

RESILIENCE OF FAITH COMMUNITIES ON THE CAPE FLATS (SA): A PASTORAL THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE¹

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Abstract

Coloured and Black communities on the Cape Flats were established on the Cape Flats as part of Verwoerdian Apartheid, a massive programme of social engineering implemented by the National Party which came to power in 1948 in South Africa (Schärf, 1990:233). Through legislation such as the Population Registration Act (1950) and its 'twin partner', the Group Areas Act (1950), people were forcibly removed and uprooted from homes and communities where they had been living for generations. Old, ordered communities were disrupted, families were forcefully removed from communities where they knew their neighbours and where social life was in many instances organised around the church, to new neighbourhoods where people were strangers to one another – 'to soulless townships across the Cape Flats'. In these new townships on the Cape Flats, faith communities had to re-establish, re-align and re-invent themselves to face the new challenges presented to the people of the Cape Flats. Faith communities have indeed continued to play a vital role of healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciling, nurturing and empowering people throughout years of oppression and suppression, trials and tribulations. This paper looks at the resilience shown by faith communities on the Cape Flats over many years from a pastoral theological perspective and at some of the lessons we can learn with regard to congregational care.

Keywords: Cape Flats, Coloured People, Faith Communities, Resilience

Introduction

Although Apartheid is usually regarded as closely linked to the political rule of the National Party (NP), it should be made clear that the 'divide and rule' approach was part of British colonial policy. "Notions of racial superiority formed part of the general pattern of colonial rule into the twentieth century."² The establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910 "consolidated the interests of the white population over the black community".³

¹ Paper read at the 8th World Congress of the International Council on Pastoral Care and Counselling (ICPCC), Krzyzowa, Poland, 7-14 August 2007.

² Heather Deegan, *The Politics of the New South Africa. Apartheid and After* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education Ltd, 2001), 5. A number of laws were promulgated to ensure that the policy of racial segregation be maintained and the economic interests of the white minority protected. These included The Mines and Works Act (1911), which essentially meant that skilled positions were designated for whites, while blacks undertook unskilled work; the Natives Land Act (1913), which prevented Africans from buying land in areas designated as white; the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923, which enabled local authorities to enforce residential segregation between blacks and whites and forbade the granting of freehold property rights to Africans; and the Riotous Assemblies Act of 1927, which allowed for the strict control of any disturbances; the 1927

When the NP took over the reins in 1948, the system of segregation was showing signs of collapse,⁴ mainly because industrial development accelerated the movement of Africans. The Nationalists set about entrenching segregation by rooting it in the ideology of apartheid and dividing the country into racial zones: “The National Party did not wish to halt industrialisation and economic growth but rather ‘to control its social implications by imposing strict segregation based on racial hierarchy.’”⁵

Apartheid under the NP, or Verwoerdian Apartheid, as it is also called, was a massive programme of social engineering aimed at keeping black South Africans disorganised and economically dependent. Wilfred Schärf,⁶ a well-known criminologist, summarises the position of black people during Apartheid as follows:

Economic dependency was ensured by preventing the accumulation of capital by blacks. Influx control was designed to confine the surplus African population to the economically impoverished homelands. Housing policies denied Africans freehold rights and other relatively stable forms of land tenure and thus robbed them of the opportunity of using their homes as collateral for loans. Licensing provisions in the townships were extremely restrictive, thus limiting opportunities for the growth of a black middle class. All forms of street trading without licences, otherwise known as the informal sector, were made illegal. Even the commodification of domestic services such as beer was criminalized. In addition, the education system for blacks was designed to perpetuate the *status quo* by keeping blacks under-skilled. Until the late seventies, job reservation protected whites from competition in the job market. There were thus pitifully few legal avenues to *financial success* open to Africans.

The South African sociologist Bernard Magubane, referring to “the perverted logic of Apartheid”,⁷ gives this harsh description from a Marxist viewpoint: “Apartheid, as a policy of naked exploitation allied with dishonesty, is permeated by hysterical irrationality. Such a statement reminds us that the policy of apartheid is a flight from reality into fabulously convoluted rationalizations to justify any action against the African proletariat.”⁸

Apartheid, Magubane argues, is based on and grounded in Afrikaner nationalism, which he describes as “national consciousness of a perverse kind. It is a distorted love of one’s own people based on hatred, fear, and contempt for others. It misdirects the service to one’s own people into the subjugation and exploitation of all other peoples. It is a nationalism that is opposed to a free and independent growth of other nationalities. It spiritualizes the national sentiment into crass economic gains.”⁹

Whichever way one chooses to look at the history of colonisation, Dutch, English and Afrikaner rule, all of it had the net effect that the indigenous peoples of this country were robbed of the wealth, of the land, as well as of their human dignity. The white settlers made pretty sure that they, and not the African minority, would remain in control of the economy,

Immorality Act, which forbade extramarital sexual relations between blacks and whites (Deegan, *Politics of South Africa*, 3-14).

³ Deegan, *Politics of South Africa*, 3.

⁴ Deegan, *Politics of South Africa*, 23.

⁵ James Barber, cited in Deegan, *Politics of South Africa*, 23.

