Unfinished Business?

Faith Communities and Reconciliation
in a Post-TRC Context

Thoughts into action

Creating a long-term movement toward a reconciled and just society

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Introduction: The past and the present

The world watched South Africa's transition from apartheid to a democracy with an admiration for its perceived peaceful shift. However, Kaufman concurs that this transition was not peaceful and mentions that thousands of South Africans died during the fight for freedom from 1985-1995.² These deaths and other social injustices during apartheid resulted in trauma for individuals, families and communities. The lasting damage cannot be ignored.

After the end of apartheid, South Africa was faced with the task of building an inclusive society, while also addressing the damage of the past. Transformation in terms of a transition from exclusion to inclusion in all spheres of life was required, and citizens had to find a new way of living together.³ Therefore, the

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2 Stuart J. Kaufman. 2012. *The end of Apartheid: Rethinking South Africa's 'peaceful' transition*. <https://bit.ly/2xEmszA> [Accessed 20 October 2016].

3 Cf. Johannes C. Erasmus. 2005. *Religion and social transformation: A case study from South Africa*. *Transformation*, 22(3):139-148. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026537880502200303>

I Thoughts into action I

original commitment by the newly-elected democratic government and civil society (including faith communities) was that the people should be viewed as a fundamental resource in terms of the future development of the country.⁴ However, the trauma of the past lingered on as individuals, groups and communities remained sensitive owing to past experiences.⁵

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was one way of assisting South African society in moving towards reconciliation. Pedro asserts that, although the TRC acted as a catalyst and a platform for discussion, victims of apartheid did not necessarily receive justice, as it did not lead to a changed society (i.e. rehabilitation of society post-apartheid).⁶ It became clear that the hurt of the past was too deep for the TRC to deal with extensively within the limited time it had at its disposal.⁷ In this regard, the TRC became an event and not the start of a transformation process as intended. To enter this process, Pedro warns, the terms 'truth' and 'reconciliation' should not be a mere academic or political theory, but it should be practised to ensure transformation.⁸

Furthermore, Leubolt⁹ and Bentley¹⁰ concur that thus far transformational change focused primarily on the political realm, while the social fabric of South Africa has not received adequate attention, resulting in a continued fragmented, distrustful society. With a specific focus on the role of faith communities (FC),¹¹ Rev Nyobole of the Methodist Church of South Africa echoes this sentiment as follows:

And that was true for the past; it is still true for today: that we find it is easy to make those confessions and statements, but find it difficult to live up to those ... In terms of reconciliation, the churches ... the faith communities were not co-ordinated in terms of taking that agenda forward.¹²

4 ANC (African National Congress). 2012. *Social transformation. Policy discussion document*. Pretoria: African National Congress, 3.

5 Marichen van der Westhuizen, Thomas Greuel and Christo Thesnaar. 2015. In search of a theoretical framework towards intercultural awareness and tolerance. *Scriptura*, 114(1):1-16. <https://doi.org/10.7833/114-0-1135>

6 LL Miguel Pedro. 2007. The Ministry of Reconciliation. A comparative study of the role of the churches in promoting reconciliation in South Africa and Angola. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 47-62.

7 Van der Westhuizen, Greuel and Thesnaar, *In search of a theoretical framework*, 2.

8 Pedro, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 47-62.

9 Bernard Leubolt. 2014. *Social policies and redistribution in South Africa*. Geneva: International Labour Organization.

10 Wessel Bentley. 2014. Methodism and transformation in South Africa: 20 years of constitutional democracy. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 70(1):1-8. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2673>

11 'Faith communities' are abbreviated as FC for the remainder of the essay.

12 Beyers Naudé Centre for Public Theology (BNC). 2014. Revisiting the TRC faith community hearings. Draft document. Discussion panel at the Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University, 8-9 October 2014. Stellenbosch, 10-18.

The present situation reflects the above description of a lack of any long-term progress towards a reconciled and just South African society. Hofmeyr and Govender provide the following statistical description of the present-day realities: The majority of South Africans (59.2 per cent) believe that there was some progress towards reconciliation. Importantly, the South African people "... are convinced that the country has to continue to pursue it as a national objective (69.7 per cent)".¹³

In contrast to the above, the majority also view reconciliation as impossible as long as the poor remain poor. Reconciliation means, among other things, that inter-racial relationships should heal. However, 61.4 per cent of South Africans described these relationships as either unchanged or that it deteriorated since 1994, resulting in a lack of trust (experienced by 67.3 per cent). A need to create safe spaces to engage in activities aimed at the reconciliation of relationships is highlighted. In this regard, FCs seem to be well-positioned to assist South African people. However, it was reported that "... most interracial interaction between South Africans occurs in public spaces, such as places of work and study and shopping centres", while interaction in more intimate spaces where relationships can deliberately be reconciled is limited. A hopeful statistical description is that 71 per cent of South Africans have a desire to strive for the creation of a united South African nation, a desire acknowledged by the role of FCs in creating a long-term movement toward a reconciled and just society to create a united South African nation will be discussed next.

