

United Methodist Church Unity and Human Sexuality

African Voices

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Introduction

This chapter is based on a paper presented at the colloquy titled, “The Unity of the Church and Human Sexuality: Toward a Faithful United Methodist Witness,” and I participated, representing the African Association of the United Methodist Theological Institutions (AAUMTI). This association was created in 2011, but Christian teachings in Africa have a long history. Tertullian and Augustine were Africans and influenced many of the doctrines that are central to Christianity today. In the fifteenth century, Christianity arrived in Mozambique through Catholic missionaries such as Dominicans, Augustinians, and Jesuits who came from Portugal. In the nineteenth century, Methodist missionaries from the United States arrived in Liberia and West Africa during the early part of the century. Later, Bishop Taylor and Bishop Lambuth were among the first to visit the continent to create churches and schools in Southern Africa, including Angola, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and other areas. Discussions about the “Unity of The United Methodist Church and Human Sexuality” need to consider this long history. My contribution focuses on the situation in Mozambique and the role of the AAUMTI in this discussion.

A Brief Overview of Africa and Mozambique

It is said that there were two main races inhabiting Africa in early times, the Berbers of the Mediterranean coastlands and the Negroes of equatorial Africa.¹ The Berbers were of Hamitic stock and racially Caucasian, with “European” facial characteristics. The Negroes included the small-statured pygmies. The pygmies and a third race, the rather yellow-skinned Bushmen, may have been widely spread over central and southern Africa until they were driven from the most fruitful lands by the Negroes. The descendants of the pygmies now inhabit the forests of central Africa. Only small numbers of Bushmen now survive, mainly in the Kalahari Desert in the south. The early inhabitants of the Sahara were a mixture of Berbers and Negroes. Recently discovered rock paintings showing that agriculture and cattle-keeping were the major occupations in what appears to have been a peaceful life. The paintings also show that music and dancing were important to these ancient Africans—as they are to the modern Negroes. Africans, mainly those of Sub-Saharan, are identified by their dancing, which is used to express happiness as well as sadness. In addition to that, people from this region are identified by skills like iron working and the cultivation of forest crops.

Early Christianity in Africa points to Egypt. According to John Baur, the founding of the first Christian church in Egypt was in AD 62, and the first, most known leader was Apollos, who was from Alexandria. In Egypt, there were two theological schools, one in Alexandria and the other

in Carthage. These two schools were very influential in the process of training leaders of the church in Africa. Then, in the Carthage school, a conflict developed because Tertullian wrote in Latin, while in Rome, educated Christians thought that they could pray only in Greek. It was during this time that St. Augustine was very concerned with the unity of the African church.² This shows that the issue of church unity did not start with The United Methodist Church, but has concerned church leaders since the beginning.

The history of Mozambique³ includes many centuries of Portuguese domination, but it does not begin with Portuguese domination. There were different empires that dominated Mozambique long before the Portuguese came into the country. Many attractive resources were found in the whole Indian Ocean coast, including the rivers that go through the country—the Zambezi River being one of great importance.⁴ These natural resources (rivers and the flat coastline) facilitated an easy penetration into different communities along these rivers and the seashore. It is of paramount importance to mention some of the empires that dominated Mozambique before the Portuguese. The first was the so-called Bantu-speaking people, then the Khoisan, the Bushmen, the Karanga, the Mwene Mutapa Empire, the Ngoni, and the Undi.⁵

The Portuguese first had contact with Mozambique on January 10, 1498, when Vasco da Gama passed through Inhambane.⁶ Then da Gama's ships anchored near Mozambique Island in the north of Mozambique while he was on his way to India. In Inhambane, because of the good hospitality that da Gama and his crew received, they called that place *Terra da boa Gente*, Portuguese words meaning "land of good people".⁷ The Portuguese were astonished at the stone buildings and the atmosphere of prosperity.⁸

