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## **Peace Initiative for African Contexts: a Theological Thinking Beyond the Culture of Violence**

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### **Abstract**

This article presents a theological reflection on the contribution of David H. Kajom's *Violence and Peace Initiative in Nigeria* (2015). This conversation is meant to closely read Kajom's work and present it to other readers in order to further reflect on the urgency of peace in the world of violence. Kajom's major contribution to the church in the aforementioned work is to stir the interest of his readers, especially from West African Evangelical circles, to rethink their relationship with the World Council of Churches (WCC). This he did in terms of having a closer look at the projection of the WCC on 'the Decade to Overcome Violence'. This is a hopeful projection, not only for Africa, but more so for the entire world. This article does not argue that violence can be overcome within a certain decade, nor does Kajom present such argument. But rather the possibility of self-critique and reorientation in a world full of violent actions is possible. We must beyond the culture of violence to the life-giving project of the church of Jesus Christ as the community of peace and love in the world. This reflection is offered as a memorial on the passing of Dr. David H. Kajom whose memory would continue to challenge us in the years to come.

## Introduction

Let me begin with some personal reflections on my encounters with the late ECWA Trustee, Rev. Dr. David H. Kajom.<sup>1</sup> My first encounter with him was during a choir day service in Katsina State to which he had been invited as the guest speaker. It was a great time of wonder and encounter. I never thought he would speak the way he spoke; his diction and seriousness were telling as he exposed the biblical text according to the theme of the occasion.

Later, we met at Stellenbosch just one year before his doctoral graduation. It was a good place and a creative moment in which he and his friend and colleague Dr. Nathan Chiroma stood by us as great parents and mentors from the early stages of our higher theological education onwards. Dr. Kajom has been a great voice with which to be reckoned in all manner of Christian leadership and theological engagement. During our last meeting in Kaduna, we had a very vibrant discussion on how to continue the liaison of good relationships between seminaries and public universities in Nigeria. Dr. Kajom was very enthusiastic and was at the fore in suggesting very useful ways in which we can continue to create and maintain useful relationships across different social and ecclesial boundaries.

In what follows, I try to further listen to the voice of Kajom through his magnum opus, namely, *Violence and Peace Initiative in Nigeria* (2015). In this seminal book, his major research at Stellenbosch University is given a wider circulation and articulation. Kajom focuses his systematic theological contribution in search of viable applications more than just abstract argumentation. His dissertation provides a theological assessment of the World Council of Churches '(WCC) 'decade to overcome violence 'hope and strategy in order that the church may reorient the world on how to learn to live differently in an age of violence. In this article I will engage in conversation with Kajom in order to allow his voice to be heard again and to see how to take

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<sup>1</sup> This article is to honour the memory of late ECWA Trustee Revd. Dr. David H. Kajom. Before his death he was elected and sworn in on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2020 as an ECWA Trustee.

his passion further through our own passions and thoughts in doing theology in a very critical situation.

The passing of Dr. Kajom came as a serious shock. Many may understand that the illness prior to his demise was some kind of preparation toward that final exit, yet at every death there is the thought of loss and the pain of separation. Nevertheless, in the hope and trust we have in Christ who is our life hidden in God (Col. 3:1), we shall continue to remember Kajom's good legacies, especially his ideas and teachings that call us into good action and deeper reflections.

*Violence and Peace* are Kajom's major contribution and testament. Just as Byang H. Kato left us a legacy and memory in his published research, *The Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (1975), the testament of Kajom is a clarion call for a new orientation of life for a culture of peace over and against a culture of violence. Just as Kato called for the rootedness of evangelical theology in Africa, Kajom left a legacy of creative peace initiative for a global world. This was majorly influenced by the research interest of Stellenbosch University in the promotion of peace and justice from the churches to the societies in Africa and the wider world.

In Kajom's contribution we are called into direct contact and dialogue with the WCC and the ecumenical church movement. The ecumenical initiative met serious resistance in many instances of African missionary enterprise and the rise of the indigenous churches in Africa. The suspicion of the infiltration of pluralism or universalism to destabilise the truth of the church and make it liberal and irresponsible did not deter Kajom. Rather, he ventured into a very creative and intentional ecumenical dialogue that we need to revisit in order to find ways for creative discourse and living as a united church in the world under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Every true church must be the church of Jesus Christ. Thus, every church must accept his lordship and submit to his command to the glory of God. Any church that defines itself based on its denominational identity has missed the urgency of the call of Jesus Christ to be the one body which he prayed for and established at his earthly advent (John 17). The being of the church as the body of Christ must be maintained and promoted in Africa and beyond.

