

# Emerging Ecumenical Church Polity, 1965–2010: Lessons from Efforts at Church Unity in Zambia

**Godfrey Msiska**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2583-1914>

University of Pretoria

[gmsiska2000@gmail.com](mailto:gmsiska2000@gmail.com)

**Graham Duncan**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2583-1914>

University of Pretoria

[profgrahamduncan@gmail.com](mailto:profgrahamduncan@gmail.com)

## Abstract

This article explores an emerging ecumenical church polity in Zambia from a church historical perspective. While church polity and church unity literature has acknowledged the role of church polity and church unity in Zambia, and its use for ecclesiological purposes, the growing use of church polity and the efforts at church unity in the period 1965–2010 in Zambia, have remained unexamined. This article thus explores qualitatively how church polity and church unity were viewed in church legislation and official church documents of the United Church of Zambia (UCZ), the Anglican Church in Zambia (ACZ) and the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) in Zambia. The article observes that ecumenical church polity has indeed been developed in Zambia and lessons from efforts at church unity in Zambia can assist in developing ecumenical church polity. This is demonstrated by comparing the church legislation and by studying lessons from efforts at church unity within the ranks of the UCZ, ACZ and UPCSA, among other ways. The article therefore advances the argument that ecumenical church polity can be developed by comparing the church legislation provisions and by studying the lessons from efforts at church unity in Zambia. This article contributes to the field of church history, church polity and ecclesiology.

**Keywords:** church polity; church unity; church order; ecumenical church polity; ecclesiology

## Introduction

Church polity in Zambia is one of the less recognised theological disciplines. Direct reasons for this position of the discipline may be indicated as *inter alia* bad experiences in church polity with regard to church schisms, the influence of the church divisions, and lack of efforts at church union. The article explores the emerging ecumenical church



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polity in Zambia with reference to the growing use of church polity and lessons from efforts at church unity in Zambia. The article arises out of the concern that one of the most significant—but often overlooked—factors in the church, is the role played by church polity and church unity.

This article argues in favour of a common vision for church unity in Zambia; this can be done from a juridical point of view by drawing from the provisions of the church polity of different denominations which belong to the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ), seeking points of convergence. It also contends that there are many complementary and overlapping provisions within the ranks of the United Church of Zambia (UCZ), the Anglican Church in Zambia (ACZ) and the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) that have been investigated from the standpoint of their church polity. Here, Reuver (2000, 1) holds that “the church to remain credible needs juridical structures and laws which balance stability and openness to change.” This is true, as a common juridical structure and laws will ensure a strong union within the church in Zambia. It is worth noting that the UCZ, ACZ and UPCSA are part of the CCZ, an ecumenical council of churches. However, this article is proposing that consideration might be given to all three denominations becoming one denomination.

The theoretical framework is developed from Koffeman’s conception of church polity and Doe’s comparative study of religious law, purporting that it is possible to find common grounds for different legislative provisions of churches (Koffeman 2014, 61; Doe 2013, 388). A church legislative comparative analysis of the UCZ, ACZ and UPCSA in Zambia is carried out.

In view of this research, it is possible for churches to have a common church order based on identifying provisions that are common to each denomination. Furthermore, it is observed that the constitutions of the UCZ, ACZ and UPCSA have common legislative provisions to form one ecumenical church, meaning that the three churches should become one. The benefit of a common church order is that ecclesial conflicts and disputes will be resolved in a specific Christian way, following procedures relative to each other denomination.

It seems evident that the three Protestant churches in Zambia can meaningfully unite with each other on the basis of ecumenical church polity. It must be stated that if the three Protestant churches in Zambia can unite, they will have a significant number of church members and ecumenical influence in Zambia.

The article explores qualitative methods in the form of a literature study to gather data and make meaning of the data. Church legislation of the UCZ, ACZ and UPCSA are sampled and analysed. However, this will be complemented by the study of lessons to be learnt from efforts at church unity within the ranks of the UCZ, ACZ and UPCSA. The main question which guided data collection of the research that directed this article,

was centred on establishing how church polity can be used to develop ecumenical church polity.

## Methodology

This article is based on case studies of the UCZ, ACZ and UPCS. These case studies are located within the theoretical framework of church history and church polity. The UCZ is used as a single case study because it was established as a result of church union. ACZ and UPCS are considered as case studies because of their initiatives and efforts to unite with the UCZ. The ACZ and UPCS are used as multiple case studies to allow the researcher to take a comparative perspective. The researcher has taught at UCZ Theological University since 2008; he also taught at Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation in 2010, as well as at St John's Seminary for the Anglican Church in Zambia from 2014–2016. The researcher is an ordained minister in UPCS. The researcher was a participant-observer. A unique set of circumstances allowed the researcher to gain a good understanding of the UCZ, ACZ and UPCS. The researcher has been involved in the ecumenical leadership in Zambia. This allowed him the opportunity to conduct a qualitative study of this phenomenon by way of participant-observation, which allowed for the collection of data by observing participants directly, and asking them open-ended questions in multiple interviews (Creswell 2015, 4).

Through the researcher's involvement in the ecumenical theological education at Extension College in Zambia (TEEZ), and as a member of the executive of the management leadership at national level from 2009–2013, he came to understand the polity and ecumenical involvement of the UCZ, ACZ and UPCS in fostering close links with other churches. As part of this research, the polity of the UCZ, ACZ and UPCS in Zambia was constructed using a literature study of each denomination's officially stated view.

The focus of the study was the approaches of church polity and efforts at church union in Zambia in the period 1965–2010. This necessitated a broader description of church polity and church union in Zambia through interviews conducted with scholars, theologians and church leaders—both the clergy and laity. The period 1965–2010 was a unique phase because it is the period after Zambia had received its political independence. Following independence and the Zambianisation of the churches in Zambia, it was anticipated that church leaders, such as moderators and bishops, would be Africans.

## Conceptualising Ecumenical Church Polity

The article utilises the broad and general definition of ecumenical church polity as suggested by Koffeman (2014, 37), that ecumenical church polity expresses the common church legislation. Koffeman insists that ecumenical church polity should become part of the church polity agenda (2014, 37).

