



# Meaning beyond symbols! : A theological interpretation of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe's logo

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<https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.105.523>

## Abstract

Methodism came to Zimbabwe in 1891. The church expanded through Eurocentric theology taught to the locals. As the mission continued to grow the indigenes became part of the Methodist ethos and theology through the contextualisation of the gospel, the localisation of worship, and the indigenisation of leadership, however, the church did not have a visible identity. When the church finally designed its logo in 1987, there was no deliberate effort to explain the meaning and significance of the insignia to its congregants. Coupled with this lack of knowledge, the logo later became the church's trademark through kitchen utensils with the logo, clothing material, designed in different fashions of women, men, and youth regalia, billboards, and branding of different items and properties. This paper aimed to contribute to Methodist theology and scholarship by providing literature that explains the meaning and significance of the Methodist logo which is represented by a circle, the map of Zimbabwe, the cross, a scallop shell, and a dove. The paper started by presenting the methodology used to gather data. This was followed by a historical development of the logo. The paper also analysed the significance of the logo as a fundraising tool, a form of identity and a quasi-uniform in the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe. In this paper, we argued that the Methodist logo represents the indelible theological insignia that directs its congregants to a deep theology of a church located within the global Wesleyan Methodist and in particular the "connexional" of Zimbabwe. The paper concluded by forwarding that, logo(s) remain central to the identity of any organisation and members of each organisation need to have an appreciation of their identity and the meaning of their emblems if the organisation has to be theologically impactful to its congregants.

**Keywords:** Symbols; Methodist Church in Zimbabwe; Logo; Connexion; Autonomy

## Introduction

The identity of any entity is defined by its replica which stands as a logo, an emblem, an artefact, or a symbol of the same relevance. This paper; *Meaning beyond Symbols! : A theological interpretation of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe's logo* was motivated by three justifications. First, since the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe (MCZ) developed its logo in 1987, there was no deliberate effort by the church to explain the history and theological significance of the symbols



and colours of the emblem. This lack of relevant information on what defines the theology of any church (ecclesia) has resulted in some people adding different colours to the logo or replacing the traditional colours of white, black, red, green and yellow with a blue background, a white bird, a yellow scallop shell with others going as far as inscribing words around the logo. Second, for over 47 years, the MCZ logo has never received any scholarly attention or any simplistic explanation, resulting in the congregants taking pride in the logo pictures without much appreciation of the historical development and the theological significance of their pride. Third, logo(s) help members of any organisation to discover and occupy their place in the organisation, and also to understand their identity and roles as members. This is contrary to the MCZ as members do not appreciate the relevance of the symbols of their church. This paper aims to unpack the meaning behind the pictures as shown on the five features on the MCZ logo namely the circle, the dove, the cross, the map of Zimbabwe and the scallop shell and their colours.



The Methodist Church In Zimbabwe logo.

Sourced at: <https://www.facebook.com/p/The-Methodist-Church-In-Zimbabwe>

Structurally, the paper will start by presenting the methodology employed in the paper, followed by engaging the purpose and the definition of the logo. The paper will proceed to present the historical development of the MCZ logo and the meaning of the symbols. The paper will also discuss the impact of the logo as a fundraising enterprise, a quasi-uniform and a unifier of the MCZ congregants. The conclusion will be a warning to different denominations to explain the meaning of their logo(s) to their congregants in order to avoid many duplications of the similar logo(s) as people will not have an appreciation of the original meaning of the emblem being used by the church. Given the complexity and the confusion that can be brought about by the plural of the word logo, we have decided to put the “s” of the plural in brackets to differentiate the spelling from Logos.

