

# **Township churches as heritage: The case of Langa, Cape Town**

Dissertation presented as part fulfilment of the degree of  
Master of Philosophy in Conservation of the Built Environment

In the School of Architecture, Planning and Geomatics  
University of Cape Town

January 2015

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Supervisor: Associate Professor S.S. Townsend



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# **ABSTRACT**

## **Township churches as heritage: The case of Langa, Cape Town**

Dissertation presented as part fulfilment of the degree of Master of  
Philosophy in Conservation of the Built Environment

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January 2015

This study investigates the perceived heritage significance of township churches. This is done by means of a case study which focuses on early churches in Langa, particularly the Wesleyan Methodist and the African Methodist Episcopal churches.

The hypothesis is that heritage values are attached to certain churches of Langa and that these are regarded as heritage resources as a result of a particular character or built form. In support of this hypothesis, the intellectual realm of churches and heritage values was explored and the historical and spatial context which informed the development of the churches, investigated. A strong emphasis was placed on ascertaining the heritage values of the Langa community in a series of interviews. To understand the values attached to churches, views have been solicited from community members residing in the neighbourhood of the identified churches, members of the clergy and congregants and a number of 'experts' – people who have been involved in the study of heritage in Langa, either from an academic or community perspective. Sixteen interviews, which took the form of focused, semi-structured discussions, were conducted.

In these discussions, a number of themes emerged which can be categorised as follows: the role of churches in the history of Langa (churches as providers of early schools and as refuge during the apartheid era); intangible values associated with churches (culture, tradition, spirituality, community, music); and the importance of the churches as heritage resources that potentially need to be conserved.

It was found that many of the values associated with the churches could be regarded as intangible. The responses from community and church members came across as ambiguous with regard to differentiating between the building and the function of the church. In most responses there was only a tenuous link discernible between people's values relating to the church and the physical fabric and character of the building. It would appear that the architectural, spatial and landmark values associated with churches are of lesser importance than significance attached to the age of the buildings and their functionality or use value. In other words, people valued the fact that the buildings have played a role in the history of Langa and in their day to day activities over time.

The study concludes by confirming that the churches of Langa are considered heritage resources by the community, but that this is mostly based on intangible social and cultural values. As such the need for intervention by authorities becomes debatable and a flexible management approach needs to be adopted with regard to the conservation of these resources.

**Keywords:** Churches; Cultural values; Heritage significance; Langa

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AHD	Authorised Heritage Discourse
AME	African Methodist Episcopal (church)
BMC	Bantu Methodist Church
CCT	City of Cape Town
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
HWC	Heritage Western Cape
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
LHF	Langa Heritage Forum
NHRA	National Heritage Resources Act (no 25 of 1999)
NLA	Natives Land Act (No 27 of 1913)
NUAA	Native (Urban Areas) Act (No 21 of 1923)
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
SAHRA	South African Heritage Resources Agency
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WMC	Wesleyan Methodist Church