In the quest for an ecumenical church polity, the polities of the three Protestant churches in Zambia (which have been used as case studies in this paper) will be investigated in an attempt to establish one potential uniform juridical pattern and a single juridical model. The methodological perspective is to compare the existing church legislation of the UCZ, ACZ and UPCSAs denominations to show the variety among themselves in both contents and level of authority in their respective polities. This existing church legislation falls within the period of study because the church orders which are being examined are within the period of study. The characteristics of this church legislation and their diversity are primarily due to the particular historical contexts from which they emerged. However, these church polities cannot just be copied into the Zambian context. During this period, from 1965–2010, differences became clear and divisions among the three Protestant churches were also associated with a lack of serious contextualisation of church legislative provisions. The problem regarding disunity within the current ecumenical church polity and legislative provisions on church unity in the ranks of churches and ecumenical bodies, is that they are not working efficiently.

Further investigation of the sharpening of the divergences of these church legislative provisions of the UCZ, ACZ and UPCSAs indicated that these three Protestant churches were also reacting against existing legal models; a response which has also been a source of ecclesial divisions. The understanding of law is a good point of departure in the process of understanding the church polity that reflects the reality of Zambia.

## The Emergence of an Ecumenical Church Polity

The hypothesis of this paper is that an ecumenical church polity is emerging in the UCZ, ACZ and UPCSAs and this ought to be reflected in church polity. The emerging ecumenical church polity must be understood in the context of ecumenism and church polity (Bolink 1967, 380) that is visible in the deliberations of the church order that was formulated for the UCZ. This was prepared in 1947 by Rev. D. K. Francis and it was revised six times before it was adopted in 1965 (Bolink 1967, 270–279). This church order was prepared in such a way that it was open to the possibilities of a reunion with other Protestant churches that did not join the union at that time (Bolink 1967, 380).

History has demonstrated that the church order that was formulated for the UCZ was one-sided: it concentrated on the organisational side of the church rather than on the confessional side of the church. Its main concern was to prepare a church order for maintaining order in the church, and for the government of the church (Bolink 1967, 366–399).

It is clear that this church order was prepared by European missionaries, because the African Christians were not vocal in the negotiations for the union of the UCZ and most of them had no knowledge of church polity. This church order was imposed on African Christians (Verstraelen 1982, 332) and its scope corresponded with the political feelings among Africans who believed in national unity. However, it is not clear if the African Christians understood the importance of this union of churches because the negotiations

towards church union were carried out by European missionaries (Verstraelen 1982, 332).

The UCZ was formed three months after national independence on 16 January 1965 (Chuba 2005, 144). The union was interpreted as marking the end of the colonial era, even in the church (Luig 1997, 223).

## The Juridical Approach to Church Polity

The juridical approach suggests that church polity needs more juridical education in order to understand the relation between legal provisions in church polity (Koffeman 2010b, 7–9). A good understanding of law is important, as well as the acknowledgement that law defines power and has the potential to allocate power (Koffeman 2010a, 1–7). Du Plooy calls the juridical approach a juridical science because church polity, constitutional law, criminal law, and disciplinary law all have the same kind of practice of justice (Du Plooy 2000, 170–173). Torfs (1995, 23–30) proposes that the legal provisions in church polity create a sound legal culture within the church.

Koffeman (2015, 193) played an important role in laying the groundwork for a new approach to church polity. Koffeman (2015, 193), in his article, “The Ecumenical Potential of Church Polity,” discusses the relationship between theology and legal philosophy with a dialogue on ecumenism. This dialogue will serve the ecumenical movements. He further suggests that the dialogue of theological and legal questions must open new possibilities to develop ecumenical church polity (2015, 193). Koffeman seeks to address a new role of church polity in ecclesiology and ecumenism.

In his comparative study of episcopal, Presbyterian, and congregational forms of governance, Koffeman (2014, 61) holds that each church system must be challenged theologically, and each includes challenges to the other systems; there is no ideal system—the only option is a truly ecumenical approach, which recognises that each church polity system is necessarily provisional, and that church polity is there in order to serve the mission of the church (2014, 80).

Similarly, Doe (2013, 388) makes an analysis of regulatory instruments of different Christian denominations, structures with thoughtfulness rarely adopted even by those of the faith tradition concerned (2013, 388). His comparative study of principles of Christian law gives focus and energy to the ecumenical enterprise.

Koffeman (2014, 233) argues that the focus of ecumenism has been on bilateral and multilateral discourses, as well as on ecumenical ecclesiology; and more focus has been on doctrinal debates. He further discusses the church in a context of church law which is shaped in continuing interaction with culture—or rather with cultures. In addition, church polity is contextual. For ecumenism to be effective, one should consider the issue of the church-state relationships, which are shaped by two legal systems at the same time (Koffeman 2014, 237)—the state law and church law.

In his discussion on the ecumenical church polity in practice, Koffeman suggests that alongside unilateral norms made by the church on ecumenism and joint norm-making, inter-church agreements, ecumenical partners could use to develop a joint set of regulations in which the churches transfer specific competencies to ecumenical organisations, arbitration committees or other bodies. He insists that ecumenical church polity should become part of the church polity agenda (Koffeman 2014, 37).

## Juridical Analysis of UCZ, ACZ and UPCSA

Table. 1:

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Unity</b>	<b>Doctrine</b>	<b>Church membership</b>	<b>Priesthood of all believers</b>
UCZ	Article 3	Article 4	Article XI (4)	Article 8
ACZ	Canon 1 & 1a, Article V	Article V	Article 11, 12 & 13	Article 7
UPCSA	Chapter 2 Appendix E (1), E (2) & E (4)	Chapter 2: 1–2:5	Chapter 1: 3–5	Chapter 2.6.4, 2.6.5 & 2.6.6

Table 2:

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Church Discipline</b>	<b>Autonomy</b>	<b>Property</b>	<b>Laity</b>
UCZ	Article 16	Article 17	Article 18	Article 9
ACZ	Canon 24, 25	Article 5	Canon 33	Article 7, Canon 14 & 18
UPCSA	Chapter 18	Chapter 12: 46–51	Chapter 12: 69	Chapter 2.6.4, 2.6.5 & 2.6.6

Table 3:

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Baptism</b>	<b>Holy communion</b>	<b>Government of the church</b>	<b>Legal issues</b>
UCZ	Article 5	Article 5	Article 11	Article 17
ACZ	Article 11	Article 14	Article 5	Article 5
UPCSA	Chapter 1: 6–7 & Chapter 3	Chapter 1: 6–7 & Chapter 4	Chapter 1: 8–12	Chapter 12: 46–51

### Tables 1, 2 and 3 Juridical Analysis

This section begins with a brief survey of the selected legislative provisions of church orders of the UCZ, ACZ and UPCSA, and then, after discussing the legislative provisions more clearly, relates that discussion to specific ecumenical church polities.

