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The Office of Deacon in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe: A historical perspective

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Abstract

A deacon is generally considered to be a member of the diaconate. This relates to an office in most Christian churches that is associated with some type of service offered, but the latter varies among denominations. The word deacon emanates from the Greek word *diákonos* which means a servant, minister, or envoy. The office of deacon was initiated in the selection of seven men by the apostles of Jesus, among whom was Stephen the proto-deacon. Their role was to assist with charitable works in the early church as it has been recorded in Acts chapter 6. This article deals with the office of the deacon and investigates it in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe from a historical perspective. There are four offices of Church government in the Reformed/Presbyterian system. These are the office of the minister of the Word, Professors of Theological School, elder and the deacon. The study holds that the office of the deacon plays an important role in the administration of finances in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. The aim of this study is to relate and re-evaluate the history of the office of the deacon from the establishment of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe to date. The research contributes to the on-going gathering and production of historical data of the history of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe.

Keywords: Office, deacon, Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, church government, Presbyterian.

Introduction

This article briefly reconnoitres the historical expansion of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, the formation of the Church Council and the concepts of church government and more particularly the office of the deacon in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. This study used a historical interpretive and literature review methodology as it is suitable for understanding context and deep-seated meanings in particular situations (Zgambo, 2021:1). The office of the deacon in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe traces its origin from the Dutch Reformed Church Cape Synod in South Africa which planted the Church in Zimbabwe. In Reformed Church history the office of the deacon is an independent office which is not part of the church council but they report to the church council about their activities (Vorster, 1999:45). The article seeks to better understand what is being practiced in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. Thus, this work aims to ascertain what the church does and how the office of the deacon in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe can remain relevant given the original Reformed Church Orders' emphasis on the main duties of the deacons in issues that are material and in spiritual matters as stated in other Reformed Church Orders. A brief historical background of the Reformed Church in

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Zimbabwe's establishment in the country is provided in order to set the background information for the article.

The coming of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Zimbabwe

Cronje (1984:114) states that the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Zimbabwe (hereafter referred as DRCM) came to Zimbabwe after the initiation of the DRC Christians in Zoutpansberg Congregation under the guidance of Rev Stephanus Hofmeyr. Hofmeyr was a minister in Zoutpansberg Congregation in Transvaal, South Africa. Van der Merwe[1] (1981:1) states that the missionary work of the Dutch Reformed Church in Zimbabwe was started by Andrew Louw with the blessing of the Dutch Reformed Church (Cape Synod) in 1891. He laboured through the training of evangelists and holding of special revivals as a way of stimulating the zeal in his members to participate in this noble cause of witnessing among the non-Christians as pointed out by Cronje (1984:115).

According to Houser[2] (2000:100) the mission work in Southern Rhodesia by the Dutch Reformed Church started way back in 1865 when Stephanus Hofmeyr came to Zoutpansberg in Northern Transvaal. His great missionary heart was not only concerned about the spiritual wellbeing of the natives and coloureds of that province but also the perishing souls across the Limpopo River. For Hofmeyr there was no time to waste so he wrote a letter to his home board in the Cape, requesting that missionaries be sent to the Banyai[3] people in the then Southern Rhodesia (Houser, 2000:100).

The time from which the missionaries arrive in Zimbabwe by then known as Rhodesia in 1891-1974 was referred as *(Muneri Era)*, the era of missionaries (Mutumburanzou, 1999:31). During this time missionaries established mission stations which are still referred to as "*Kwa Muneri*" the places of missionaries. These mission stations are Morgenster, Pamushana, Jichidza, Gutu, Chibi, Zimuto, Chimombe, Makumbe and Nyashanu (Mutumburanzou,1999:36).

[1] W.J. van der Merwe is the author of "From Mission Field to Autonomous Church in Zimbabwe". This book is the one which contains the history of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. Merwe was a missionary who laboured in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. He pastored in congregations and he was also once a lecturer at Murray Theological College. Much of the factual information gathered for the writings of his book has come from the original sources kept in the Dutch Reformed Church Archives in Cape Town, National Archives, Zimbabwe, the Dutch Reformed Church Mission Office Cape Town, the Archives of the Dutch Reformed Church mission at Morgenster and from the files of Rev G. Murray who was formerly stationed at Morgenster. In Masvingo as the Liaison Officer and the General Secretary of the African Reformed Church from 1956 to 1975. Merwe laboured as a missionary for 24 years in the African Reformed Church in Zimbabwe.