This situation motivated the Portuguese to think of expedient ways to explore the richness of Mozambique and to Christianize the people of the country. In order to fulfill their intent, they first had to fight the Arabs (who were Muslim) who had already settled in the country. So it is clear that when the Portuguese came to Africa (and Mozambique in particular), they were interested in commerce, evangelization, and a crusade against Muslims. It was because of these projects that, in the 1530s, more Portuguese penetrated into the interior of Mozambique, to places such as Sena, Tete, Luabo, and Quelimane.⁹ One of the major strategies that accelerated the domination of the Portuguese over Mozambicans was the introduction of *prazos*.¹⁰ A *prazo* was a large estate leased to colonists, settlers, and traders used to exploit resources. *Prazos* began in the seventeenth century when the Portuguese started sending settlers to occupy the country, with the objective of turning the occupied land into their own property. As Henriksen argues: "the prazo masters relied on Africans for defense, trade, food, and women. Using African techniques as well as labor in mining gold, hunting elephants, raising food, and building houses and forts, they gradually became Africanized."¹¹

Since the Portuguese needed to expand their authority, domination, and promotion of profitable business ventures, they introduced companies as a new way for exploiting the country. These companies were run as private concerns by British, Dutch, and French firms.¹² The country was divided into three main companies: the Mozambique Company, covering two provinces—Manica, Sofala, and part of Gaza; the Niassa Company, covering two provinces—Niassa and Cabo Delgado; and the Zambézia Company, which included the Zambézia and Tete provinces. Maputo, Inhambane, and the other parts of Gaza provinces were under the direct administration of the colonial state.¹³

According to Eduardo Mondlane, three major strategies were used by the Portuguese for controlling these territories. First, Portuguese business people were sent to Mozambique on the pretext that they were coming only for commercial purposes, but later the Portuguese sent troops

to eliminate any kind of resistance from local chiefs. Second, the Portuguese came to Mozambique and requested land for agricultural purposes, but later claimed that the land was theirs. Third, Portuguese missionaries came as peacemakers and were involved in evangelization, which was used to mislead Africans while Portuguese troops were occupying and controlling the Mozambican land.¹⁴ It was from this last strategy that we get the saying: “When white people came to our continent they had the Bible and we ‘blacks’ (indigenous) had the land. They said ‘let us pray’ and we closed our eyes to pray. At the end of the prayer whites had the land and Africans had the Bible.”¹⁵ The reason that Catholic missionaries were successful with their exploitation was because of the concordat in 1940, which maintained a comfortable and mutually beneficial relationship between church and state. Consequently, the state could not criticize the Roman Catholic Church whenever it committed a negative act.

Christianity and Catholic Missionary Work in Mozambique

The arrival of Vasco da Gama in Mozambique in 1498, marked the first missionary contact with the inhabitants, because he came with some Dominican, Augustinian, and Jesuit priests who gave spiritual guidance to the soldiers and seamen who were part of his force.¹⁶ Evangelization gained momentum between 1514 and 1612, when the first missionary team came to Mozambique from Goa (India). It included the following priests: Gonçalves da Silveira, André Fernandes, and Brother Fernando André da Costa, who came to Inhambane.¹⁷ Unfortunately, this first stage of evangelizing was unsuccessful, which prompted a furious Portuguese scholar named A. da Silva Rego to write: “The virgin forest was not ready yet for the people to peacefully accept the Gospel . . . because it is dominated by the absolutism of chiefs and the interest of the blacks [indigenous].”¹⁸ After this failure in Inhambane, the Portuguese missionaries decided to penetrate into the interior of the country and in Sena-Sofala Province about five hundred people were baptized.¹⁹

The second missionary work in Mozambique began in January 1612, after the papal bull issued by Pope Paulo V, who elevated Mozambique to a “*Prelature Nullius*.”²⁰ This period is considered to be the time when some people in Mozambique started welcoming the Portuguese missionaries, because some of the chiefs related to Monomotapa went to Dominican seminaries in Goa (India) to be trained as priests. Consequently, as we can see, there were three orders of missionaries in Mozambique—Dominicans, Augustinians, and Jesuits—who later changed their evangelistic motifs and became more interested in trade, particularly gold, ivory, and slaves. This created a crisis between the Portuguese state and the Roman Catholic Church, a crisis that culminated in chasing away Portuguese missionaries from Mozambique and abolishing the three orders, leaving only four priests from Goa (India) in Mutarara-Tete.²¹