The tables above show chapters, articles and canons of church legislation, but do not provide the actual views on certain theological issues found in each church.

It is clear from tables 1 and 3 that the UCZ and UPCSAs have the same roots in Scotland, but they live differently in Zambia (Bolink 1967, 347; Pons 1982, 4).

Table 3 shows that within the UCZ and UPCSAs, church legislation articles on Presbyterianism discuss the issue that the power of the church is in the hands of the assemblies. Besides that, under the same church legislation article, the item of a quorum is raised, namely that for a quorum to be constituted they need the elders and the ministers. However, there is a problem with this: for some reasons (especially in UPCSAs) there were deacons who were not part of the new polity concept of a united church.

On church government and unity, tables 1, 2 and 3 show that the two church orders of the UCZ and UPCSAs have shared historical development of Presbyterian church government. However, these churches follow Presbyterian principles; in particular, the principle of the rule by plurality of elders at the local congregation, and second, the principle of submission of a local governing body to a higher governing body. In the third place, the unity of church would find its most concrete representation in the connection of churches and their elders in regional and trans-regional councils. The last point on unity is a good principle, but most members of the Presbyterian family are not connected to each other within the denomination horizontally. From tables 1, 2 and 3, the ACZ church government shows that it is governed by bishops, while the UCZ and UPCSAs are governed by elders who are spiritually mature, and then by congregations (UCZ 1965a,b/1982/1984/1994/2004, Article 11, ACZ 1996, Article 5, UPCSAs 2007a,b,c/2010a,b, Chapter 1, 8–12).

From the legislative provisions of the UCZ, ACZ and UPCSAs, it is clear that, in principle, these churches are not opposed to church unity; which view is supported by their legislative provisions. A campaign needs to be launched to raise awareness of the kind of church unity that is sought. The research tried to answer the following question: What should be a realistic approach of church polity for visible church unity in Zambia?

From Article V of the ACZ, it is clear that regarding church doctrine, the constitution lays down the episcopal synod, which consists only of bishops of the province who have final authority in matters concerning the preservation of the truth of the church's doctrine, purity of life, and worthiness of worship. Synods have very wide authority to legislate, but regarding the authority of bishops on matters of faith and order, the bishop is the last resort (UCZ 1965a,b/1982/1984/1994/2004, Article 4, ACZ 1996, Article 5, UPCSAs 2007a,b,c/2010a,b, Chapter 2, 1–2, 4).

From the legislative provisions, the UCZ, ACZ and UPCSAs believe that the Bible is the word of God. It is clear that the UCZ, ACZ and UPCSAs agree that the Holy Spirit makes

Holy Scripture the word of God, the message in which God reveals himself and gives himself to humans. This work of the Holy Spirit is an incarnational event; the word of God takes flesh among us. It is up to all believers, and to the church, to open the way for the advent of this gospel of God. In view of this, Christians and churches have an interpretative task to allow the word of God to speak for itself. With regard to the interpretation of scripture there is a need for hermeneutical keys, exegetical methods and legitimacy of interpretation (McGrath 2011, 409)

Church membership is determined according to the model of a roll of members, as inherited from missionaries (UCZ 1965a,b/1982/1984/1994/2004, Article XI (4), ACZ 1996, Article 11, 12 & 13, UPCSA 2007a,b,c/2010a,b, Chapter 1, 3–5). What is the implication of the missionary-inherited model of church membership, as opposed to a traditional understanding of membership? Today, church members are not interested in the model of a roll of members. They want a church with open doors—not a legally binding, prescriptive list.

It is not uncommon to find a dual kind of church membership in Protestant churches and evangelical churches in Zambia. Similarly, it is found that the Reformed Church in Zambia (RCZ) and Brethren in Christ Church (BICC) are both members of CCZ and Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ). This is gradually becoming a normal type of membership in most of the mainline churches. Because of the pressure put on mainline churches by evangelicals, most of the mainline churches have been inviting evangelicals to their churches. It is worth noting that there is tension between evangelical Christianity and Protestant Christianity in Zambia. This has resulted in the rise of a dual membership problem in the church in Zambia. In this regard, Johnson (2009, 90) quotes John Calvin, who said that all believers in the church are considered equal in the eyes of God. The question which should be addressed is: Where—and in whom—does authority reside in the Protestant churches in Zambia? However, this situation is also seen in the ecumenical bodies' question of lay Christian involvement (which is weak), consequently affecting efforts at church unity. It is clear that lay Christian leaders want to have more active participation in the running of churches and ecumenical bodies. It should be pointed out that involvement in the church is not limited to membership.

From the tables above, it is clear to see both the clergy and the laity as part of the priesthood of all believers. As a result, the main emphasis of these churches is the service of God's people through the priesthood of all believers. Here, the emphasis is on the service of the church towards the world, and its emphasis is on the participation and responsibility of *all* lay people and clergy for the church's mission.

After comparing the constitutions of the UCZ, ACZ and UPCSA, it is clear that these constitutions need to be reviewed and brought up to date to allow the laity to have a greater role in the “running of the church”; and also that the Reformed teaching of the priesthood of all believers should be taken seriously (UCZ



1965a,b/1982/1984/1994/2004, Article 8, ACZ 1996, Article 7, UPCSA 2007a,b,c/2010a,b, Chapter 2.6.4, 2.6.5 & 2.6.6).

