# Omega Graduate School

# Dissertation Research Prospectus (Pre-Proposal)

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# Problem Statement

The problem is looking at conflict within the churches of the Pentecostal Assemblies of the West Indies in the island nation of Barbados relating to the role of clergy.

# 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.

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# Background of the Problem

Speed Leas and Paul Kittlaus (1973) in their seminal work, *Church Fights: Managing Conflict in the Local Church*, put the spotlight on contemporary conflict which was not grounded in ministry but in the defense of positions, and which led to distrust and acrimony. It was written for pastors and laypersons experiencing conflict and seeking to develop strategies for better management of this phenomenon. The goal was to provide concepts, experiences, processes and tools for congregational leadership desirous of leading a congregation through conflict in such a way that the conflict is useful and not detrimental to the further development of the mission of the church.

Studies emerging since the beginning of the twenty-first century such as Bradshaw (2006), Holland (2007), Jones (2002), Kim (2004), Moore (2003), Thomas (2005), and Wall (2002) provided relevant information for the ground work of this research. The consensus of their findings is that conflict is part and parcel of church life. Wall (2002) examined the belief that Christian people in a particular denomination will deal with conflict in a unique way within their community. Moore’s (2003) qualitative study showed that while conflict was a normal part of church life, the experience is often negative and devastating.

The work of Simpson (2003) grew out of an encounter with a friend forced out of a Canadian church. Simpson describes the happenings in churches as an epidemic that is more spiritually debilitating than some global illnesses, infecting every kind of church, destroying both clergy and congregational members alike, and frustrating denominational leaders. Simpson’s label for this condition, The Epidemic of Conflict Management, is interesting, underscoring the widespread nature of the problem (2003).

Holland’s (2007) insight from his research was that conflict transcends every level of human enterprise and management, inflicting wounds and leaving destruction in its wake. Such an insight was telling, considering the study had nothing to do with church life.

The undertaking of this study, has brought into sharp focus my journey that spans four decades of observance of this phenomenon in varied stages of ministry and experience, providing background and contextualization in the process. 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 afore-mentioned organization, one came face to face with this ugly monster of conflict and its varying manifestations.

# Significance

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 the 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 is 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

The researcher evaluated the theory of conflict among pastors/clergy in congregations of P.A.W.I. Various factors contributed to this phenomenon that have prompted research in this area.

The study is framed by role theory and leadership theory, undergirded by social exchange and leader-member exchange theories. The broader sociological perspectives are provided from discussion surrounding social conflict theory, social constructionism, structural conflict theory, and phenomenology, particularly, existential phenomenology, the philosophies of which inform the study.

# Instrumentation

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

This study will utilize a field-tested researcher-developed interview protocol 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 manual coding and Creswell and Poth’s Data Analysis Spiral for data analysis: Step One: Managing and organizing the data (data preparation), Step Two: Reading and memoing emergent ideas, Step Three: Describing and classifying codes into themes, Step Four: Developing and assessing interpretations, Step Five: Representing and visualizing the data.

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

**Ophneil, we had a good last meeting and worked through your prospectus, discussed your projects, and did a lot of online research together finding more research to help develop this prospectus with more literature that is more recent. As we discussed, updating is needed since your last trip to LOC was a while ago. You are missing a Works Cited section at the end of the Prospectus so I cannot review the titles or track down any of these cited sources I need to look at to help you. Here are the titles we found doing research together and which I sent you through the Zoom chat:**

**A God-Centered Ministry & Responses to Conflict between Peers (2016) Mininger**

**A Guided Approach to Christian Conflict Resolution (2024) Tithely.org**

**A Phenomenological Study of Role Ambiguity Among Church Employees (2024) Andrew S. Bogan, Dissert.**

**An African Hermeneutic Reading of Luke 9.18-22 In Relation to Conflict & Leadership In Pastoral Ministry\_ The Cameroonian Context (2013)**

**An Agenda for Joy Rowan Williams's Theology of Conflict, Unity & Solidarity (2020) Thesis**

**Biblical Conflict Resolution - Denver Institute For Faith & Work (2017) Laura Bernero**

**Church Conflict\_ From Contention to Collaboration (2004) Norma Cook Everist**

**Church Conflict\_ Understanding the Inevitable (2013) P. Martin, J. L. Martin, S. Boldt**

**Clergy's conflict management style of avoidance & life satisfaction, religious commitment, & lived exper. (2012) Dissert.**

**Conflict & Conflict Avoidance in Organization and Political Arena\_ The Biblical View (2017)**

**Conflict, Clergy & Culture - A Phenomenological Study Exploring & Conflicting Resolution Approaches of Jamaican Church Leaders in South Florida (Clarke, 2017) [Dissertation]**

**Exploring Conflicting Expectations Within the Church & Their Impact on the Role of the Pastor\_ A Grounded Theory Study (2018)**

**How to Lead in Church Conflict\_ Healing Ungrieved Loss (2012) K. B. Lyon, D. Moseley**

**Learning Conflict Resolution\_ Strategies From the Bible on How to Manage Conflict in the Church (2024) P. E. Carter**

**Making Peace\_ A Guide to Overcoming Church Conflict (2008) Jim Van Yperen**

**Preaching to brokenness\_ Proclaiming good news to churches in conflict (2013) Dissert.**

**The Peacemaking Pastor, A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict (2006) Alfred J. Poirier**

**Understanding, Managing & Redeeming Church Conflict (2012) Leroy W. Goertzen**

**Vision Conflict Within Pastoral Ministry (2010) J. Louis Spencer, Dissert.**

**Whitewater\_ Navigating the Rapids of Church Conflict (2010) Bill Elliff**

**Ten participants should be adequate for a qualitative project, especially since you are already familiar with these churches.**

**Instead of Dedoose software, view the Video prepared by Dr. Sara Reichard using MS Word for a simpler method of recording and coding research findings from your interviews.**

**Keep working on the Prospectus, and since I am your chair, I will have more detailed feedback in our next meeting using a new Prospectus Evaluation Rubric.**

**Overall, good job, keep developing your Prospectus document using the resources we found together! -- Prof. David Ward**