Despite the problems between the Portuguese government and the Roman Catholic Church, missionaries continued coming to Mozambique in their campaign of evangelization. According to Ferreira, the year of 1940, became especially significant because it was then that the Roman Catholic Church began a systematic plan of evangelization. As a result, three dioceses were founded in Mozambique: Maputo, Beira, and Nampula. Later the dioceses of Pemba, Lichinga, Inhambane, Xai-Xai, Tete, and Quelimane were also created.²²

The same missionaries who supported Portuguese domination continued spreading the gospel using new strategies. To begin with, the Roman Catholic missionary priests constantly worked with African chiefs, believing that the people would follow the example set by the ruling class. Second, missionaries concentrated their efforts on teaching and preaching the gospel. Third, they

translated some portions of the Bible into local languages. According to Kwame Bediako, the translation of the Bible into local language ensured that a deep and authentic dialogue would take place between the gospel and African tradition, authentic in so far as it would take place, not in the terms of foreign language or of a foreign culture, but in the categories of local idioms and worldviews.²³ In addition, Lamin Sanneh argues that the significance of Scripture translation is that it enables a people's language, and thus their experience of truth, to be connected to the reality and actuality of the Living God. It is this that makes language itself into a theological category, conferring upon it eternal significance and transcendent range.²⁴

More significant, of the three strategies, education was the most important. For this reason, wherever missionaries went, they opened schools.²⁵ The most important goal of these schools was not to truly educate the country's people but just teach them the Portuguese language. This position is supported by Macy, who agrees that Mozambicans were kept from developing any kind of professional skills. On the contrary, they were given little opportunity to receive even primary education. She goes on to say that to save national social expenditure, Portugal put the Roman Catholic Church in charge of educating the indigenous people. As a result, by the time Mozambique became independent in 1975, there were only six economists, two agronomists, three lawyers, forty university graduates, and fewer than a thousand indigenous people who had graduated from high school.²⁶

The Historical Growth of The United Methodist Church in Mozambique

In the nineteenth century, after the Berlin conference in 1885, where the partition of Africa took place, Protestant churches were allowed to spread and establish their missions in Africa.²⁷ It was in this context that the first missionaries sent by the American Board Commissioners for Foreign Missions came to Mozambique in order to establish their ministries, especially in Inhambane region. According to the Rev. Joao Guezi Gujamo, these missionaries came in July 18, 1884, and the team included seven missionaries under the leadership of the Rev. Erwin Richards. They started in Mongue before moving to Chicuque, Cambine, and Mocodoene. However, their missionary work did not take root because of two major problems. First, the missionaries were attacked by malaria, and Inhambane was regarded as an unhealthy place. As a result, the majority of the congregational missionaries left Mozambique and went to Natal, where they established the Umzila mission. Second, Rev. Richards went through a serious personal crisis. He had a concubine. Miss Dalita Isaacs was a black prominent woman in the region, but their relationship was morally wrong and strictly against church rules.²⁸ This painful experience ended his missionary career in Mozambique. The Home Board Secretary in Boston called Rev. Richards back to America, and he was dismissed from the American Board of Mission.

In spite of this situation, however, Rev. Richards was still interested of coming back to Africa to continue his missionary work. This was why, soon after his dismissal from the American Board Mission, he began investigating other possibilities for missionary work in Africa. Toward the end of 1890, he had introduced himself to the secretariat of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and through them, to Bishop William Taylor, who accepted him. Helgesson says that "on the eve of Christmas, 1890, Richards received permission from Bishop William Taylor to raise funds to proceed to Africa."²⁹ It is clear that the request of Richards to come to Africa as a Methodist Episcopal missionary was well received by Bishop Taylor, because, by that time, "the Bishop had a plan of planting chains of mission stations across Africa from the West of the Southeast."³⁰ His appeal was well received, and Richards was sent to East Africa.

Finally, he settled in the Inhambane area, and that was the beginning of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Mozambique, which is today known as The United Methodist Church (The UMC). It is interesting to note that church unity and human sexuality have been in play since the beginning of Methodist work in Mozambique.