Faith communities as agents of change

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu explains that one challenge for FCs in a post-Apartheid era is that clarity is needed about what they did, what they are doing, and what they should be doing.¹⁴ Linked to this explanation, Dean Weeder from the Anglican Church of Southern Africa concurs that the past has not left us (i.e. FCs *and* the South African society) yet, that FCs did not learn a new way of thinking, behaving and speaking and, alarmingly, have come to accept temporary solutions – only dealing with things when it is an immediate crisis.¹⁵

This discussion emphasises the roles of FCs, in terms of being a part of a democratic society, to clarify the future role of FCs, addressing social concerns, promoting social justice and spiritual well-being, while the role of leadership in reconciliation processes are described.

13 Jan Hofmeyr and Rajen Govender. 2015. *National reconciliation, race relations, and social inclusion: South African Barometer Briefing Paper 1*. Hatfield: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 1.

14 BNC, *Revisiting the TRC*, 7.

15 Ibid., 11-14.

I Thoughts into action I

The role of FCs as a vehicle for social transformation in communities suffering from “... acute fragmentation as a result of colonisation” has been highlighted since the beginning of the Truth and Reconciliation process.¹⁶ This role, with a specific focus on contributing to the spiritual well-being of the South African people, was accentuated by former president Nelson Mandela as follows: “... social transformation cannot be separated from spiritual transformation.”¹⁷

Despite the above statement, Emedi notes that the social concern within FCs needs to be revisited, as this aspect is often underplayed in terms of the role of such communities in broader society.¹⁸ Additionally, a challenge for FCs is that their relationship with the government has changed. They had to enter into a shift from either being a ‘partner’ or an ‘opponent’ of the ruling government to a part of a democratic society. This shift requires that FCs should engage with each other and should in solidary support initiatives that promote social justice, peace, fairness, democracy and the protection of the interests of the vulnerable groups in society.¹⁹ Linking the role of FCs and the need for solidarity between these communities, Volf discusses the social meaning of reconciliation.²⁰ He writes that, although FCs can play a vital role in addressing unjust practices, they are often quiet, which in essence means that they contribute to the continuation of unjust practices. If FCs want to promote social justice, they should become willing to engage with systems that have the power to contribute to social justice and reconciliation processes and/or those that maintain or protect the unjust practices.²¹ Reconciliation must, therefore, not only be preached but must become real in these communities’ actions. A discourse and process are needed where existing experiences and perceptions are explored, engagements between different role-players should be encouraged and planned activities, within this process, should be aimed at a different understanding based on truth, justice, healing and security.²²

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- 16 Agbiji Obaji and Ignatius Swart. 2015. Religion and social transformation in Africa: A critical and appreciative perspective. *Scriptura*, 114(1):1-20. <https://doi.org/10.7833/114-0-1115>
 - 17 ANC (African National Congress). 1998. *Ethical statement: ANC statement on the moral renewal of the nation*. Pretoria: South African Government.
 - 18 Pablo-George Emedi. 2010. The local church as an agent of social transformation in a poor community. Unpublished MA thesis. Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 36.
 - 19 Raymond S. Kumalo. 2007. *A prophetic church in the democratization of the South African society – a myth or reality?* Paper presented at Diakonia Council of Churches, 7 November 2007. <https://bit.ly/2xAFd0C> [Accessed 19 October 2016].
 - 20 Miroslav Volf. 2006. *The end of memory: Remembering rightly in a violent world*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 8.
 - 21 Rich Janzen. 2013. *Justice and faith: Mobilizing Christian Reformed Church congregations for justice*. Burlington, In: Christian Reformed Church in North America, Centre for Community Based Research, 11.
 - 22 John Lederach and Michelle Maiese. 2009. Conflict transformation: A circular journey with a purpose. *New Routes*, 14(2):7-11.