## Methodology

This desk research employed qualitative research methodology. In using this methodology, the authors were cognisant of the fact that the MCZ logo is a trademark of the church as such it has to be authorised by the gatekeeper of the Church who is the General Secretary (Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, 2019:9). In addition, the archives of the MCZ contain the Minutes of different Conferences including the 1987 Minutes that authorised the logo. All this is the intellectual property of MCZ and the authors needed to be given consent. The paper also gathered data through purposive sampling interviews of Rev. Farai Chirisa who was the Bishop (now Presiding Bishop) of the MCZ from 1987-1991 (Mujinga, 2017:162) and Rev Margareth James who was the



Secretary of Conference (now General Secretary) from 1986 to 1992 (Mujinga, 2020). The paper also purposively selected Mrs. Gladys Chirisa the wife of Rev Chirisa who was leading Ruwadzano/Manyano (Mujinga, 2023) during the period. Data was analysed using thematic data analysis.

### **Definition and Purpose of a Logo**

Logo(s) play a significant role in giving identity to different firms and organisations including churches. For example, in business studies, a logo is a trademark or other identifying symbol of an organisation, often including a name (Statt, 2003:95). Another definition was provided by Thompson (1993:523) who defines a logo as an emblem of an organisation used to display material, etc. Following the above definitions, a logo is a sign that is used to distinguish goods and services provided by one enterprise from those of other enterprises. In addition, a logo serves the purpose of identification. As an emblem, the logo comprises picture(s) and colour(s) to represent a person, a group or an organisation. The pictures used in the logo also represent a quality of the idea that distinguishes one organisation from the other. Furthermore, a logo stands as an emblem of identification and trademark communicating the idea and concept of an organisation or individuals. They present the uniqueness of an organisation from others in the same trade or business (Statt, 2003:95).

A logo speaks for the personality of the organisation in two ways. First, it speaks to the stakeholder conveying the message about what the organisation believes and stands for. Second, it helps members of that organisation to discover and occupy their place in the organisation and understand their identity and roles as members of that organisation. Unfortunately, there is a strong gap in the MCZ as far as this definition is concerned. For Shobhasana (2023), a logo is designed, with two people in mind, i.e. the stakeholders and members of the organisation as an essential investment for any business or organisation. Moreover, a logo(s) help in building a strong brand identity that attracts new customers and in turn increases sales as such, a logo should also be flexible enough to be adapted to different brands and products, while still maintaining its core identity (Shobhasana, 2023). Shobhasana (2023), further argues that a logo has some key characteristics such as "...relatable meaning it should use imagery and symbolism that they can understand and connect with. In addition, a logo has to be versatile, timeless, pleasing, unique, scalable, memorable, iconic, and simple". In analysing Shobhasana's statement, it is clear that a logo has to be recognisable and distinctive. That being as it may, a logo should not be confused with other businesses or organisations. These unique characteristics make a logo impactful to both the organisation and those who do business with them. The fact that the logo is an artefact, means that organisations have to design their emblems in such a way that they capture the attention of those viewers and as an artefact, it is designed based on the fact that visuals are powerful ways of expressing a brand identity.

Theologically, a logo helps the church to connect itself with the community at the same time communicating the mission and value of the organisation (Pipe-Rougeau, 2022). In addition, a church logo presents the identity of the denomination, and what it is known for. From an outward-looking perspective, a good logo can help the church grow and be more successful in the community, helping the organisation bring more like-minded people together. From an introspective or inward-looking perspective, a good church logo plays the role of making people feel more connected to the congregation ( or denomination) and it shows that the church is professional, and cares for its appearance and the message it conveys. In this understanding, every shape, item, colour, size and position of the logo remains critical in explaining the mission of the church (Pipe-Rougeau, 2022).