The history of The UMC in the center of Mozambique started at Sofala Province, when people from south, especially matshwa-speaking people, started to come to Beira in 1974, seeking jobs. These people were employed by the railway company connecting Mozambique and Rhodesia, now known as Zimbabwe. Members of The UMC joined the United Church of Christ of Manica and Sofala, and worshiped together. Churches with members in this small southern community felt that there was a need to offer pastoral assistance. Consequently, pastors from different denominations that had members there came to serve the entire ecumenical community. The first appointed evangelist was Julião Paulo Matsinhe³¹ from the Free Methodist Episcopal Church. Later, members of the Methodist Episcopal Church realized that they were not free to carry out what was recommended by their denomination. As a result, they decided to establish their own church. Several reasons contributed to this decision. To begin with, there were misunderstandings with members who came from other churches, especially those who were natives of Sofala. Second, some women rejected dressing in ways that were deemed suitable for The United Methodist Church. Third, some denied practicing some of the United Methodist doctrine. Last, there was lack of clarity about using the funds raised by the church.³² But on December 13, 1970, members of The United Methodist Church began their own worship in Beira.

In 1966, Protestants started to expand their churches in the northern area of Mozambique. At that time, the majority of people were members of the Roman Catholic Church or were Muslim. In order to make this expansion possible, two pastors were sent as missionaries in their own country. In 1968, the Rev. Felix Cossa of the Presbyterian Church was sent to Nampula. When he returned to the south in 1978, the Rev. Cesar Seventine Pongo of The United Methodist Church was sent to Cuamba (Niassa). These pastors worked under ecumenical recommendation from the Christian Council of Mozambique and were not allowed to start their own denominations. The presence of these two pastors in northern Mozambique inspired people with the idea of starting their own denominations. In 1982, in Nampula, a prayer group was created; it was called, in Portuguese, “*classe de oração dos irmãos do Sul*,” meaning “prayer group of brothers from south.” It was from this group that in 1987, three protestant denominations emerged in Nampula province, namely United Methodist, Nazarene, and Presbyterian churches.³³

The United Methodist Church in Mozambique is always guided by the principle of unity in all activities that take place in the country. Here are some things that can be considered the result of church unity: the first male pastors in Mozambique were ordained in 1905, and only in 1979 were the first female pastors ordained; up until that time, the church agreed that there was need to give space for women to answer their call to serve the church. Now many women are pastors and some are district superintendents. For instance, within the annual conference of Mozambique, there are three female pastors who are DSs. The climax of that unity was demonstrated through the election of the first female bishop (Joaquina Filipe Nhanala) in The United Methodist Church in Africa; she leads the church in Mozambique. This was done because the majority of church members of Mozambique agreed that female pastors are capable. While there were some people who did not vote in favor of a female bishop, The United Methodist Church makes decisions based on majority rule, so those people accepted the decision. Here

again, we see a connection between church unity and human sexuality, as Mozambicans were able to move beyond traditional culture and accept a woman as a leader of The United Methodist Church.

To say more about human sexuality in The United Methodist Church in Mozambique, I would first like to mention something about African culture. In African culture, when adolescents go through initiation rites, they are divided in two groups according to their gender. Each group receives instructions about what they are to do when they become mature people. For instance, all are taught that when they grow up they have to marry someone of a different sex. Culturally, in Africa, in general, and Mozambique, in particular, there is no space to talk about homosexuality. This explanation is not meant to say that The United Methodist Church in Mozambique necessarily supports or only supports tradition, but it does show to what extent culture contributes to the definition of rolls for men and women and to the denial of homosexuality in African reality.

Most Mozambicans who pass through initiation rites before they are converted to Christianity find it difficult to accept homosexuality. In addition, Scripture strengthens the position against homosexuality, because it is believed that it is against God's plan when he created humankind (Gen. 2:24). But it is also true that there is a lack of deep discussion about human sexuality in the church, maybe because it is still a new topic that has only recently come to the fore. This is true, particularly in Mozambique, even though in some other countries this issue has been discussed for a long time. It is common to hear the claim that homosexuality is a sin or affront to human nature or even to the work of God.

