampling because it sought in depth and contextually rich information rather than statistical representation (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2016). Purposive sampling was the main technique and was used to select participants with relevant experience in ZCC peacebuilding, theology, justice, peace, and reconciliation (Patton, 2015). These included ZCC leaders, theologians, church leaders, programme coordinators, and peace practitioners. This approach enabled the researcher to obtain information rich perspectives relevant to the study objectives (Creswell and Poth, 2018).

Snowball sampling complemented purposive sampling, particularly in reaching participants who were difficult to access through formal channels. These included grassroots peace actors and individuals with experiences of political violence. Initial participants referred the researcher to other individuals who met the study criteria (Babbie, 2020). The combination of the two techniques enabled the study to include both institutional perspectives and community experiences. It also supported Conflict Transformation Theory by engaging different levels of society in understanding peacebuilding processes (Lederach, 1997).

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The study used three qualitative data collection methods: five semi structured key informant interviews, 32 open ended questionnaires, and document analysis. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the academic use of the information. Interviews were conducted in English or Shona according to participant preference and, with consent, were recorded and transcribed. The three methods complemented one another by allowing the researcher to compare participant perspectives, institutional claims, and documentary evidence.

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

3.5.1 Semi Structured Interviews

Five semi structured key informant interviews were conducted with participants who had relevant knowledge and experience of ZCC peacebuilding, church leadership, theology, public engagement, or conflict transformation. The interviewees are identified as Interviewees A to E to maintain confidentiality. Semi structured interviews were appropriate because they allowed the researcher to address the research questions while giving participants freedom to explain their experiences and perspectives in depth (Bryman, 2016; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015).

The interview guide covered themes such as justice, peace, reconciliation, forgiveness, prophetic witness, mediation, and Matthew 5:9. This enabled the researcher to explore how biblical and theological ideas were understood and applied within the Zimbabwean context (Beavans 2016; Osmer, 2008). Interviews were conducted in English or Shona, recorded with consent, and transcribed for analysis. Field notes were also used to capture relevant contextual observations. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the process to reduce researcher bias and keep participant perspectives central to the study (Finlay, 2002).

3.5.2 Document Analysis

Document analysis was used to provide historical, theological, and institutional perspectives on the ZCC's prophetic engagement (Bowen, 2009). Documents included ZCC pastoral letters, policy documents, strategic plans, advocacy statements, reconciliation reports, ecumenical declarations, and other relevant publications. These documents were selected because of their direct relevance to justice, peace, reconciliation, prophetic witness, and public engagement.

The analysis examined how the ZCC articulated its theological and prophetic response to political and social challenges in Zimbabwe. Documentary evidence was also compared with interview and questionnaire responses to identify areas of agreement, difference, and limitations in the available evidence. This helped the researcher assess not only what the ZCC

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

reported doing, but also how its peacebuilding role was understood and experienced by participants.

3.5.3 Open Ended Questionnaires

The study employed 32 open-ended questionnaires to obtain additional qualitative perspectives on justice, peace, reconciliation, and ZCC peacebuilding initiatives. They allowed participants to freely express their experiences and included individuals who could not participate in interviews. The responses were analysed together with interview and documentary data as a qualitative source, enabling comparison of different perspectives and strengthening the understanding of the ZCC's prophetic role.

3.6 Data Analysis and Theological Interpretation

The data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step thematic analysis framework. The process began with familiarisation through repeated reading of interview transcripts, questionnaire responses, field notes, and relevant documents. Initial codes were then generated from meaningful sections of the data, including community dialogue, political intimidation, reconciliation, church mediation, biblical motivation, and political pressure. Related codes were grouped into broader themes, such as Prophetic Strategies for Peacebuilding and Political Constraints on Prophetic Witness. The themes were reviewed, refined, defined, and named according to their relevance to the research objectives. The final stage involved interpreting and presenting the findings in relation to the research questions, Conflict Transformation Theory, biblical theology, and existing literature. The analysis was conducted manually without qualitative analysis software to maintain close engagement with the data.

Theological interpretation was integrated into the analysis, with Matthew 5:9 providing the primary theological framework for understanding peace making, reconciliation, justice, and prophetic witness. The analysis considered peace making as active engagement in dialogue,

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truth, justice, forgiveness, and restoration rather than merely the absence of conflict. African theological perspectives, particularly ubuntu, were also considered because of their emphasis on relational humanity, communal solidarity, and restorative healing (Tutu, 2021: 12). This integration enabled the researcher to interpret the empirical findings critically in dialogue with biblical theology, African theology, and Conflict Transformation Theory.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The study addressed sensitive issues relating to political violence, justice, reconciliation, and church–state relations. Ethical principles were observed throughout the research process to protect participants' dignity, privacy, safety, and well-being. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after they were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, the measures taken to maintain confidentiality, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2014).

Participants' identities were protected through the use of coded references, and research data were stored securely to prevent unauthorised access. Participants were treated respectfully and were not pressured to discuss experiences that caused discomfort or emotional distress. Where applicable, the necessary research permits and ethical approvals were obtained in accordance with the relevant institutional requirements. The consent form used in the study is provided in Appendix [I]. These measures were intended to ensure that the research was conducted responsibly and with due regard for the rights and welfare of all participants.

3.8 Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness was ensured through credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Credibility was strengthened through triangulation of interviews, open ended questionnaires, and document analysis. Dependability was supported by documenting the sampling, data collection, coding, and analysis procedures. Transferability was enhanced through clear description of the Zimbabwean political, social, and ecclesial context, while

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confirmability was supported through researcher reflexivity and grounding interpretations in participant responses, documentary evidence, and theological analysis (Finlay, 2002:234). These measures strengthened the credibility and academic rigour of the study.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented the qualitative methodology used to examine the prophetic role of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation. It outlined the research design, sampling, data collection, thematic analysis, ethical considerations, and measures taken to ensure trustworthiness. The integration of qualitative inquiry, biblical theology, and Conflict Transformation Theory provided a suitable framework for examining the theological and practical dimensions of ZCC peacebuilding. The next chapter presents and interprets the findings from the interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis.

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CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the findings of the study on the prophetic role of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. The findings are drawn from five key informant interviews, 32 open ended questionnaires, and relevant ZCC documents. The data are organised according to the main themes emerging from the study and are interpreted in relation to the research objectives, Matthew 5:9, and Conflict Transformation Theory. The chapter also considers both the contributions and challenges of the ZCC's peacebuilding efforts.