As in the past, FCs are key role-players and agents of change in addressing social issues such as poverty and inequality. These communities, therefore, act as representatives of civil society and are in the position to specifically address morality and citizenship within society.²³ Bowers du Toit reflects on this and asserts that "... it is hoped that such recognition may provide the basis for re-engaging religious leaders and re-energising the religious sector" to reflect on future roles.²⁴ Re-imagining the role of FCs today, the author concurs that they should mobilise communities to engage with the reconciliation agenda, act as 'voice for the voiceless',²⁵ represent the marginalised and oppressed and engage with other sectors to work towards a just society.²⁶

As part of repositioning itself in future reconciliation processes, Fisher advises that leaders in a just reconciliation process who work from a faith perspective specifically need to "... expand their cultural competence to embrace community and organisational interventions, not just individual interventions".²⁷ The leaders should then actively start with empowering the FCs they represent to enter the process of reconciliation. Aspects that may be addressed include, negative community profiling, stereotyping, a lack of understanding of why people do and think the way they do and verbal and non-verbal ways of engaging with 'others' (i.e. those viewed as different from the 'u' and where social injustices took place against 'the others' or where the specific group was harmed by 'the others').

Reconciliation and social justice as a long-term process and not an event

Reconciliation

The term 'reconciliation', in a practical sense, refers to the coming together of different parties where some unjust act took place intending to understand and accept each other, to learn to live and work together and to become able to solve differences for the greater good of a just society.²⁸ Lederach and Maiese identify

23 Skip Krige. 2008. Towards a Coherent Vision for Faith Development. *JTSA*, 132(17):16-37.

24 Nadine Bowers du Toit. 2012. The Church as an Agent of Change: reflections on the role of the Church in Carnegie I, II and now III? Paper presented at the Towards Carnegie III Conference, University of Cape Town, 3-7 September, 15.

25 Cf. Emedi, *The local church*, 53.

26 Bowers du Toit, *The Church as an Agent of Change*, 11-14.

27 Catherine Fisher. 2012. *Transforming communities: Faith social justice group work with homeless*. Paper presented at the North American Social Work (NACSW) Convention, St Louis, MO, October 2012, 1-7.

28 Pedro, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 5.

I Thoughts into action I

truth, justice, healing and security as four elements to be included in the process of reconciliation.²⁹ Healing and security then inform a peaceful society.

A platform needs to be created through which people who were involved in an unjust situation are encouraged to tell what happened to them. Lederach and Maiese refer to storytelling as a strategy where they not only reflect on the painful past but where they are allowed to develop a vision for a better future as follows:

... individuals and a nation repeat stories to one another in an attempt to bring coherence to past events and to make sense of the present and the future.³⁰

The truth relates to the past; how people experienced it and how they remember it. Part of telling the truth is that unjust practices should change to just practices. Just practices are, however, easier to talk about and more difficult to practice. Individuals, groups and communities need support to practice acting in a fair and just manner and to integrate these actions into a new way of living. The victims must be supported to distinguish between justice and revenge for them to truly become free of the past, while the perpetrators have to understand that to 'pay the price' changes the outcome of the final part of the story and that this could make them free as well. A process where the perpetrator should forgive him/herself should supplement a victims' forgiveness, only to become a reality when one includes relationship-building into the process. These new relationships require the active practice of truth and justice. Lastly, peace (i.e. healing and security) is an element that refers to a structural change that evolves from a process of understanding. Positive peace then becomes an outcome of the reconciliation process where new understandings, behaviours and relationships direct the future structuring of society.³¹

Nordstokke describes the dimensions of FCs' involvement in reconciliation practices as political, ideological and social.³² All these dimensions relate to the discussion of the role of FCs as agents of change above, requiring that such communities become safe places where people can express their hope and vision for a better future. The FCs should lead such discussions to promote solidarity, justice, peace and care for creation, according to the worldview and values of these communities. Reconciliation from a social justice perspective includes:

29 Lederach and Maiese, *Conflict transformation*, 7-8.

30 Ibid., 8.

31 Cf. Lederach and Maiese. 2009. *Conflict transformation*, 7-8.

32 Kjell Nordstokke. 2009. *Diakonia in context: Transformation, reconciliation, empowerment*. Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 20.

- Consciousness-raising (what happened (truth));
- opportunities for individuals to work through painful emotions (e.g. hurt, anger, shame, guilt);
- solidarity between those who suffered injustice and those who inflicted injustice;
- restored individual dignity and worth;
- increased social support; and
- opportunities to engage in difficult dialogues.³³

Within the above description, reconciliation processes should lead to social justice.