The Discussion of Unity and Sexuality in Light of Colonial Domination

It is true that the majority of Mozambicans have the idea that the Portuguese colonized some countries in Africa in general, and Mozambique in particular. Hence, they argue that there is no need to explain what positive effects colonization might have had. However, the Portuguese presence in Mozambique had both negative *and* positive impact, so it is important to appreciate the positive things that the Portuguese did; the positives outweigh the negatives. The impact of Portuguese domination in Mozambique can be understood as threefold: social, political, and economic. And there were negative and positive impact in each area. But the major objective for the Portuguese who came to Africa was to "civilize" Africans, and they wanted Africans to accept everything they did on the continent. In fact, the Portuguese exploited and oppressed Mozambicans, and the Portuguese are to blame for the poverty in Mozambique and the other African countries they colonized.

Colonial education was the main channel used to exploit Mozambicans. At worst, education was not available to all but only a few, so that the majority remained illiterate. These few were considered *assimilado*.³⁴ These Mozambicans were taught to look down upon their own culture, which was considered to be backward, uncouth, barbaric, and heathen. Even the very few educated people had to learn Portuguese, which further alienated them from their own language and culture.

This is relevant to issues of unity and human sexuality in Mozambique. In the case of unity, the insistence on one language was motivated by the policy that was adopted by the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) soon after independence in 1975. Since this new party wanted to eliminate tribal diversity, this meant eradicating local languages and adopting Portuguese as the language of unity for the entire country. This relates to human sexuality and

gender issues, because it is recognised that girls were neglected during the time of Portuguese domination in Mozambique; they were barred, for example, from education, and were treated with a condescending attitude. This was motivated by the fact that, according to African patriarchy, neglecting girls' education and suppressing women's voices was a reality. As a consequence, even today, girls from Mozambique's rural areas do not go to school, allegedly because there is no need to educate them; after all, it is said, they are only waiting to get married. The Portuguese believed that the majority of girls needed only to learn how to take care of their husbands and children. Some years ago, the Mozambican government decided to promote education for girls, arguing that the percentage of boys enrolled in schools must be at least the same as that of girls, or the ratio of the enrolled girls must be higher than that of boys.

In the social arena, the impact of the Portuguese was felt in the intermarriage with Mozambican women, thus creating a class of Afro-Portuguese, some of whom did not even have a chance to know their fathers.³⁵ The same is true for Mozambicans working in Southern Rhodesia and South Africa as well as for those sold as slaves to some Western countries like the United States of America, Brazil, France, and Spain.³⁶ The coming of Vasco da Gama (Portuguese) to Mozambique opened a way for the coming of Portuguese masses into the country, as well as opening a way for the introduction of colonial domination of the land that, according to them, they had discovered. It was with the coming of the Portuguese that Mozambique and other African states came into being. It was the presence of Europeans that precipitated the drawing of boundaries according to which European countries colonized which area.³⁷

During the same period, hospitals and schools were introduced in the country. As the population grew, the colonizers launched campaigns against some epidemic diseases by providing medical facilities. The same systems were adopted by the Mozambican authorities after the nation attained independence, and now, whenever there is an epidemic, the government carries out campaigns against the disease by awakening people about the dangers of such disease. It was through the coming of the Portuguese to Mozambique that urbanization began. Some towns were expanded while new ones were established. The Portuguese presence in Mozambique was important regarding religion, with the introduction of Christianity. Through Christianity, Western education was introduced into the whole country. As a result, primary, secondary, and university education appeared for the first time in the nation.³⁸

Mozambicans suffered under Portuguese domination and were characterized by adjectives such as "indolent, incapable and incompetent."³⁹ This so infuriated the Mozambicans that they felt it necessary to do something in order to change the situation, despite any consequences it may bring to the country. Consequently, the war of liberation between Mozambicans and Portuguese erupted, which culminated with the proclamation of independence on June 25, 1975.

Since the beginning, The United Methodist Church in Mozambique has been in the forefront, promoting unity. For instance, it was in Cambine that Eduardo Chivambo Mondlane, while studying agriculture (1941–1943), challenged other students coming from different areas of Mozambique to unite and plan for the liberation war that led the country to independence. Along the same line, The United Methodist Church opened a university on March 17, 2017, which seeks to unify Mozambicans for the purpose of education, so that they can bring answers to the difficulties that the country is facing.

