# Omega Graduate School

# Dissertation Research Prospectus (Pre-Proposal)

Erral Ophneil Forde

# Problem Statement

The problem is looking at conflict among the churches of the Pentecostal Assemblies of the West Indies in the island nation of Barbados because of the differing perceptions of the role of clergy as perceived by both clergy and laity.

# Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the various perceptions of clergy and laity that may result in conflict in the congregations of Pentecostal Assemblies of the West Indies in Barbados.

#

# Background of the Problem

Describe the problem in the context of extant literature…

 In undertaking this study, there is a necessity to provide a background to the problem. I therefore take this opportunity to chronicle my journey and experience with this phenomenon of conflict the varied stages of ministry and experience.

 Whether it was serving as the pastor of the local church, or in the capacity of the District Presiding Bishop, or as a member of the General Executive of P.A.W.I. Inc., or as the Assistant General Bishop of the above-mentioned organization, one came face to face with this ugly monster of conflict and its varying manifestations.

 Sometimes it was displayed in inappropriate relationships that called forth negative responses from the laity. Sometimes it was evident in marital and domestic relationships that became the basis for gossip and rumor-mongering. In other cases, it carried financial overtones. Conflict arose because of the unwise investment of church funds which led to acrimony and disagreement. Instances of poor financial management in support of a lifestyle or to satisfy one’s ego became apparent.

 In another case, the unfair dismissal of a staff member and the blatant disrespect for the rights of the individual saw parties heading to the law courts to resolve issues, bringing the cause of Christ into disrepute. One can speak of accusations that were levelled against leadership, threats of litigation with a view to intimidation, as well as the undermining and subversion of authority, or the exhibition of insubordination that created friction and tension in the body. The inability of leaders to manage conflict in their congregations was a contributing factor to this phenomenon, sparking infighting and division that impaired the church’s function.

 In all the instances mentioned above, the laity would have been a participant in the conflict. However, their role in the conflict was evidenced by their perception of the clergy’s role. Often high and unrealistic expectations of the clergy led to discontent, disappointment, and frustration among the laity, and these became precursors for trouble. The result is the creation of an atmosphere not conducive to growth or progress.

 In all of these cases, the church’s ministry and witness in the community was dealt a serious blow with it image being tarnished. Division was a natural consequence of this phenomenon, as families were pitted against each other. I saw churches split down the center as persons took sides on the issues at stake. The fallout was inevitable and unavoidable. The loss to the church was incalculable as valued members left in droves, taking their contribution to ministry, financial commitments, expertise, and leaving in its wake a spiritual brain drain. In addition, time invested in the resolution of issues of conflict is precious time that could have been channeled into meaningful projects for the growth and progress of the kingdom. The fact is negative conflict is not beneficial and can prove destructive to the church caught in its throes. Instances of conflict are still ongoing, prompting the need for such research in our Caribbean setting.

#

# Significance

This study will contribute to the gap in research of…by identifying….

 This study will contribute to the gap in research of the conflict phenomenon in Pentecostal congregations, as well as other evangelical denominational ones by identifying the perceptions of both clergy and laity that contribute to problem; patterns of behavior consistent with the problem; and suggest and develop strategies that might be useful in its resolution.

 The problem is not peculiar to Barbados but it takes on regional and international significance. Within the Barbadian context no research on the subject was available and I suspect that this was so for the Eastern Caribbean region.

 The research will also add to the growing body of information on the subject that has become a vexing issue in church circles and can therefore be utilized by other denominations experiencing similar problems. Omega Graduate School stands to benefit immensely from the research which positions the institution to be a leading contributor in offering a solution by becoming a center for conflict management and resolution studies, The fact that the issue is plaguing the church worldwide is testimony to its international significance. The research provides a platform for further research in other areas of human relationships where the problem is recognized.

#

# Research Questions

 The first round of questions are provided from Moustakas’ general questions which are applied to the “experience” of “church conflict.”

RQ1: How do differences in the perception of clergy and the perception of laity contribute to conflict in churches of Pentecostal Assemblies of the West Indies in Barbados? (Perception differences)

RQ2: What factors are associated with and impact on clergy-laity conflict in P.A.W.I churches in Barbados? (Congregational factors)

RQ3: What is the effect of clergy-laity conflict on the ministry of the P.A.W.I. church in Barbados? (Effects)

RQ4: How has the absence or presence of conflict management skills impacted conflict between clergy and laity in the P.A.W.I. churches in Barbados. (Skills)

#

# Research Methodology

This study will utilize a qualitative methodology because research questions will be answered through inductive coding and exploratory thematic analysis.

#

# Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

This study is framed by \_\_\_\_\_\_ theory because… (cite).

#

# Instrumentation

Researcher-developed and field-tested questionnaire, interview, or focus group (qualitative).

This study will utilize a field-tested researcher-developed questionnaire validated by feedback from 5-7 subject matter experts…

#

# Research Design

Basic Qualitative: explore emergent themes from open-ended participant responses (qualitative, inductive)

This qualitative study will utilize a basic qualitative design because it will explore perceptions of clergy and laity about the role of clergy among believers in the church denomination of Pentecostal Assemblies of the West Indies (P.A.W.I.), Barbados District.

#

# Population and Sampling

The target population for this study will be drawn from clergy and laity between the ages of 18 and 65+ in five churches of P.A.W.I. in Barbados. Ten participants altogether, one clergyman/woman and one layperson from each of the five churches will be selected.

# Data Analysis Plan

Qualitative:

This study will utilize three rounds of open-ended interviews, recorded and transcribed for data analysis using Dedoose software.