4.2 Presentation and Analysis of Findings

The findings are presented according to the major themes emerging from the questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. The presentation distinguishes participant accounts from the researcher's interpretation and identifies both the contributions and limitations of the ZCC's prophetic engagement.

4.2.1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The study involved 32 questionnaire respondents drawn from church leadership, theological academia, peace practitioners, and community structures. Most participants were in the 31–45 and 46–60 age groups, suggesting that the findings were largely informed by mature individuals with practical experience in church leadership, peacebuilding, conflict mediation, and community engagement. Respondents below 30 years and those above 60 years were less represented. The age distribution therefore provided perspectives from participants who were actively involved in church administration, advocacy, and reconciliation initiatives.

The interview participants also reflected generational diversity. Interviewees A and B provided perspectives associated with younger leadership and civic engagement, while

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Interviewees C, D, and E contributed longer term experience of church governance and peacebuilding. This diversity helped the study consider how understandings of prophetic ministry are influenced by historical experience, political changes, and changing responsibilities within the Church.

The findings also revealed a significant gender imbalance, with male participants forming the majority. This reflects the continued dominance of men in many ecclesial leadership and decision making structures. Interviewee B observed that "leadership spaces in the Church are still largely shaped by male presence." This finding has theological and institutional significance because representation can influence how prophetic voice, authority, and public engagement are understood and practised. It also supports Chitando and Manyonganise's (2021) observation that patriarchal structures continue to influence participation and authority within Zimbabwean churches.

Table 4.1: Participants' Roles

Role/Position	**Description**
Church leaders	Majority drawn from ZCC member churches
Theologians/Academics	Provided theological ad critical perspectives
Peace practitioners	Offered practical conflicts transformation insights
Community members	Represented grassroots experiences

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The demographic composition of the study therefore provided both institutional and experiential depth, enabling the research to capture theological reflections, practical experiences, and grassroots perspectives on the ZCC's peacebuilding role in Zimbabwe.

4.2.2 Understanding of the Prophetic Role of the Church

Participants demonstrated a broad and multidimensional understanding of the prophetic role of the Church. Their responses consistently associated prophetic ministry with social

responsibility, justice advocacy, moral accountability, peacebuilding, and reconciliation. Rather than limiting prophecy to spiritual proclamation alone, participants understood the prophetic role as active engagement with social suffering, political injustice, and broken communal relationships.

Table 4.2: Thematic Understanding of the Prophetic Role

Theme	Description
Speaking truth to power	Challenging injustice and political oppression
Advocacy for justice	Defending human rights and dignity
Voice of the voiceless	Representing marginalised communities
Moral Conscience	Providing ethical guidance to society
Peace and reconciliation	Promoting healing and unity

Interview responses reinforced these themes. Interviewee A stated, "The church must not be silent when people are suffering," while Interviewee D argued that prophetic ministry involves "standing with the people, especially those who cannot speak for themselves." These findings suggest that participants viewed the Church as both a spiritual institution and a moral agent responsible for confronting injustice within society.

The findings strongly resonate with Brueggemann's understanding of prophetic ministry as involving both critique of oppressive systems and the articulation of an alternative vision grounded in justice and hope (Brueggemann, 2019:39–45). Similarly, the findings support Boesak's argument that prophecy is not passive religious commentary but active participation in transforming unjust social and political realities (Boesak, 2015:7). Theologically, participants interpreted prophetic witness through the framework of justice-oriented peace making rooted in Matthew 5:9. This reflects a holistic understanding of peace similar to the biblical concept of shalom, which encompasses justice, restored relationships, dignity, and communal wellbeing.

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Document analysis further reinforced these interpretations. The Zimbabwe We Want (2006) consistently presents the Church as a moral conscience responsible for national transformation, ethical leadership, and social accountability. However, despite these strong theological ideals, participants also acknowledged tensions between prophetic responsibility and institutional caution. Some respondents noted that political pressure and fear of state retaliation sometimes discourage bold prophetic engagement. This finding supports Chitando and Manyonganise's observation that churches operating within politically restrictive environments often struggle to sustain consistent prophetic witness (2021:123). The findings therefore reveal that prophetic ministry within Zimbabwe is shaped by both theological conviction and political limitation.

4.2.3 ZCC Understanding of Its Prophetic Calling

Participants perceived the Zimbabwe Council of Churches as an ecumenical institution committed to promoting justice, peace, reconciliation, and democratic accountability within Zimbabwean society. The findings revealed that the ZCC's prophetic role is understood primarily through advocacy, mediation, peacebuilding, reconciliation, and theological leadership.

Table 4.3: Perceived Roles of the ZCC

Theme	Description
Advocacy	Engagement with governance and justice issues
Mediation	Facilitating dialogue among conflicting parties
Peacebuilding	Promoting non-violence and social cohesion
Reconciliation	Encouraging healing and unity
Spiritual leadership	Providing theological direction

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Participants consistently described the ZCC as a mediating institution capable of engaging both state and civil society actors. One respondent explained, "The ZCC has become a bridge between different groups during times of national tension." This perception reflects the organisation's ecumenical identity and its attempt to maintain moral credibility within politically polarised contexts. The findings therefore align closely with Lederach's understanding of reconciliation as the rebuilding of relationships across divided communities and institutions (Lederach, 1997: 29). Interview responses also demonstrated that the ZCC integrates theology with civic responsibility. Participants frequently referred to programmes such as I Pray, I Vote as examples of how the organisation combines spiritual formation with democratic participation and peacebuilding. This reflects De Gruchy's understanding of public theology, where Christian faith actively engages social and political realities rather than remaining confined to private spirituality (De Gruchy, 2002: 98).

However, participants also identified important limitations. Some respondents argued that the ZCC's prophetic voice occasionally becomes restrained by political pressure, denominational fragmentation, and fear of state reprisals. One participant noted, "There are moments when the church becomes cautious when dealing with politically sensitive issues." This finding supports earlier scholarship discussed in Chapter Two which argued that ecclesial institutions in Zimbabwe often face tension between maintaining dialogue spaces and sustaining prophetic boldness (Masengwe, 2022: 14–16). The findings therefore reveal a complex and adaptive prophetic model in which the ZCC attempts to balance confrontation with engagement, advocacy with diplomacy, and moral witness with institutional survival. While this approach enables continued participation in national dialogue processes, it may also weaken public perceptions of prophetic courage and consistency.