Finally, these issues are also related to some current trends in Mozambique. The country has experienced democracy since the general peace agreement was signed on October 4, 1992, as a result of an agreement between the FRELIMO and RENAMO. However, this is a weak

democracy. Consequently, poverty in Mozambique is severe and widespread, especially in rural areas. According to Rachel Waterhouse, “There is limited understanding of social protection strategies and their capacity to address vulnerability and support poverty reduction and economic growth”.⁴⁰ Related to this, HIV/AIDS is another trend that condemns many Mozambicans to live with uncertainty. Due to traditional views on human sexuality, there are people who still do not accept that this pandemic disease is a reality. This disease has implications for vulnerability at different levels; it has an impact on individual, household, community, and state services.

Waterhouse stresses “that there has been a little understanding or debate around ‘vulnerability’ as an analytical concept that can help to identify the factors and trends which make some people more likely to be poor or chronically poor than others at certain times and why.”⁴¹ This is a critical issue in Mozambique, because some kinds of vulnerability are avoidable.

Theological Discussion on Church Unity and Human Sexuality in Africa

Considering these challenges, there are many recent developments related to the work of many Methodist Churches in Africa, including recent developments within The United Methodist Church. The General Board of Global Ministry (GBGM) and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) have worked on the African continent for decades, but this work has become more visible in the last decade. A part of this trend is the development of theological education, which has led to the creation of an Association of Theological Institutions in Africa based on the results of a Global Consultation on Theological Education promoted by GBHEM and the Association of United Methodist Theological Schools (AUMTS).⁴²

The African Association of United Methodist Theological Institutions (AAUMTI) is a new organization that continues the tradition and addresses the challenges of Christianity and Methodism in Africa.⁴³ Today, nearly twenty institutions are members of AAUMTI:

- School of Theology at Katanga Methodist University, Democratic Republic of Congo
- School at Kamina Methodist University, Democratic Republic of Congo
- School at Kabongo Methodist University, Democratic Republic of Congo
- School at Wembo-Nyama Methodist University, Democratic Republic of Congo
- School at Musumba Methodist University, Democratic Republic of Congo
- School at Kindu Methodist University, Democratic Republic of Congo
- School at Kasaji Methodist University, Democratic Republic of Congo
- Lubumbashi Methodist University, Democratic Republic of Congo
- Gbarnga School of Theology, Liberia
- John G Innis Graduate School of Theology, Liberia
- Banyam Theological Seminary, Nigeria
- Bispo Emílio de Carvalho Methodist Theological Institute, Angola
- Quessua Methodist University, Angola
- School of Theology at Methodist University of Angola, Angola
- Africa University School of Theology, Zimbabwe
- Institute of Higher Theological Studies at Abidjan, Cote D’ivoire
- United Methodist Bible College, Uganda
- School of Theology at United Methodist University, Sierra Leone
- Wesley School of Theology and Management, Sierra Leone

- Wesley College, Tanzania
- Cambine Theological Seminary, Mozambique⁴⁴

The Association also offers the possibility to other theological seminaries and theology schools of other Methodist Churches in Africa to be associate, or honorary members, with voice but no vote.⁴⁵ Therefore, we welcome participants from Kenya, South Africa, and other areas. This provides for a greater diversity of perspective, and AAUMTI is playing an important role in bringing them together in a way that reflects the unity of the church.

Concerning the issue of human sexuality, however, there is diversity of thought within the AAUMTI membership (some do not even want church members to talk about this kind of topic). For that reason, the topic was brought up at the last annual meeting of the Association, which took place in Mozambique in December 2016. I recall some of the conversations. These contributions were coming from different African perspectives. I would like to share them, based on the information and documentation they provided:

1. The Rev. Dr. Jerry Kulah from Liberia said that the laws of his country (Liberia) as well as in The United Methodist Church in Liberia are strongly against any type of sexual option that is against what is recommended by God (only between man and woman).
2. The Rev. Welton Odongo from Kenya also stressed that governmental law as well as the church are against the sexual option, which is against God's will. However, he also mentioned that this issue is being discussed in public, including through training about human sexuality offered by non-governmental organizations.
3. In Mozambique, for instance, the Constitution of the Republic as well as Family Law do not make direct mention of issues regarding human sexuality or homosexuality. In this sense, both treat men with respect as far as people's rights go, without specifying one thing or another. Even though there is a law concerning associations, there is resistance by government agencies to apply this to homosexuality. Coming to church context, in Mozambique there is no room to talk openly about homosexuality.