Social justice

Social justice may be described as a process where one pursues equity and fairness. In the present discussion, it becomes the outcome of a reconciliation process. Green and Baldry, however, notes that this term is often just a “... distant dot on the horizon”, as we neglect to integrate our academic understanding of the term with the principles of social justice in practice.³⁴

Meckled-Garcia reflects on whether human rights standards are the same as principles of social justice under a different name or whether social justice is a subset of human rights.³⁵ He concludes that both options are valid, as the principles of social justice inform human rights standards, while the practice of social justice also includes human rights standards.

Social justice, in practice, relates to social relationships. In the case of efforts to work towards reconciliation in a post-apartheid South Africa, this means that the mentioned efforts should be based on the moral values associated with social justice, including fairness, equality, worthiness and rights and responsibilities applicable to all.³⁶ If social justice is viewed as an act of fairness in inter-personal contacts, the focus of reconciliation efforts should be on the restoration of relationships that reflects the “... human longing for wholeness and harmony in social relationships”.³⁷

33 Fisher, *Transforming communities*, 7.

34 Sue Green and Eileen Baldry. 2008. Building indigenous Australian social work. *Australian Social Work*, 61(4):389-402. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03124070802430718>

35 Saladin Meckled-Garcia. 2011. *Human rights or social justice? Rescuing human rights from the outcomes view: Working Paper 30*. London: University College, School of Public Policy, 2.

36 Meckled-Garcia, *Human rights or social justice*, 5.

37 Mary Anne Poe. 2007. Fairness is not enough: Social Justice as restoration of right relationships. *Social Work and Christianity* 34(4):449-470.

I Thoughts into action I

Within these relationships, we work within a scope of the types of rights and responsibilities that are needed for reconciliation to take place. We need to understand how the people involved view rights and responsibilities, and we need a process of mediation to agree on this. The desired outcomes for the individuals involved need to be linked to the desired outcome for a movement towards a just society. Additionally, Janzen reflects on social justice in relation to restoration (with the focus on relationships) and retribution (with the focus on damage) and explains that this is a fundamental outcome of justice work.³⁸ He links restoration and retribution with renewal, bringing healing to both the victims and the perpetrators and contributes to a changed way of social functioning beyond the painful past.

The role of the FCs, when working together towards a reconciled just society, should be agreed upon and clarified.³⁹ Whatever the identified role(s) may be, long-term and sustainable change can only take place when one views activities/programmes/events that are aimed at reconciliation and social justice as part of a bigger process towards change.

Process versus event

Reconciliation is aimed at dealing with some conflict or unjust practice. Conflict resolution may be seen as an event, where the focus is on the specific factors that contribute to the conflict or unjust practice. Reconciliation takes it one step further, in that it focuses not only on the immediate situation but aims at transformation, to address the situation in the future in a different way. This focus means that one learns and develops new ways of understanding and reacting to conflict and unjust practices.⁴⁰ One current example of conflict impacting on the reconciliation process is that of the Fees Must Fall movements at local universities. Prinsloo argues that active engagement in such societal issues is needed and that “... deep understanding of these questions are necessary to prevent more of the same ‘techno-bureaucratic fixes’, that, until now, have left South Africa’s universities largely untransformed”.⁴¹

One role of FCs may be seen as facilitating a process where deeper patterns are identified within the context while also seeking creative responses to address the real issues within a specific context. Therefore, when viewing reconciliation as a

38 Janzen, *Justice and faith*, 9-11.

39 Meckled-Garcia, *Human rights or social justice*, 5-6.

40 Lederach and Maiese, *Conflict transformation*, 7-8.

41 Estelle H. Prinsloo. 2016. The role of the Humanities in decolonising the academy. *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education*, 15(1):164-168. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474022215613608>

process, it should be understood that one cannot achieve change by means of single or fragmented events. It should be acknowledged that it requires a long-term commitment.⁴² A process towards transformation, as part of a reconciliation effort, involves three steps, linked to the principles of social justice, as proposed by Lederach and Maiese:⁴³

Firstly, the situation has to be presented, requiring facilitation of communication to ensure that all the parties have opportunities to express themselves and to hear each other's stories, as was the case with the TRC. Bloomfield explains that this process applies to everyone involved – those who inflicted suffering and those suffering.⁴⁴ It also has to explore the attitudes, prejudice and stereotyping that evolved from the hurtful practices. This first step involves more than just communication; it explores the structures and patterns of past events that need to be changed to move beyond the event that caused the pain, anger and mistrust.

Secondly, a vision of what we wish to create (i.e. a horizon of the future) is created through a circular model of change, aimed at a movement from the present situation to the desired future.

