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20 | The Theological Journey of Peggy Mulambya Kabonde:

The First Black Female General Secretary
of the United Church of Zambia

Bridget Nonde Masaiti-Mukuka

*“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you;
before you were born I sanctified you;
I ordained you a prophet to the nations”.*

(Jeremiah 1:5)

Abstract

This article sets out to retrieve the theological history of Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde who was the first black female to be appointed as General Secretary of the United Church of Zambia. It attempts a survey of African Women’s Theology which highlights some theological sources used by Peggy. The article concerns Peggy’s personal narratives that include her social and religio-cultural backgrounds. Findings from the interviews highlight how colonialism, power, patriarchy, culture, ageism, gender and religion intersects in the theological journey of Peggy. By focusing on Peggy as the first female General Secretary of UCZ, the article outlines the theological challenges and achievements she encountered. The article explains how her theological ideas challenge and transforms patriarchy, colonialism, gender, culture and the subordination of women in the church. This article contributes to the emergent literature on the concept of intersectionality and this will be used as a theoretical framework. Data in this article is drawn from secondary research sources, through academic journals, scholarly books, online publications and the face-to-face interviews that the author had with Peggy on 25th January 2020 and 18th August, 2022 respectively.

Keywords: African Women’s Theology, Power, Intersectionality

Introduction

In as much as the article sets out to outline the theological-life journey of Rev. Dr. Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde, it will address issues of power dynamics in terms of her position in the church. However, before bringing forth the many experiences of Peggy, the article outlines, briefly, the context and the religiosity of the Zambian people in the Reformed Church of Zambia (RCZ) and the United Church of Zambia (UCZ) respectively.

The article entices and widens the perspective of the reader on African Women's Theology and its relationship with other postcolonial African theologies. To achieve this objective, the article poses the following questions: who is Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde? What are some of the challenges experienced by Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde during her historical and theological journeys as a reverend in the postcolonial United Church of Zambia (UCZ)? To answer the question, the article analyzes the narrative or responses of Peggy who was available for interviews. The section below discusses briefly, some experiences of the ordained women in the Reformed Church of Zambia (RCZ) and the United Church of Zambia (UCZ).

Post-Colonial Women and the Church in Zambia

Kangwa (2017:96) observes that the history of Christianity in Africa reflects androcentric preoccupations because a lot of stories about women who contributed to the growth of Christianity have been marginalized. Kangwa sees that the names of many women who have contributed to the growth of the church, such as Alice Mulenga Lenshina¹ in Zambia

¹ Alice Mulenga Lenshina, initiated her own African Indigenous Church (AIC) in Zambia in 1958. Her church was called the Lumpa Church. Lenshina was the first woman to protest and challenge the missionary's preaching, the colonial powers, as well as the Kaunda regime. Lenshina claimed to have died and risen again. In her death, she claimed she saw Jesus Christ, who told her to go back to life and tell the people that "Jesus is coming again". At that time, Lenshina knew nothing about reading the Bible (For more information see Hinfelaar, 1994:73; Masaiti, 2017). It is believed that some of the accusations alleged against her by the Kaunda regime had no foundation. For example, "Lenshina was accused of using false doctrines, such as advising her members to drink their own urine so as to cleanse themselves. They said she also advised her members to climb tall trees and let go of themselves, so that the

are mentioned without giving positive details of their contributions. In many cases, the narrations on Lenshina are viewed negatively. For example, many of us received stories of how Lenshina forcefully made her followers drink her own urine. It is through face-to-face interviews with Lenshina's followers that one gets to uncover the truth about Lenshina's experiences as a woman ordained by God.

It is through these backgrounds that many mainline churches in Zambia were not ready to ordain women. Mulowa (2022:226), an ordained woman in the Reformed Church in Zambia, explains how her church celebrated her 100 years of existence without any ordained woman on board. According to Mulowa (2022:228),

by the year 2000, the topic on women's ordination became a hot debate. Proposals to allow women into ministry were sent to synod...After careful debate and reflection, with a majority vote, the 21st synod conference at Mphangwe congregation held [from] 21st to 25th of August, 2000, took up the challenge of allowing women into the ministry of word and sacrament.