During the discussion, we also learned about how issues of human sexuality are treated differently in countries such as Angola, South Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. After these discussions, the members of the association decided to continue the conversation and publish the results of this discussion in the AAUMTI journal.⁴⁶

Conclusion

The United Methodist Church is a global church that includes many linguistic, cultural, political, and even theological perspectives. In the history, culture, and impact of Christianity and The United Methodist Church in Mozambique, we can see the unique development of the country and how it was necessary to cope with many challenges related to colonization and exploitation for a long time. It is also possible to see the liberating role of education in helping the country address these challenges. Christian and Methodist education and evangelization in Mozambique were part of the political problems, but also contributed to promote the gospel of Jesus Christ. Today, the *Book of Discipline* provides the reference for unity in The United Methodist Church in Mozambique, and there is no public discussion about the issue of human sexuality. This silence is based on the perception that homosexuality is contrary to Scripture and is not tolerated

by certain cultural traditions. The law of the country is also silent about this matter, and there is no systematic practice of persecution based on human sexuality.

Other countries have different views. In Africa, we have begun conversations about this matter at the meetings of the African Association of United Methodist Theological Institutions (AAUMTI), and our discussions show that there are differences on how the church and society talk about this issue.

To conclude, based on the discussions of leaders of theological institutions in Africa, there is the common view for people that sexual relationships for people of the same sex is not the plan of God, as the Bible says “He who finds a wife / finds a good thing, / and obtains favor / from the LORD” (Prov. 18:22). However, I would like to bring three recommendations to The United Methodist Church:

1. The United Methodist Church in Mozambique, Africa, and the world generally should open space for the dialogue on the issue of human sexuality, since it will help strengthen people in order to defend God’s principles more strongly.
2. The UMC is called to strengthen the ministry of reconciliation between people holding different views about monogamous, heterosexual marriage and homosexual relationships, with the objective of making people understand the will of God and follow it.
3. The AAUMTI can be a partner in this discussion, because we have already begun to reflect on the question about church unity and human sexuality in a way that considers different perspectives on biblical teaching, doctrinal decisions in the *Book of Discipline*, and the many views represented by our members.