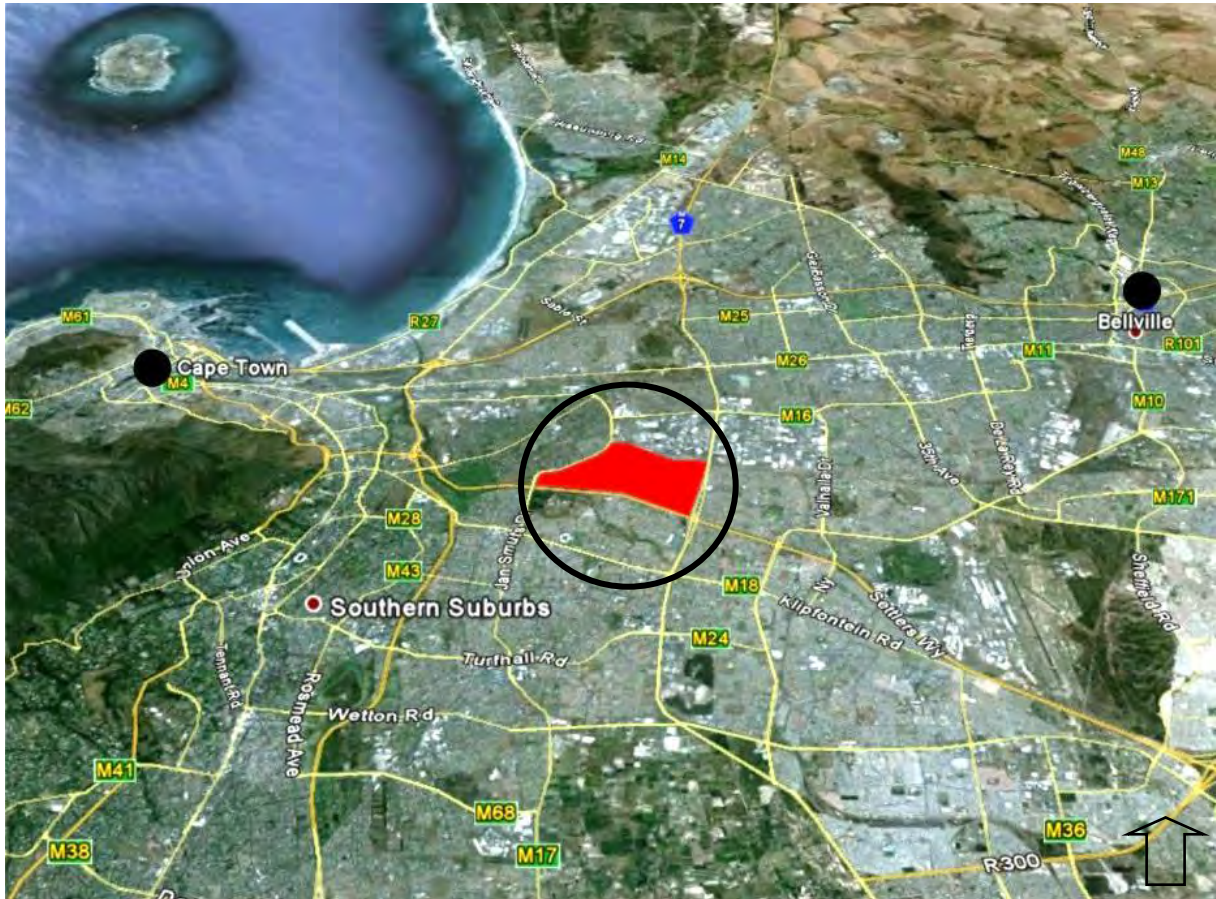
# CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

## Background

### Spatial context

Langa is the oldest African township in Cape Town and was established during the 1920s in terms of the Native (Urban Areas) Act, no 21 of 1923. The Act, which expanded upon the premise of the earlier Native Reserves Location Act of 1902, enabled the demand for labour to be met without affording black people the right to permanent access to urban areas. In order to accommodate the resultant migrant workers, the township of Langa was planned from 1923 onwards in line with principles stemming from the Act and was formally established in 1927. People were relocated here from nearby Ndabeni, the first location created outside of white residential areas in 1901, which eventually closed in 1936. Despite (or perhaps because of) stringent controls, the township became a focus area for resistance against apartheid over time. These aspects of racial segregation, control and resistance have strongly informed the narrative of Langa over time. Yet it is important to bear in mind that Langa's development also represents complexities associated with all urban environments and the making of place.

Langa is located adjacent to the N2 highway, in close proximity to the traditionally 'white' community of Pinelands and the 'coloured' area of Athlone. The township is bordered on all sides either by railway tracks or highways and its resultant isolation brings to mind the typical spatial configuration associated with racially segregated planning, even though the development of Langa pre-dates the apartheid era. (See *Figure 1* below)



**Figure 1: Location of Langa in the context of broader Cape Town**  
(Google Maps2014)

### **Langa's heritage significance**

Langa's character has been determined by a particular set of historical, political, economic and social influences. Its urban characteristics - the form and style of its structures and their positioning - as well as landscape features are outcomes of the socio-political context of the time. Spatially Langa thus typifies the values of the racially-oriented South African past. It can be described as a failed attempt at developing a Garden City, the principles of which was initially applied to the township (Coetzer 2013:194). It is the only remaining example in the country of this type of settlement where the formally designed layout aimed to control the movement of migrant (black) workers within the urban landscape. As a result it has been argued by officials at the national heritage authority that Langa is of high cultural significance (Crouts & Ebrahim 2004).