The Reformed Church in Zambia (RCZ) is also one of the mainline churches in Zambia. The church faced a lot of challenges in ordaining women into ministry and is still facing many problems when it comes to including women in leadership positions. Additionally, Mukuka (2022:188) shares how she broke "...the barriers of patriarchy in the ecclesiastical setup, [by] being the first female Bishop in the United Church of Zambia, 37 years after the church's inception [in 1965]". She recalls that her election to the position of Bishop in 2002 came with enormous challenges and opposition from her male partners. Mukuka received a lot of encouragement from many women. She echoes that her experience in ministry "...had actually exposed how deeply the patriarchal and sexist practices were embedded in the church" (Mukuka, 2022:198). Stories from women in ministry are a healing to young women who are joining ministry. Mukuka's and Mulowa's stories are healing and empowering stories to those women who are experiencing marginalization in the church today, and to those who intend telling their experiences but do not have an idea where they can start from. The following section gives the historical-background of Rev. Dr. Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde.

angels of God would come down and save them. It was believed that many people died from this act". (See Mwamba, 2020).

Who is Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde?

Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde is a Zambian woman. She is a black woman whose purpose has been to motivate and empower female lay and clergy in the church. Her biological parents are both Zambians. She was born on 5th May, 1961, in Nchanga North Hospital in Chingola. Chingola is one of the towns on the Copperbelt Province of Zambia. Peggy is the fifth child in the family of nine children, six boys and three girls. Her parents were committed Christians in the colonial Free State Church in Zambia. Her father was working in the mining industry in Chingola. Peggy recalls that “we were brought up in a home that practiced Christian values. My parents encouraged us to study and attend church services” (Interview. 2020). It was from this background that Peggy enjoyed the Sunday School Services. Peggy started her primary school at Kapopo Primary School. She later went to Twatasha Primary School. When Peggy was in grade 4, she joined the Girls Brigade Unit of the United Church of Zambia. As years went by, Peggy successfully passed her grade 7 examinations and went to Chikola Secondary. Peggy later moved to Mporokoso Secondary School where she wrote her form five examinations in 1981.

Peggy’s Theological Journey

Peggy emphasizes that her favourite scripture is always at her finger-tips. This is Jeremiah 1 verse 5 which is cited at the beginning of this article. The scripture is self-explanatory since Peggy did not explain the reasons this scripture is her favourite. Peggy was an active member of the body of Christ at a young age in evangelism campaigns. It was during one of the evangelism campaigns led by Reverend Bill Hincks, who was the evangelism secretary by then, that Peggy received a calling. Bill Hincks travelled all the way to Mporokoso, the Northern Part of Zambia. Hincks was based at Kashinda Mission where he was carrying out evangelism campaigns. Peggy attended the evangelism campaign. Peggy recalls, “it was one of my life-changing campaigns because, coupled with my involvement in the choir, and being a Sunday School teacher, I remember very well that I received Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Saviour in this same campaign” (Interview. 2020). During this period, and as stated in the previous section, Peggy was a student at Mporokoso Secondary School where she completed her secondary education in 1981.

In 1983, Peggy applied to go and study at the United Church of Zambia (UCZ) Theological College. She found other three women who were already studying there. These were Reverend Violet Bredt-Sampa, Reverend Milandu Mundemba and Reverend Juliet Matembo. Peggy narrates that “I was the fourth woman student minister to be admitted to train as a minister of the Word and Sacraments” (Interview. 2020). Sharing her ministerial experience, Peggy explains that,

the first woman to be at the theological college was the Reverend Violet Bredt-Sampa, who was later sent to the University of Zambia as a Chaplain. Then there was Rev. Milandu Mundemba, then there was also Rev. Juliet Matembo and then myself – so you see, there was no woman minister on the Copperbelt Province at that time. And I was stationed right there. At first, it was very difficult for me, but when Reverend Mundemba was sent to the Copperbelt Province, I started getting excited to be in ministry, you know? (Interview. 2020).