⁶ Wilfred Schärf, “The resurgence of urban street gangs and community responses in Cape Town during the late eighties”, in D Hausson & D van Zyl Smith (eds.), *Towards Justice, Crime and State Control in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1990), 233.

⁷ Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane, 1979, 1990. *The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa* (New York. London: Monthly Review Press), 149.

⁸ Magubane. *Political Economy*, 159.

⁹ Magubane. *Political Economy*, 248.

as Allan Boesak puts it:

The common thread, as in the beginning of the colonial project, was the need for white solidarity to secure white supremacy. It is important to remember that white, racial solidarity guaranteed white political hegemony, which in turn guaranteed white economic superiority. That early creation of a platform of wealth remains one of the most potent factors preventing genuine black economic empowerment even today.¹⁰

The Group Areas Act (1950): Forced Removals and uprooting Communities

The Group Areas Act of 1950 was one of the Nationalist government's first pieces of legislation. It extended the principle of separate racial residential areas on a comprehensive and compulsory basis. The Population Registration Act (1950) classified the people of South Africa into four main categories: 'white', 'coloured' 'Asiatic' (Indian) and 'Native' (later termed 'Bantu' or African). Land held by Indians and coloureds in city centres was expropriated by the government, and residents were resettled in housing estates on the peripheries of cities,¹¹ "far removed from jobs and organised in racially segregated townships separated from each other by unoccupied buffer zones".¹²

In this regard, District Six, in Cape Town, has become a symbol of the pain and anger of people who were forcibly removed to what is now commonly known as the Cape Flats. Despite a lack of proper housing and the general occurrence of poverty among the approximately 40 000 residents, a very strong feeling of community and cohesion existed among the people of District Six. Father John, Rector of St Mark's Church, District Six, in 2004 described District Six and the type of community life there as follows:

District Six is a national icon of our history. It is a visible reminder of forced removals that took place under the Group Areas Act. We want to remember and celebrate what the community was about before it was forcibly removed. It was a community that displayed admirable values long before the Group Areas Act was enforced. It was a community of support and racial tolerance. It was an inter-religious community who had respect for each other and attended each other's funerals, whether they were Muslims, Christians or Jews. It was a way of co-existence that is exactly what we are trying to encourage amongst all the people of South Africa as we celebrate 10 years of democracy.¹³

The existence of extended families played an enormous role in creating a sense of security, general respect for one another and caring for others. During that time, people accepted responsibility for the care and discipline of the neighbourhood's children: Your child is my child, and my child is your child.

The Group Areas Act changed the lives of Coloured, Black and Indian people of Cape Town in more ways than one, and in a very profound manner. We should remember that it was not only the people of District Six who were affected, but also people from other areas, and, indeed, right across South Africa.¹⁴

¹⁰ Allan Boesak. *The Tenderness of Conscience. African Renaissance and the Spirituality of Politics* (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2005).

¹¹ Deegan, *Politics of South Africa*, 23.

¹² Sandrine Rospabe & Harris Selod. "Does city structure cause unemployment? The case of Cape Town", in Haroon Borhat & Ravi Kanbur (eds.). *Poverty and Policy in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2006), 262.

¹³ City and St Mark's Church and District Six Museum celebrate Heritage Day. Media Release No 164/2004, 23 September 2004. www.capetown.gov.za

¹⁴ See, for example: Don Pinnock. *Elsies River* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1980); Derrick C Marco. "The Role of the Minister in a context of poverty. A charism of facilitation: Teaching-Enabling-Pastoring". (Unpublished

Prof Erika Theron¹⁵ has referred to the bitterness, distrust and enmity that this legislation, more than any other, has provoked among Coloured people. Old ordered communities were disrupted, families were forcefully removed from communities where they knew their neighbours and where social life was in many instances organised around the church, to new neighbourhoods where people were strangers to one another – to soulless townships across the Cape Flats.

Arnold Smith¹⁶ sums up the situation as follows:

The removal of thousands of people to the open Cape Flats did not envisage any proper community. People were merely dumped and forced to develop some sort of community for themselves. In addition, Bishop Lavis was literally ‘culturally poor’ during the first ten years of its existence. There was no effective schooling, minimum church life and very little sport and recreational facilities. In brief, the people of the town did not ‘live’, they only ‘existed’. By the time thought was given to such facilities, social ills like poverty, unemployment, alcohol abuse, etc. had already taken root, hindering the positive influence of the home, the school and the church as community institutions (*my translation, LLMM*).

One reason for an increase in crime was said to be the lack of facilities (with shebeens¹⁷ as the only gathering places) and a feeling of displacement or uprootment.

Many long and close friendships were broken up and extended family systems destroyed. This displacement also affected established street gangs. These were splintered into smaller gangs in the new townships. The new leadership did not necessarily adhere to the established rules and ‘norms’ maintained by the District Six leaders, resulting in different *modi operandi* in different areas.