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

4.2.4 Influence of Matthew 5:9 on ZCC Theology and Practice

Participants overwhelmingly affirmed that Matthew 5:9 serves as a foundational theological text shaping the ZCC's understanding of peace-making, reconciliation, and justice-oriented ministry. The findings demonstrated that participants did not interpret peace merely as the absence of violence but as the active pursuit of justice, healing, and restored relationships.

Table 4.4: Influence of Matthew 5:9 on ZCC Theology and Practice

Theme	Description
Peace-making as mandate	Central to ZCC mission
Justice -peace relationship	Peace requires justice
Active engagement	Peace making demands action
Reconciliation	Healing broken relationships

Interview responses revealed that participants viewed peace-making as a practical and transformative responsibility rather than a passive spiritual ideal. One participant stated that "peace is impossible where injustice is tolerated," highlighting the inseparable relationship between peace and justice within the ZCC's theology. This finding reflects Boesak's argument that biblical peace requires confrontation with oppressive systems and commitment to social transformation (Boesak, 2015:9). The findings also strongly align with Conflict Transformation Theory, particularly Lederach's emphasis on relational healing and structural transformation as foundations for sustainable peace (Lederach, 1997: 35). Participants consistently associated reconciliation with dialogue, trust building, healing, and restoration of communal relationships. This suggests that the ZCC's peace theology extends beyond conflict management toward broader social transformation.

Document analysis further demonstrated that the ZCC interprets Matthew 5:9 not simply as a spiritual teaching but as a public ethical mandate guiding civic engagement and national

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

peacebuilding. Through pastoral letters, advocacy statements, and civic education programmes, the Church attempts to translate biblical principles into practical responses to political violence, constitutional debates, and social division. However, participants also acknowledged that applying these theological ideals within Zimbabwe's politically contested environment remains difficult. The findings therefore reveal an ongoing tension between theological aspiration and political reality.

4.2.5 Activities Used by the ZCC to Promote Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation

Participants identified several activities through which the ZCC seeks to promote justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. These activities reflect a multidimensional approach that combines theology, advocacy, civic engagement, and grassroots peacebuilding.

Table 4.5: Key Activities of the ZCC

Activity	Description
Advocacy	Addressing governance and justice concerns
Dialogue facilitation	Promoting engagement among stakeholders
Pastoral letters	Providing moral and theological guidance
Training programmes	Capacity building for peacebuilding
Prayer initiatives	Spiritual mobilisation

Dialogue emerged as one of the most important peacebuilding strategies employed by the ZCC. Participants consistently described dialogue as a mechanism for reducing hostility, fostering mutual understanding, and rebuilding trust among conflicting groups. This finding supports Lederach's understanding that sustainable peace emerges through relational engagement and constructive interaction across divided communities (Lederach, 1997: 26).

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Participants also highlighted the importance of pastoral letters as instruments of prophetic witness. Through these public statements, the ZCC addresses issues such as elections, constitutional reform, governance, and political violence. The findings therefore demonstrate that prophetic ministry within the ZCC involves both theological reflection and institutional advocacy directed toward national transformation. At grassroots level, civic education and community mobilisation were identified as important strategies for promoting peaceful coexistence and democratic participation. The I Pray, I Vote initiative was frequently cited as an example of how the Church integrates spiritual formation with civic responsibility. Participants viewed this programme as an important intervention aimed at reducing electoral violence while encouraging peaceful participation in democratic processes.

Despite these strengths, participants questioned whether these activities consistently produce long-term structural transformation. While the ZCC succeeds in facilitating dialogue and promoting awareness, respondents argued that political structures often remain resistant to meaningful reform. This finding reveals a significant gap between prophetic engagement and structural impact. It therefore supports the critique raised in chapter two that ecclesial peacebuilding efforts are sometimes effective at relational levels but less successful in transforming deeply entrenched political systems.

4.2.6 Practical Strategies for Promoting Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation

The findings revealed that the ZCC employs both grassroots and national-level strategies in its peacebuilding efforts. Participants described these strategies as attempts to address immediate conflict while also promoting long-term social healing and reconciliation.

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

Table 4.6: Practical Strategies Used by the ZCC

Strategy	Description
Community engagement	Grassroots peacebuilding initiatives
Civic education	Awareness on governance and rights
Mediation	Conflict resolution mechanisms
National dialogue	Engagement with political actors
Humanitarian support	Assistance to vulnerable groups

Participants repeatedly emphasised the importance of community-based peacebuilding. One interviewee stated, "Peace building must begin where people experience conflict daily." This finding reflects Lederach's argument that sustainable reconciliation requires engagement with grassroots communities because conflict is experienced most directly at local level (Lederach, 1997: 39). The ZCC's emphasis on local engagement therefore demonstrates an understanding that peace requires both structural and relational transformation. The findings also showed that the organisation combines advocacy with humanitarian and pastoral interventions. Civic education programmes seek to empower communities with knowledge about governance, constitutional rights, and peaceful participation in public life, while humanitarian initiatives provide practical support to vulnerable communities affected by conflict and social instability. Participants viewed these combined interventions as important because they address both the causes and consequences of conflict.

However, respondents also acknowledged significant challenges affecting implementation. Political suspicion, resource limitations, and institutional fragmentation were identified as major constraints limiting the effectiveness of these strategies. Consequently, while the ZCC is practical, interventions are socially and theologically significant; their long-

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term impact remains shaped by broader political and institutional realities beyond the organisation's direct control.

4.2.7 Prophetic Interventions during Times of Crisis

Participants identified several national crises during which the ZCC exercised prophetic engagement through advocacy, mediation, reconciliation initiatives, and public theological reflection. These interventions demonstrate that the organisation attempts to remain publicly relevant during periods of political instability and social conflict.