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- ¹ http://aero-comlab.stanford.edu/jameson/world_history/A_Short_History_of_Africa.pdf. Accessed February 28, 2017.
- ² J. Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa* (Nairobi: Paulines, 1994), 21–28.
- ³ According to Henriksen, the name *Mozambique* derives from one Musa al Bique, a sheikh or a prominent person on the island (T. H. Henriksen, *Mozambique: A History* [Cape Town: Rex Collings with David Philip Publisher, 1978]).
- ⁴ Henriksen, *Mozambique*, 1.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 1–15.
- ⁶ Chamango, *Sumário da História da Igreja em Moçambique* (1991), 10.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.
- ⁸ Henriksen, *Mozambique*, 21.
- ⁹ H. J. Sindima, *Drums of Redemption: An Introduction to African Christianity* (London: Praeger Publisher, 1994), 56.
- ¹⁰ For detailed information on Prazos, the research recommends Henriksen, *Mozambique*.
- ¹¹ Henriksen, *Mozambique*, 55.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 104.
- ¹³ M. Hall & T. Young, *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique since Independence* (Athens: Ohio University Press 1997), 3.
- ¹⁴ E. Mondlane, *Lutar por Moçambique* (Maputo: Centro de Estudos Africanos Publications, 1995), 33.
- ¹⁵ T. Maluleke, *Black Theology as Public Discourse. Concept Paper for the Academic Workshop* (Cape Town, September 30, October 2, 1998), <http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/ricsa/me99/docs/maluleke.htm>, accessed, November 11, 2010.
- ¹⁶ L. C. Ferreira, *Igreja Ministerial em Moçambique: Caminhos de Hoje e de Amanhã*, (Maputo: Imprimi Potest 1987), 31.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹ Sindima, *Drums of Redemption*, 56.
- ²⁰ *Prelature Nullius* means a certain area of the Roman Catholic Church that is functioning without a prelate/bishop. In such situations, the Pope chose an administrator to run the activities of the church.
- ²¹ Ferreira, *Igreja Ministerial*, 72–74.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 74.
- ²³ Translation was introduced in the Roman Catholic Church as a way to keeping their members within the church, since by that time some Protestant churches began evangelizing and using translation as their main tool. Protestants were the first Christian denominations to open schools and teach in local languages, including Bible lessons.
- ²⁴ K. Bediako, “The Role and significance of the translation of the Bible into African Languages on consolidation of the Church and its expansion into unreached areas,” <http://www.wycliffe.net/resources/missiology/globalperspectives/tabid/97/Default.aspx?id=1105>, accessed November 18, 2013.
- ²⁵ <http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/module-fourteen-activity-four/>, accessed June 1, 2017.
- ²⁶ P. P. Macy, *Women's Lives in the District of Cuamba Mozambique* (1997), 3.
- ²⁷ A. Helgesson, *Church, State and People in Mozambique: A Historical Study with special Emphasis on the Methodist Development in the Inhambane Region* (Uppsala: Tryck AB Press, 1994), 55.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.
- ³⁰ J.W.Z. Kurewa, *The Church in Mission: A Short History of The United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe 1897–1997* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 104.
- ³¹ *27º Anversario do Distrito de Sofala 1979 a 2006* (Unpublished), 3.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 4.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 4.

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- ³⁴ A Portuguese term that emerged as a reply to the accusation thrown by indigenous people to the Portuguese as racists. The Portuguese gave this status to some Africans, arguing that from the moment they are given this status they belong to the Portuguese community with the same privileges as those of the Portuguese. They were the most Christianized, civilized Africans compared to their counterparts. Looking deeply at what was going on with these *assimilados*, it was not true that they had the same privileges. The only thing they escaped were some of the restrictions that the indigenous people experienced. Even with the status of *assimilado*, their economic situation was totally different from that of Portuguese, even in terms of education, the *assimilado* needed to make more effort than the whites in order to pass; in most cases the *assimilado* did not use the same toilet as the Portuguese. To be *assimilado* meant not to accept being African but to identify with Portuguese people. This was really a cultural, political, and economic identity that demonstrated prejudice for colonized people.
- ³⁵ A. Isaacman and B. Isaacman, *Mozambique: From Colonialism to Revolution, 1900-1982* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983), 53.
- ³⁶ A. J. Reibel, *An African Success Story: Civil Society and the Mozambican Miracles*, http://africanajournal.org/PDF/vol4no1/vol4no1_3_Aaron%20J.%20Reibel.pdf, accessed January 21, 2011.
- ³⁷ A. A. Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 96–99.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 104.
- ³⁹ Isaacman & Isaacman, *Mozambique*, 61–62.
- ⁴⁰ R. Waterhouse, *Vulnerability in Mozambique: Patterns, Trends, and Responses* (2009), 2.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 4.
- ⁴² See *The Consultation on Global United Methodist Theological Education: A Report on Progress* (Atlanta: Association of United Methodist Theological Schools, 2011).
- ⁴³ The organization of the association is defined by its by-laws, approved by its full members in 2014, based on recommendations discussed during the Conference of the International Association of Methodist-related Schools, Colleges, and Universities (IAMSCU) held in Hiroshima, Japan (May 24–28), in which AAUMTI was an active participant.
- ⁴⁴ For a complete list of Methodist theological institutions in Africa, see the *Africa Regional Directory*, published in partnership with AAUMTI and IAMSCU (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2016).
- ⁴⁵ *AAUMTI By-Laws*, Article III, §§d, e.
- ⁴⁶ *Journal of Theology in African Context*, vol. 1 (2014).