The economic consequences of the forced removals were far-reaching. Because of higher rent and other expenses, both parents were forced to work in order to cope financially. The new townships were further from places of employment,¹⁸ which meant that people left their homes much earlier in the morning and returned later from work. This resulted in many young children being left more on their own without adult supervision and few, if any, proper recreational facilities. Resulting from these factors, gangs increasingly substituted the extended families in terms of a supporting function.¹⁹

Gus Adams, a Coloured newspaper columnist, strikingly sums up the effect of the Groups Areas Act:

MTh thesis, Cape Town: UWC, 1992); Arnold H Smith. *Die Sosiaal-historiese ontwikkeling van die dorp Bishop Lavis onder beheer van die Stedelike Behuisingsbond, 1951-1964* (Unpublished MA thesis, Bellville: UWC, 1994).

¹⁵ Erika Theron “Geregtigheid in die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing – Sosiale beskouing”, in *Geregtigheid in die Suid-Afrikaanse Samelewing*. Wetenskaplike Bydraes van die PU vir CHO. Reeks F (Potchefstroom: Instituut vir die Bevordering van Calvinisme, 1977), 38.

¹⁶ Smith, “Die Sosiaal-historiese ontwikkeling van Bishop Lavis”, 74.

¹⁷ So-called ‘illegal’ liquor outlets.

¹⁸ This “physical disconnection” between places of work and places of residence is referred to as “spatial mismatch”. Rospabe & Selod (“Does city structure cause unemployment”, 263) point out how some workers – notably unskilled workers – are further affected by the poor quality of public transport systems. See also: M Shaw & A Louw. *Environmental design for safer communities: Preventing crime in South Africa’s cities and towns*. ISS Monograph Series No. 24, May 1998. Halfway House: Institute for Security Studies).

¹⁹ Rospabe & Selod (“Does city structure cause unemployment”, 264), refer to the “epidemic theory of ghettos” in which “the propensity of youngsters to adopt socially deviant behaviour” (for instance, dropping out of school or yielding to criminality) depends on the proportion of same-behaviour individuals in the neighbourhood.

‘Suid-Afrika sal met baie trane nie die skade van die Wet op Groepsgebiede uitgewis kry nie. En ons kan maar verduidelik dat mense tog maar moes uitkring na die Kaapse Vlakte; die een woord wat onaanvaarbaar bly, is: verpligtend. Ja, maar julle moes ons nie verplig het nie. Vrye beweging, ja; die “group”, nee.’²⁰

What was the Effect on Faith Communities on the Cape Flats?

Faith communities are part and parcel of the broader society; they are not islands unaffected by broader societal changes. As such, they experience everything that communities at large are experiencing. Coloured and Black people have always been people of faith. This point is argued very strongly by Allan Boesak,²¹ who takes issue with academics and politicians who do not “recognize the power of the liberating gospel as reclaimed by the oppressed”. Ignoring the importance and integral role of spirituality in the lives, the political activity and struggles of the oppressed people of South Africa, according to Boesak, is “the height of both academic and political dishonesty”, a “grave insult”.²²

Thus, when people were uprooted and forcibly removed from their communities, their religious practices were severely disrupted as they were robbed, amongst other things, of places of worship and fellowship. Policies, not people, mattered more to the Nationalist government. In the case of the establishment of the township of Bishop Lavis, it is rather ironic that the Citizens Housing League, who planned and developed the new town, required a letter from a church minister as part of the application for a house, but at the same time apparently did not care much about people’s religious needs in the new township. People in the new townships had to find their own ways and means of establishing a sense of community; this was not easy and it would, in fact, take at least a decade for people just to settle down, if they ever did (See comment by Joshua Louw, below). Derrick Marco, writing the following with reference to Elsies River, reflects the experience of people across the Cape Flats:

As a result of prevailing conditions and the effects it has on the lives of people, it is difficult to detect an authentic community spirit i.e. a feeling of belonging, of appreciation and of respect. Attitudes have hardened and defensiveness, withdrawal, and individualism regulate social relations. This, while it cannot be condoned, is understandable in a community where ‘the rule of the jungle applies i.e. the fittest survive. Trusting, caring relationships seldom exist. Love is a foreign phenomenon...’²³

Residents in these new townships were strangers to one another and most probably did not have much faith in the place or in their new neighbours. Their restlessness and mistrust somehow also influenced the children of the townships. According to Arnold Smith, financial considerations overshadowed human considerations like minimum needs for comfort, inspiration and happiness in the minds of the planners of new townships. No provision was made for the education of children, for decent public spaces for recreation and relaxation, and for the practising of their faith.²⁴ People in the newly established Bishop Lavis township had to walk some distance to nearby Elsies River to attend church services;

²⁰ As quoted in Theron (“Geregtigheid in die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing”, 40): “South Africa will with lots of tears never erase the damage of the Group Areas Act. And we can explain that people ultimately had to move out to the Cape Flats; the one word that will remain unacceptable is “compulsory”. Yes, but you should not have forced us. Free movement, yes; the Group, no.”

²¹ Boesak, *The Tenderness of Conscience*, 2005.

²² Boesak, *The Tenderness of Conscience*, 103-131.

²³ Marco, “The Role of the Minister in a context of poverty”, 16.