The counter argument, as suggested by Davies (2002:7), is that the 'mundane fabric with a very limited content, diversity and aesthetic appeal' does not appear to be immediately attractive as a potential object of (heritage) conservation. Langa's value as a historical resource is however not questioned.

To make sense of these competing views, it is firstly necessary to discuss what is meant by cultural heritage and its associated concepts. A useful definition in this regard is offered by the Council of Europe's 2005 convention on the *Value of Cultural Heritage for Society*, as quoted by Smith, Messenger and Soderland (2010:15): 'cultural heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, knowledge and traditions'.

In 2001 the Langa Heritage Project was launched by the Heritage Resources Section of the City of Cape Town (CCT) and it continued over the next few years. The aim of the project was to identify sites (and events) of heritage significance (Ralphs 2008:259). Field (2003a:2) explains that an initial identification of heritage sites in Langa occurred through a consultative process by a forum called the Langa Heritage Reference Group. This group included a mix of age and gender with representatives from various political, religious, cultural and environmental organisations. As a further step an oral history project explored how meaningful these sites were to a pilot group of Langa residents. In this way the identifications made by the reference group were confirmed. Most of the potential sites related to the period from the 1920s to the 1960s and mostly elderly residents were therefore interviewed (Field 2007:34).

According to Field (2003b:3) the heritage sites identified by the community in this process map the history of urban racial segregation, migrant labour and apartheid. It is observed that the sites 'commemorate the atrocities suffered by the community in the struggle for liberation, honour cultural traditions and pay tribute to the sporting, music, intellectual and political contributions of the community'. Although interesting historical information was gathered by means of this process, it could be questioned

whether, as an approach to establishing heritage value, it was sufficiently able to obtain and represent a variety of views.

Notwithstanding these attempts at establishing heritage value, no formal proclamation or protection of sites in Langa has been finalised. Langa has however been deemed a Grade 1 heritage resource by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA). The nomination report (Crouts & Ebrahim 2004) presents detail around Langa's heritage relating to three aspects: firstly it represents the oppressive system imposed on urban black South Africans; secondly it has special meaning to the community in their quest to create a living environment; and thirdly it is significant in the fight for freedom in South Africa. It is argued in the report that the identification and conservation of significant places in Langa will contribute to readdressing past injustices. The nomination and proposed grading has been accepted and was approved by SAHRA in 2004 but the process of formal declaration has not yet been concluded.

Portions of Langa have also been included in a proposed Heritage Protection Overlay Zone, which is to be administered by means of the City of Cape Town's zoning scheme. This proposed heritage area covers the historic core of Langa as well as a heritage route which extends from the historic entrance in Bhunga Avenue into Washington Drive, across Lerotholi up to the Robert Sobukwe Memorial and the 'Old Flats'. The area also includes the route from the old train station to the Main Barracks as well as the sites nominated by SAHRA (CCT 2014:3). This unresolved status results in a lack of clarity as to the future management of heritage resources and development of the townscape.

### **Langa's churches**

The historical background of the origin and development of Langa has previously been researched in order to identify potential heritage resources (Anderson & Field 2003; also see Elias 1983 for a history of the various construction phases). The first development phase started in 1925 when the initial tender for construction was

released. This comprised the main barracks, an eating hall as well as so-called special quarters housing. A second phase included a police station, hospital and general dealers, workshops and further housing in the form of the northern barracks and the first married quarters. By 1930 the 'Old Location' to the east of Bhunga Avenue was complete (see *Figure 2*). The third and fourth developments, built in 1932 and 1934 respectively, extended the township as far as Jungle Walk. The fifth, sixth and seventh development phases followed in the period from 1935 to 1940 and included more housing. Further extensions after that time led to the completion of greater Langa as it exists today.