It has been mentioned earlier that the involvement of lay Christians in ecumenical bodies is weak, consequently affecting efforts at church unity. It is clear that lay Christian leaders want to have more active participation in the running of churches and ecumenical bodies.

From the above tables, it is possible to determine the place of autonomy in the legislative provisions of these three churches. The article of autonomy can be illustrated by the article in the UPCSA church order that UPCSA in Zambia wanted to be autonomous from UPCSA. It has been focusing on Venn's three "-selves": self-governing, self-propagating and self-sustaining (Anderson 1999, 698). The main problem is identified in the UPCSA Synod of Zambia's strategic plan 2007–2009 on the weaknesses, for which urgent attention is required to resolve these problems on matters of governance. However, the discussion on autonomy has been one-sided because the issue in question involves matters of control, power and authority. The deliberations on Zambian autonomy from UPCSA have tended towards a *modus vivendi* (a matter of agreeing to disagree) for church officers and church members. It is worth noting that the UCZ and ACZ have legislative powers on matters of faith and order, but UPCSA in Zambia has no legislative power. The issue of autonomy has affected efforts at church union for over 45 years (UCZ 1965a,b/1982/1984/1994/2004, Article 17, ACZ 1996, Article 5, UPCSA 2007a,b,c/2010a,b, Chapter 12, 46–51).

With regard to property, from jurisprudence, it is easy to see that the highest council has control of the ownership of land and consequent responsibilities. Such interests could be mortgages, leases, licences, easements or profits. All these are responsibilities of the highest council, namely to deal with rights and liabilities of landowners or property owners. In the case of UPCSA, the ownership of land and their interests are held in the hands of the general trustees of the denomination or in that of individual congregations (UCZ 1965a,b/1982/1984/1994/2004, Article 18, ACZ 1996, Canon 33, UPCSA 2007a,b,c/2010a,b, Chapter 12, 69).

In evaluating church discipline within the ranks of the UCZ, ACZ and UPCSA, it is important to give a brief historical development of ecclesiastical discipline. It should be said that church discipline has developed through different contexts and with different applications, influenced by different political and ecclesiastical situations. The question is: How does church discipline reflect the exigency of Zambian reality? Of course, the immediate answer to this question is, through contextualisation. Church discipline has developed as a result of different historical and contextual situations. For that reason, it is very important to note that there are many Reformers who have contributed to the development of church discipline. Along with that, church discipline aims at maintaining the purity of the church, which is the Body of Christ. Efforts at church union in Zambia have been affected for over 45 years by the issue of church discipline

(UCZ 1965a,b/1982/1984/1994/2004, Article 16, 24, ACZ 1996, Canon 24, 25, UPCSA 2007a,b,c/2010a,b, Chapter 18).

In evaluating the UCZ, ACZ and UPCSA views on Baptism and Holy Communion, it is clear that these churches in Zambia can achieve the visible unity they seek, as one of the essential prerequisites is that they should be in basic agreement on the sacraments. From the legislative provisions on Baptism and Holy Communion, therefore, these churches are already in agreement. As much as there is wide agreement on Baptism and Holy Communion, these churches do not necessarily agree on an understanding of the interpretation of scripture regarding Baptism and Holy Communion (UCZ 1965a,b/1982/1984/1994/2004, Article 5, ACZ 1996, Article 11, 14, UPCSA 2007a,b,c/2010a,b, Chapter 1, 16–17).

## Ecumenism in Zambia

The ecumenical work of the UCZ (1965a,b) was dominated by amateur ecumenists. There have been 45 years of the “UCZ” embodying the confession ecumenically, but it is worth mentioning that the confessional norms of the church had not been strong. Bolink (1967) carried out research on church union in Zambia in order to analyse the ecumenical work of missionaries’ cooperation. One of the most important contributions by Bolink (1967) and Chuba’s (2005) research on church unity in Zambia, was to create and disseminate information about ecumenism and efforts at church unity.

At this point, before proceeding further, it is worth giving a brief explanation about the problem of church unity in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). Morris holds that:

... the single greatest problem facing the leaders of the new African states is that of maintaining national unity in the face of [a] tendency to fusion caused by tribalism and regionalism. A church therefore, which is divisive in its effects, segregating Africans into groups labelled Methodist, Presbyterian and Anglican and so on, is both an object of scorn and [a] direct threat to the purpose of the state. (Morris 1963, 40)

In 1965, President Kenneth Kaunda welcomed the formation of the UCZ, aided by Rev. Colin Morris, who had for a long time dreamt of a “National Church” in Northern Rhodesia (Morris 1963, 41). One cannot flee visible disunity to an invisible unity; nor can one restore unity by seeing only religious societies that might coexist and incorporate.

The missionaries in Zambia believed that there was a need to have one church. The union of the UCZ was born out of a real desire by missionaries to see one, united Protestant church of Zambia. The union was a product of friendships that had been established over many years through missionary co-operative efforts, and out of the conviction that this was what God wanted; one church. The union was established by missionaries who were unhappy with the separateness of the Christian churches in their homelands, and were anxious not to be guilty of bequeathing the same divisions on the emerging Christian church in Zambia. The process towards union was financially

supported by their home churches. In addition, the missionaries had specific areas of operation in Zambia; each missionary brought into the union his identity and a group of people. On top of that, missionaries had developed trust and friendship among themselves due to frequent meetings of the General Missionary Conference; meanwhile their followers had not.

With this in mind, the social and cultural division in the history of Zambian society was rather more clearly seen and felt, as the church activating the church union.

In this regard, Morris makes the important additional point that the union negotiation of the UCZ was predominant with “the west and above all, unable to drown out the strident cries of the hungry Third World for justice” (Morris 1968, 115). From this, it is evident that the union of the UCZ did not take the issues of justice in Zambia seriously. This article contends that every culture has its pre-understanding of justice, and this is also true in Zambian society. Therefore, without a study of traditional religions, a correct understanding of Zambian Christianity is almost impossible. It can without any doubt be said that Rev. Colin Morris was an authoritative character in the UCZ, because Morris identified with the pains and sufferings of the Africans before and after the independence of Northern Rhodesia (Morris 1968, 117).