²⁴ Smith, “Die Sosiaal-historiese ontwikkeling van Bishop Lavis”, 38.

they had to negotiate bushes and were therefore at risk of being attacked by criminal elements, or otherwise gather in houses to worship. The authorities also did not cater for the diverse religious affiliations of the people. Thirty-six different church denominations applied for building sites, but the authorities only awarded land to five: the Anglican Church, the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, the Methodist Church, the Roman Catholic and the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Despite the harsh circumstances under which people they found themselves, faith communities did play a very important and significant role in helping people to cope, to make sense in their lives, to find solace in the fact that “God is not sleeping”. I have found this expression to be the general way in which people of faith express their trust and hope when they find themselves in situations of wrongdoing or adversity. This God who is not sleeping, is a God of justice and righteousness who would ensure that the ‘wheel of justice’ will turn (against the wrong-doers and in favour of the afflicted). It expresses a faith in a God who hears and sees. It is faith in the God who saw Hagar’s flight from the abuse of Sarai (Gen. 16:13);²⁵ the God who heard the cries of Ishmael in the desert (Gen. 21:17-18);²⁶ the God who had “indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt”, and had “heard them crying out because of their slave drivers” and who was “concerned about their suffering” (Exodus 3:7, NIV).

The Current Situation on the Cape Flats: For Better or for Worse?

Joshua Louw, Anglican priest in the township of Manenberg, has expressed the opinion that it seems as if many of the residents “have not arrived yet”, especially the older people. “It is as if they are still somehow protesting against the forced removals, as if they are just not able to settle down”.²⁷ One may ask whether that feeling somehow filters through to the younger generations, affecting them sub-consciously in a psychological way, resulting in a feeling of restlessness.

It is clear that, despite tremendous progress and giant steps already taken forward and away from our dreadful past,²⁸ the net effects of apartheid could never be eradicated easily and definitely not in the near future. Bhorat and Kanbur, for example, point out that,

²⁵ “She gave this name to the lord who spoke to her: ‘You are the God who sees me’, for she said, ‘I have now seen the One who sees me’” (The Bible, New International Version (NIV)).

²⁶ “God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, ‘what is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation’ (NIV).

²⁷ Interview, 14 November 2006.

²⁸ Allister Sparks is of the opinion that “one can credit the new South Africa with many excellent achievements”. He continues: “We have entrenched a new democratic constitution, perhaps the most progressive in the world, and bedded it down through four national, provincial and local elections which have been manifestly peaceful and fair. . . Not least we have managed a smooth transition from the Founding Father of our new nation to his young successor in a continent where this is rare. We have scrapped all the old race laws, guaranteed freedom of speech and the press, abolished the death penalty, legalized abortion on demand, protected the rights of gay people, and advanced women in many spheres of life. We have brought clean water to more than 9 million people who did not have it before, electricity to more than 2 million, and telephones – that vital connection to the new Information Age – to 1,5 million. We have integrated, at least nominally, more than 30 000 public schools that used to be racially segregated, as well as the country’s universities and other institutions of higher learning, raised the literacy rate of 15 to 24-year-olds to 95%, and brought free health care to millions of children. . . We have resuscitated an economy that was on its deathbed, restoring fiscal discipline, cutting the budget deficit, reducing the national debt, bringing inflation down from double figures to within a target range of 3% to 6%, slashing interest rates from a high 24% under apartheid to 14% prime, lifting trade barriers, removing a maze of tariffs and import duties, and winning universal praise for establishing a sound macroeconomic base from which hopefully to build future prosperity. It is indeed another country” (Allister Sparks, *Beyond the Miracle. Inside the New South Africa*, (Johannesburg & Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2003), 3-4.

although South Africa's formal baptism of democracy in April 1994 received international acclaim and recognition, the "greater struggle since the early post-apartheid days has been the attempt to undo the economic vestiges of the system of racial exclusivity... the first ten years have seen rising unemployment, rising income poverty, and rising income inequality, all in the context of a lacklustre performance in economic growth".²⁹ The Western Cape has shown very positive signs of economic growth in comparison with national figures. It is estimated, for example, that this province, together with the Northern Cape and Free State, has experienced significant declines in poverty. In 2000, the Western Cape had the lowest poverty head count rate in South Africa, while its neighbour, the Eastern Cape, already the poorest province in South Africa in 1995, has experienced an increase of the extreme poverty rate from 49% to 56%.³⁰ According to Statistics South Africa, the Western Cape has the lowest unemployment rate in the country, namely 15% (18,9% in 2005), compared to the national average of 25,5%.³¹ However, researchers point out that the so-called Growth Incidence Curves (GIC) are "upward-sloping", meaning that the non-poor benefited more from growth than the poor and that "inequality among coloureds has risen".³²

For the people of the Cape Flats life remains a struggle. The non-governmental organisation, the Proudly Manenberg Campaign (PMC), has revealed the following statistics regarding the Manenberg township on the Cape Flats:

Manenberg has [an] estimated population of about 70 000 people of which approximately 37% are younger than 17 years old. About 40% to 50% of the people are unemployed with around 44% of the households living on an annual income of less than R25 000. More than half (57%) of the residents live in rented state-owned houses or flats. Not one of the 11 primary and 2 high schools have proper assembly halls or sport fields. Only 30 out of 200 Grade 8 learners reach Grade 12, and less than 1% of the population has a university qualification.³³

Many decades of oppression and deprivation have left deep scars and bleeding wounds on the people and communities of the Cape Flats. These manifest themselves in the numerous social ills, for example:

- *Crime*

Although the Western Cape is one of the most developed provinces of the country, it is regarded as the most crime-ridden.³⁴ It has the nation's highest rate of murders: 85 murders

²⁹ Haroon Borat & Ravi Kanbur, "Poverty and well-being in post-apartheid South Africa" in Borat & Kanbur, *op. cit.*, 1.