[2] Houser Tillman was born in 1922, in the United States and completed his MA in 1978 at the School of World Mission at the Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He pastored for seven years in United States. He spent thirty-five years as a missionary in Zimbabwe including fifteen in month in Natal, South Africa. His missionary services include managing of primary schools and planted Churches. He edited and published translations of the Free Methodist Church standard of faith and practise in *Shangaan* and *Shona* Languages. Free Methodist Church in Zimbabwe which was founded by Houser is a missionary Church which shares the same hymn book with the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe.

[3] Banyai was a reference to the Shona speaking people in the then Southern Rhodesia now referred as Zimbabwe. This is a group of people where the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe has established mission stations and congregations. As it is today in Zimbabwe 75% of the population are *Shona* speaking people.

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Mutumburanzou (1999:32) is convinced that it was under an inspiring vision that Hofmeyr sent Rev S.P. Helm, his colleague, and a group of evangelists to Zimbabwe. This mission was to find out whether there could be a possibility of establishing a permanent settlement in the area for effective mission work among the *Shona* people of Zimbabwe. Through this fact-finding mission, Rev S.P. Helm visited more that eighteen congregations in South Africa explaining the spiritual need for the people in Zimbabwe. According to Cronje (1984: 115) this touched the heart of Andrew Louw who was the son of the Dutch Reformed Church minister in the town of Paarl in South Africa. He declared himself that he was convinced of having been called by God to minister among the people of Zimbabwe. In his book titled *"Born to Witness"* Cronje (1984: 117) explains that this young man was a student at Stellenbosch Theological Seminary but he had to withdraw in the third year of his studies because of ill health. Andrew Louw, with a team of seven evangelists left Kranspoort in South Africa by an ox-wagon on June 18, 1891 and crossed the Limpopo River and entered Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). According to Van der Merwe (1981:49) Andrew Louw and his team of evangelists were supported materially and spiritually by a congregation at Stellenbosch from the day they started off their journey to Zimbabwe. As they were travelling some of the evangelists were posted to different villages to commence the missionary work in Zimbabwe. It took them two and half months to reach the mountain where Chief Mugabe was residing and they were given permission to start mission work among his people (Baloyi, 2016: 59).

Andrew Louw heard that God was calling him for this missionary task but he was an ill man but still he offered himself as a missionary for the Banyai people. His father was a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church and a devout man and he was also convinced when he read the Bible in *1 Corinthians 1:27*, namely: "God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things of the mighty". A.A Louw started off by ox wagon for *Banyai* land and they passed through Goedgedacht Mission in Zoutpansberg where he and his team received all the encouragement and other provisions. It was noted that they set out in faith and crossed the Limpopo with great difficulty and after weeks of travel in their ox wagon over the *mopane/mupani* trees of the Lowveld they arrived on Mugabe's Mountain on the 9th September, 1891 (Houser, 2000:101).

Mutumburanzou (1999:35) states that soon after their arrival at the top of the mountain where they were living Andrew Louw became ill because he was afflicted with malaria. However, God heard the prayers of the young man and he recovered from the illness. The establishment of Church offices such as elders and deacons were constituted in 1918. According to Vorster (1999:67) it is stated that when a church council is instituted for the first time, or reinstituted, it must be done with the advice of the presbytery. It there are only a small number of elders deacons may be considered to form part of the church council by way of local arrangement. However, we stick to the mandate of this article of discussing the historical perspective of the office of the deacon in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. A short historical background of the Reformed polity concerning the said office must be expounded upon before discussing the office of the deacon in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe.

Reformed principle of the office of the deacon

Vorster (1999:26) states that:

> The essence of the office of deacon is conscientiously to collect the money and goods given to the poor as gifts of love and to distribute these gifts diligently, after joint deliberation, according to the needs of both the needy and other church members. It is also their duty to visit and comfort those in need and to ensure

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> that the gifts are not wrongly applied. The deacons must report to the church council about their activities and, if so desired, to the congregation as well when the church council considers it appropriate.

The work of the deacon was clearly defined in the early church as it is written in the Bible (Acts 2:42 & 4:32-37). Their tasks as deacons were not limited to material matters only, but also included spiritual matters. In addition to caring for the poor, they preached and baptized (Vorster 1999:45). Deacons should serve in the community and help the church to do community services. But they can also lead the congregation in ministering to them and also to other Christians where need exists.