Table 4.7: Examples of Prophetic Interventions

Intervention Area	Description
Election periods	Advocacy for peaceful processes
Gukuahundi discussions	Support for reconciliation and healing
Constitutional debates	Issuing pastoral letters
Political dialogue	Mediation between political actors

Participants highlighted the ZCC's role in condemning electoral violence, facilitating dialogue between political actors, and supporting national healing processes. The organisation's involvement in constitutional debates, particularly through pastoral letters addressing Constitutional Amendment Bill No. 3, demonstrated its willingness to engage governance issues from theological and ethical perspectives. These findings support De Gruchy's argument that authentic Christian public witness requires engagement with political suffering, injustice, and national crises rather than withdrawal into purely spiritual concerns (De Gruchy, 2002: 102). Theologically, the interventions reflect the ZCC understands that peace making involves confronting injustice while preserving possibilities for reconciliation and dialogue.

However, participants also revealed important tensions surrounding the organisation's prophetic engagement. Several respondents argued that the ZCC often operates within

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"carefully negotiated boundaries" in order to preserve access to political dialogue spaces and avoid direct confrontation with the state. While this strategy enables continued engagement with political actors, it may also weaken perceptions of prophetic boldness and institutional independence. The findings reveal that the ZCC's prophetic role is dynamic, adaptive, and negotiated in context. Its interventions reflect an ongoing attempt to balance theological conviction, institutional survival, and socio-political engagement in a politically sensitive environment. This demonstrates that prophetic ministry in Zimbabwe involves continuous negotiation between moral responsibility and political reality.

4. 3 Interpretation of Findings

The findings are interpreted in relation to the study objectives, Matthew 5:9, biblical theology, and Conflict Transformation Theory. The analysis considers the theological basis of the ZCC's prophetic role, its forms of engagement, the effectiveness of its interventions, and the challenges and opportunities shaping its peacebuilding ministry.

4.3.1 Theological Basis of Prophetic Engagement

The findings showed that participants understood the prophetic role of the Church as both a spiritual vocation and a social responsibility. The Church was expected to respond to injustice, violence, exclusion, and political challenges through advocacy, mediation, reconciliation, and peacebuilding. This understanding reflects Brueggemann's view that prophetic ministry involves challenging oppressive structures while presenting an alternative vision based on justice and human dignity (Brueggemann, 2019). Participants also associated peace with justice, accountability, restored relationships, and human dignity rather than simply the absence of conflict. This understanding is consistent with the biblical concept of shalom and with Lederach's emphasis on relational and structural transformation (Lederach, 1997). In this sense, Matthew 5:9 presents peacemaking as an active vocation. The ZCC's prophetic role

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

therefore involves confronting conditions that undermine peace while creating opportunities for dialogue, reconciliation, and social restoration.

Documentary evidence supported this interpretation. *The Zimbabwe We Want* (2006) linked peacebuilding with ethical leadership, national healing, social justice, and institutional transformation, while *I Pray, I Vote* reflected the ZCC's understanding of civic participation as part of Christian responsibility. However, the findings also revealed tension between theological commitment and political realities. Fear of political reprisals, institutional caution, and political sensitivity sometimes limited the ZCC's prophetic boldness. This demonstrates that prophetic ministry in Zimbabwe involves both moral responsibility and practical constraints.

4.3.2 Forms of Prophetic Engagement

The findings identified dialogue, advocacy, civic education, pastoral communication, mediation, and community mobilisation as major forms of ZCC prophetic engagement. Dialogue was particularly important because it created opportunities for conflicting groups to meet, listen, and rebuild trust. The ZCC's ecumenical identity also enabled it to act as a mediating institution between political actors, communities, and civil society. Advocacy was expressed through pastoral letters, public statements, constitutional interventions, and other forms of public engagement. The response to Constitutional Amendment Bill No. 3 demonstrated the ZCC's willingness to address governance and justice from a theological perspective. At community level, civic education, leadership training, trauma healing, and dialogue programmes extended this engagement beyond national advocacy.

These approaches correspond with Conflict Transformation Theory because they address personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions of conflict (Lederach, 2005). However, the findings also revealed that dialogue and neutrality could have limitations. While neutrality enabled the ZCC to engage different stakeholders, it could sometimes reduce its willingness to

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

confront injustice more strongly. Thus, the findings present the ZCC's prophetic engagement as both constructive and constrained.

4.3.3 Effectiveness of Prophetic Engagement

The effectiveness of the ZCC was assessed by distinguishing between activities, participant perceptions, observable outcomes, longer term effects, and theological significance. This distinction is important because the existence of peacebuilding programmes does not, by itself, prove that they were effective. The findings indicated that the ZCC made meaningful contributions through mediation, advocacy, civic education, dialogue, and pastoral engagement. Participants particularly valued the ZCC as a trusted space for dialogue during periods of political tension. The *I Pray, I Vote* initiative was also identified as an important contribution to peaceful electoral participation and civic responsibility.

However, the evidence also showed that effectiveness was uneven and context dependent. Participants acknowledged that dialogue did not always lead to implementation or lasting structural change. Political resistance, denominational divisions, resource limitations, and institutional caution restricted the ZCC's ability to influence state policy and address systemic injustice. The findings therefore suggest that the ZCC has achieved moral and relational influence, but its capacity to produce long term structural transformation remains limited.

4.3.4 Challenges and Opportunities

The main challenges identified were political restrictions, limited civic space, denominational fragmentation, differing political loyalties, and inadequate resources. Participants noted that church interventions could easily be interpreted through partisan political lenses, making it difficult for the ZCC to maintain both prophetic independence and constructive relationships with political authorities. At the same time, the ZCC possesses important opportunities for strengthening its prophetic ministry. Its grassroots presence,

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ecumenical structure, theological foundation, and continued moral credibility provide a strong basis for peacebuilding and reconciliation. *The Zimbabwe We Want* also demonstrates the potential of the Church to contribute to ethical leadership, national healing, and social transformation. These findings suggest that the ZCC can strengthen its prophetic role by combining theological conviction with strategic engagement. It must maintain spaces for dialogue while also addressing the structural causes of injustice that prevent sustainable peace.

4.3.5 Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the findings show that the ZCC understands prophetic ministry as an active commitment to justice, peace, reconciliation, and social transformation. Its work through dialogue, advocacy, mediation, civic education, and community engagement reflects the understanding of Matthew 5:9 as a call to active peacemaking rather than passive avoidance of conflict. The findings also demonstrate a strong connection between the ZCC's approach and Conflict Transformation Theory, particularly its emphasis on relationships, justice, and structural change. However, the ZCC operates within tensions between prophetic courage and political caution, theological ideals and institutional limitations, and ecumenical unity and internal differences. Its prophetic role is therefore both significant and contested.