Peggy got married to Mr Fred Kabonde in 1986, in the same year that she completed her ministerial studies. She was ordained as the Minister of Word and Sacrament. In 1986, Peggy was given her first congregation in Ndola. On her first appointment, Peggy was sent to the UCZ Kawama Congregation and other surrounding Congregations in Ndola. This was the time she had her first experience/s. Her experience at UCZ Kawama Congregation meant that Peggy could carry out mission work at the following UCZ congregations; Minsundu, Chipulukusu, Misaka, and Pamodzi Congregations, to mention but a few. The experience she got from these congregations strengthened her morally and spiritually in her theological-journeys. Peggy blended spiritually with all the congregations by attending the morning glory sessions with members on particular days. Peggy and Fred have four children. All of them are girls. Unfortunately, Fred answered God’s call in December 2020.

A Member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians

Peggy was introduced to the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians by Ms Omega Bula². In 1989, Ms Omega Bula identified Peggy

² Unfortunately, Ms Omega Bula died on the 31st of January, 2023 and was buried on the 4th of February, 2023 near her farm in Chisamba, Zambia. May Her Soul Rest in Eternal Peace.

as an emerging African woman theologian. Ms Bula appointed her to attend the first inauguration of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in 1989 in Ghana. According to Peggy, “It was also my first time to fly out of the country, you know”, (*smiling*). (Interview. 2020). In the same interview, Peggy explained that,

the aim of the first round of women was to bring the African women who had studied theology to be writing and publishing their experiences and the experiences of other women on the continent. It was hilarious to be part of this group of women and in our midst, was a renowned African male theologian; John Pobee who supported the work of the women, (Interview with Peggy. 2020).

Apart from being the minister of Word and Sacrament, Peggy held other positions in other institutions. “I began in 1994 when I was in my early 30s. I was appointed as the Director of women’s work...you know, they say, God calls the unqualified and qualifies them. The Women’s Christian Fellowship (WCF) elderly women did help me a lot. I had served as a minister in several congregations on the Copperbelt Presbytery” (Interview. 2020). Peggy was appointed as the Chaplain at the University of Zambia and also as a part-time Gender Officer. This involved incorporating women into the national activities and bringing women to be involved in some decision-making. Peggy recalls that at first some men never supported the gender program and only started supporting it after some time.

Specific features and uniqueness of the theology of Peggy as a Matriarch

“My professional journey did not just end at the congregation”, explains Peggy, (Interview. 2020). Peggy enrolled at Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation (MEF) where she obtained a diploma. She was one of the few black women in the country who secured a scholarship from the Methodist Church in Britain. “I was sent to school to study my Masters’ degree”, echos Peggy. Peggy was offered an honorary degree at the University of Cape Town. She graduated with a master’s degree at the University of Cape Town and returned to Zambia to continue with God’s work. In 2010, Peggy left the country again to pursue her PhD in Gender and Religion studies in Pietermaritzburg-South Africa at the University of Kwa-Zulu-Natal. It was during this same period in 2010 that she was recalled

by the United Church of Zambia senior officials to help stand in as the interim General Secretary of the church. According to Peggy (2020),

...that was in 2010. But after only a few months of us being in South Africa, you know, I received a phone call that I was chosen to serve as Interim General Secretary of the United Church of Zambia for two years...that was from 2010 to 2012. I was not very ready for this position, because I did not know where I would start from, you know, especially that we had sold all our household goods and relocated to a foreign place...and we were just starting to settle in when this phone call came along. I...I didn't know what to do...I went to my supervisor and explained everything to her. (Posing the question to the *interviewer*) *You know how our supervisor is eh?* I explained to her that there has never been a female General Secretary in the United Church of Zambia...I even explained to her that at the moment our church is undergoing some financial problems. But you know Prof. Phiri? (Peggy asked the interviewer)? Being my Supervisor, she encouraged me by stating that "you never know what plans God has for your church...." She further reminded me that since my thesis discussed issues on women—I must go there with an open mind because this is not the church of human beings, but bear in mind that this is God's church (Interview. 2020).