The Church Order emphasizes the following main duties of deacons in material and spiritual matters and these include:

The collection of contribution for the poor

The distribution of these contributions

To act communally to prevent in injustices and disorderliness

To do house visitation with the sole purpose of comforting those in need with the Word of God and to inspire Christians to take care of the needy

To report to the church council and, if necessary to the congregation about their work.

To report not only in the congregation but for in need (Galatians 6:10).

The deacons should promote a sensitivity in the congregation for the poor, the oppressed and the needy (Vorster, 1999:47; Hiebert, 1983). With this background of the principles of the office of the deacon in the Reformed polity the author now discusses the subject matter of the office of the deacon in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe (RCZ).

The Office of the Deacon in the RCZ

The RCZ 2017 *Rules and Regulations* revised edition of the RCZ (*Bhuku Yomurairo),* clear states that anyone who aspires to be a deacon has to be an RCZ church member. The RCZ deacons have voting rights in the church council and can also be elected as delegates to represent the Congregation as delegates at the Presbytery and Synod. The *Bhuku YoMurairo* of RCZ church demands that members who will be elected to the office of deacon in the RCZ must meet the following qualifications:

1. Must have attained the age of twenty-five regardless of being a youth member who is not married (Bhuku YoMurairo, 2017:20).

2. Must have stayed in the Congregation for at least one year or more as a full member (Bhuku YoMurairo, 2017:20).

3. If possible, those who have never been to this post shall be given thirst preference (Bhuku YoMurairo, 2017:20).

4. A deacon must serve in this office for two years and if re-elected must serve for another two years. He/she is not permitted to serve in this office for more than four years without a rest. After four years one can, be elected back to the office of deacon after a rest for at least one year (Bhuku YoMurairo, 2017:20).

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Similarly, Hanko (1962) mentions in article 22 in his book, the "*Notes on Church Polity",* that members of the congregation are given an opportunity to direct attention or recommend to suitable candidates from each section. The Consistory or the Church Council will vote using secret ballot for one to take the office of a deacon in that section or preaching centre. This criterion is the same as the one which is being used in the RCZ when electing members to the office of deacon. Strictly speaking the examination of those elected in both the office of the elders and deacons in RCZ is missing.

Installation of the deacons will only take place after the names of those to be installed have been announced on three successive Sundays during worship service and they will be installed during worship service, most of these installations are normal done during Holy Communion services and the end of the year. In the *RCZ Bhuku YoMurairo* (2017:23) it is stated that the purpose of announcing the names before the installation to the office are two:

1. To make sure that all members in the congregation are well informed of the nominations.

2. To give an opportunity to those who want to bring in objections against the nomination or against the election as a whole (*RCZ Bhuku YoMurairo* 2017:23).

Women as Deacons in the RCZ

As has been noted earlier on that the RCZ attained her autonomy in 1952, the elders and deacons of the Church were supposed to be married men only. Women and youths were not allowed to assume any leadership post in the church council, presbytery and at Synod level. This can be supported with the minutes of the Synod that was held at Morgenster Mission in 1981 where the women's guild hereafter referred as the women's fell0wship requested to be included in the decision-making boards such as Church Council, Presbytery and the Synod. Their request was unanimous rejected (*Synod Minutes,* 1981:432).

In August 1984 at Zimuto Mission the Synod accepted that women can be elected as deacons and elders in the Church. At the same General Synod, it was also agreed that women can be allowed to read the liturgy when leading worship services (*Synod minutes,* 1984: 631/21).

Mutumburanzou (1999:20) noted that the struggle of women in the church in both the Synods of 1978 and of 1981 was passed positively at the Synod of 1984. From this Synod women were allowed to take responsibility in the leadership of the church and to be elected as elders and as deaconesses of the Church. This is in line with the early church teachings according to Nicolaides (2021) who informs us that even widows as deaconesses could make a contribution to the welfare and spiritual development of fellow believers. "Deaconesses and also deacons were required to visit all who were in need, and inform the bishop of all who were in distress and be totally obedient to him always" (Nicolaides, 2021:7)

It took eight years for the congregations to recommend women as delegates to represent Church councils in the highest decision-making boards of the Church. Zunga Congregation, Chivi Presbytery in Chivi district in Masvingo province was the first Congregation to send a woman delegate to represent their Congregation at the Synod level in 1992 (*Synod Minutes,* 1992:66/3). Women were despised as people who cannot hold leadership positions in the RCZ. The first woman to be send as a delegate at the Synod in 1992 was Mrs Majange.

Thank God that by the time this research was done women are now being elected as elders, deacons and some have been ordained as ministers of the Word and Sacraments. This is important since all are created in the image of God.