³⁰ Johannes G Hoogeveen & Berk Özler. "Poverty and inequality in post-apartheid South Africa: 1995-2000", in Borat & Kanbur, *Poverty and Policy*, 59-94. This point is of importance given the debate about the socio-economic effects of thousands of people moving to the Western Cape annually. Political opponents of the African National Congress (ANC) see it as a deliberate 'scheme' by the ANC to bolster its support in a province that has never be completely under ANC governance.

³¹ "Service economy boosts job creation in province", *Cape Times*, 13 July 2007.

³² Hoogeveen & Özler *op. cit.*, 71.

³³ *Naweek Kaapse Son*, 13 July 2007 "Trots op Manenberg". The PMC was established in 2000 by a group of activists from the 1980s who have decided to plough back into the community where they have grown up. They initially concentrated on academic bursaries for students from Manenberg, but have decided to expand their activities after the killing of a learner outside the Manenberg High School in July 2005. Their organisational plans now focus on 11 sectors – businesses, safety, education, environment, faith, women, housing, arts and culture, sport, health and the youth.

³⁴ Ted Legget, "What's up in the Cape? Crime rates in Western and Northern Cape provinces", in *Crime Quarterly*, 7, 2004.

per 100 000 citizens in 2002/3, against the national average of 47.³⁵ There has been a significant decline in the number of murders, but the very latest crime statistics (2006/7) show that the Western Cape is still the so-called ‘murder capital’ of South Africa with 60.7 murders per 100 000 citizens against the national average of 40.7. Nyanga, on the Cape Flats, has recorded the highest number of murders for 2006/7 (303, up from last year’s 284) with other Western Cape areas namely Khayelitsha, Harare and Gugulethu taking the fifth, sixth and seventh spots.³⁶ The homicide rate for Coloureds has almost always been higher than other race groups, exceeding 60 murders per 100 000 since 1980.³⁷ Coloured people are also over-represented in the nation’s prisons – they represent 9% of the national population but make up 18% of the national prison population.³⁸

▪ *Organised gangsterism*

Organised gangsterism is concentrated more on the Cape Flats than any other part of South Africa.³⁹

▪ *Drug-abuse*

The latest crime statistics released by the South African Police Services (SAPS) show that Mitchell’s Plain on the Cape Flats has the highest number of drug-related crimes in the country. That 39% of the country’s drug-related crimes in 2006/7 were committed in the Western Cape, shows a shocking increase of 205.8 percent to a rate of 865 crimes for every 100 000 people. Drug-abuse, and especially crystal methamphetamine, has reach pandemic proportions on the Cape Flats, with coloured residential areas the hardest hit.⁴⁰

³⁵ According to United Nations Crime and Justice Information Network (www.uncjin.org), Russia’s murder rate was 21 per 100 000, Brazil was 19, the USA had a rate of 5.6, and most of Europe was under 4 homicides per 100 000 people – as quoted in JDS Thomson, “A Murderous Legacy. Coloured homicide trends in South Africa”, published in *Crime Quarterly* No 7 2004.

³⁶ “The Western Cape is still SA’s murder capital”, *The Cape Times*, 4/7/2007.

³⁷ JDS Thomson, “A Murderous Legacy”, 2004.

³⁸ Ted Legget, “Still marginal. Crime in the coloured community” *Crime Quarterly* No 7 2004.

³⁹ Llewellyn LM MacMaster, “Die Trauma van Geweldsmisdaad op die funksionering van Geloofs-gemeenskappe”, Unpublished MTh thesis (Stellenbosch, 2001). I am also currently working on a doctoral thesis under the topic “In search of a family: The challenge of gangsterism to faith communities”.