In another interview with the researcher, Peggy explained how she found the financial position of the Church when she served as the General Secretary. She reckons that the church was experiencing extreme financial challenges when she took the position of General Secretary. In an interview with Peggy (2020), she stated:

And for sure when I came here as an Interim, I served as the Interim General Secretary for Two years. And for sure, there were problems... (*Holding her head and speaking out*) Jesus Christ! ...there was no money in the church—But you know, to cut the long story short... God as God-self, makes a way where there is no way. We started writing to many of the UCZ partner churches, explaining our problems...we found ourselves where to place our heads... and in 2014 after tough competitions, I was elected as the new General Secretary of the United Church of Zambia. The question I kept asking myself was: are we doing something that is fine—but God was saying, 'it is not you—it is God working' and indeed God is our Ebenezer—because I keep thanking the members who really supported me and those who did not believe in me but has seen what God can do through using my leadership skills—and for those that have not supported, God has been fighting for us. And as time went on, we started receiving help from our partner churches. I really felt at peace, you know, that I had achieved one goal not on my own, but with

the help of others around me and also with the protection and guidance and wisdom from God Almighty.

Peggy worked tirelessly during this period. She points out that this has been the period that she committed herself into prayer more than ever before. Of course, she acknowledges that there were some church members who really wanted to see her downfall, from both sides, men and women, but this never happened. She has however worked with Church leaders, executive officers, and other people of high calibre and observed their leadership styles thereby emulating some; and subsequently tried not to acquire the traits of some of those whom she did not admire. In her confessions, Peggy remembers some of the challenges she faced when she was the General Secretary of the United Church of Zambia.

I faced some of the challenges from the church workers—for example when you want only some church workers, some challenges you face are different from when you face the general membership. There are a lot of positive and excellent responses from the general membership than from the church workers. There are some people who would just look at some bad things happening and will not bother to tell you—and...and from the female leadership, sometimes they tend doing things behind your back. As a leader in a male dominated church, you see them degrading you—and sometimes challenges come from the family members. For instance, some relatives of my husband would even request me to go and pray for their family members that are sick (Interview. 2020).

Characteristics/themes of this particular Matriarch's theology

Peggy, being one of our Zambian matriarchs, explains how her leadership role has contributed greatly to building the capacity of some church members. Even though some things could have been difficult at times, Peggy is proud to state that during her reign, many members in the church received both formal and informal trainings. She theologizes that...

Being a human being created in God's own image, I've tried to broaden and cast the net wider—we have offered capacity building, lifted people by offering training facilities equally, below the average and those above informal and formal trainings. We have opened that. Before I came there was only one or two members with PhDs. Proudly, we can say we

have more at the moment—for those with Masters degrees, I can't even mention because they are many, both women and men in the church (Interview. 2020).

The above response serves as a motivation to Peggy because as a matriarch, she sees herself as an agent of change both in the church and the community. This is because within the academic spheres, the church has achieved some of her goals by allowing some members to pursue further studies. Peggy was asked the question: 'if you were to encourage and motivate other women in similar positions, what would be your advice?' She theologically pointed out that...

For me—the secret lies in God—the way one relates with God—when you have faith in God—there may be some challenges yes, simply because you are a woman. You know what, even your fellow women can despise you, for example, when I tell women to do something, the majority are always reluctant, but this is not the case with men. The men will receive the instructions and run and work things out...I believe all these challenges come up because of the way we are socialized—you see even if there are some opportunities for women, the way we see things as women is different from the way men see things—in any case, I have had a lot of opportunities... but because I know that others can benefit as well, I allowed others to take and go—if I am selfish I would not have allowed others to go in my place. That is why I am saying, for women we see things ahead of us. I would encourage another woman just to work as a vessel because, to tell you the truth... (emphasizing the point) 'I have never, never, in my life, fasted and prayed the way I've done it in this office'. We have opened the United Church of Zambia to the world, showing the world that we are indeed somehow transparent and obedient. Of course, one experiences a lot of intimidation. As a woman, you don't have to intimidate and imitate anybody—where they err, one has to be courteous and correct the situation to reach a common ground. I can speak out here—for the past ten years—we have enjoyed peace in this church—I have levelled the ground and no presbytery has gone astray...and to even weigh those ideas, we have allowed heads of departments do their work diligently. I just had to do it with the help of God (Interview. 2020).

In the same interview, Peggy was asked to share her views on women and children who are sexually abused and discriminated in both the church and society? She responded as follows:

We are all created in the image of God—no single life should be abused—I’ve condemned any forms of abuse, be it spiritual, emotional, psychological, sexual, physical...eh...eh... People can be talking about this daily—when I say talking about it, I mean campaigning on these issues and we should not in any way or the other condone such things in our society (Interview. 2022).