In order to further see how Kajom's quest to dialogue with the WCC's initiative for peace and development can be further received in our Protestant church context in Africa we shall briefly explore his discussion of the dream of the ecumenical church to overcome violence and create a new culture of peace and solidarity by designation the 'decade to overcome violence' (DOV). The DOV can be seen as a novel action plan for churches and other social organisations to seek peace and to promote its meaning and function for the gift of life, not death.

## **On Remembering Violence**

The theme of violence is so complex and pervasive that no age can be innocent of it in terms of its perpetration and the actual experience of its effects. Hannah Arendt (1969) wrote about violence as a systemic evil. The idea of evil as a creative way for creative destruction has been multiplied in the many different technological devices that are being used today to hold our world captive. The rise of European enlightenment popularised the polarity between man and himself. The separation of life from its essence has been the age-old project for human mastery of the earth. The identity of the object by the subject has made the subject dominate and destroy the object. The interconnection of life has been relegated to fetishism and the glorification of nature. This became possible because of the acquisition of new power of man.

Francis Bacon said, 'Knowledge is power' (quoted in Azamfirei 2016:65). This became the wisdom of the age and a danger to life which is constantly vulnerable. The knowledge of man as domination has been variously justified by the misappropriation God's mandate to man to dominate the earth in Genesis 1:28. But the mandate was given, not in order that man may destroy the earth and consequently destroy himself, but so that man may discern the order of nature and respect it for its further growth and flourishing. In what has become 'culture of violence' (Kajom 2015:78), Kajom and others with a passion for life in the midst of the threat of death and the darkness of the age have raised their voices from Africa to call out for a new possibility. It is the task of Christian theology to stand in the midst of the fray and never to recede to the shadows.

The culture of violence is the creative action of those who have made themselves violent by choice. God did not create man as a man of violence. Even the devil became the devil, falling from his initial angelic status, by the choice of arrogance and pride. No matter how violent a culture has become within any given community, it can never be accepted as normal. Violence is the creative mechanism of power that denies the space given to man and all things to live in the beauty of freedom. Violence is the arrogance of power by which life is denied of its essence and systemically relinquished into the dread and horror of nothingness. The culture of violence eats the fabric of our society. It is the ghetto response to which many young people have been subjected. That is why we have many terrorists today who claim to be 'freedom fighters'. The culture of violence is the horror of our time. We live without thoroughly reading the times. That is why many human beings today obey the orders of Antichrist in the name of Christ and why pious people who claim the religion of peace unleash terror by their passionate actions.

Remembering violence is both the goodness and the badness of our creatureliness. We are good when we remember and our remembering makes violence always new. We may seek to forget the pain and the horror, but must never forget the faces and the names of those that violence has consumed. The terror of our time is that human life has been greatly conspired against. 'The modern time regime' (Assmann 2020) has become the age of terror and anxiety. Paul Tillich (1980) discovered the meaninglessness of life once the atmosphere of peace and freedom has been turned into the atmosphere of anxiety. Jürgen Moltmann (1975:114-117, 314) called attention to the nature of the church in the friendship of Jesus. Friendship is the key to freedom in the world. Thus as the church that embodies the life and mission of Jesus Christ we must learn to live in ways that promotes that 'culture of life' even in the 'dangers of our time' (Moltmann 2019:3).

In this conversation it will be argued that a true human being will not willingly turn him- or herself into a beast against other human being. A true human being is one who loves life, not death. It is through the love of life that we lead a life that gives freedom and space for joy for others and for ourselves. We cannot be true to ourselves when we embrace a culture of violence over a culture of peace. We may justify the culture of violence in our quest for self-protection and the protection of our families and properties, but deep down

what keeps us open and yearning for the future is the unsettling question of life, not death.

Kajom (2015:79) sees violence as a 'complex social phenomenon' in our modern world. In modern acts of violence and its relation to either religion or politics, 'Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?' (I Cor. 1:20, NIV). In selfish human wisdom the generosity of life is denied and the horror of death is embraced and shared. Not all violence leads to death, but in all violence there are images of death and the horror thereof is the pain that lingers. We cannot say that we are safe from violence or that we cannot be perpetrators of evil. This is a confession from the vulnerability and fragility of our creatureliness and our openness to act according to our will. As seen in Nietzsche (1968:500-508), the human will to power is the arrogant human creation of him- or herself into a god. In this power, called terror, there is nothing that matters except that power. The cry of the destitute, the gasping of a dying child or mother does nothing to move the cold heart and hand outstretched with a knife or a cold finger against a gun's trigger.