In short, it can be stated that, throughout the history of the UCZ, it is noted that Rev. Colin Morris was “replaced as President of the UCZ by Black Zambian—a change much overdue, I had been on to the job too long, even though elected and re-elected by predominantly African membership” (Morris 1968, 115). Morris played a pivotal role in helping Africans to understand the concept of organic unity. Morris (1968, 115) holds that the:

... union negotiating nowhere and taking [a] long time about it, under assault from young Christians demanding less dogma and more action, increasingly aware that they shared the tawdry materialism of the West.

It is true that a lack of proper understanding of Christian doctrines, and the desire for material gain in the church in Zambia before political independence, were hinderances to organic church unity and affected the kind of organic church unity within the UCZ, which does not reflect the reality of Zambia.

With this said, it should be noted that in principle the white missionary was not against church unity as such, and as was supported by Morris (1963, 42). This shows that organic union was important in Zambia in the sense that “the soundest basis for unity is the indignant refusal of the rank and file membership to be kept apart from their fellow Christians any longer.” This view was widely accepted among white missionaries.

It should, however, be remembered that the model of church unity was based on a weak vision for future efforts at church union in Zambia; the UCZ was influenced by broader developments in Protestant efforts of church union at that time. In this regard, Morris

(1963, 43) holds that Christian mission in Africa should be based on a theology that takes into account the grace of God, and not a vested interest of personal gain.

Morris makes it clear that:

... the Christian church's continued existence can only be tolerated if it was seen to be helping the cause of political and social cohesion, and this was only possible if Christians were prepared to sink their differences and bring into being a national church. This was one of the compelling political, quite apart from theological, justifications for the move to integrate the Methodist church in Northern Rhodesia into United Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia. (Morris 1963, 41)

Missionaries were architects of the union movement; those who brought the church to Zambia. Here Morris discusses the idea further:

[The] Methodist [church] in Northern Rhodesia was largely a tribal church, its membership was almost entirely drawn from the tribes of the Central and Southern Provinces-tribes which are already politically at odds with the majority nationalist movement. It would be a scandal, therefore, if Methodists were to give religious sanction to political divisions which threaten the territory's peace and security. (Morris 1963, 41)

The vision of the UCZ, which was to open the new possibility for future unity in Zambia, proved to be inadequate. In this regard, we can refer back to the discussion on the vision of the UCZ in 1965. From this account, therefore, missionaries had a role in promoting unity in Northern Rhodesia for many years until the time of the union of the UCZ. Morris, however, does not ignore that:

A national church, on the other hand, which held within its ranks all to remain tribal groups, would serve as a shining example to the new state of the power of Christianity as a reconciling force, and so help to avert catastrophe. (Morris 1963, 41)

According to Kaunda (1966, 34–35), ecumenism is first a will to peace and unity, a very foundation for living and teaching ecumenism in Africa. A character feature of traditional life and attitudes in most places in Africa, is precisely a will to forgive and reconcile. Here Kaunda holds that:

We are also a forgiving people ... when I talk of our people being forgiving people, I do not mean that they are morally superior or more religious than other peoples. In our eyes, forgiveness is a social virtue which implies much more than words of absolution. It involves restoration to fellowship, the re-establishment of links which have been severed by the past behaviour by the one who needs to be forgiven. Because the only life we have known is life-in-community; to be unforgiven is to remain outside the circle of relationship, and this state of affairs is socially undesirable, quite apart from cruelty of the punishment ... we cannot afford overweening pride and desire for revenge to rule our hearts, because these vices are destructive of community. Our whole life is

togetherness, and to be cut off from our fellow human beings is to die in the soul. (Kaunda 1966, 34–35)

Kaunda's (1966, 81) view always had the advantage of a common language and culture to act as cohesive factors to bind the people together. In this regard, Kaunda believed that unity was important in a country. Kaunda makes it clear that:

All faiths should live together in harmony. We are, after all, human beings. We certainly cannot afford to add religious divisions to the tribal differences which threaten our national unity. Because I happen to be one of those odd people who feel equally at home in a cathedral, synagogue, temple or mosque, I recognise the power inherent in all the major faiths and urgently desire to see that power is harnessed for the welfare and good of humanity. (Kaunda 1973, 28)

From this account, the first President of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, always bemoaned the way churches had imported divisions into Zambia; therefore, Kaunda approved the union. What is more, Kaunda was present during the inauguration of the UCZ to show support for the union. The formation of the UCZ corresponded with President Kaunda's call to overcome imported denominations; to the political "One Zambia, One Nation"; the religious "One Church" should correspond. The desire for ecclesiastical unity was thus mixed with a desire to please the new state. The government did not want an excess of self-directed religious groups.

## Lessons from Efforts at Church Unity in Zambia

The concept of ecumenical church polity in this research refers to theological reflection aimed at nurturing the unity of the Christian church, or at overcoming schisms between divided churches. This research points towards developing an ecumenical church polity which can overcome divisions in churches.

In Zambia, the UCZ began well in uniting with other churches which did not join the union in 1965. The UCZ also created an atmosphere for ecumenism to grow in Zambia. What this paper has done is to evaluate issues in the context of ecumenical ecclesiology, following the Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1988, which had reaffirmed the following positions which were made in 1920: first, the scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the rule of faith; second, the Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed; and the two dominical sacraments. Along with that, the Anglican Church accepted the historic episcopate for administration (Study Book of Church Union between Anglican and UCZ in 1966b, 28).

These ecclesial historical decisions of the Anglican Church encouraged ACZ efforts to unite with the UCZ on common positions. Thus, a joint committee was formed in 1966 to undertake a comparative study of the ACZ and UCZ. This comparative study was to find a common direction in the historical relation between the ACZ and the UCZ, and also to find common ground in their church constitutions, church traditions and church

doctrines pertaining the ACZ and UCZ in 1966, with the view of establishing their common positions.

After 1966, all subsequent meetings between the ACZ and UCZ had underscored the theme of ecumenical ecclesiology. It was found necessary during the Anglican synod meeting in mid-1967 and the UCZ synod meeting in January 1968 to decide if and when possibly to enter into an agreement of sincere intention to seek organic unity (The Document of Basis for Consultation for Church Union of UCZ and ACZ 1965, 3). It is to be noted that the church union consultation discussions between the ACZ and UCZ were associated with some kind of visible unity.