Once the above vision has been established, the *third* step involves the active development and implementation of a change process. Lederach and Maiese highlight the fact that:

... because the change processes should address both the immediate problems and the broader relational and structural patterns, we need to reflect on multiple levels and types of change rather than focusing on a single operational solution. Change processes must not only promote short-term solutions, but also build platforms capable of promoting long-term social change.⁴⁵

To summarise this process of reconciliation, Bloomfield refers to reconciliation as both a process and an outcome.⁴⁶ In terms of a process, the activities should be based on a real understanding of the experiences and perceptions of all the role-players, that requires a dynamic adaptive process aimed at healing and change. To achieve this understanding communication forms an integral part of the process, while relationship-building is viewed as an outcome.

42 David Bloomfield. 2003. *On good terms: Clarifying reconciliation*. Belfast: Berghof Center for Constructive Conflict, 12

43 Lederach and Maiese, *Conflict transformation*, 7-9.

44 Bloomfield, *On good terms*, 12.

45 Lederach and Maiese, *Conflict transformation*, 8.

46 Bloomfield, *On good terms*, 12.

I Thoughts into action I

This process links to social justice and social development, as it contributes to a fair and just society where community members have equal rights and responsibilities to work toward positive change. FCs may be viewed as systems within communities that can act as change agents.

Systems thinking as an approach to social development

Systems thinking

The systems-thinking approach, with specific reference to reconciliation and social justice as a process to change the fragmented South African society, implies that different groups within a community affect one another's functioning. For this discussion, 'different groups' refers to those who suffered injustice and those who inflicted injustice during *and* after the end of apartheid. Van der Westhuizen et al. assert that "... those aspects that explain the reciprocal relationships between individuals, groups and/or communities should be included when attempting to develop a positive-change environment".⁴⁷ The aim of this approach is, therefore, to assist those involved to solve both immediate and broader relational and structural problems together.⁴⁸

A system (for example, a group of people affected by social injustice during apartheid) consists of various interrelated or interdependent factors, such as historical events (i.e. apartheid), activities and interactions. Ackoff describes the term 'interpretive systems' as a form of systems thinking that models 'reality', reflecting the different views of the individuals within the system, as well as those outside the system and those affected by the system.⁴⁹ Those affected by apartheid will, therefore, act according to their experiences and views, which influences their interactions with those who benefited from apartheid. The systems-thinking approach acknowledges relationships and interactions between systems as an inclusive process.⁵⁰ The engagements between different systems (i.e. those who suffered injustice and those who inflicted injustice) in a reconciliation process are then facilitated by FCs to assist them to mobilise the strengths of their relationships to address social, mental and spiritual well-being and, therefore, to work together toward a fair and just society for all.⁵¹

47 Van der Westhuizen, Greuel and Thesnaar, *In search of a theoretical framework*, 11.

48 Cf. Lederach and Maiese, *Conflict transformation*, 8.

49 Russel Ackoff. 2010. *Systems thinking for curious managers*. Devon: Triarchy, 13.

50 Van der Westhuizen, Greuel and Thesnaar, *In search of a theoretical framework*, 11.

51 Peter Stratton. 2010. *The evidence base of systemic family and couples therapy*. Warrington, UK: Association for Family Therapy, 5.

Additionally, this approach acknowledges the importance of the environment in which people function, including cultural practices and challenges, such as poverty. When working from this approach, the relevant societal issues should be examined critically to create a better understanding of societal contexts and needs.⁵²

Through the systems thinking approach, FCs can contribute to reconciliation and social justice by leading a process to assist different groups in engaging with each other to contribute to a 'better whole'. Their role as the agent of change becomes clear as they create safe spaces where these groups, individually and collectively, find ways to share their perspectives and experiences to develop a different way of thinking/perceiving that would lead to different attitudes and behaviour towards each other and contributing to long-term change. It involves changes in different systems, which then influence the changes that take place in the whole context.⁵³

In summary, systems thinking is directed at changes in the different systems, leading to long-term change in the whole context. Social development is, therefore, an outcome of the systems-thinking process, while the principles of social development direct activities/events within this process.

Social development

The United Nations adopted a broad definition of social development, namely:

... concerned with processes of change that lead to improvements in human well-being, social relations and social institutions, and that are equitable, sustainable, and compatible with principles of democratic governance and social justice.⁵⁴

This description relates directly to the discussion of the role of FCs in a reconciliation process. However, Emedi reflects on the relationship between the FCs and the community in which they are situated, and concludes that some see "... the world and culture as a threat to the church and urge a strategy of avoidance".⁵⁵ To actively take on the role as agents of change, FCs should reflect on themselves as one system within the broader context, including the communities in which they are situated and the whole social environment of the country. In this way, it becomes clear that FCs, as a system, has the power to affect other systems, should they review current actions, events and processes.