## **Origins and Development of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe Logo**

The discussion to have a logo in the MCZ started in 1987 through a report from the Connexional<sup>1</sup> Evangelism Committee. Two prominent people on the committee were Rev. Andrew Sankey a missionary who was the chairperson, and Rev. Morris Masvanhise a native minister who was the secretary of the committee (Rev. Farai Chirisa Online Interview with Onias Chagudhuma November 11, 2023). Three sketches of the possible logo were presented to the Standing Committee<sup>2</sup> meeting that was held on the 25<sup>th</sup> of July 1987. The characteristics of the logo were the cross, the dove, the scallop shell, and the map of Zimbabwe (Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, 1987:5). The Standing Committee agreed that the features of the logo should have a representation of the church as 'Christ's ambassadors' having the mandate of making Christ known (Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, 1987:5). The four features of the logo represented the MCZ's mission, theology and ecclesiology. To commodify the logo, the Standing Committee asked the Evangelism Committee to continue developing the logo. These developments saw the addition of the circle as the fifth feature of the logo. In addition, the cross was painted 'red' and black as the church was designing material to use for the Centenary celebrations in 1991 and other memorabilia such as clothing material, mug cups, and dinner plates (Rev. Margareth James Online Interview with Onias Chagudhuma 11 April 2024).

## **The Theological Meaning of the Symbols and colours of the MCZ logo**

The Methodist logo was designed based on the theological and traditional values of the MCZ. This section will unpack the meaning and significance of each of the five features that were agreed to be the representation of the MCZ emblem.

## **The Interpretation of the Circle that Surrounds the Methodist Logo**

In agreeing to have the circle as a later development to the logo, the Standing Committee was cognisant of the deep theological and traditional meaning of this feature. According to Rev. James, the circle represents, the seamless relationship of the triune God. In this Trinitarian relationship, God the Father is presented as surrounding and protecting the church as it carries out God's mission (Rev. Margareth James Online Interview with Onias Chagudhuma 13 November 2023). The fact that the cycle does not have a beginning and an end represents the unbreakable relationship of the omnipotent, omnipresent and eternal God who guides and protects the church. In addition, the single line that makes a circle demonstrate wholeness, totality, union, unity and God's protection. The circle as part of the MCZ logo also communicates the truth that in as much as the circle does not have a beginning and an ending, so it is with God and His love for humanity (Gilland, 2016). Circles are very often symbolic of unity, infinity, and utter perfection -all God's attributes -due to their symmetrical and continuous nature.

The circle also emphasises the connexionality of Methodism. Connexionalism in the Methodist tradition is used to describe the principles and practices by which Methodism is intentionally interrelated and connected (Atkins, 2010:17). Methodists spell the word as 'connexion' to emphasise what was mentioned by Wakefield (1988) in footnote 1. In addition, Connexionalism also emphasises how many scattered Methodist churches are brought together under one

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<sup>1</sup> The word connexion was first used by John Wesley in his strictness to refer to the Order of Societies bound to him and to each other in the form of a connexion (Wakefield, 1988: 75).

<sup>2</sup> According to the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe Standing Orders, "the Standing Committee is the statutory committee that meets between the close of any meeting of the Conference and the opening of the next succeeding meeting of the Conference. The Committee is authorized to act on behalf of the Conference, provided that such action be not contrary either to the Standing Orders or to any subsisting resolutions of the Conference." (MCZ 2022:23).



leadership for one purpose and this was a normal rendition in the eighteenth century (Merriam-Webster Dictionary. n.d). Moreover, the origins of Methodism as a discipleship movement are in the 'connexion' of its congregants, and this concept backdates to the ministry of John Wesley.

Quaye (2012) further argues that 'connexionalism' is all-embracing, uniting and inclusion of all churches. Within the concept of 'connexionalism', the Methodists express their concept of the church in the conception of connexionalism. The church also stretches into all countries, races colours and cultures through Connexionalism. For example, all Zimbabwean Methodists in the diaspora fellowship are under the MCZ connexion, thereby having MCZ Fellowships in Britain, Ireland, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and Botswana among other countries spread across the globe. These congregants survive under other conferences but still maintain the discipline, ethics and tradition of the Zimbabwean Connexional Office. In addition, Connexionalism brings all the members of the body of Christ together without exclusion. The structures of the MCZ are connected administratively, financially, ecclesiastically and theologically through the hierarchy of the connexion, district, circuit and society. Such coming together of people of one country, observing one tradition, regardless of where they are makes the circle very significant as a Connexional symbol important. Moreover, the offices of the MCZ are not referred to as headquarters but as Connexional offices to avoid a scenario of a hierarchy that leaves other people out. Furthermore, the circle on the logo is also a reminder that our love for each other in the whole 'connexion' is unending because the systems are also connected.