In relation to the central theological question of this study, Matthew 5:9 provides a foundation for understanding the Church as a community called not only to proclaim peace but to actively pursue the conditions that make peace possible. The ZCC's experience demonstrates that such peacemaking requires justice, truth, reconciliation, dialogue, and courage to address structures that undermine human dignity. Its prophetic vocation in Zimbabwe therefore remains an ongoing process of bringing biblical faith into engagement with the realities of public life.

4.4 Thematic Analysis of Prophetic Engagement

The thematic analysis identified four major themes that characterise the prophetic engagement of the ZCC: prophetic truth telling, advocacy for marginalised groups, dialogue

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

and mediation, and civic education. These themes demonstrate how the ZCC translates its theological commitment to Matthew 5:9 into practical engagement with justice, peace, and reconciliation. The analysis also revealed that the effectiveness of these forms of engagement is influenced by political conditions, institutional limitations, and the broader social context in Zimbabwe.

4.4.1 The Church as a Prophetic Voice in Society

A dominant theme emerging from the data is the understanding of the church, particularly the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), as a prophetic voice in society. Across questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis, participants consistently view the church not only as a spiritual institution but also as a moral and ethical authority called to engage public life. The church is described as the conscience of the nation, responsible for speaking against injustice, confronting oppression, and defending marginalised groups. This reflects a lived theological conviction that faith must actively respond to socio-political realities. Interview data reinforces this perspective. Interviewee A argues that the church loses credibility when it withdraws from public issues, as silence in the face of injustice amounts to complicity. Interviewee C further emphasises that prophetic ministry must extend beyond preaching to active engagement with systems of governance and social structures. This demonstrates that prophecy is understood not as prediction, but as critical engagement with present injustice.

Document analysis supports this view. The Zimbabwe We Want document positions the church as a key moral agent in national transformation, while the ZCC Pastoral Letter on Constitutional Amendment Bill No. 3 demonstrates engagement with governance and human rights issues. However, tensions are evident between prophetic responsibility and contextual risk. Interviewee E notes that fear of political consequences often limits the directness of the church's voice, reflecting the ongoing tension between prophetic boldness and contextual restraint.

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

4.4.2 Dialogue as a Central Mechanism for Peacebuilding

A second key theme is the centrality of dialogue as the primary mechanism for promoting peace, justice, and reconciliation. Questionnaire findings show strong agreement that dialogue is the most effective peacebuilding tool used by the ZCC. Interviews further reinforce this, describing dialogue as both a practical necessity and moral responsibility in a politically polarised context.

Interviewee B describes dialogue as "the only space where enemies can become listeners again," highlighting its restorative function. Interviewee D adds that dialogue reduces mistrust and creates opportunities for cooperation among conflicting groups. This indicates that dialogue is understood as an ongoing relational process rather than a one-time event. At both community and national levels, the ZCC facilitates dialogue on governance, conflict, and civic participation. Initiatives such as I Pray, I Vote extend dialogue into civic education and electoral responsibility. However, limitations remain. Interviewee E notes that while dialogue fosters engagement, it is often weak in ensuring implementation of agreements. This reveals a gap between dialogue and structural transformation, suggesting that dialogue requires political will to produce lasting change.

4.4.3 Integration of Theology and Social Action

Another major theme is the strong integration of theology and social action in the ZCC's ministry. Participants consistently affirm that the ZCC's work is grounded in biblical teaching, particularly Matthew 5:9, which calls believers to be peacemakers. Theology is therefore not theoretical but practical and action-oriented. Interviewee A states that authentic faith must translate into social engagement, noting that a church that prays without action remains incomplete. This reflects a lived theology in which belief is validated through practice. Accordingly, ZCC activities such as pastoral letters, mediation, advocacy, and civic education are viewed as expressions of theological conviction.

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

Document analysis supports this integration, showing that national transformation is framed in both moral and spiritual terms. However, Interviewee C highlights tensions that arise when theological conviction intersects with politically sensitive issues. This demonstrates that the relationship between theology and social action is dynamic and often negotiated within a complex socio-political environment.

4.4.4 Effectiveness of the ZCC: Achievements and Limitations

The findings present a balanced view of the ZCC's effectiveness, highlighting both strengths and limitations. Questionnaire data indicates that the ZCC is widely regarded as a credible actor in peacebuilding and dialogue facilitation. Interviewees confirm this perception, emphasising its neutrality and trustworthiness in divided political contexts. Interviewee B notes that the ZCC has contributed to reducing electoral tensions by providing neutral platforms for engagement. Interviewee D similarly highlights its mediating role, which is widely accepted due to its ecumenical identity. The I Pray, I Vote campaign is identified as a key success, linking spirituality with civic responsibility.

However, limitations are also evident. Interviewee E points to weak implementation of agreements reached during dialogue processes. Interviewee A further notes that internal differences and perceptions of political caution sometimes weaken the church's prophetic authority. These findings suggest that while the ZCC is effective in facilitation, its transformative impact is constrained by institutional and political realities.

4.4.5 Justice as the Foundation for Peace and Reconciliation

A unifying theme across all data is the view that justice is the foundation of sustainable peace and reconciliation. Participants consistently argue that peace without justice is unstable and incomplete. Reconciliation is therefore understood as requiring truth, accountability, and structural transformation. Interviewee C states that "peace without justice is fragile and temporary," emphasising the inseparability of the two concepts. The Zimbabwe We Want

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

document similarly highlights justice, equality, and accountability as essential for national healing. However, practical challenges remain. Interviewee D notes that political constraints often hinder the realisation of justice, revealing a gap between theological ideals and political realities.

4.4.6 Contextual Challenges and the Complexity of Prophetic Engagement

The final theme highlights the complex environment in which the ZCC operates. Key challenges include political interference, limited civic space, and internal divisions within the church. These factors shape how prophetic engagement is expressed and received. Interviewee E describes the church as "walking a tightrope between being prophetic and remaining acceptable to those in power," capturing the tension between truth-telling and institutional survival. The ZCC Pastoral Letter on Constitutional Amendment Bill No. 3 illustrates this balancing act in practice. Despite these challenges, the ZCC continues to engage actively in peacebuilding. Interviewee B notes that silence would contradict the church's calling, underscoring its commitment to prophetic witness even in constrained conditions.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the Zimbabwe Council of Churches plays a significant yet complex prophetic role in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. Its work is grounded in Matthew 5:9 and reflected in its engagement in dialogue, advocacy, civic education, pastoral letters, and civic initiatives such as I Pray, I Vote. Although the ZCC contributes meaningfully to peacebuilding and public awareness, its impact is constrained by political pressures, institutional challenges, and difficulties in translating dialogue into practical action. Overall, the ZCC remains an important moral and prophetic voice in Zimbabwe, operating within a contested socio-political environment that both shapes and limits its influence.