In 1965, the Anglican Diocesan synod of Zambia unanimously resolved as follows:

That this synod recognising our Lord's call to unity within His church gives thanks to Almighty God for the inauguration of the UCZ; and mindful of the resolution passed by the provincial synod in 1962 welcomes the invitation now extended to the Anglican Church by the President of the UCZ enter into formal discussions with a view to closer links between two churches; and calls upon the Bishop to appoint six representatives to join official conversations with the United Church. (Anglican Diocese of Zambia, Minutes of 1965)

In 1965, a negotiating body met twice in the effort to foster church unity. Observers of the Roman Catholic Church, Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa (in Zambia) attended, and a representative of the African Reformed Church (now the Reformed Church in Zambia) was invited but did not attend (PCZ, Presbyterian Church of Zambia, Presbytery of Zambia, Minutes of 1965).

The UCZ synod of 1966 also resolved that:

The presbyteries on the conversations of union. Amongst the matters which should be drawn to their attention is the necessary commitment of the United Church to the Lambeth Quadrilateral, especially as it affects the incorporation of the Episcopal System. At the same time, it is stressed that providing the Historic Episcopate is continued in the Act of inauguration on union, no particular definition of Apostolic Succession, Historic Episcopate or the functions of the Bishop will be desired by the Anglican Church. It will be for the church to decide what form and function of Bishop will exist in the church to a new church of Zambia. (UCZ, Minutes of Synod Executive of 1966a)

From this it is evident that the ACZ and UCZ have been committed to efforts at church union in Zambia. Examining the Document of Basis for Consultation for Church Union of UCZ and ACZ (1965, 3), it is clear that the document expressed considerably greater interest in the efforts at church union between the ACZ and UCZ. The document of the Basis of Union Consultation of 1965, affirmed the need for visible unity. The decision regarding a more structured and organised approach to achieving visible unity was resolved between the ACZ and UCZ as follows:

The purpose of the conversations towards church union was to enter into union with a deep sense of the great spiritual need of Zambia and the world. We are surrounded with a sense of urgency, that as the action's motto is one Zambia, one nation, so under Christ there may be one church being in the one Zambia. (The Document of Basis for Consultation for Church Union of UCZ and ACZ 1965, 3)

Emphasis was placed on the motto: one Zambia, one nation, so under Christ there may be one church in the one Zambia. This motto of oneness was popular when Zambia attained its political independence from British rule, since Kaunda was faced with the task of building a new, united nation. From 1964, the motto "one Zambia, one Nation" was propagated. Kaunda was also concerned to promote a united approach to religion. It should, however, be remembered that the problem of the Lumpa Church uprising in 1964 confirmed Kaunda's dislike of the way in which the churches had imported their divisions into Zambia (Kaunda 1973, 16). The Lumpa Church was an African Independent Church which was banned after the political independence of Zambia.

When Zambia achieved its political independence in 1964, the theocratic state was perceived as a threat. Many people were killed in the process of the government's attempt to ban them. (Msiska 2014, 117)

The primary need in any move towards church unity is for the church members of each church to recognise the things that already unite them; to face frankly the issues that divide them; to pray both for clarity of mind and freedom from prejudice; and also, that the will of God will be revealed through Christ our Lord.

It is worth noting that the ACZ and UCZ agreed:

To think of close links with the University of Zambia as well. On the other hand, the joint consultation agreed to unite with African Reformed Church (now RCZ) and to unite with PCSA in Zambia, and to encourage inter-church co-operation with Catholics. (The Document of Basis for Consultation for Church Union of UCZ and ACZ 1965, 4; ACZ and UCZ Minutes of the Basis of Church Union Consultation of 1966, 3).

From this account, the ACZ and UCZ had taken heed of the prevailing needs of church union. The Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (PCSA) and Reformed Church in Zambia's (RCZ) response towards church union between the ACZ and UCZ began in 1965, when the PCSA and RCZ accepted the invitation from the ACZ and UCZ church union consultation to send observers to each consultation meeting. At all subsequent meetings of the church union consultation, the PCSA and RCZ were invited as observers. It was also found in 1967, that PCSA and RCZ representatives were present as observers at the consultation of church union of the ACZ and UCZ (ACZ and UCZ Minutes of the Basis of Church Union Consultation of 1966, 3).

The draft of the basis of church union consultation was compiled by Rev. J. C Weller. However, there were a number of decisions which were made as a way forward of church union consultation:

First and foremost, both churches to develop a study document of ACZ and UCZ. Second, joint efforts to work towards recovering organic union, and to acknowledge the signposts of church union along the way. Third, a joint endeavour of two teacher training colleges in Zambia at Livingstone and Serenje. Next, to encourage a joint endeavour to make a political position in order to address some political situations in Zambia. Again, to encourage a joint endeavour to conduct a week of prayer for Christian unity. (ACZ and UCZ Minutes of the Basis of Church Union Consultation of 1966, 3)

From this description, it seems evident that the ACZ and UCZ succeeded meaningfully to agree with each other on the basis of church union. From the agreement of the consultation of church union between the ACZ and UCZ, these two denominations were more inward looking and largely indifferent to the real needs of the world. From the agreement of the consultation of church union between the ACZ and UCZ, it was not clear how the two churches would address social problems. Here Kessler states that:

There is a need on the African content to overcome poverty, which includes the church. And there is a need for programmes towards good governance and participatory of civil society, issues concerning justice, human rights and the rule of law, fragmentation and exclusion and the moral rejection of society. (Kessler 1999, 224–225)

With regard to social problems, both the ACZ and UCZ have been addressing such problems through their close links with CCZ. However, the consultation on church union between the ACZ and UCZ could have made an effort to address it in a more practical way than the way social problems were being addressed. Yet, it is necessary to make such a review because the decisions which were made are important steps towards organic unity.