The concept of 'Connexionalism' augurs well with the African spirituality of *hunhuism/ Ubuntu*. Describing how circles bind Africans together Mbiti states the following:

As a rule, traditional African houses are round and built around a village compound so that if there are several houses in one compound, they also form a circle ... Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and toward other people. When he suffers. He does not suffer alone but with the corporate group; when he rejoices, he rejoices not alone but with his kinsmen, his neighbours, and his relatives. ... Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say, 'I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am (Mbiti, 1969:140-141).

### **The Resemblance of the Cross on the Methodist Logo**

The cross on the MCZ logo represents the church's deep theological belief in the empty cross of Jesus after his resurrection. In explaining the theological justification for adding the cross to the logo, the Evangelism Committee reported to the Standing Committee, that "the cross is inserted on the logo as an affirmation of the importance as a symbol of the Christian church showing the centrality of the death and resurrection of Jesus on the cross for the forgiveness of sins and his purpose of reconciling humanity with God (Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, 1987:5). In its decision, the Standing Committee affirmed that "a cross is an event of God's love in which the Son suffered abandonment by the Father, the Father suffered the death of the Son, and the Holy Spirit is the powerful love which spans the gulf between the Father and Son and so reaches God-forsaken humanity" (Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, 1987:5). Through the cross, Methodists acknowledge that Jesus Christ reconciled humanity to the Father, and also, humanity were reconciled to each other (Ephesians 2:16-18; cf. Corinthians 5:18-19).

Methodists also validate the centrality of the cross in general and on their logo in particular through their music. Most of the songs in the Methodist church talk about the cross which is a justification



of Pauline teaching when he said in (I Corinthians 1:23-24) "... We preach Christ crucified; a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God". Furthermore, the Methodist church has the cross at the front centre and on the pulpits of every church sanctuary, be it a church or any other place or building used for worship, the cross is always in front drawn on pulpits or on cloths on the table in front of the congregation. Such a level of religiosity demonstrates that Methodists connect with the cross on several occasions in as much as ancient Israel would respond to who God is, what He has done to them, and what He continued to do to them in song and dance and this is the epicentre of Methodist theology (Chagudhuma, 2023:6). As argued earlier, the cross is central in the Methodist songs. For example, the Methodists express their faith and gratitude in songs such as Hymn 58 (Shona) 199 English which has been translated as:

Jesu ndisededzeiwo, Pedyo nemuchinjikwa, Patsime rinokosha, Rinorapa vose  <b>Chorus</b>  Ipapo pamuchinjikwa Ndichakudza Jesu Dakara Mweya wangu Wawana Zororo  Pedyo nomuchinjikwa Rudo rwanidwana Nyamatsatsi yedenga Yandivhenekera	Jesus keep near the cross There is a precious fountain, Free to all a healing stream Flows from Calvary's mountain  <b>Chorus</b>  In the cross, in the cross Be my glory ever, Till my raptured soul shall find Rest beyond the river  Near the, a trembling soul, Love and mercy found me; There a Bright and Morning Star Sheds its beams around me
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In the four stanzas of this song which is central during the Easter, the word cross is written 5 times at the top of each first line. The other four lines of the song explain the need to be drawn nearer the cross. The other songs that emphasise the cross in the Methodist Hymnbooks are 54, 59 Shona, 197 'English' (Beneath the Cross"); [Hymn 65 'Ndebele' – "*Wazithwal' izono*, Jesu, *zingezono zakho*. There is healing on the cross hence we refer to it as '*Tsime rinokosha rinorapa vose*' (Hymn 58 – Shona) (a precious fountain, free to all, a healing stream) English Hymn 199.