Twenty-two churches were established between 1927 and 1948 (Anderson and Field 2003:53). The first churches to be established were the Presbyterian Church of South Africa, the Wesleyan Methodist Church<sup>1</sup>, the Church of England and the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. The Ethiopian and Zionist Churches (breakaway groups from the mission churches which formed during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century) gained ground in Langa particularly from the late 1930s with the creation of an urban black working class. From available records it would appear that 26 applications for church sites were made between 1927 and 1954, not all of which were successful (Cape Archives: 3/CT – 4/1/5/1271). Among these applicants were some of the nine churches already existing in Ndabeni, the majority of which relocated to Langa (Sambumbu 2010:89).

An extensive set of standard lease conditions governed the arrangement between the various churches and the City Council as landowner. Field (2003b:22) ascribes the restrictions on church development to authorities' fear of an uncontrolled increase in churches. The Black (Native) Laws Amendment Act No 46 of 1937 prohibited the City Council from granting land to native churches and land for such purposes could only be leased based on certain conditions. This made it difficult to

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<sup>1</sup> The 'Wesleyan Methodist Church' is used throughout the text to refer to the church in Lerotholi Avenue; in some instances 'Methodist Church' or Wesleyan Church' is used if described as such in source material.

obtain loans for the construction of buildings. Furthermore, recognition of churches by the government was dependent on conditions such as 'ten years of quiet life and a good bank account' (Field 2003b:22). For churches catering to the African working class, this was understandably problematic.

No official provision was made for schooling in Langa at the outset. The provision of informal classroom space and later the establishment of the first schools therefore also came to be a function of the churches. The earliest schools were developed by mission churches and included the following: St Cyprians (a Church of England school built in 1928; later called Zimasa and eventually demolished), the Dutch Reformed school (initially a Sotho and Afrikaans school that later became known as Moshesh school), St Louis (which was built by the Catholic St Anthony's church in Rubusana Avenue in 1935/6) and the Methodist School, built in 1936 (Anderson & Field 2003:131).

The churches' cooperation in respect of education continued as endeavours to establish a secondary school was co-ordinated by an inter-denominational committee. This was only achieved after a ten year period when Langa High School was started in 1937. Classes were initially held in the African Presbyterian Church, the AME Church and the Methodist Church vestry until the education department built the first class rooms, which officially opened in March 1943 (Field 2003b:22). Apart from their role in education, Langa's churches influenced other community activities and were for example closely linked to the development of choral music. Various choirs originated in Langa with annual competitions held in the public hall. The churches were also associated with certain tribal festivals and memorial days and it was common for more than one denomination to be present at such events (Field 2003b: 16-17).

The emphasis of this study is on those churches established during the initial development phases of Langa. The selection is therefore determined by the layout of the original plan of Langa (1925) as well subsequent development phases which

encompass the civic core (the development on either side of Lerotholi Avenue) and the areas immediately to the east and west thereof. (See *Figure 2*)

## **Rationale**

This study aims to examine the role of churches in people's perception of heritage and how churches are thought of and valued in the Langa community.

Fields's preliminary study acknowledged the need for research on church sites and congregations as necessary further work in order to identify heritage resources in Langa (2003a:31). Although churches emerged as a theme in the 2002 oral history interviews, no clear evaluation of significance was made (CPM: BC 1223 - D5.3). There are many cursory references to churches in the interviews and subsequent academic texts but a comprehensive overview of these sites is lacking.

Other available research also indicates that this aspect of Langa's history has received little attention. Often the emphasis is on the nature of political (and spatial) control of the township, the austere housing conditions, and the supposed transitory nature of the community and the pervasive influence of politics (Coetzer 2013, Davies 2002; Ralphs 2008 et al). Little mention is made of the role of churches as landmarks and as non-governmental community facilities that possibly play a positive role in people's perceptions and experience of the area. A study on the churches of Langa is therefore seen as a potentially useful addition to the body of knowledge.

## **Research question**

The research question is aimed at determining to what extent the people of Langa think of the older churches in the township as heritage resources and as being part of the landscape of heritage. In other words, are they seen as heritage and as being of cultural value?