Duties of deacons in the RCZ

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It is stated in the *RCZ Bhuku YoMurairo* (2017:23) that the duties of deacons are as mentioned below:

1. To collect tithes, membership, Sunday collections hereafter referred as Church offerings, and thanksgivings with the help of the elders. This is also stated in the "*Constitution of the Reformed Church in Zambia"* (2013:70) which states that the duty of deacons is to encourage Christians to give their tithes and offerings required to extend the works of the Church in accordance with the Scriptures.

2. To care for the poor, though this must be done in consultation with the church council. In the Reformed Church in Zambia, it is stated that the deacons must identify the poor and the needy that should be ministered to with regard to their spiritual and physical needs (*The Constitution of the Reformed Church in Zambia,* 2013:70).

3. They must strategize ways and means of raising money for the whole congregation. Mutumburanzou (1995:19) noted that the issue of stewardship became the bone of contention in the RCZ because they were relying on donors who had withdrawn their support after independence because the indigenous Christians were not taught how to give and the necessity of tithing and giving church offerings. As a result of this church members in some of the congregations were and are still unable to raise enough funds to support their own projects and to support their ministers.

4. Deacons are the ones responsible of receipting and banking all Congregation funds as soon as possible because congregation funds must keep in the bank.

Vorster (1999:45) explains that deacons as it is stated in the Church Orders, have as their main duty in the church the need attend to the material and spiritual matters of believers. This is the same as in the RCZ; deacons have the duty of collecting and receive all resources for the congregation. Of course, in the *RCZ Bhuku YoMurairo* (2017:51) it is stated in article 139, that members must be taught what is in the Word of God concerning the giving of tithes, building fund, Sunday collections, thanksgiving and other means of raising funds which the church council may see fit for the congregation.

Similarly, this is also explained by Zeze (2012:113) for he has stated in his dissertation that the task of the deacons is to look after the Church and the needy. The duties of the office of the deacon shall be the upliftment, comfort and support of those in need, collection and distribution of resources necessary for the diaconal work of the Church. They shall attend Congregation Council meetings, do house visitation and undertake works of charity says Zeze (2013:24). The administration of the funds in a congregation is the duty of the Finance Committee where all deacons are members of this committee. They are the people responsible with the formulating the budget of the Congregation (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:103)

The congregation budget must include monies for the Central box which is administered by the national Church treasurer; some of money is allocated for the administration of the congregation and the presbytery (*RCZ Bhuku YoMurairo* 2017:97). It is the duty of the deacons to see to it that funds are made available for the administration of the church needs on a daily basis. Therefore, deacons in the RCZ are stewards of God's resources. Good stewardship of Church's resources is the vehicle for the development of the RCZ.

Stewardship in the RCZ

When the missionaries came to Zimbabwe from 1891 to 1952, all the Church work took place under the Mission Council, which was fully supported financially by the Mission Board in South

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Africa (Mutumburanzou, 1999:67). From the beginning of the mission work in Zimbabwe, indigenous Christians where not taught the importance of giving tithes or free will offerings (Sunday collections). At the Synod of 1975 it was resolved that all money raised by congregations and other church departments should be channelled to the Central Box/Central Fund which was established at the same Conference. Those who were to benefit from this fund were ministers, evangelists and all workers of the church who work in various departments (*Synod Minutes*,1975:112/138). However, this did not improve the way of giving in the RCZ until the church started to hold refresher courses on the importance on giving, starting with ministers and then members of the Church. This resulted in a marked improvement in giving by many Christians (Mutumburanzou, 1999:179). The ministers, elders and deacons were challenged to lead by example, even in giving.

It is the duty of the office of deacons to teach member of the RCZ to understand what stewardship is, that is they have to carry the responsibility of being self-reliant instead of being depending on partners from outside Zimbabwe. This was also highlighted by Mutumburanzou (1999:303) in his doctoral dissertation when he said: "Regarding the issue of stewardship in the RCZ, there has been a general lack of education among the Christians, especially during the missionary era. This was not caused because the people were poor or were unwilling to give to the Lord, but just because many had not learnt fully the meaning of giving, and even the need to give" (Mutumburanzou, 1999:303).

If the office of deacons is fully utilized in the RCZ, the Church can be self-supporting in all her departments because good stewardship is the backbone of the development of the Church. This will help the Congregation Treasurer and the Finance Committee to fully implement all cost centres of the Congregation, and without any limitations the resources will be readily available all the time (Mutumburanzou, 1999:303).