Peggy emphasized on the issue of campaigning, to continue raising awareness with regards to sexual and gender-based violence. In Peggy’s view, she contends that this can be addressed...

Through well-structured church-based programmes—well laid information where widows, widowers, street kids, men and women can be looked after and be involved in such programmes by the Community Youth Social Justice Development. When each congregation adds such issues, we can then become decentralized—we should then create some programmes called ‘missional works and Beer Drinking’. In these programmes we identify people within the congregations, even at this level we do such programmes but in many cases we do not hear the outcomes of these programmes. I believe that congregations are more practical (Interview. 2022).

With Peggy, campaigns and/or awareness programmes can well be tackled at the congregational level because this is where some core-researchers get more information from the grassroot level. Peggy responded to the following question, *What does this position mean to you, not only as an African, ordained woman, but also an advocate, a member and Regional Coordinator of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians?*

The position means humbling myself at the right time. God provided and enabled me to go through the studies—I am not here by account or by mistake—not only to serve my fellow women but men as well—to me it is some kind of service not only to the United Church of Zambia, but also in community—it has made me to be an advocate—lobby for my fellow women, men, and children—right now I need to write on the issue of Climate change, not only about the church but when we combine, we will have a just and peaceful environment because women are soft spoken—and some men are on fire when it comes to issues of God, but God has put me in this position, so that, sometimes one may not feel it in the heart, but to go through elections—they make you strong—this is an opportunity for women to rise and get up—not only the church, but also the countries in the world (Interview. 2022).

Peggy does not regret standing up and advocating for her fellow women. She declares not to be threatened by male power. Theologically, she explains that one should not be threatened by human beings when one is working towards doing good. In her interview with the researcher, Peggy echoed,

(smiling with an emphasis) NOO! That is an outright answer—in my Christian faith, I say I will never look to man but to God—To me they do not even matter...you know?...*(smiling and asking)*—we are all created in God’s image— so I am encouraging women to go out there, to attend and present papers at the international conferences (Interview. 2020).

Reflecting on what her name (Peggy Mulambya Kabonde) means to her life and work, and how she wants her name to be remembered, she remarked: ‘Remembered and God-Fearing woman – Humility is my Virtue’ (Interview. 2020).

The purpose of the Matriarch’s generated theological thinking

At the time of writing this chapter, Peggy was serving as a missionary in the United Kingdom. She was asked to share some of her experiences within her current position. She stated that,

...in my current ministry, says Peggy, I always prayed to my God that I want to end my ministry before I finally retire with Christians on the ground (congregations) and graciously God has accorded that opportunity to serve in this part of the world and God’s world. I must say and confess that I was well received and accorded a thunderous warm welcome by both the ordinary Christians and the leaders of the church. Since I came, the people have been very receptive and welcomed my ministry and always looking forward to learning new things about the mission of God.

I have always been asked to share the experiences of the Zambian church and her growth to enable me replicate certain things that could add to the efforts the church in the North is making in terms of witness and discipleship. The mission of God may be the same but approaches differ from context to context. It is fulfilling because I have been given liberty to share what God has imparted in me through the various things that I have been involved in during the tour of my duty.

The only challenge is that one has got to be prayerful and wise on how to propagate the Word of God, because church in this part of the world is not popular but a private matter (Interview. 2022).

Theoretical Framework

As stated in the beginning, the article is a contribution to the theological journey of Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde. This article acknowledges that Peggy, like any other ordained minister of the Word and Sacrament, has been able to respond to the needs and moods of the community. Peggy is one person who has inspired "...other women and men to give out their best to the community while making the best of their God-given talents and graces", (Gathogo, 2010:2). It is obvious that in her attempt to give out so much to the community, Peggy has experienced overlapping challenges that are more intersectional in her journey.

To this end, the article utilizes intersectionality as the framework. Intersectionality, as first coined by Crenshaw, (1989), is perceived as a lens that one uses to see where power comes and collides, and where it interlocks and intersects, (Crenshaw, 2017:6). This article that discusses the historical and theological journey of Peggy resorts to analyze issues from an intersectional point of view. In our own African set up, intersectionality comes with many attachments. In this article, intersectionality is defined as the lens used to analyse societal issues faced by human beings such as sex, race, gender, location, class, ableism, ageism, position and the socio-religio-cultural issues. Coupled with some power dynamics in societies, these are multiple identities that entangle a person and make that person unable to function like any other human being.