The complexity of our societies can be seen in the waves of violence coming out of them. There is no longer a safe port in the world. Everywhere and everyone is exposed to the danger and horror of a quick and even violent death. The sights and stories of 'violence against girls and women' (Kajom 2015: 98) being heard across the world today only makes us cold within ourselves. The incessant kidnapping atrocities of Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen terrorists in Nigeria only make the country another veil of tears. Horror is everywhere, and ears which hear about that today almost accept it as normal in the age of terror.

The fading story of Leah Sharibu (Dayil and Chi 2021:307-314) has made the Nigerian government cold against the freedom of the entire country. Leah is a metaphor for Nigeria. The pain of her captivity is felt and suffered in every house. Every school girl is a potential Leah, every mother is a mother of a Leah, and the entire country harbours the perpetrators of such inhumane acts that make our women and children people who live with the taste of tears. The pain and bloodiness of Nigeria turns us to a serious search, not only for God, but also for ourselves.

Violence is experienced even in the context of the church. All churches who call on the name of Christ must learn to speak peace in his name. The church of the Christ does not speak only for the culture of peace but also for that of love. It is from the love of Christ that the peace of Christ flows into our hearts and forms the words we speak in his name. The social adulteration of the sanctity of the church may not be hurriedly blamed on society. Rather we can argue that the church has often neglected her place and identity, which is why the cultures of evil are creeping into it. The wisdom of spiritual enlightenment is the discernment of evil in all its guises and moving away from it. 'For the fear of the Lord is wisdom and to move away from evil is understanding' (Job 28:28).

The problem of violence in our time has been further discussed in what Kajom (2015:101) calls 'cultural violence'. This is the situation in which a certain culture unleashes violence against another because of hatred. This is where tribalism gives rise to ethnic cleansing and all kinds of systemic violence. Hatred of others is the breeding ground for cultural violence. This happens, not only in terms of physical attack and the use of high-tech mechanisms, but also in our inner attitudes and the actual words we speak. Thus we can unleash enormous terror and do violence against and upon those who hear us.

There is also 'cross-cultural violence' (Kajom 2015:101), which is the movement of hatred and violence from one culture to another. This happens in the wrong kind of solidarity, against the positive solidarity of peace. The solidarity of violence is justified in the name of freedom fighting or in retaliation of the evil done to a brother or friend. The tendency to repay evil with evil takes place even across cultures in which their beauty should be seen as attractive diversities that should make them friends and members of the same families. The evil of cultural violence may be the fight of the older generation for the sake of the younger, but the fact that it is driven by a self-serving notion of having been there before others breaks the spirit of positive solidarity and renders itself useless for the formation of peace and order in any context. There is no shame greater than a church that turns itself into a tribal stronghold. The name of the church is *ecclesia*, one called out of the systems of the world into the new light and life of Jesus Christ in which all members are one with each other and with Christ (John 15-17). The new spirit of the age (*zeitgeist*) is a spirit of divisiveness and self-service even at the expense of the

others. The culture of Christianity must be the life-giving nature of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Where there is goodness and life in the righteousness of Christ, the Kingdom of God is realised among us and grows with us.

Another serious form of violence that has also become systemic in Africa is that which is done to our environment. This is what Kajom (2015:102) calls 'environmental violence'. Moltmann (1985:20) had described it as earlier 'ecological crisis'. This is seen in human greed and careless use of creation which displays the idea of the 'crisis of domination' (Moltmann, 1985:23). This is the systemic destruction of the environment in which we live. It is the pollution of the ecosystem by the bio-waste we release into the air to make it toxic, and the violence of cutting down trees and pouring poisons out onto the ecosystem. The dying of trees and other lesser seen and known living things only tells the future how irresponsible many of the present generation are to them and to their future. Our destruction of the environment is also an indirect way of our own self-destruction. We need to understand the idea of a careful and God-honouring way of receiving of our environment as the given place for our dwelling and flourishing. This has implications not only on ourselves as those who live today, but also and especially on 'tomorrow's children' (Alves 1972).

The 'proliferation of arms' and ongoing 'militarisation' (Kajom 2015:104) may be justified by nation-states as a sure way of keeping themselves safe. But internally all these arms that are circulating, whether small or large, only demonstrate more about the depth of decadence, fear, and mistrust in our world. They do not speak the call for peace and love amongst ourselves. The proliferation of arms in the hands of a few has become the major bulwark behind the rising tide of terrorism in our contexts. The person who deliberately attacks another person does so in the power of his arms. He attacks the other he hates and wants to kill who was totally unknown before, being seen just because the attacker wants to taste his arm.