Central Deacon[4]/Congregation Treasurer

One deacon needs to be chosen and he/she must be in position to prepare Income and Expenditure of the money in the congregation article 23:3 (*RCZ Bhuku YoMurairo,* 2017:42). Financial reports must be given to the congregation each year and at every church council meeting. He/she is called central deacon or congregation treasurer. Central Deacons in the congregations are chief advisors of financial issues in their congregations (*Central Deacons Minutes,* 2011:05/4). The Central Deacon must ensure that all the monies received are paid into the congregation's bank account. All monies must be banked first before being used, and so it is the duty of the Central Deacon to see that all collections for the month are banked on the last working day of that month regardless of the amount collected. At one of the Central Deacons' meetings held at the RCZ headquarters the Church treasurer emphasised that Central deacons should take a leading role in giving and teaching about tithing in their congregations (*Central Deacons Minutes,* 2005:01/3).

Roles of Central Deacons

The Finance Committee Chairperson who addressed the Central deacons at their meeting on the 14th May 2011 highlighted the following as the Key Result Areas (KRA) of Central deacons:

[4] In the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe the Treasurer of the Congregation is referred as the Central Deacon. All section deacons are to bank all their collections to the Central deacon for mastering and is the one to represent the Congregation in all matters which involves finances. His/her duties is to receipt all collections of the congregation from section deacon/ness, to prepare income and expenditure statements for the congregation.

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1. Safe keeping of the Church wealth.

2. Gathering church wealth.

3. Managing the use of money (expenditure).

4. Record keeping and updating the congregation (in financial reports).

5. Assessing or reviewing performance.

6. Taking responsibility for the results whether good or bad (*Central deacons Minutes,* 2011:05/4).

Responsibilities of the Finance Committee

The finance committee which is an arm of the office of deacons in the Congregation is there to oversee the overall management of the financial and other resources of the congregation in accordance with the RCZ finance policy procedures.

The Constitution, by-laws and Procedures of the Reformed Church in Zambia (2013:132) states the same things with the RCZ where it says that the Committee must conduct various capacity building programmes for all deacons within the congregation. It is stated that they must carry out internal audit of church finances internal audit of church finances in the congregation.

The Finance Committee was constituted by the Synod with the purpose of advising the Moderature which is the Synodical Committee Executive on the church's financial issues; church budgetary controls and assist in the church's national fundraising activities for its strategic projects *(Synod Minutes,* 2014:112).

Duties of the Finance Committee

1. To ensure that proper books of accounts are kept at the congregation.

2. To ensure that the Congregation has an updated Master asset register and inventory record.

3. To ensure that payments are made as and when they fall due and to keep proper record of any outstanding amounts in appropriate books.

4. To prepare and control annual congregation budgets.

5. To prepare monthly expenditure, income projections and analysis financial reports from the Central Deacon.

6. To propose various methods of raising enough resources needed in the Congregation.

7. The minister being the Chairperson of the Congregation shall ensure that proper financial management is implemented in accordance with the RCZ financial policy procedures (*The Constitution, by-laws and Procedures of the Reformed Church in Zambia,* 2013:132).

8. At synod level the Finance Committee is mandated by the Church to visit all Congregations which are not performing well in terms of their budget as a way of encouraging them and to conduct workshops with Presbyteries, church councils and deacons. This was resolved at the RCZ Synod in 1996 at Morgenster Mission (*Synod minutes,* 1996: 1081/68). This is also supported by what was reported at the Synod in August 2014 at Zimuto Mission, the Finance committee noted that before they embark on an outreach programme an average contribution to the central box was 47% but after a national outreach the average contributions rise up to

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60%. All the Presbyteries were visited during this outreach programme (*Synod Minutes,* 2014:115).

This is also supported by what is stated in the RCZ Rules and Regulations article 150:5 (*RCZ Bhuku YoMurairo,* 2017:103) where it is stated that the Minister in charge of the congregation has the statement of the congregation. However, the minister must relieved/exempted from handling congregation funds.

According to the *Bhuku YoMurairo* of the RCZ (2017:102) article 150:2-3 it is the duty of the Finance Committee to safeguard all congregation funds. The committee must give financial reports on every church council meeting. The church magazine called *Munyai WaShe* (Messenger of God), of March (2010:11) noted that it is the duty of the finance committee to prepare congregation budget and to present it for approval by the church council.