52 Cameron White and Susan McCormack. 2006. The message in the music: Popular culture and teaching in social studies. *The Social Studies*, 97(3):122-127.
<https://doi.org/10.3200/TSSS.97.3.122-127>

53 Ackoff, *Systems thinking*, 12.

54 United Nations. 2011. *Social development in an uncertain world*. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2.

55 Emedi, *The local church*, 47.

I Thoughts into action I

Principles of social development that guide the process of change include partnerships between different FCs and between FCs and communities, empowerment and participation strategies to attain sustainable and collective change, inclusion and equality.⁵⁶ It is a rights-based approach to social change with the emphasis is on a participation-driven process, where a willingness to take ownership of a situation and to join hands to find solutions is cultivated. Community involvement is, therefore, needed to create sustainable change.⁵⁷

The values that FCs represent support these principles. Obaji and Swart noted the link between faith-based interventions to contribute to social development and moral values that guide these interventions.⁵⁸ Kalu supports this viewpoint and places emphasis on the essential role that FCs plays in the fostering of values that contribute to reconciliation; such as honesty (i.e. truth), integrity, openness, forthrightness and tolerance.⁵⁹

Thus, FCs have a facilitating function to mobilise actions to encourage a collaborative capacity-building and social-development process through which local groups and/or organisations identify reasons behind the lack of reconciliation and where they identify a practical way through which they can engage in the process of reconciliation and sustainable change.⁶⁰ The change should involve the empowerment of the community, including the construction of knowledge, understanding and skills to work towards reconciliation. The envisaged outcome is a bottom-up approach, where the people involved themselves develop the ability to build relationships.⁶¹ Empowerment is also aimed at ownership, where the people involved take ownership of the process when it addresses their needs and is consistent with their ideals. Empowerment and ownership require participation that supports sustainable change. The latter requires a reduction of conflict and increasing cooperation based on the needs and values of the people involved.⁶² Roberts explains that, in a post-apartheid context, the poor and vulnerable are still

56 C.S. Hart. 2012. Professionalisation of community development in South Africa: Process, issues and achievements. *Africanus*, 42(2):55-66.

57 Paul Harvey and Jeremy Lind. 2005. *Dependency and humanitarian relief*. HPG Research Report 29. London: Overseas Development Institute, 19.

58 Obaji and Swart, *Religion and social transformation*, 9.

59 Ogbu Kalu. 2010. Harsh flutes: The religious dimension of the legitimacy crisis in Nigeria, 1993-1998. In W Kalu, N Wariboko and T Falola (eds.), *Religions in Africa: Conflicts, politics and social ethics: The collected essays of Ogbu Uke Kalu*, 3. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 31-64.

60 G Caine. 2008. Literature Review on Community Mobilisation. CSIR. Unpublished.

61 Judith A.B. Lee. 2001. *The empowerment approach to social work practice*. 2nd Edition. New York: Columbia University Press, 34.

62 Huma Louw. 2007. *Participatory community development in social work and the social service professions*. Pretoria: University of South Africa, 114-115.

not in a position of empowerment where they play an active role in their fate.⁶³ In terms of victims of the apartheid system, many still feel victimised and not being heard or acknowledged.

Much has been written about reconciliation and social justice, but from a developmental approach, one has to 'hear the voices' of those affected, meaning that one needs to develop a contextualised perspective that involves the cultural practices, belief systems and perceptions of all involved. To acknowledge that cultural knowledge is important in addressing the psychological, intellectual, spiritual and emotional needs of people is the first step to just practice in a reconciliation process.⁶⁴ Indigenous knowledge should, therefore, be used to shape future practice. Crampton explains that this requires constant dialogue and a process of engagement to be able to not only build our understanding on external factors (what we see and hear) but also on internal factors (i.e. belief systems of those involved and/or affected) that are affected by the nature of people's realities that shapes the way they know and understand their contexts.⁶⁵ However, Dion Foster of the Methodist Church of South Africa notes: "... I think from a theological perspective, many of our churches have lost touch with a people's theology."⁶⁶ Bishop Dowling of the Catholic Church links the concepts 'justice' and 'social development' with the future role of FCs in terms of:

... the empowerment and transformation in their spirit [the poor, disenfranchised violated people] has to happen right down there in the affected communities ... and take our rightful role with the poor and the suffering because they are our members, they are our people. And it is there that we must put all our energy because they are the ones who are to be called and invited to be the agents of their own transformation.⁶⁷

As mentioned earlier, care should be taken to not only think about the future role of FCs in the reconciliation process but also to put these thoughts into action. Some strategies that are based on the principles of social development will be presented as examples of how FCs may approach future involvements.