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the major findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the study. The findings are drawn from 32 open-ended questionnaires, five key informant interviews, and relevant document analysis. The findings are interpreted in relation to the study objectives, Matthew 5:9, and Conflict Transformation Theory. The chapter highlights the main contributions of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches to justice, peace, and reconciliation, as well as the challenges that influence the effectiveness of its prophetic engagement. It concludes by drawing together the key lessons from the study and providing recommendations for strengthening the prophetic and peacebuilding role of the ZCC in Zimbabwe.

5.2 Summary of Major Findings

The study examined the prophetic role of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. The study was guided by the understanding that the Church has a theological and public responsibility to respond to situations of injustice, conflict, violence, and social division. The findings were obtained from 32 open-ended questionnaires, five key informant interviews, and document analysis. The data were analysed thematically and interpreted in relation to the study objectives, Matthew 5:9, Conflict Transformation Theory, and relevant theological literature. The findings demonstrate that the ZCC has played an important role in peacebuilding and reconciliation, although its prophetic ministry continues to be influenced by political, institutional, and social challenges.

5.2.1 Understanding of the Prophetic Role

The study found that participants understood the prophetic role of the Church as an active public responsibility that goes beyond worship, preaching, and doctrinal teaching. It involves

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speaking truth, confronting injustice, defending human dignity, promoting accountability, and giving a voice to marginalised and vulnerable groups. The Church is therefore expected to apply biblical values to social and political realities and to promote justice, reconciliation, and peaceful coexistence. However, political pressure, fear of reprisals, limited civic space, and political sensitivities sometimes encouraged cautious engagement, creating tension between the Church's prophetic responsibility and the realities of the Zimbabwean context.

5.2.2 Role of the ZCC in Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation

The findings showed that the ZCC contributes to justice, peace, and reconciliation through a range of activities, including dialogue, mediation, advocacy, civic education, pastoral communication, leadership development, and reconciliation initiatives. These activities demonstrate the ZCC's attempt to translate its theological commitment to peace into practical engagement with individuals, communities, institutions, and political actors. Its ecumenical structure gives it a particular advantage because it can bring together different Christian denominations and engage stakeholders who may hold different social and political positions.

Dialogue emerged as one of the most significant approaches used by the ZCC. Participants indicated that dialogue provides space for conflicting parties to listen to one another, express concerns, reduce tensions, and rebuild relationships. Mediation similarly enables the Church to create channels of communication where direct engagement between conflicting parties may be difficult. These approaches are consistent with the relational emphasis of Conflict Transformation Theory, which views sustainable peace as requiring the transformation of relationships and the conditions that produce conflict. The study also found that the ZCC has contributed through advocacy and civic education. Pastoral letters, public statements, civic awareness programmes, and engagement on national issues have enabled the Church to address questions of governance, citizenship, justice, and peace. Such initiatives

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

demonstrate that the ZCC's role is not limited to responding to conflict after it occurs but also includes efforts to prevent conflict and promote responsible participation in public life.

Nevertheless, the findings revealed a gap between some peacebuilding activities and their longer term outcomes. Dialogue may create opportunities for engagement without necessarily producing changes in policy or political behaviour. Similarly, advocacy may raise important concerns without resulting in immediate structural transformation. The study therefore concludes that the ZCC has made meaningful contributions to justice, peace, and reconciliation, particularly at relational and community levels, while its ability to influence wider structural and political change remains more limited.

5.2.3 Influence of Matthew 5:9

Matthew 5:9 emerged as an important theological foundation for understanding the prophetic and peacebuilding vocation of the ZCC. Participants understood the statement, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God," as a call to active involvement in the creation and restoration of peace. Peacemaking was not understood merely as avoiding conflict or maintaining silence in situations of injustice. Rather, it involved engaging the causes and consequences of conflict through justice, truth, reconciliation, forgiveness, restoration, and the healing of broken relationships. The findings therefore established a connection between Matthew 5:9 and the practical activities of the ZCC. Advocacy can be understood as a response to injustice, mediation as an effort to restore relationships, civic education as a means of promoting responsible citizenship, and reconciliation programmes as practical expressions of the Christian call to peacemaking. The verse therefore provides a theological basis for understanding peacebuilding as an essential part of Christian public witness.

The study further found that the concept of peace reflected in Matthew 5:9 is consistent with the broader biblical understanding of peace as involving justice, right relationships,

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restoration, and human flourishing. This understanding also connects with Conflict Transformation Theory, which emphasises the transformation of relationships, structures, and social conditions that sustain conflict. However, the findings showed that the application of this theological ideal is not always straightforward. Political pressures, institutional limitations, and competing interests can make it difficult for the Church to fully translate its theological convictions into prophetic action.

5.2.4 Key Themes from Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis identified four major dimensions of the ZCC's prophetic ministry: prophetic truth telling, advocacy for marginalised groups, dialogue and mediation, and civic education. These themes emerged from the analysis of participant responses, interviews, and documentary evidence and demonstrate the different ways in which the ZCC exercises its prophetic responsibility.

Prophetic truth telling emerged as an important dimension because participants associated the Church's prophetic role with speaking against injustice and drawing attention to issues of accountability and human dignity. Advocacy for marginalised groups similarly demonstrated the Church's responsibility to ensure that vulnerable voices are recognised within public and community discussions. Dialogue and mediation emerged as practical mechanisms for reducing tensions, rebuilding trust, and creating opportunities for reconciliation among divided groups. Civic education was also identified as an important form of prophetic engagement. Through civic education, the Church can encourage responsible citizenship, peaceful participation, awareness of rights and responsibilities, and constructive engagement with national issues. These four themes demonstrate that the ZCC's prophetic ministry combines theological proclamation with practical engagement in society.