Garry's (2011) explanation will be adopted to analyse the life and theological experiences of Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde. Garry (2011:827) advocates that "intersectional analyses the fundamental point that we all have many important facets to our identities that are impacted differently by multiple interacting systems of oppression and privilege depending on the various aspects of our identities". In Peggy's case, one would carefully try to examine the background where Peggy was born. Her parents were committed Christians in the Free Methodist church in the colonial era. Peggy joined the Girls' Brigade at a very young age. It is obvious there was no ordained woman minister of the Word during the period 1950 to 1970. Using intersectional lens, and bringing to light the power dynamics that the missionaries possessed, the missionary era was dominated by

'holy patriarchs'.³ Our parents did not seem to realize how systems of culture, religion, patriarchy, gender and race would impact on their own children in future. Even if they were aware, it was difficult for some of them to choose to live a life-style that was separate from their neighbours. This is why Garry argues that:

Recent work on "epistemologies of ignorance" has called attention to the ways in which dominant groups' ignorance is constructed and maintained; explorations of whose power is served by such ignorance; and the ways that our current interests, beliefs, and theories block why we sometimes do not even know that we do not know, or if we do know it, why we do not care (Garry, 2011:827).

Of course, the powers of the colonial missionaries were served by the 'ignorance of our innocent parents'. They did not realize that their children's identities, beliefs, interests and theories would be blocked by multiple interacted systems of oppression and other systems of marginalization without really considering the effects these would cause on their children. In this article, we acknowledge and analyse the multiple interacted systems of oppression faced by Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde by using intersectionality as a framework.

Using Intersectionality as a Framework: Analyzing Peggy's Theological Journey

Yee, (2020:8) observes that "in wrestling theoretically with the problem of inequality and poverty, I found that the most helpful analytical tool to help me avoid compartmentalizing gender, race, class, et cetera was "intersectionality." Yee is of the view that intersectionality is the most helpful analytical tool to help us avoid putting issues that entangle us and render us powerless into groups, to see how all these oppressive structures are connected to each other. Peggy's story enables one to realise that she was exposed to be in leadership positions and to look up to God at a very young age. She joined the Girls' Brigade of Zambia when she was in grade 4. Surely, even if she did not mention this during the interview, there were no boys or men in the Girls' Brigade at that time, meaning

³ Ruether (1983:53), elaborating on Holy Patriarchy, states that women and children are connected to God in a secondary manner. Women and children do not stand in direct relation to God, but they do so in an indirect manner, through the male. This is the God-male-female format.

that Peggy was given a group of young girls and not *boys* to lead. She was not able to join the Boys' Brigade, or to lead the boys, because, culturally, it was not *right*, and morally and colonially, it was *wrong*. A black girl needed to know her limits and her place during the colonial era. She needed to show that she was submissive; first, to the white regime; second, to the black leaders who were also submissive to the colonial powers, and, third, to the community where she was coming from. In support of this, Crenshaw (1989:160), writing from the black American point of view, informs us that "black women are caught between a Black community that, perhaps understandably, views with suspicion attempts to litigate questions of sexual violence and a feminist community that reinforces those suspicions by focusing on [black] female sexuality." Even though Crenshaw writes from a different context, it is also evident in Peggy's socio-cultural and religio-cultural contexts that appointing her to be a leader among both women and men could have reinforced suspicions from both leaders and the community because such issues *just never existed* at all.

In this article, employing intersectionality as a framework is important. Intersectionality helps us "...to explore the link between structural and systemic inequalities and African women's socio-cultural, religio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-political oppression as it relates to" issues that Peggy encountered in her theological journey (Naicker, 2021:37). All these have power issues attached to them. Using intersectionality as an analytical lens also opens our eyes and mindset to analyse the socio-cultural, religio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-political issues that Peggy grew up from. From the religio-cultural and socio-political point of view, the first three years after Peggy was born was the time that Zambia was ruled by colonial powers. The white missionaries had so much influence and power to win the souls of the black people through their own interpretation of the gospel. Magesa (2004:6) argues that "the gospel is a cultural reality" because Christian missionaries transmit to listeners "...their own understanding of the gospel", according to the way it has developed in "their own communities". At the same time, this also has an influence on the Christian missionaries' "...interpretation of the message" (Magesa, 2004:6).