It can be said that the ACZ is a member of ecumenical bodies, namely TEEZ, CCZ and MEF. After political independence in 1964, the name of the Northern Diocese of Northern Rhodesia was changed to the Diocese of Zambia. In 1970, a joint agreement on the doctrinal position on baptism was agreed between the Roman Catholic Church in Zambia, the UCZ and ACZ. The Catholic Church Bishop and UCZ Bishop attended the meeting (ACZ Minutes of Diocese 1970, 2). This was a first effort and initiative towards church unity between three churches.

From this initiative, it should be noted that the Roman Catholic Church in Zambia, the UCZ and ACZ had recognised a shared doctrinal position on baptism, which sprung from their awareness that their churches' teaching on baptism was same. This means that the church members who were once baptised in the Roman Catholic Church in Zambia, UCZ and ACZ, cannot/need not be re-baptised in the Roman Catholic Church in Zambia, UCZ and ACZ for them to be admitted as church members.



## PCSA Perspective on Church Unity in Zambia

In 1966, the PCSA General Assembly stated that: “The church union between UCZ and ACZ was going well. But the type of church union has not been defined or settled” (PCSA Minutes of Proceedings of General Assembly 1966, 119). From this account, PCSA observers expressed considerably greater interest in the efforts in church union between the ACZ and UCZ. The PCSA began well in efforts at church unity with other churches as observers at union negotiations. The PCSA also created an atmosphere for ecumenism to grow by appointing PCSA observers on the union consultation in Zambia between the ACZ and UCZ.

In 1966, the PCSA General Assembly stated that: “The PCSA General Assembly also re-appointed its observers on the union consultation in Zambia between ACZ and UCZ” (PCSA Minutes of Proceedings of General Assembly 1966, 119). The PCSA’s response to efforts at church union in Zambia began in the 1960s, when the PCSA accepted the invitation from the consultation on church union between the ACZ and UCZ to send observers to each consultation meeting.

From this account, it is clear that the PCSA was receptive to other denominations. In 1967, the PCSA did attend a consultation on church union between the ACZ and UCZ meeting as an observer (ACZ and UCZ Minutes of the Basis of Church Union Consultation 1966, 3).

The problem facing the church union between the UCZ and ACZ was that the type of church union was not clear. The issue of church union between the ACZ and UCZ was undefined in the context of efforts at church union in Zambia. It was also found that the efforts at church union between the UCZ and ACZ were progressing well, but the type of union was not defined or settled (PCSA Minutes of Proceedings of General Assembly 1966, 121). However, the PCSA General Assembly observed that the consultation on church union was helpful for Zambia.

It is worth noting that in an effort to create an atmosphere for ecumenism to grow in Zambia, the PCSA General Assembly paid R20, the annual subscription fee to the Christian Council in Zambia (PCSA Minutes of Proceedings of General Assembly 1966, 119, 122). With regard to paying the subscription fee to the CCZ within the context of ecumenism, it was important in the sense that the CCZ budget was not using its own local sources and that the CCZ budget was entirely dependent on external funding. In all subsequent PCSA General Assembly meetings, observers were appointed to the union consultation meetings between the ACZ and UCZ. In 1968, the PCSA General Assembly:

... Appointed its observers on the union consultation in Zambia between ACZ and UCZ. The Presbyterian Church of Zambia made some efforts towards church unity through personal contacts of Mr. P. Mkandawire because of the political nature prevailing in Zambia at the time. (PCSA Minutes of Proceedings of General Assembly 1966, 121)

Perhaps the most significant change affecting church unity, arising from a political perspective, was a concern for the poor living conditions of the majority of the population, particularly in the rural areas. People flocked from the countryside to the towns in search of better living conditions. On the Copperbelt, the backbone of the nation's economy, there was considerable industrial unrest in 1966, partly as a result of inflation (Molteno and Scott 1974, 155).

Here, Andrew and Bilin (1999, 96) hold that there were frequent national miners' strikes from 1966 to 1967. However, the political environment had affected the economy of the country:

Political instability took the form of recurring struggles between narrow urban interest groups and the government, which tried to implement national policies in the face of the often-hostile opposition. Frequent outbreaks of unrest, including strikes and riots, posed problems to economic reforms. (Andrew and Bilin 1999, 95)

The political instability in Zambia made it difficult for the Protestant churches in Zambia to promote church unity. Andrew and Bilin make the important additional point:

The main potential threat to political stability has changed overtime. During the first Republic (from 1964 to 1973), the chief source of social unrest lay in the desire of the indigenous population to catch up with the living standards of the whites. (Andrew and Bilin 1999, 97)

Because of the political situation in 1966, the PCSA had appointed a Zambian to represent them at union consultations in Zambia. In 1967, the PCSA General Assembly re-appointed its observers to the union consultation in Zambia (PCSA Minutes of Proceedings of General Assembly 1967, 122). The commitment to send observers to union consultation had created the ecumenical spirit of different Protestant denominations in Zambia. In 1968, the Assembly resolved "an addendum and further re-appoints its observer to the union consultations in Zambia" (PCSA Minutes of Proceedings of General Assembly 1968, 37). In the efforts to promote church unity, Rev. Brian Stumbles was appointed as an observer at the church unity consultation in Zambia. Stumbles was working as a chaplain in the Zambian army, and he was also a chaplain of the Boys' Brigade, an ecumenical organisation in Zambia (PCSA Minutes of Proceedings of General Assembly 1968, 106). Such involvement by the PCSA in Zambia at different levels, clearly indicates that within the church union consultation in Zambia, there have been strong commitments to the goal of visible unity.

At the PCSA General Assembly of 1970, the Assembly decided that the PCSA in Zambia was to open up fresh opportunities for church union negotiations with the UCZ, RCZ and CCAP (PCSA Report and Minutes of Proceedings of General Assembly 1970). Following the General Assembly decision in 1970, the evaluation made in this section points to several key issues that leadership of the PCSA needed to take into consideration in order to encourage church unity.