Furthermore, for Methodists, the cross is also a symbol of discipleship (Scott, 1984:287). It enables the successful carrying out of missions against all odds. There is an assurance of victory as long as the cross' is guiding the way. This message of the cross is found in the matching song of the mission:

Fambai vaKristu, somunondorwa, Munotungamirwa noMuchinjikwa; Kristu Ishe wedu, Mutungamiri, Fambai sehondo nesimba rake; <b>(Hymn 250 – Shona)</b>	Onward Christian soldiers Marching as to war, With the cross of Jesus going on before Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe Forward into battle, see his banner go <b>(Hymn 822 - English)</b>
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The song demonstrates the resilience of a matching church that does not major in the obstacles but in the accomplishment of the mission. The cross gives hope to the people on a mission as the cross is mightier and victory is assured (Colossians 2:13-15). The cross on the logo is represented by black and red colours which means that we were once sinners (black) but we were cleansed by the blood of Jesus (red colour) (Mujinga, 2023).



## The Significance of the Dove on the Methodist Logo

The dove features in several biblical passages as a bird of peace. The bird was first mentioned in the 'Flood Story' of Noah (Genesis 8:6-12). Other biblical passages that feature the dove in the Old Testament are, (Isaiah 38:14; 59:11; Jeremiah 48:28; Ezekiel 7:16; Hosea 7:11; 11:11; Nahum 2:7 and Song of Songs 2:14; 5:2). In the New Testament, the dove symbolises the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32; 2:14-16). In the Jesus narratives, the dove featured at His baptism. "As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son whom I love; with him, I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:16-17 cf Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22). In the Eastern Orthodox church, the dove at Christ's baptism in the Jordan was a "theophany" - a powerful manifestation of God to the world and the beginning of our Lord's public ministry. It was also a revelation of the Holy Trinity. There is, indeed, some evidence in the gospels themselves that a dove could in fact symbolise purity. Matthew spoke of Jesus instructing His disciples to "be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:16). Doves are also referred to as sacrificial animals in each of the gospels (Matthew 21:12, Mark 11:15, Luke 2:24, John 2:14, 16). This shows us that they were considered to be "clean" animals, that were uncontaminated and suitable to be sacrificed. Thus, we can contend that the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove as a symbol of His incorruptibility and purity, affirming His merit to be the sacrifice for the appeasing of the sins of humanity (Nicolaidis, 2010).

MCZ incorporated the dove, both as a symbol of the Holy Spirit and an image of peace. The Standing Committee confirmed that the dove on the logo represents the Holy Spirit who is the Sanctifier of the Church, one who transforms lives and empowers individuals to impact society (Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, 1987:5). In making this decision to adopt the dove as a symbol of peace, MCZ Conference was aware that the Holy Spirit is the third member of the Godhead and can be represented by many other symbols. For example, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came in the form of a combination of violent wind and tongues of fire (Acts 2:1-4). In His discussion with the Samaritan woman at the well Jesus also showed that water can be an emblem of the Holy Spirit signifying eternal life (John 4:14). The same is also echoed in (John 7:37-39). The MCZ chose the dove out of all these other emblems in the light of its important mission. "In the synoptic Gospels, what the Spirit did to Jesus in the form of a dove represented Jesus' anointing to fulfil His messianic task" (Wenk, 2013:391) justifying MCZ's belief in the dove as the symbol of the Holy Spirit.

It is worth mentioning that the 1987 Conference accepted a picture of a dove without colours. However, it is not clear as to when and why the MCZ opted for the yellow dove because literally, no dove is yellow in colour but rather greyish. In this regard, the decision by MCZ to have a yellow dove instead of a grey one remains a separate research topic for another time. What remains clear is that the dove on the MCZ logo represents the Holy Spirit. Just like it is in the features discussed before, the Holy Spirit can be represented by different colours depending on the role that the Spirit is playing at that particular moment. According to Colour with Leo (2024), the Holy Spirit can be represented by white signifying purity, holiness and virtue. The Holy Spirit can also be represented by blue signifying coolness and peacefulness; red evoking the ideas of fire, heat and energy (Acts 2:3); green signifying life-giving, growth, renewal and freshness (John 3:5-8); purple speaking of His awesomeness as the very presence and power of God dwelling within His people; orange, signifying light and heat speaking how the Spirit brings the fiery light of God into our lives illuminating our path; yellow speaking of the Spirit kindling His warmth glow within us and also representing the bright rays of hope (Colour with Leo, 2024). The colour yellow inspires worship and is also a symbol of fire. Acts 2 speaks of the Holy Spirit coming in the form of fire.