The focus of people in both the developed and developing worlds today has been the collection of arms and the kinds of bombs they can control. The more ammunition a nation or group of people own, the more others fear them. Nobody can boast of controlling the other without the possession of

sophisticated weapons to use against them in case of any misbehaviour. The actual lives of human beings have been reduced to being more like animals in the forest. What should be a community of life has become a competitive game of hunt and kill. Militarism is on the increase in order to keep the political elites and their structures safe, even at the expense of the safety of the people. The new propaganda of more-military-power-equals-more-security has been overtaken by the power of money in the realm of politics. Partisan politics has turned the military into a power to own and control, not forces for peace and security.

Militarism has grown to such an extent that the general citizenry often live with great suspicion and discomfort. For example, many instances of guerrilla attacks on innocent villages in Nigeria that have left serious human and property destruction have indicated the use of military uniforms and arms, whether given or stolen, tells a lot about the violence people can do to their fellow citizens in the ongoing sad situations in which we live.

The post-colonial era has not been innocent of the ongoing violence that seeks to see and destroy people, because of the vested interests of those who rule over those being ruled. Up to now the emancipation of developing countries such as those in Africa is still a far cry from what it should be. Systemic racism and intimidation have been an ongoing crisis between the West and the rest (Terreblanche 2002:2012). The rise of superpower nations has not made the world safer than it was before their rise. The quest for power seems to be solely about the acquisition of nuclear warheads and the intensification of the forces of control to destroy lesser powers. 'Might is right' has been the ongoing marching orders of the superpowers. The need for democratisation and healthy negotiation has become only the talks of lips, not the passion or commitment of hearts. Such behaviours makes the world superpowers more ambiguous to understand and to rely upon.

In the midst of the ugliness of violence and its increasing tide, the WCC has been optimistic that the possibility of peace is still open. The call for peace must be shifted to the task for peace. To have peace now in the context of world violence and chaos requires a new sense of creativity in which the way things have been must change to become new ways of doing them. The WCC

works for a decade to overcome violence (Kajom 2015:104). This is the main issue that would occupy our thoughts in the following segment.

## **The Decade to Overcome Violence?**

There is no doubt that many people are desperate to see an end to the culture of violence in our world. The WCC's project of the DOV is equally stimulating and demanding. The hopeful thought that violence cannot reign in the world of God forever gives us the hope of a new dawn. In this faith that we live and hope that one day there would be a world without violence, but with only the peace and righteousness of God (Mal. 4; Rev. 22). No doubt whoever hears about the coming of this new world will think of a utopia that is the perfect world in which everyone is happy and satisfied.

But what matters in Kajom's view, as inspired by the WCC, is not to raise people's hope for a certain utopia in this world, but rather to call attention to the necessity of the church working together as a body to ensure the application of the ethics of the Kingdom of God on earth, ethics that cares for all people and for the whole earth. This would be an important contribution for the preservation of God's creation and the right attitude in waiting for the coming of his Kingdom.

It is interesting to note how our cultures and various traditions 'play roles' in sustaining the culture of violence (Kajom 2015:79). The irony is that it is only within the same cultures and traditions that we can reflect and work together in order to produce a new sense of life together that will better represent our humanity and our ecclesial nature. The colonial cultures of human domination, whether from the West, the Arabs, or even fellow Africans, have been supporting factors in the backwardness of Africa and the wide gulf between its people. The traditions of prestige and the ownership of territories in which no stranger or newcomer is welcomed make us live in likeminded ghettos and seem to push away or even kill those who seek to come near us. There have been clashes of interests and historic realities in many African communities in which those who were given asylum or shelter to rest and flourish for a time have become the major occupants of those areas. The culture and traditions of self-imposed interests and fabricated histories must be closely scrutinised and addressed if we are to be restored to our true history and our true selves.

The kinds of technological devices we use more often than not end up reorienting us differently and negatively. The ‘movies which teach violence to children’ are watched in our homes (Kajom 2015:79). If we are to raise children with a new value system, especially with the values of human life and the beauty of creation in the presence of God, we must be intentional in analysing the movies our children watch and in providing healthy commentaries that will help them see the blind spots and even seeming conspiracies in the movies that they have otherwise not seen.