⁴⁰ A few years ago Ted Legget warned that the use of crystal methamphetamine, commonly known as ‘tik’ in the Western Cape, “a drug with a high addiction potential that can elicit bizarre and aggressive behaviour” may be growing on the Cape Flats. “If so,” he wrote, “this is an issue for law enforcement to watch, because speed and violent criminals are not a good combination.” [Ted Legget, “On the Tuk-Tuk express. Has methamphetamine hit the Cape Flats?” published in *Crime Quarterly* No 6, 2003]. The latest crime statistics released by the SAPS reflect this alarming increase, measured in this instance by the reported drug-related crimes at a few police stations on the Cape Flats, in particular in Coloured areas: Mitchell’s Plain, where 829 cases were reported in 2003/4, has the highest number in the country for 2006/7 – 3 683 cases. Other examples of this steep increase are: Bishop Lavis, from 499 in 2003/4 to 1,333 in 2006/7; Macassar, from 93 to 285; Ravensmead, from 191 to 656; and Elsies River, from 348 to 1,193 cases. Tik, also known commonly as meth, tuk, speed or crystal, is a hugely addictive methamphetamine drug, right up there with heroin, although not quite as addictive. The white, odourless, bitter crystalline powder, which dissolves easily in water or alcohol, is a powerful stimulant that affects the central nervous system. In South Africa, users typically smoke the fumes after the powder or crystal, placed in a light bulb, is heated with a lighter. From the second half of 2004, the number of addicts seeking treatment for tik use (as their main substance of abuse) spiralled from just 2.3 percent of total users in treatment in Cape Town at the end of 2003 to nearly 20 percent at the end of 2004. According to the Medical Research Council’s Alcohol and Drug Abuse Research Group, almost 60 percent of the patients seeking treatment for tik as their main drug of abuse in the second half of 2004 were younger than 20. The ages ranged from 13 to 46. Of the patients seeking treatment in Cape Town for tik as their main drug of abuse, 88 percent were coloured and 72 percent were male, the majority coming from Mitchell’s Plain. Other problem areas for tik use include Retreat, Athlone, Bonteheuwel and Hanover

▪ *Abuse of women and children*

The past couple of years have seen an alarming increase in the occurrence of abuse of women and children. Cape Town is statistically the most dangerous city for children to live in, according to a recent study by Professor Sebastian van As, head of the Red Cross Children's Hospital Trauma Unit. The results of this study revealed 200 violent deaths of children for every 100 000 city residents.⁴¹

Although the statistics show a very bleak picture of life within the communities on the Cape Flats, and definite reasons for concern, there is also enough evidence to suggest that a very large percentage of the people on the Cape Flats still have a deep enough sense of self-belief and faith in God to refuse to accept the fatality of the situation. The work of organisations like the Proudly Manenberg Campaign and recent community mobilisation against drug abuse and gangsterism in areas like Mitchell's Plain and Hanover Park are examples of communities' refusal to accept these phenomena as normative. These campaigns are normally driven by people who have strong faith and/or political convictions; people who have a sound and holistic understanding of the bigger picture as influenced by psycho-social factors in which individual as well as systemic issues have to be addressed in the search for solutions. This has contributed in no small measure to the resilience that has helped people on the Cape Flats to survive against many odds.

The last section will evaluate the role of faith communities throughout these years of dispossession and displacement, reinvention and re-establishment, and remarkable resilience.

Vital Elements of Congregational Ministry and Care on the Cape Flats: Survival, Re-invention and Resilience

Pastoral care in the black church has a history. Many persons may have the impression that pastoral care does not exist in the black church because very little has been written about it. But, to the contrary, any ministry of the church that has as its end the tender, solicitous care of persons in crisis is pastoral care. Pastoral care exists when the hungry are fed, when the naked are clothed, when the sick are healed, when the prisoners are visited. Therefore, it can be concluded that pastoral care has always existed in the black church because the needs of persons are ministered to by others all the time (Edward P Wimberly).⁴²

I am of the opinion that Wimberly's assessment and understanding of pastoral care within the African American context is of great value for our situation on the Cape Flats. The aim of this paper is indeed to show that pastoral care, and in particular congregational care, has existed among faith communities on the Cape Flats right from the beginning. Another point of intersection with Wimberly's view is the biblical foundation revealed through his reference to Jesus' words in Matthew 25:31-46. Wimberly subscribes to a broader understanding of pastoral care "as the bringing to bear upon persons and families in

Park. Pointing to the power of tik, and its particular popularity with adolescents, Grant Jardine, director of the Cape Town Drug Counselling Centre, has been quoted in the Cape Argus as saying the drug "gives adolescents what they want – confidence and a sense of power". ["Tik addiction soars at an alarming rate", *The Argus*, 7 April 2005. "Tik is taking over, say shocking drug stats", *The Argus*, 7 November 2006]; *Fact Sheet – Methamphetamine*, Medical Research Council (MRC), November 2005.

⁴¹ "Which city is the most dangerous for kids", *The Cape Argus*. 18 July 2007.

⁴² Edward P Wimberly. *Pastoral Care in the Black Church*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), 17-18. I am finding the work of Edward Wimberly and other African American writers very useful and relevant to my own theological thinking and formation. To my mind, there are some very close similarities between the situations of African Americans in the United States of America and African (Coloured and Black) people in South Africa.

crisis the total caring resources of the church”. It is about “the total caring resources of the church”, not only about the pastor’s role in carrying out the four traditional/classical functions of pastoral care as described by Clebsch and Jaekle,⁴³ namely healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling.⁴⁴ This is important for our situation because many congregations or parishes have been without a full-time pastor for longer or shorter periods, but have been able to sustain the life and ministries of that particular faith community.

We have already said that faith communities, as part of the broader society, experienced the same trauma resulting from the Group Areas Act, in particular, and the Apartheid policies as a whole. Faith communities also suffered financial losses when their properties were disowned and found it extremely difficult to rebuild in the new townships.