63 Benjamin Roberts. 2006. The Happy Transition? Attitudes to poverty and inequality after a decade of democracy. In U Pillay, B Roberts and S Rule (eds.), *South African social attitudes: Changing times, diverse voices*. Cape Town: HSRC, 101-130.

64 D Thabede. 2008. The African worldview as the basis of practice in the helping professions. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 44(3):233-245. <https://doi.org/10.15270/44-3-237>

65 Alexandra Crampton. 2015. Decolonizing social work 'best practices' through a philosophy of impermanence. *Journal of Indigenous Social Development*, 4(1):1-11.

66 BNC, *Revisiting the TRC*, 20.

67 Ibid., 30-31.

I Thoughts into action I

Strategies towards reconciliation

The purpose of strategies aimed at reconciliation should not be viewed as separate from the activities of the TRC, but rather to extend and deepen them and aimed at assisting individuals, groups and communities in reconciling in a just manner. A clarity of focus is needed in a time where FCs continue to be viewed as a key contributor and agent of change in society, while also being unsure of its specific role and how to engage actively in a reconciliation process.⁶⁸ They should exactly clarify what they will focus on to contribute to the ongoing process of reconciliation, with whom they need to partner with and how they will contribute.⁶⁹ Olorunnisola also accentuates this clarification and argues that a conversation is needed to explore how the formation of ethical participation of FCs in national issues, such as reconciliation can be achieved.⁷⁰

Five strategies that align with the principles of social development, as well as with the systems thinking approach, where the focus is on the healing of relationships as part of contributing to a reconciled and just South African society, will be presented below. These strategies serve as some examples for a movement from thoughts to actions.

- *Storytelling* has been acknowledged as one way to work towards reconciliation.⁷¹ The TRC serves as an example where storytelling served, among others, the following purposes: It provided perpetrators with an opportunity to admit their wrong-doings, while the victims had an opportunity to express themselves in terms of the impact of the actions against them, their families and their communities. However, storytelling in itself is not seen as necessarily helpful. The value lies in the fact that the sharing of stories should also contribute to repairing the damage, forgiveness and a new relationship that is born from the process.⁷² For this to take place, ongoing dialogue and collaboration are needed.
- *Dialogue and collaboration* are some actions that can contribute to the development of interpersonal and inter-group relationships. It can prevent violent conflict and promote

68 Nadine Bowers du Toit. 2012. Remembrance and renewal: Exploring the role of the church as an agent of welfare after 15 years of democracy. *The Eradication of Poverty*, 53(2):205-216. <https://doi.org/10.5952/53-0-207>

69 HEKS (*Hilfwerk der Evangelischen Kirche Schweiz*). 2006. *Between war and peace: The role of churches in reconciliation processes*. Documentation of the Symposium, Bern, Thursday 21 September 2006, 4.

70 Titus Olorunnisola. 2015. The Church in Conversation for Social Transformation: From Christology to Christo-Praxis. *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 3(2):65-72. <https://doi.org/10.15640/ijpt.v3n2a7>

71 Cf. Lederach and Maiese, *Conflict transformation*, 8.

72 Hugo van der Merwe. 2003. The Role of the church in promoting reconciliation in post-TRC South Africa. In: A Chapman and B Spong (eds.), *Religion and reconciliation in South Africa*. Philadelphia, PA: Templeton Foundation, 275-276; Wielenga, C. 2013. *Shattered stories: Healing and reconciliation in the South African context*. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 34(1):1-14. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v34i1.747>

peaceful solutions as part of finding solutions for problems/conflicts on the one hand.⁷³ On the other hand, it could be used as part of a healing process, where ongoing dialogue leads to collaboration and the development of newly defined relationships.

The collaboration will entail that FCs identify leaders, bring these leaders together and encourage a cooperative effort to support communities to work towards a practical reconciliation process. The shared vision to contribute to a just society is seen as the driving force.⁷⁴ Janzen also accentuates the importance of investing in leadership that promotes justice and asserts that these leaders should create places for conversations and that these conversations and engagements then leads to individuals who act and become involved in reconciliation practices.⁷⁵ Van der Merwe refers to two types of dialogues that FCs can provide a safe space for, namely cross-racial and victim-perpetrator dialogues. Cross-racial dialogue is aimed at community-building.⁷⁶ Space is created to allow different groups to share experiences, enter into discussions and to find a way to work towards a new relationship. In the same way, victimised groups should be provided with a safe space and a guided process to enter into conversations of healing with perpetrator communities.