According to Kajom’s (2015:82) observation, ‘The Decade to Overcome Violence was timed to coincide with the UN’s Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010’. This move came with great responsibility and with the feeling of life for the coming generation. If we continue to be careless about the future, we have closed it to those to whom it rightfully belongs. Thus, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer (2010:42) argues, the responsible person is not one who wishes to extricate him- or herself from the situation, but rather one who thinks and works hard in order to provide a better space and condition of life for the coming generation (see also Huber 2014:978). The contribution of Kajom in conversation with WCC was not meant to polarise opinions. Rather Kajom sought ways to pave the way for the creation of a new Africa, an Africa that would be more free and just than the present conditions in which we currently live.

The idea of a decade to overcome violence (2001-2010) was creatively outlined with visionary goals in order to actualise the dreams of its founders (Kajom 2015:77). These are good dreams of hope and gratitude in unity and progress of all the churches. In Kajom’s survey, he (2015:83) presents the following point: ‘The goals are predicated on the conviction that peace making must be at the core of the life and witness of the churches’. Furthermore, the goals include, ‘holistic address, to challenge the churches to non-justification of violence, promote community not competition, to learn to pursue peace with the others, challenge militarisation etc’ (Kajom 2015: 83-84). The character of DOV, as created by the WCC, is that ‘by directing international attention both to the challenges of overcoming violence and of building cultures of peace and to initiatives being taken in this regard by the churches’ (Kajom 2015: 89). Kajom’s research does not promise to ‘overcome violence completely’

(2015:128). Rather it projects the significance of faith and hope into a very deplorable situation like that of violence.

In Kajom's (2015:128) perspective, 'An important motivation for this commitment is the determination to stand alongside certain groups of people who always seem to be the victims of most forms of violence on account of the unjust values that dominate structures of human relationships in our world today'. The call for the reconstruction of the culture of violence into a new culture of just, peaceful, and rational relationality is urgent. Human beings as creatures of God who bear the image of God, thus their dignity should be respected and cherished. To deny or violate human dignity to dishonour God the creator. Working for peace and the dignity of people and creation is part of the call of 'the ethics of responsibility' (Huber 2014: 973). This does not mean that the human beings who suffer violence are God themselves, but rather that God's presence in solidarity with them and their bearing the image of God in their being makes them sacred people in all places and at all times. Persecuting God's people is persecuting God himself. In the book of Acts, when Jesus appears to Saul, a persecutor of the church, he says, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *me*?' (Acts 9:4, NIV, emphasis added). There is no one who should be isolated and despised from the company of human beings, because all human beings are created in the image of the same God.

Having seen the perspectives of Kajom in conversation to the WCC in outlining the need for and possibility of a new culture of life against death, we now turn to discuss some key issues that surround our calling and duties for the provision of peace and unity in the church and in society.

## **Seeking Cultures of Peace**

It is the calling and mandate of the church to cultivate and nurture a culture that seeks peace among all peoples. Enns (2011:9) describes what the ecumenical church has come through and what it has learned from its shared experience: 'We have learned so much—about ourselves and others, about the ugliness of violence and the beauty of reconciliation. And we discovered how the unity of the church—in reconciled diversity—is itself a credible sign of peace'. He calls the church to a peace-giving life rooted in the teachings and life of Jesus Christ. True peace is found in the unity of Christ as reflected in the

high priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17 (Enns 2005:8). The peace-giving life and message of Jesus Christ are pivotal for all Christians and church communities to be people and communities of God's peace. This peace is not the absence of suffering in the world, but rather is the turning of human life toward the light of life in the presence of God. We steal, kill, and destroy when tempted and pushed by the evil one whose mission is the annihilation of all life and goodness. The culture of violence cannot be condoned in the church of Jesus Christ. Rather it must be critically opposed and actively resisted. When one suffers, all suffer. When one unleashes violence, he or she has betrayed him- or herself from his or her actual humanity.

Overcoming violence in our time and local places remains a serious challenge for the church. The search for peace must begin from the self. This is why Kajom (2015:80) has a heading in which he discussed 'Self-critique and ministry of peace'. The best critique is self-critique. The arrogance of human freedom always tries to convince one that he or she does not need any further correction from others. This sense of self-sufficiency only leads to self-service and arrogance. The act of self-critique unveils the truth of our being truly human in our own eyes and in relation to other human beings. The discipline to come into conversation with oneself is the actual manifestation of human maturity. If we sit tight and think through issues in our minds we will be led to better options than the rashness of empty zeal, which leads to violence and the extinction of the strength that could have been deployed in the building of lives rather than in their destruction.