One would imagine just how many different 'types' of missionaries Peggy and her parents were exposed to. Hastings (1994:4) observes that "the year 1785 was a significant year for the penetration of some missionaries in Central Africa". Peggy's parents were Christians in the Free

Methodist Church. However, converting black people to Christianity was not the only aim that the missionaries had. Garvey (1994:62) is of the view that “the more urbanized Protestant missionaries sought to develop commerce both as a means of opposing slavery and of development”. Henceforth, some missionaries also engaged in commerce as a way of economic prosperity.

By the time Peggy started school, Zambia had obtained its independence. Apart from being a member of the Girls’ Brigade, Peggy was also a member of the church choir. Peggy grew up in a context where culture was more favourable and gave power towards men. Peggy has seen how power lies in the hands of those who are able to dominate others. Becker (1996:164) refers to this kind of power, such as the one that gives authority to men as more authoritative. She continues to assert that this kind of power is more authoritative and can be referred to as “power as commodity which is power over” (Becker, 1996:164). Culture has power and issues attached to it come with different power dynamics. Men have been, in many contexts, considered to be the ‘heads’ of households, leaders in society and the ones chosen as elders in the church before they start ordaining African men. Peggy attended the evangelism campaigns organized by Bill Hincks. Whatever language was used during the Bill Hincks campaigns did not only influence Peggy, but multitudes of believers.

Language is powerful and dynamic. Language opens doors for knowledge. Knowledge therefore, comes with a lot of power. Commenting on language, Boonzaaier and van der Walt (2019:99), advocate that, “in the same way that language constructs “economic, social and political discourses” that inform violence and the violation of women, language also constructs discourses that inform heteronormative and homophobic practices”. All these influenced Peggy’s upbringing in the manner that made her learn how to interact with people from different contexts and to positively acknowledge that both women and men are created in the image of God.

According to Gathogo (2010:7), “In my own assessment, African Women’s Theologies emerged out of the need to create a forum in seeking to liberate African women from the oppressive structures in both the society and the religious institutions, and especially the Church”. With regard to the socio-economic oppression, Peggy’s parents worked tirelessly to educate their children despite the socio-economic oppression, from the commercial missionaries as well as the socio-culturally-based institutions. The forces of authority by the colonial era made them work

tirelessly. Peggy chose to go into ministry in 1983. There were only three women in the ministry-based-institution, with Peggy being the fourth. Using intersectional lens, the religio-cultural system in which men were the custodians of the church dominated the whole space. It is either women were marginalized during that period or the language that was used was more discriminatory against women. Boonzaaier and van der Walt (2019:99) further argue that, “it is important to reflect on language and the way terms and concepts are used in talking, especially about theology”. Although Boonzaaier and van der Walt are referring to other contexts, the issue of language that they have mentioned applies to each and every society because it is the misuse of language that reinforces marginalization of individuals in a given group or society.

Even though the four women were brave enough to be amongst the men, it is important to analyze the structural and systemic inequalities between the two genders. There were more than 10 men than women. What were the experiences of the women in that given culture? The experiences of the women during their theological training at the same theological college with men are not told. It is important to bring the hidden life histories of these women to an open space. An important question one should ask is, *were the women given all the recognition that they deserved or did they feel like leaving?* In trying to answer this question, Oduyoye’s (2001) words are echoed. She observes that within the church structure:

the question a feminist ecclesiology has to answer is not whether or not women ought to ‘leave’ or ‘stay’, but how it is possible to rethink what it means to be church within a theology paradigm which aim at reconsidering the basics of Christian theology and practice in feminist terms (2001:4).

Drawing from Oduyoye’s words, many African women have never wanted to leave the church. Power dynamics are at play in every aspect of a woman’s life. And the same applied to Peggy and her three women counterparts.