The first few years of this congregation’s existence (the Dutch Reformed Mission Church Goodwood in Elsies River) was marked by tremendous upheavals and psychological traumas experienced both on a personal, family and congregational level. Families who owned property and were not willing to move voluntarily were forced to move. Most families moved to Elsies River where they had to start from scratch. Many were left penniless and, stripped of their pride, had to find homes in the bushes of Elsies River, by then declared a slum area.⁴⁵

Despite the pain and trauma, faith communities had to provide spaces of affinity amid the confusion of the forced removals. These would later on become spaces of struggle and expression of alternate thinking as communities faced hardship through different periods of the Nationalist regime’s experimentation with policies. These policies were always meant to entrench white minority political and economic power and privilege, with little regard for the negative effects on Coloured, Black and Indian families and communities. When the human dignity of other groups of people is denied through racism, it becomes so much easier to objectify those people – they become objects in your political manoeuvres.

What I am suggesting here is obviously not the complete picture, but my perspective on the people of the Cape Flats:

1. Faith communities provided safe spaces, places of community and affinity amid the confusion of the forced removals and general effects of the Apartheid policies. The church kept people rooted, connected, and brought people from different places together to find sanity in their state of displacement.

The church choir, the youth movement, the brigade, the Sunday school were all pillars that reflected the resilience of the faith community expanding and linking its spiritual experiences to their everyday struggles to make sense of their lives. And indeed the conversation of displacement remained alive, not in a disgruntled sense, but in a sense of reshaping and rebuilding and taking pride in who they are and where they came from.⁴⁶

In this regard one has to take note of many new faith communities that have grown on the Cape Flats. Apart from the so-called more traditional or mainline churches, numerous other denominations or ministries (“bedieninge”) were established. Whatever one’s opinion or criticism of these groups, they have been able to provide places of

⁴³ William A Clebsch & Charles R Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective* (Englewood, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964).

⁴⁴ Wimberly, *Pastoral Care in the Black Church*, 18-19.

⁴⁵ Marco. The Role of the Minister in a context of poverty, 49. Marco ministered in the Goodwood congregation of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, now known as the Uniting Reformed Church, in Elsies River, between 1987 and 1994. This congregation decided to keep the name “Goodwood” as a reminder and symbol of the fact that they were forcibly removed from their original homes and area of residence.

⁴⁶ Interview with Derrick Marco (12 June 2007).

fellowship and worship for many people – and are still doing it today. The type of theology of many of these groups is sometimes frowned upon as ‘escapism’ and ‘emotionalism’, but the reality is that they attract hundreds of people, and are in fact growing at a time when most of the so-called mainline denominations are experiencing decline in numbers. Reggie Nel, a minister in the Uniting Reformed Church, is of the opinion that these groups “became the glue that held the townships together as a sort of cultural social movement”.

2. The social and human capital that exists within faith communities is acknowledged by social scientists, as well as governments.⁴⁷ Church buildings, for example, have been significant for developing social capital, as places where people can cross boundaries, meet others, share activities and build trust. In townships that lack basic communal places for recreation and meeting, church buildings often provide the only place where the community can gather. They provide the space for celebrations (e.g. birthday parties and wedding receptions) and are also the places where people come together for their schools’ parent meetings, political protest meetings and service groups (e.g. women and senior citizens). Beverly Gail Haddad sees church buildings as ‘a strategic asset’.⁴⁸ This physical capital was therefore significant in developing and sustaining social capital in neighbourhoods where community buildings were and still are scarce. “Most immediately, faith buildings are a home where people can share a common life and form bonds with one another. But they can also be the means of contributing bridging and linking social capital to wider community networks.”⁴⁹ Haddad lists some of the community initiatives that have been started by churches, namely distribution of food parcels; clothing; soup kitchens; social activities for the aged; crèches in halls/homes; education bursaries; care for homeless; advice office work.⁵⁰ The work of congregational groups as well as denominational organisations needs acknowledgement. The *Diakonale Dienste* (Deaconal Services) of the Uniting Reformed Church and the Board of Social responsibility of the Anglican Church are examples of faith-based organisations that have over many years rendered critical services to the poor people on the Cape Flats. Other organisations that have made significant contributions include the Child Welfare Society, the Black Sash, the Red Cross, the Peninsula Feeding Scheme, St John’s Ambulance and the Haven Night Shelter (Haddad).⁵¹

People in faith communities on the Cape Flats have a strong sense of caring for one another. Even in the poorest of communities, you would find support in the form of food parcels and financial contributions, even if as one-off contributions. Support in times of sickness and death is almost ‘natural’ and comes in the form of emotional support through visits and taking over household tasks that the afflicted cannot attend to, as well as prayer meetings for spiritual support.

The particular contribution of *women* in this regard cannot be overemphasised. In most congregations across the spectrum of the Christian religion, women form the

⁴⁷ Ignatius Swart, I “Churches as a Stock of Social Capital for Promoting Social Development in Western Cape Communities”, in *Journal of Religion in Africa*. 2006.36(3/4):346-378.

⁴⁸ Beverly Gail Haddad. “The Role of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA) the Social Transformation of the Western Cape 1960-1990” (Unpublished MA Thesis, UWC: 1992), 79.

⁴⁹ Robert Furbey, Adam Dinham, Richard Farnell, Doreen Finneron & Guy Wilkinson. “Faith as social capital: connecting or dividing”, Available online: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/0136.asp> [25/07/2007].