Kajom (2015:93) explores some models for peace building in ecclesia and social contexts. His ideas have to do with identity formation and a spirituality of forgiveness and reconciliation. When people learn the courage to come together and discuss their situation, they will find the strength to work together to combat the problems that are challenging them. The church must always be bridge-building by means of true forgiveness and the restoration of good relationships between persons and communities. There is no denying the fact that there have been serious inhumane crimes committed in different places that seem beyond the human power to forgive. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela (2003) studied the problem of apartheid crimes against humanity. She calls different people to attend to the need for forgiveness and the restoration of good relationships. This is the only sure path to a good and

secure future. As the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1999) wrote, there is 'no future without forgiveness'. To have any meaningful future life in church and communities, there is need to discover and apply the power of forgiving love and reconciliation.

Kajom (2015:83) argues that the churches today must be 'churches seeking reconciliation and peace.' This is seen in the discipleship of Jesus Christ. In his *Sanctorum Communio*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1998:208-15) sees the church as the embodiment of Jesus Christ in actual communities by the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. Russel Botman (1997:30-39) calls this paradigmatic to contextual Christianity. One cannot see Jesus apart from the church or the church apart from Jesus. Rather, one must see the Church as reflective of Jesus, the mirror through which or by which the reality of Christ is made manifest to the world. This is the new sociality of the church in the world (Green 1999). In this regard, we may see the church as the incarnational presence of Jesus Christ in the world. The promises of Jesus to his disciples and, by extension, to all believers that he will never leave nor forsake them (John 14:18; Heb. 13:5) reminds us of the constant presence of Jesus Christ in the world through the church. This marks the church as a distinctive community, born at the cross and nurtured by the Holy Spirit. It would be an ecclesial naiveté to see the church as a merely a cultural or political organisation. That is a degeneration of the church as the sanctified body of Jesus Christ to being merely a human-made organisation. All the structures of the church cannot rise beyond the framework of being brothers and sisters in the fellowship of Jesus Christ. We will only overcome the culture of violence and surely celebrate an age of peace in our world when we change our perspectives of life and ethics. We will live together in the goodness of life and harmony when we live together as family, brothers and sisters, in the fellowship of Jesus Christ. To all unbelievers who are outside the church, we can help them overcome their fears and the self-negation of life when we extend to them the hands of fellowship as the ambassadors of God's peace, sent in the name and power of Christ.

## **Conclusion: Justice for Peace**

In conclusion, for the church to be an active agent of God's peace in the world it needs to be serious about providing good pastoral care. Pastor care is an important model for the growth of Christian influence in the world today

(Magezi 2016:1, Waruta & Kinoti 2000). The need for pastoral care as a framework for peace in order to bring hope and reconciliation to war-torn countries and divided societies cannot be overemphasised. Kajom (2015:129) calls us to build a consensus for peace. Ecumenically speaking, this could cut across many boundaries among people and provide them good access to one another and to God.

In the midst of religious crises, intolerance, and many instances of social injustice, we are called to learn to negotiate for peace as a just cause (Moltmann 1997:189; 2012; Holung 2008). This negotiation is not the search for blame, but rather a move toward the healing of the wounded and the comfort of all those in affliction. Then we shall see how we can be creative in organising ourselves and our communities for growth toward life, rather than resigning ourselves to despair and death.

Kajom (2015:129) argues that, 'The part which violence and war play in our present societies is a sin against God and a degradation of humankind.' The main foundation that Kajom envisages for building a new culture of peace is that of justice. No one can build peace without justice. There is a slogan which says, 'No justice, no peace'. This is a cry from the soul of all humanity and from the earth itself to be given justice as its due. It cuts across all strata of life in which people live and suffer. The restoration of life is only possible with the restoration of justice in God's love. 'Peace requires a new international order based on justice for and within all nations, and respect for God-given humanity and dignity of every person' (Kajom 2015:129). The call goes beyond mere human toleration to actual acknowledgement of the creative actions of God to help us to be more like God in our being more human in the world. For this to be possible, 'what is required is a critical re-appropriation of the age-old wisdom, if you want peace, prepare for peace (not for war)' (Kajom 2015: 131).

Dr. David Kajom was well celebrated at his funeral as a great man of God, a man of great determination, friendship, and steadfastness. His book *Violence and Peace Initiative in Nigeria* can only be interpreted now as his major testament for the church and society. It echoes the words of Jesus at his own earthly departure from his disciples: 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give you' (John 14:27 NIV).

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