At the same time, the findings showed that the implementation of these forms of prophetic engagement is not always consistent. Political pressure, limited resources,

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institutional constraints, denominational differences, and concerns about maintaining relationships with different stakeholders can influence the extent of prophetic action. The thematic findings therefore present the ZCC as an institution that possesses significant potential for prophetic ministry but operates within a context that can both enable and constrain its effectiveness.

5.2.5 Challenges and Limitations

The study identified several challenges that affect the ZCC's prophetic ministry. Political pressure and limited civic space were among the most significant challenges because they can restrict the ability of churches to address sensitive political and governance issues openly. The study also found that denominational differences and differing political loyalties can affect ecumenical unity and make it difficult to develop a consistent collective prophetic voice.

Another important challenge was the inadequate representation of women and youth in some leadership and decision making structures. This may limit the diversity of perspectives within peacebuilding processes and reduce opportunities for younger generations and women to contribute fully to prophetic ministry.

Financial and institutional constraints were also identified as factors that can affect the implementation, continuity, and reach of peacebuilding programmes. The study further identified a gap between national and grassroots perspectives. While national structures may develop policies, statements, and programmes, their impact depends partly on how effectively these initiatives reach and respond to local communities. Grassroots experiences are important because they provide insight into how conflict, injustice, and reconciliation are experienced in everyday life.

Finally, the study recognised a limitation in assessing the longer-term effectiveness of some ZCC initiatives. The available evidence provides strong indications of contributions to dialogue, civic awareness, relationship building, and mediation, but there is less evidence to

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demonstrate sustained structural transformation over time. This distinction is important because the existence of activities does not automatically establish their effectiveness. Despite these challenges, the ZCC's ecumenical networks, theological foundation, moral credibility, and presence within communities provide important opportunities for strengthening its prophetic witness and contribution to justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe.

5.3 Conclusions Drawn

The study concludes that Matthew 5:9 provides a strong theological foundation for the ZCC's prophetic vocation. Peacemaking involves more than the absence of conflict; it requires justice, truth, reconciliation, mercy, and restored relationships. The ZCC expresses this vocation through dialogue, mediation, advocacy, civic education, pastoral communication, and reconciliation initiatives. Its ecumenical identity, moral credibility, and grassroots networks provide important opportunities for peacebuilding. However, the study also concludes that the effectiveness of the ZCC is uneven. Its contribution is more evident in dialogue, civic awareness, relationship building, and community engagement than in longer term structural and political transformation. Political pressure, limited civic space, financial constraints, denominational differences, and institutional concerns influence the extent of its prophetic engagement.

Overall, the study concludes that the prophetic role of the ZCC involves a continuing tension between courage and caution, confrontation and dialogue, and moral witness and institutional survival. Matthew 5:9 calls the Church to pursue peace actively through justice, truth, reconciliation, and social responsibility. The ZCC has made an important contribution to this vocation in Zimbabwe, but sustained transformation requires cooperation among the Church, political actors, government, civil society, and communities.

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5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen the prophetic role of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe.

5.4.1 Recommendations for Church Practice

The ZCC should strengthen grassroots peacebuilding structures and communication between local and national levels so that its prophetic engagement responds more effectively to local experiences of conflict, injustice, and reconciliation. Community dialogue forums and effective feedback mechanisms would enable local concerns to inform national programmes and advocacy. The ZCC should also increase the participation of women and youth in leadership, peacebuilding, and decision making through appropriate mentorship and leadership development programmes. This would promote more inclusive and intergenerational prophetic ministry.

In addition, the ZCC should maintain its non-partisan identity while strengthening the clarity and consistency of its prophetic witness. Its public statements, civic education, and advocacy should remain grounded in justice, accountability, human dignity, and responsible citizenship while maintaining constructive engagement with political authorities. Such an approach would enable the Church to balance prophetic courage with its responsibility to remain a credible space for dialogue and reconciliation.

5.4.2 Recommendations for Policy and Ecumenical Engagement

The ZCC should strengthen collaboration with government institutions, civil society organisations, and other ecumenical bodies because sustainable peacebuilding requires cooperation across institutional and social boundaries. Coordinated platforms for dialogue should provide space for diverse stakeholders, particularly communities affected by conflict and injustice, to participate in discussions on governance, justice, peace, and reconciliation. At

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the same time, the institutional independence of the ZCC should be protected because its prophetic credibility depends on its ability to address injustice and governance concerns without undue political influence. Greater ecumenical unity is also necessary. Joint theological and public statements on significant national issues would strengthen the collective Christian voice, reduce fragmentation, and enhance the moral authority of the Church in public discourse. Through stronger collaboration, institutional independence, and ecumenical unity, the ZCC would be better positioned to contribute constructively to national transformation while maintaining its prophetic responsibility.

5.4.3 Recommendations for Theological Reflection

The study recommends the development of a stronger African contextual theology of prophetic ministry, peacebuilding, and reconciliation. Such a theology should connect biblical teaching, particularly Matthew 5:9, with African experiences of injustice, conflict, reconciliation, communal life, and social transformation. In this framework, peacemaking should be understood as an active process involving justice, truth, reconciliation, restoration, and transformation rather than merely the absence of conflict.

Theological institutions should therefore strengthen training in public theology, conflict transformation, governance ethics, civic engagement, and reconciliation. This would equip church leaders to interpret Scripture critically within their social and political contexts and to exercise prophetic ministry with both theological conviction and practical competence. Such theological formation would also strengthen the capacity of the Church to address structural injustice while remaining committed to dialogue, reconciliation, and peaceful transformation.

5.4.4 Recommendations for Political Parties and Government

Political parties and government should recognise the constructive role of the Church and ecumenical organisations in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation. Political parties should create space for peaceful dialogue and engage faith based organisations on issues

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affecting national unity, governance, human dignity, and social justice. Government should protect the civic space necessary for churches to exercise their prophetic ministry without intimidation or undue political interference. The findings of this study indicate that the broader political environment influences the effectiveness of the ZCC's prophetic engagement.

Government and political actors should therefore regard constructive church engagement as part of the wider process of building peaceful and accountable institutions. Inclusive dialogue between political actors, government, churches, civil society, and communities should be strengthened, particularly during periods of political tension and national transition. Such engagement would support the principles of Matthew 5:9 by creating conditions in which peace is pursued through dialogue, justice, reconciliation, and respect for human dignity.