⁵⁰ Haddad, “The Role of the CPSA”, 50.

⁵¹ Haddad, “The Role of the CPSA”, 82.

majority. Although this is not always reflected in the composition of the leadership in faith communities, women are indeed the backbone of these communities.⁵² Their commitment to their respective communities, their diligence in building and maintaining organisations and support structures cannot be denied. While only a few churches, for example, would have a men's organisation, most of them, right across the denominational spectrum, would have a women's organisation or society. These women are also leading prayer groups that amongst other things support members in need and in times of distress, sharing the little they had with one another. Women's significant role in the broader communities on the Cape Flats is described by Elaine Salo in her study of the meanings of personhood and agency in Manenberg, on the Cape Flats.⁵³

3. The simple piety of so-called ordinary members or lay persons. I have already referred to the spirituality and faith of the people in their God – a God who does not sleep, who sees their hardship and hears their cries. Michael Weeder, an Anglican priest who grew up in Elsies River, remembers how:

The fault lines of our communion were nurtured by the simple piety of the lay persons, mainly male but not exclusively so, who led us in the Wednesday evening *biduur* (prayer meeting). It was ... the intimacy evolving from small group meetings clustered around the Word that allowed for a deepening and growth of community. Support emerged as information was shared around a biscuit and a cup of tea... We were members of St Andrews Anglican Church, part of the broader historical colonial church. That it was and we were often burdened by the ministry of a ceaseless flow of priests from England. We were hereby exposed to Du Bois' "double consciousness" in that our faith formation took place in the belly of that colonial institution while we lived a reality far removed from that distant "green and pleasant land".⁵⁴

The Holy Scriptures played a tremendous empowering role in the lives of the people throughout the years of oppression. One can still clearly hear this during meetings when people pray the words of psalms such as Psalm 23 ("The Lord is my shepherd") or 121 ("I lift my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."), or 27 ("The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?"). This is what African Americans call "soul theology":

The core belief-system that gives shape to the world, that shows how African American people have come to grips with the world in a meaningful way. These core beliefs are embodied in narratives and stories that permeate the church life of African Americans... These narratives suggest ways to motivate people to action, help them recognize new resources, enable them to channel behavior in constructive ways, sustain them in crises, bring healing and reconciliation in relationships, heal the scars of memories, and provide guidance when direction is needed.⁵⁵

4. The particular role of ecumenical bodies and the spirit of ecumenism. Although ecumenical relations between churches have not always and at all times been very

⁵² See, for example, Haddad, "The Role of the CPSA", 88.

⁵³ Elaine Salo. "Respectable mothers, tough men and good daughters. Making persons in Manenberg township, South Africa". Unpublished PhD thesis, Emory University, Atlanta, 2004. For a shorter version of her work see "Mans is Ma Soe: Ganging Practices in Manenberg, South Africa and the ideologies of masculinity, gender and generational relations." Paper delivered at the *Criminal Justice: A New Decade, Consolidating Transformation Conference*, 7-8 February 2005. Available online. <http://www.wits.ac.za/csvr/confpaps/salo.htm>. [Accessed, 24 March 2006].

⁵⁴ Interview, 2 June 2007.

⁵⁵ Edward P Wimberly. *African American Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 11.

positive, it was the collective voice and protest of churches and leaders of faith communities during times of deep crisis that have helped displaced and dispossessed communities to garner enough strength to face life under Apartheid's oppressive policies. The Western Province Council of Churches (WPCC) kept the church alive and kept faith communities rooted and their contribution cannot be under-estimated. The Inter Church Youth (ICY) was a "formidable movement that was set up in 1982-83 as one of the flagships of the United Democratic Front (UDF). The roots of this movement cut across denominational lines and brought the rhythmic singing of youth in line with critical theological underpinnings to promote progressive change".⁵⁶ Ecumenical bodies played a vital role in public pastoral care⁵⁷ by leading community protests, supporting people when their dwellings in informal settlements were destroyed by the government, paying fines and bail money for people arrested during protests, etc. These ecumenical organisations also helped people to think and reflect theologically with others outside the, at times more narrow, own denominational confessional framework.

Conclusion

The trauma and pain that resulted from the effects of the oppressive apartheid policies on the lives of thousands of people on the Cape Flats could never really be measured or adequately expressed in words. In so many cases, the scars and open wounds remain evident and manifest in some of the social ills that communities on the Cape Flats are still facing and struggling to overcome. The important role of faith communities to help people cope with the trauma of displacement, to create spaces of safety and affinity in new townships where they were virtual strangers to one another, needs to be recognised. Apart from caring for members, as well as non-members, faith communities also had the extremely difficult task of re-aligning and re-inventing themselves in the light of the new challenges brought about by the forced removals, while working with very limited resources. In this regard, these faith communities, despite their own brokenness and fragility, have been crucial in taking care of people through a ministry of presence.

⁵⁶ Derrick Marco, Interview, 12 June 2007.

⁵⁷ Llewellyn LM MacMaster. "Where have all the pastors gone. A case for public pastoral care in South Africa today". Paper read at the Annual meeting of the Theological Society of South Africa (TSSA), June 2007, in Pretoria.