Dialogue within the FCs may focus on:

- Formal denominational understandings of justice,
 - undoing systemic barriers,
 - on-the-ground understandings of justice,
 - FCs as members of society,
 - public dialogue, and
 - responding to people beyond charity and focusing on healing and development.⁷⁷
- *Education of the past and developing a new language* can form part of dialogues. Dean Weeder from the Anglican Church of Southern Africa postulates that one way to start a process of sustainable change would be to simplify the language so that all people of South Africa can relate to what is being said.⁷⁸

By using this new language and educational/information opportunities, we can learn from the past. However, education of the past should go hand-in-hand with healing and reconciling. To know about the past in itself is not a healing factor, as it can lead to bitterness and anger that hinder reconciliation. Also, knowledge must go hand-in-hand with restoration – making things right and developing new relationships.

- *Transformation of the social structure* requires that one should start within small groups, link groups together and create new, larger groups that are then linked together. Such actions are based on a systems-thinking process whereby a change in a small group can affect change in another small group, creating change in the social structure within which all these groups function.

Khondker and Schuerkens advise that one should focus on short-term changes that create movement, as well as long-term changes that reflect the desired outcomes of the

73 Lederach and Maiese, *Conflict transformation*, 7-8.

74 Kumalo, *A prophetic church*, 9; Fisher, *Transforming communities*, 5.

75 Janzen, *Justice and faith*, 22-23.

76 Van der Merwe, *The Role of the church*, 275-276.

77 Kumalo, *A prophetic church*, 1-2; Janzen, *Justice and faith*, 6-8.

78 BNC, *Revisiting the TRC*, 11-14.

I Thoughts into action I

efforts.⁷⁹ Nordstokke refers to such transformations as “... an ongoing process of total reorientation of life with all its aspirations, ideologies, structures, and values.”⁸⁰ In this way, all those aspects that influence and/or prohibits change/reconciliation, as well as all those involved in the social structure and who are needed to participate to ensure sustainable change are included.

- *Creating a lifestyle* based on values and principles of social justice involves the organisation of activities and interactions where such a lifestyle can be explored, practised and integrated into every-day living. Janzen explains that social justice and practices of reconciliation must become a way of life for the people within FCs,⁸¹ requiring openness to engage with people inside and outside the FCs, become aware of the needs of individuals and groups and get to the root of factors that prohibit reconciliation and just practices from happening.

Conclusion

It could be argued that the post-apartheid dream of a reconciled and just South African nation did not materialise. However, statistical descriptions point to the fact that this dream is still rife among South African citizens. The process was entered into during the move towards a democratic political system and followed-up with the TRC process. FCs are having renewed reflections and discussions on the way forward and are well-positioned to work together in a social development framework to create safe spaces and ongoing events within the process of reconciliation.

Reconciliation, as a process, requires a clear vision of the outcome and the planning and implementation of specific actions/events to achieve this outcome. FCs act as moral guides, role-models and facilitators to ensure that platforms for such actions are developed, ensuring that all activities relate to the principles of social justice. Importantly, these platforms and actions/events within the process should evolve from a discourse between different FCs to ensure that solidarity informs plans and actions.

This discussion proposes a systems-thinking approach to social development as one option to become agents of change that work towards a reconciled and just South African society. Within such a framework, two primary focus areas come to the fore.

79 Habibul Khondker and Ulrike Schuerkens. 2014. Social transformation, development and globalization. *Sociopedia*, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/205684601423>

80 Nordstokke, *Diakonia in context*, 43-44.

81 Janzen, *Justice and faith*, 15-20.

Unfinished Business?

Firstly, the impact of different groups on each other is acknowledged, and efforts to contribute to reconciliation is aimed at reconciling these groups through just practices. Secondly, the reconciliation of inter-group relations must involve the principles of social development, whereby the South African people are supported to become actively involved in the healing of the country. This healing requires work at the grassroots level and a bottom-up approach. FCs plans and actions are then based on the real-life context in which the South African people function.

This discussion focused on reconciliation in a post-apartheid era. It is envisaged that the focus of the process of reconciliation will not only focus on experiences during the apartheid years but also on current incidents of intolerance and social injustice.