Kanyoro (2001b:163) cautions us that it is not right to condemn African women whose mindsets are deeply rooted in patriarchal societies. Instead of condemning our fellow women, we should “...seek to understand how societies are organized, and how power is used by different groups of people, by men and women, and by young and old and by people of varying economic means” (Kanyoro, 2001b:163). Peggy acknowledges that there were some church members who wanted to celebrate her

downfall, from both sides, men and women. She also recalls how she has prayed ceaselessly during the time she was the General Secretary of the United Church of Zambia. In Peggy's view, her experience with some of her fellow women in the church made her realize that women can be difficult to work with than men. This is why Kanyoro (2001b:163) perceives that such women's actions are deeply rooted in patriarchal socialization. Using intersectional lens, Peggy experienced the structural and systemic inequalities and African women's socio-cultural, religio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-political oppressions during her reign. Yet, the more she felt the pain, the more Peggy experienced her closeness to God. This paved way for her to mould both men and women and journeyed with them in God's mission.

Nadar (2005:61) affirms that "... we wish to hear women's voices and visions of being church so that we can affirm those aspects of the church which women find liberating, but also so that we may engage and address those aspects which women find oppressive". What Nadar is saying is that for many women such as Peggy, some relationships in the church between the women and men within church leadership are still hindrances to women empowerment. When a woman is in power, it is difficult for her fellow women to accept her as their leader. This is worse when it comes to men who negatively believe that a woman may rule over them. Such men would rather support their 'own' biological daughters campaign for political positions than their own wives. Some men even find it difficult to mention the name of their wives, or they may have forgotten the names of the loved ones. Intersectionality as a framework should help us open our eyes and minds so that we do not see others as stumbling blocks, but as members who lack some knowledge and information.

Yee (2020:17) advocates that "intersectionality is concerned with relations of power, and the ways that systems of power are implicated in the development, organization, and maintenance of social inequalities". With regard to class, Peggy is an educated minister, who also gained power and popularity because of understanding the Word of God in English as well as in her local language. In the midst of Peggy's life, was herself as a daughter, Peggy's husband as a companion, her four children to take care of, her extended family, her role as the General Secretary of the United Church of Zambia, as a leader with members who looked up to her as the mother of the church, enemies of progress who were waiting for her

downfall, and many, many other facets of life that she experienced. During this period, Peggy was not only a black woman, but *an iron lady*⁴, and an ordained minister of the Word of Sacrament. Peggy has been the *first* black woman, ordained, with a Doctor of Philosophy degree to hold the position of the General Secretary. Intersectionality as a framework needs to reveal to *us* whether there has ever been an ordained black man holding a Doctorate in Philosophy in the same position. With the experience of pursuing her studies, Peggy encouraged and extended her hand and opened doors for many to pursue further studies. It is her wish that when the majority of members in the church get acquainted with the relevant information and knowledge, it will be easy for many to address all structures and systemic oppressions using intersectional lens.

CONCLUSION

The article sought to bring out the theological journey of Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde. In this article, the researcher sought to interview Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde by bringing out her historical, educational and ministerial background. The major thing that has been dealt with in this article is to bring out the 'original' voice of Peggy which is self-explanatory than being interpreted by the researcher. Peggy was available for interviews on two occasions. Her availability has enriched the analysis of this article.

The article utilized intersectionality as a framework. In this article, intersectionality has been described as an interconnectedness of structural, systemic oppression, socio-cultural, socio-political, socio-economic and socio-religio systems that an individual faces everyday of one's life. Issues of power dynamics are also at play in this article. The article reveals some experiences of Peggy during her position as the General Secretary of the United Church of Zambia. The article argues that all these are reinforced

⁴ Some members of the church referred to Peggy as an iron lady. They indicated that there were times when Peggy would be very tough and roar and many members would be afraid to get into her office. Some have stated that, just the tone of her voice, made them realize how fearless and strong Peggy is. Moreover, others hated her for speaking the truth while others stated that Peggy never allowed some people to speak their minds out in times of pastoral issues.

by power dynamics. The article has explored some arguments from scholars such as Gale Yee, Musimbi Kanyoro, Isabel Phiri and Mercy Oduyoye, just to mention a few, to give a clear understanding of the lived experiences of some African women in patriarchal societies.

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