The Holy Spirit can also be represented by gold signifying majestic, i.e. wealth, splendour and royalty. It therefore means that different colours do teach us about different roles and qualities of the Holy Spirit described in the scriptures.

From the symbolisms of the Holy Spirit presented above, our conclusion on the dove on the MCZ logo will not focus on its colour, but on what the Holy Spirit does as the Sanctifier and peacemaker. We argue that although the Holy Spirit can be represented by a yellow colour as argued, this is not a justification of a yellow dove on the MCZ logo instead of a literary grey dove. In addition, we also forward that, the yellow dove has nothing to do with the doves in the jungle, but it is all about what the Holy Spirit does and inspires us to do. Just as the Holy Spirit birthed Jesus (Matthew 1:20-21), so He did to the church (Acts 2:1ff). It is our conviction that the same Spirit continues to play critical roles in the sustenance and nourishment of the church so that it becomes effective in carrying out its mission. As God and the Holy Spirit are part of a triune Godhead, enables and empowers the church to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations and equips the church for service. The dove on the logo is facing down which signifies the continuous outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church. There is no time when the Church will not have the Holy Spirit, and neither is there a time when the church will have to say that we have had enough of the Holy Spirit. Neither is there a time and place where the Holy Spirit turns His back against the church. The Holy Spirit is always being poured out upon the church and all its congregants in their different age groups, as well as upon all programmes.

### **The significance of the Map of Zimbabwe on the logo**

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country surrounded by Zambia to the north, Mozambique to the east, South Africa to the south and Botswana to the west. Since its inception in 1891, the Methodist Church was under the British Conference up to 1977. There was no specific logo that the church used (Rev. Margareth James Online Interview with Onias Chagudhuma, April 23, 2024). The church was granted autonomy in October 1977 (Kadenge, 1991:113-114). In October 1977, the church became autonomous to be able to run its affairs and as a conference (Mujinga 2017:149). The focus and centre of operation changed to Zimbabwe. It is against this background that the map on the logo speaks of an autonomous church. The map represents the specific responsibility in which Methodists in Zimbabwe are called to fulfil the Great Commission” (Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, 1987:6). The map does not only signify the geography of Zimbabwe but the Zimbabweans as people. This answers the justification why there are MCZ Fellowships in Australia, Britain, Canada, Ireland, South Africa and the United States of America. These Zimbabweans worship in Shona and Ndebele which are their mother languages although they are part of the parent churches in these countries. In addition, they also have chaplains who are seconded from the MCZ and can be replaced upon the expiry of the five-year term. These countries form their administration called the Diaspora Synod which also reports to the Zimbabwean Conference through the leaders of the Fellowship who come to the conference every year.

The map has a green colour which is applied to the whole map and this was a later development. Green is mentioned several times in the Bible. For example, (Psalm 23:2) speaks of God leading the righteous beside still waters, causing them to lie down in “green pastures”. Other passages where green is mentioned in the Old Testament are: (Genesis 1:30; Psalm 52:8; 92:12-15; Isaiah 15:6; Ezekiel 17:24; and Joel 2:22 among other texts). In the New Testament (Mark 6:39 and Revelation 9:4) have reference to a green colour. In all these passages, the colour is associated with God’s provisions that sustain life. For example, in the Gospel according to Mark, the multitudes were ordered to sit down in groups on green grass and they were given bread and fish, and they had excess food there (Mark 6:39-44). The colour green also symbolises blessing,





growth and the cycle of life. The significance of green pastures is emphasised throughout the Bible in various verses all tying into the theme of life and restoration. The fact that the whole map is coloured speaks to the presence of Methodism in the whole 10 political provinces of Zimbabwe namely Bulawayo, Harare. Manicaland, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland West, Matebeleland North, Matebeleland South, Masvingo and Midlands. The church also uses most of the languages spoken in Zimbabwe like Shona, Ndebele, Tonga, Nambya, Venda, Xhosa, Sotho and Sign, languages.