The meeting of the PCSA General Assembly in 1981, resolved that an agreement was to be made for PCSA and CCAP Livingstonia Synod for the two Presbyterian Churches in Zambia to be one (PCSA Report and Minutes of Proceedings of General Assembly 1981). Here Chilenje (2007, 215) holds that:

Discussions of the relationship between Presbyterian Church in Zambia and CCAP started in 1978. The two churches formed the liaison committee in 1981 to facilitate the merger. The biggest problems that hindered this unity were twofold. Firstly, the PCZ did not want to change its name, and the CCAP with the experience of loss of assets and mission stations to UCZ refused the idea of unity. Secondly, whenever PCZ and CCAP met, the PCZ members produced different minutes. ... This disappointed the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia. In view of this, the idea died a natural death.

It should be pointed out that the problems, which faced the PCZ and CCAP efforts at church union in Zambia, were common to the other Protestant churches' efforts. Another important decision was made by the PCSA General Assembly in 1982, that the PCSA in Zambia unite with the UCZ, and then Rev. S. Nkowane refused with some elders (PCSA Report and Minutes of Proceedings of General Assembly 1982).

From this account, it is evident that the PCSA General Assembly had recognised its failure to continue with union in Zambia, because of the emerging ecumenical and ecclesiological paradigms in light of church union consultation between the ACZ and UCZ. On the other hand, the church leadership in the PCSA (Zambia) hoped to continue its presence in Zambia.

In September 1993, the PCSA General Assembly granted permission to form a synod of Zambia, whose first meeting was to be held on 30 January 1994 (PCSA Minutes of Proceedings of General Assembly 1993, 2–3). In the efforts at church union, synod moderators of the RCZ, UCZ, and Church of Central African Presbyterian were present to witness the inauguration of the synod. A representative from the Anglican and General Secretary of Christian Council of Zambia was present as well (PCSA Report and Minutes of Proceedings of General Assembly 1994, 66). The PCSA in Zambia's report to the General Assembly reveals that there were talks between CCAP and PCSA towards merging because both have a common origin from Scotland (PCSA Report and Minutes of Proceedings of General Assembly 1994, 68).

As we have already seen, efforts towards unity with other churches started as a result of the increased number of African ministers in the PCSA Zambia. The PCSA in Zambia is widely known as the Presbyterian Church in Zambia (PCZ). The PCZ's ecumenical work in 1994 was dominated by leaders who had no interest in ecumenism. It is observed from a synod report that the PCZ's prophetic witness had been weak in Zambia with regard to speaking up on behalf of the people (PCSA Report and Minutes of Proceedings of General Assembly 1994, 129).

In 1975, at an AACC General Assembly meeting, it was clear that prophetic witness in churches in Africa was central and important for the well-being of the church. It was observed as follows at an AACC Assembly:

The mission of the church is prophetic, and in serving, it can accomplish its prophetic mission by being engaged, involved and sensitive to the well-being of the society. The church must be alive in the present in order to live better in the future. (AACC Minutes 1975, 38)

The PCZ prophetic witness has been weak in Zambia. However, in view of the AACC's 1975 Assembly position, it can be said that in the midst of ecumenism's many voices in Zambia, the PCSA perspective on prophetic witness had followed the CCZ position, since the PCSA became a member. The PCSA's quest for Christian unity has followed the prophetic witness of the CCZ. Such prophetic witness clearly indicates that within the ecumenical movement there has been a strong commitment to the goal of visible unity. While a body such as the CCZ is described as an ecumenical instrument in Zambia of promoting church unity, it is necessary to make such a review of prophetic witness of the PCZ, because the church has a task to witness to the world.

In January 1996, the CCAP and PCZ held a joint seminar to find common ground and signposts towards organic union (PCSA Report and Minutes of Proceedings of General Assembly of 1996). The seminar recognised their shared theological grounding and similar structures, especially seeing them as a means of living out the church's life as one church. In Zambia, the PCSA had existed as a project for the Church Extension Committee of PCSA General Assembly; therefore, its efforts at church union had been limited. The decisions to participate in the efforts at church union were determined by the PCSA General Assembly. The PCSA in Zambia could only participate at a level of an observer to church union consultation meetings within Zambia (PCSA *Perspective* 1997, 20).

In 1999, at the union of the RPCSA and PCSA in South Africa, a decision was taken that presbyteries of the PCSA in Zambia will be dissolved and reconstituted as presbyteries of UPCSAs (UPCSA Report and Minutes of Proceedings of General Assembly 1999, 23). It is worth noting that efforts at church union in South Africa did not affect the church in Zambia.

## Conclusion

The article explored the emerging ecumenical church polity in the period 1965–2010 in order to mirror the emerging ecumenical church polity in Zambia. By reflecting on both the church legislation of the UCZ, ACZ and UPCSAs, and by reflecting on their lessons from their efforts at church unity, the article did not undermine the growing use of church legislation of the three denominations, but rather focused on comparing the three denominations' church legislation in order to establish their common church legislation and their lessons from efforts at church unity in the period 1965–2010. For example,

church legislation issues were not exhaustively explained in this article. The article therefore observes that despite having increased use of church legislation within the ranks of the UCZ, ACZ and UPCSA, the growing use of church polity and their efforts at church unity were characterised with numerous discussions, which point to the notion of developing ecumenical church polity in Zambia. The article therefore argues that the emerging ecumenical church polity—as an agenda for church polity as an academic discipline—was an important factor in developing ecumenical church polity. We noted that, just as it was a mere church polity, the prominence of ecumenical church polity did not translate into what could be deemed as an ecumenical church polity, and was not used to bring about church unity in Zambia.

From this account, this emerging ecumenical legislation can provide a new paradigm in light of old paradigms of ecumenical dialogue on ethical issues without legislation. There is little doubt that the current ecumenical legislation points to ecumenical church order, or common church order, moving away from older and fading paradigms of ecumenical dialogues without legislations. To illustrate this, it is easy to see within the ranks of the UCZ, ACZ and UPCSA that their rules and norms of church legislation are not yet in force in CCZ churches; their relationships, unions of churches and church communities have not been translated into adequate juridical terms and legal forms (Reuver 2000, 101). Here, Reuver finds that no legislative foundation exists for the current ecumenical initiatives, projects, programmes and unions (2000, 101). In the Zambian ecclesiastical setting, especially churches that belong to the CCZ have many relationships and unions of these churches which have not yet been developed into adequate juridical forms by churches.

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