Church Treasurer

As was noted earlier on, that the Executive of the Synodical Committee has the post of the Treasurer and the assistant, and their duty is safeguarding the funds of the whole Church and to prepare the budget for the Church. The treasurer is there to safeguard that the Congregations meet their monthly contribution to the Central box. The treasurer and his/her assistant are members of the RCZ Finance Committee. He / She is responsible planning salaries of all Church workers including ministers. He gives financial reports to the Synodical Committee and also to the Synod. He is the signatory of all church accounts and the has to make sure that all church accounts are audited annually by the Internal and External auditors as is recommended by the Church (*RCZ Bhuku YoMurairo,* 2017:100).

The Church treasurer periodically holds meetings with the Central deacons as a way of notifying on their performance on a quarterly basis. He is the one who presents budget proposals to the Central deacons at the beginning of each year (*Central Deacons Minutes,* 2011:05/5). This is also supported by what the Finance chairperson reported during the 2014 Synod that most congregations continued to struggle with their central box budgets. He however attributed this to economic climate in the country because it has affected everyone including our congregants (*Synod Minutes,* 2014:112).

If the treasurer is out or on leave the assistant treasurer will perform the duties of the latter. The treasurer must be in a position to prepare income and expenditure. The church treasurer has the duty to revise the budget upwards or downwards with the blessing of the Finance Committee when the get the approval from the Synodical Committee (*Central Deacons Minutes,* 2010:11/3).

The Church treasurer is a member of the Board of Trustees together with the Moderator, Scriber, General Secretary and Actuary. The Board of Trustees shall have power to buy, sell, let or h ire property, exchange, transfer, receive funds by way of donations or otherwise (*RCZ Bhuku YoMurairo,* 2017:99).

The treasurer is the head of the Finance division in the Church. The Treasurer reports to the finance board which is appointed at the Synod after every two years. The finance committee consists of highly qualified and successful people in the area of finances (*Munyai WaShe,* 2010:01/19). The church through its Synodical Committee is the responsible authority and oversees the financial administration of all departments in the church.

Recommendations

Committee of Deacons or Finance Committee

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a. There must be a committee of deacons, which handle and distribute the finances of the congregation, in what is called the Finance Committee, of which the Executive of the congregation, namely the pastor, church council secretary and vice church council secretary are all ex-officio members.
b. The deacons shall ordinarily meet monthly to transact the business pertaining to their office, and whenever requested by the Church Council to do so.
c. The finance committee shall elect a chairperson and a secretary from amongst its members.
d. The finance committee shall keep a record of its proceedings and of all fundraising and tithes in their wards or sections and the distribution to the poor, and shall submit its minutes to the Church Council regularly, and at other times upon request of the Church Council.
e. The finance committee shall render a monthly account of their work to the Church Council.
f. The finance committee shall be under its supervision and authority of the Church Council.
g. The Church Council may endorse, reject or amend any action of the finance committee.

Motivation: Although provision is being made for the finance committee in the *RCZ Bhuku YoMurairo*, there is a need to amend the *RCZ Bhuku YoMurairo.* Currently, any member of the congregation can be elected as a member of the Finance Committee, regardless of being a deacon or not. The presumption of the researcher is that this committee should only consist of deacons. This will help the deacons and the RCZ at large to meet her obligation of taking care of the needy and those who are ill.

Equality of respective duties

Proposal: In the local congregation, equality shall be maintained amongst the ministers, elders, and deacons regarding their respective duties, and in other matters, as much as possible.

Motivation: The *RCZ Bhuku YoMurairo* should be amended in order to make provision for the Reformed church polity principles of no lordship. At present there is a presumption in the RCZ that the elders are more powerful in decision-making than the deacons. The *RCZ Bhuku YoMurairo* should state that there is equality amongst the offices.

Conclusion

During their missionary work in Zimbabwe, missionaries did not only concentrate in the preaching of the Word. They founded churches and established church offices one of which is the office of deacon. Deacons in the RCZ are members of the church council with a specific task of collection of money and taking care of the resources of the Church. They are also responsible of raising and distributing those resources. In verses 8-10, of 1 Timothy 3, Paul says, "Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a conscience". For Paul, a deacon is a man who wants to demonstrate the love of Christ in the body of Christ. The office of deacon is clearly an office of total service, (Nichols, 2010), and a deacon must be one who wishes to serve; he or she must desire to help when the people of God are in distress (Anyabwile, 2012). A deacon must wish faithfully serve the flock in the ministry. Thus, in electing deacons, people called by God who love serving the Lord's people in their time of need and on an ongoing basis must be chosen.

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