### **The Resemblance of the Scallop Shell on the MCZ Logo**

The fifth feature of the MCZ logo is the scallop shell. The common use of the scallop shell symbolises the universality of the feature in the Methodist tradition. Two theories make the scallop shell a Methodist trademark. The first theory presents the scallop shell as a symbol of pilgrimage that was used by people to go and see the mortal remains of the apostle James the son of Zebedee the first apostle to be martyred, in 44 CE (Paulo, 1995). The site where St. James was buried came to be known as Compostela, the star field, and there a city had arisen that drew travellers from every part of the Christian world. These travellers visiting the shrine of St James in Santiago de Compostela, in Spain were called pilgrims, and their symbol was the scallop shell (Paulo, 1995). The shells were adopted as a symbol by pilgrims to the tomb of the apostle; and served as a means of identification for the pilgrims when they met (Paulo, 1995). Over the centuries the scallop shell took on mythical, metaphorical and practical meanings. The grooves in the shell, which meet at a single point, represent the various routes pilgrims travelled, eventually arriving at a single destination: the tomb of St. James in Santiago de Compostela (Paulo, 1995: see also Nicolaidis, 2016). The shell is also a metaphor for the pilgrim: As the waves of the ocean wash scallop shells up onto the shores of Galicia, God's hand also guides the pilgrims to Santiago. (The Methodist Church of New Zealand, n.d).

The second theory locates the use of the scallop shell to the Wellesley family, the genealogy of John Wesley and Wesley himself. The tradition traces the origins of the family in the West Country of England, Dorset, and Devon, in particular. The family is assumed to be originally connected with the Wellesley family, from the same part of England. That family moved to Ireland and from it came Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington. It was the Wellesleys who used the scallop shell, and a seal from the 14<sup>th</sup> century including a shield with a cross and five scallops (The Methodist Church of New Zealand. n.d). Wellesley family had a shield crest that bears a cross decorated with five scallop shells (Drake 2011). It is believed that the Wellesleys had also once participated in the pilgrimage to St. James' shrine in Compostela, hence the reason why scallop shells found their way into their lives. The connection between John Wesley and the scallop shell goes back to 1787 when his portrait was painted by William Hamilton. At the bottom of the painting, Hamilton put in some scallop shells. Later that same year, an engraving of this portrait was published by James Fittler. Beneath the portrait, Fittler added his conception of the Coat of Arms of the Wesley family – a shield with an outlined cross, containing three scallop shells in each quarter and a wyvern as the crest, with the words, "God is love" as the motto underneath (Baker, 1954: 19: Paulo 1995). In the same way, Mediaeval Christians, including John Wesley's ancestors, walked across Europe to the shrine of St. James, and John Wesley walked across the length and breadth of Europe preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the MCZ, the shell links the ecclesia with worldwide Methodism, an emblem in Wesley's coat of arms (Methodist Church in Zimbabwe 1987:6). This point is buttressed by the fact that the scallop shell now features on the logos of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, the Methodist Church of Nigeria, the Methodist Church in Kenya and the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone.