5.4.5 Recommendations for Further Research

Further research should:

1. Examine prophetic ministry across African ecumenical organisations to identify similarities, differences, and practices that could strengthen the ZCC's contribution to justice, peace, and reconciliation.
2. Research should also investigate the participation of women and youth in church based peacebuilding, particularly the institutional and cultural barriers that limit their representation in formal leadership and decision making. Such studies could contribute to the development of more inclusive models of prophetic ministry.
3. Finally, longitudinal research is recommended to assess the longer term outcomes of ZCC initiatives such as dialogue, advocacy, civic education, mediation, and reconciliation. While the present study provided important insights into participant experiences and perceptions, longitudinal studies could provide stronger evidence of whether these interventions produce sustained relational, institutional, and structural

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transformation. This would further strengthen academic understanding of the effectiveness and long term contribution of ecumenical prophetic ministry in Zimbabwe.

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Appendix I: Informed Consent Letter

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Department of Master of Theology and Ecumenical Leadership

Researcher: Aurtha Gumbo

Email: aurthagumbo@gmail.com Phone: +263775600432

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

STUDY TITLE: THE PROPHETIC ROLE OF THE ZIMBABWE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (ZCC) IN PROMOTING JUSTICE, PEACE, AND RECONCILIATION IN ZIMBABWE. AN ANALYSIS OF MATTHEW 5:9

Dear Participant,

I am Aurtha Gumbo, a Master of Theology in Ecumenical Leadership student at St Paul's University, Limuru, Kenya, conducting research on the prophetic role of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe, with particular reference to Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." You are invited to participate because of your experience or involvement in church leadership, ecumenical work, or peacebuilding. Participation will involve an interview or responding to questions about the ZCC's role in justice, peace, and reconciliation, and the interview is expected to take approximately 40 to 60 minutes.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to decline to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

All information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your name and personal details will not appear in the final research report. Pseudonyms or codes will be used to protect your identity. Data collected will be securely stored and used strictly for academic purposes.

Risks and Benefits

This study addresses sensitive issues relating to justice and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. While there are minimal risks involved, some questions may touch on politically sensitive experiences. You may choose not to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable. Although there may be no direct personal benefit, your contribution will help strengthen theological reflection and understanding of the Church's prophetic role in promoting peace and justice.

Consent

By signing below, you confirm that:

1. You have read and understood the information provided above.

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2. You have had the opportunity to ask questions and received satisfactory answers.
3. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
4. You understand that you may withdraw at any time.

Participant Name: ……

Signature: ……

Date: ……

Researcher Signature: ……..

Date: …….

If you require further clarification, please feel free to contact me using the details provided above. Thank you for your valuable contribution to this research.

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Appendix II: Research Questionnaire.

Introductory Statement

Calvary Greetings. I am Aurtha Gumbo, a Master of Theology student specialising in Ecumenical Leadership at St Paul's University, Kenya. I am conducting an academic research entitled **THE PROPHETIC ROLE OF THE ZIMBABWE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (ZCC) IN PROMOTING JUSTICE, PEACE AND RECONCILIATION IN ZIMBABWE, AN ANALYSIS OF MATTHEW 5:9**. This questionnaire is designed sorely for academic purposes. Your participation is voluntary, and all responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and anonymity. You are free to decline any question or withdraw at any stage. The study does not seek political or personal gain, but aims to contribute to theological and academic understanding of peacebuilding within Zimbabwean context.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

(Please tick or briefly indicate where applicable)

Gender:

☐ Male ☐ Female

Age Group:

☐ 18–30 ☐ 31–45 ☐ 46–60 ☐ 61 and above

Role/Position:

☐ Church leader (ZCC member church) ☐ Ecumenical partner

☐ Community member / beneficiary ☐Theologian/academica

☐ Political or Peace practitioner ☐ Other (please specify): ……

Years of involvement in church or peacebuilding work:

☐ Less than 5years ☐ 5–10 years ☐ Over 10 years

Province or area of engagement (optional): ……

SECTION B: THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROPHETIC ROLE

In your own understanding, what does the prophetic role of the church mean in the context of Zimbabwe today?

……
……

How does the Zimbabwe Council of Churches understand and interpret its prophetic calling in relation to justice, peace, and reconciliation?

……
……...

To what extent does Matthew 5:9 ("Blessed are the peacemakers…") shape the ZCC's theology and public engagement?

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……
……..

How relevant are biblical prophetic examples such as Amos, Hosea, and Nathan's confrontation of King David to the ZCC's engagement with injustice and abuse of power today?

……
……..

SECTION C: FORMS OF PROPHETIC ENGAGEMENT BY THE ZCC.

What practical strategies or activities has the ZCC used to promote justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe?

……
……
……

Can you describe any specific programmes or interventions where the ZCC acted prophetically during times of political tension or social conflict?

……
……

How does the ZCC balance cooperation with political actors and the need to maintain independence and moral credibility?

……
……..

In what ways does ecumenical collaboration (for example through ZHOCD, AACC, or WCC) strengthen or limit the ZCC's peacebuilding work?

……

SECTION D: EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ZCC'S PROPHETIC ROLE

In your view, how effective has the ZCC been in advancing justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe?

……
……

What visible or tangible changes (social, relational, institutional, or spiritual) have resulted from the ZCC's peace initiatives?

……
……

How do communities, political leaders, or state institutions respond to the ZCC's prophetic voice?

……
……

Do you think the ZCC's interventions contribute to long-term transformation, or are they mainly focused on crisis response? Please explain.

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……
……

SECTION E: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

What major challenges hinder the effectiveness of the ZCC's prophetic role in Zimbabwe?

……
……

How does political pressure or church-state relations affect the ZCC's ability to speak truth to power?

……
……

What opportunities exist for strengthening the ZCC's contribution to justice, peace, and reconciliation in the future?

……
……

How can theological reflection, African values of ubuntu, and Conflict Transformation approaches improve the ZCC's peacebuilding work?

……
……

SECTION F: SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In your opinion, what should be the priority areas for the ZCC if it is to remain faithful to its prophetic calling in Zimbabwe today?

……
……

Are there any additional reflections, experiences, or recommendations you would like to share regarding the church's role in peace and reconciliation?

……
……
……

CLOSING REMARKS

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. Your insights are valuable to understanding the prophetic role of the Church in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. The findings will be used for academic purposes and to inform faith-based peacebuilding efforts. May God bless you for your valuable contribution.

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