### **MCZ Logo: A Source of income, a “uniform” and a Form of Identity**

After its acceptance, the MCZ did not remain as an ordinary insignia, but it was identified with business by the Ruwadzano/Manyano. The organisation used the logo as, a form of uniform and a symbol of identity through the production of kitchen utensils and clothes for sale. The first step to popularise the logo after its acceptance in 1987 was an aggressive education model among congregants through marketing and explanations of the logo. The Ruwadzano/Manyano movement became the pioneers in marketing the logo the printing and sale of materials (cloths) with the logo inscribed on them. The initiative started in 1988 but at a slow pace as people were still trying to grasp the concept behind its logo (Gladys Chirisa: Online Interview with Onias Chagudhuma April 29, 2024). The project took momentum in 1991 during the Centenary Celebrations as the material was sold concurrently with the autonomy material, and continued in the following years. In a bid to speed up the uptake of the logo material, fashion competitions were introduced at Ruwadzano/Manyano Conventions and Revival (Mrs. Gladys Chirisa: Online Interview with Onias Chagudhuma April 29, 2024). The introduction of fashion wear presented the MCZ logo as a quasi-uniform, a form of identity and a fundraising enterprise. Women were competing in fashion designing, modelling with a logo material, sewing the logo material, and smartness. These efforts became part of the women’s conventions as a way of motivating smartness, increasing identity with the church and also in promoting fundraising initiatives for the organisation.

During the same time, the work of God in the Nyaminyami area of Mashonaland West Province was facing serious financial challenges. The Ruwadzano/Manyano took it upon themselves to run the ‘logo material’ project to fundraise for the mission in Nyaminyami. (Mrs. Gladys Chirisa: Online Interview with Onias Chagudhuma April 29, 2024). Having realised the success story of the Ruwadzano/Manyano and how they looked good in clothes made of logo material, men also joined in and they started to have their logo material, the girls and different youth groups thereby making the logo a Methodist family brand and common identity marker. Unfortunately, the concentration changed to the use of the logo as a business trademark and any effort to explain its significance was abandoned. Having realised the impact of branding the church with the logo, Ruwadzano/Manyano women went further to make many other household items designed with the church logo inscribed on them, such items included coffee mugs, handbags, umbrellas, dinner plates, stationery, caps, sunhats etc. in which case some were a later development.

The logo material (cloth) has dominated space in the MCZ to become an un-constituted uniform. The material is worn by members who do not belong to any uniformed organisation to identify with the MCZ during special services like the Holy Communion, revivals, burials of Christians, etc. Unlike uniforms that segregate congregants along marital status, the logo material embraces all people as MCZ members, whether confirmed into full membership or not. Those who belong to uniformed organisations and those who have been disciplined wear clothing made from logo material and worship as one family without any problems or discrimination suggesting that the logo material in the MCZ has become a uniform by default. Apart from kitchen utensils and clothing, the MCZ has become a trademark of the MCZ such that it features on every official document, vehicle branding, posters for different marketing events, banners, billboards and signposts.

### **Conclusion**

A logo serves as a visual identifier for all churches, including the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe. The logo assists it to stand out and be easily recognisable within the community and far beyond.



The logo conveys the church's presence and mission and how it looks, communicates the values, beliefs, and even the style of the church. It helps to forge a cohesive brand that believers can connect with, in both an emotional and spiritual sense. Logos of denominations generally include a range of symbols, colours, and designs that have specific meanings within the Christian faith. All the elements therein convey powerful theological messages that invariably reinforce the church's teachings and traditions and its identity. A logo assists in engaging both its current members and potential newcomers and creates a needed sense of belonging among church members. The logo of a church should be explained to believers because it encapsulates the church's identity, mission, and connection with its broader community. This paper raised critical issues that have to do with the theology and ecclesiology of the MCZ portrayed through its logo. The paper presented the methodology, and definition of the logo and went further to track the historical development and theological meaning of each symbol and its colour. The paper bemoaned the other logo(s) available on the internet with a blue background, a white bird, a yellow scallop shell and words inscribed around the logo as serious misrepresentations of the theological meaning of the church. The authors challenge the MCZ to be serious about having one logo whose theological significance is written everywhere and should be taught to the congregants intensively. This paper is significant in academia as it unpacked the celebrated insignia of the MCZ whose historical background and theological significance are not known by MCZ members in general, including some clergy members. The paper is also significant to research as it succinctly presents the uniqueness of MCZ's identity as defined and presented by its logo.

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**Conflict of Interest Statement:** *The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.*



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