It is presumed that churches can always be considered as being heritage given the spiritual and symbolic meaning they offer people. As churches are often established physical landmarks, it could be argued that they are part of the heritage of all people, not just of the members of a particular congregation. This study will explore whether this view applies to the churches in Langa.

The theoretical background within which this dissertation is undertaken is the conservation of the built environment and therefore this study is predominantly concerned with the character and potential significance of the church buildings themselves rather than with intangible values associated with spirituality and religion, albeit that such a clear distinction is not possible. Although referring to cultural heritage<sup>2</sup> which is considered to be of 'outstanding universal value', the UNESCO Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (2013:22) set out a number of qualities which are useful in determining possible heritage values. These suggest that heritage values could be expressed through a variety of attributes including form and design; materials and substance; use and function; traditions, techniques and management systems; location and setting; other forms of intangible heritage; spirit and feeling and other internal and external factors. These attributes will be considered as dimensions of potential significance and will therefore form part of the criteria to determine the heritage value of the churches in Langa.

## **Methodology**

This study is a qualitative research project which focuses on Langa as a single case study. It is a non-empirical study which will engage with themes around heritage significance and conservation based on an investigation into a number of churches. In addition to a literature review, the case study (comprising specifically identified churches) will be examined by means of historic research as well as interviews with

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<sup>2</sup> 'Cultural heritage' is described as encompassing monuments (including architectural works) and groups of buildings or sites which are valued because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape (UNESCO 2013:13).

community members and people familiar with heritage practice in Langa and community members who are involved in the various congregations either as clergy or as church members.

The hypothesis of this study is that certain churches of Langa are regarded as heritage resources. It will be attempted to prove this case by means of the following steps:

- a) Exploring the main intellectual realm of heritage and value-based conservation in the relevant literature;
- b) Undertaking historical research by consulting literature and archival records related to the establishment and development of the churches in Langa;
- c) Establishing whether this constitutes heritage by determining the significance to various people. This will be done by obtaining input from priests, congregants, elders of the community as well as people familiar with heritage concerns in Langa.

The objectives of the study are the following:

- To understand the history of Langa's churches built between 1925 and 1950;
- To achieve an understanding of the views of 'insiders' – congregants and the clergy;
- To gain insight into the views of the Langa community and whether they see the churches as heritage;
- To come to a conclusion as to what these views imply about possible protection of the churches as heritage resources.

This research study aims to investigate the perceived heritage significance of historic churches in townships and does so by means of the single case study method. Langa serves as the examined case and the emphasis is on extant churches dating from the early development phases in what is now deemed the cultural core of Langa. Two examples of churches, chosen according to pre-determined criteria, are

focused on in particular. Langa is considered a highly suitable case study given its historical importance as well as the fact that previous studies have identified sites with deemed heritage significance.

The case study method offers the opportunity to understand a specific phenomenon. As Stake (1994:238) points out, case studies focus on both that which is common and that which is specific. It could be argued that this study is an 'instrumental case study' as a particular case is examined to provide insight into an issue (1994:237). The case of Langa plays a supportive role and facilitates our understanding of the broader issues of township churches and heritage. The case may be seen as typical of other cases to some degree and is looked at in depth in order to advance the understanding of the broader interest (1994:237).

### **Defining the study area**

The following churches were identified during the 2003 Langa Heritage Study (Anderson and Field 2003: 157) as potentially having heritage significance:

- Presbyterian Church Africa , Ndabeni Street
- St Francis Catholic Church, Ndabeni Street
- African Methodist Episcopal Church, Corner of Rubusana and Washington Streets
- Universal Congregational Church, Bennie Street
- St Cyprians Anglican Church, Papu Street
- Apostolic Church, Brinton Street
- Langa Presbyterian Church, corner Lerotholi and Papu Streets
- Wesleyan Methodist Church, Lerotholi Avenue
- Order of Ethiopia Church, Mendi Avenue
- Reformed Presbyterian Church (Ethiopian Church), Corner Jungle Walk and Livingstone
- Dutch Reformed Church, Corner Jungle Walk and Brinton Street
- Langa Baptist Church, Sandile Avenue and Washington Street corner

In order to locate the research in the realm of the built environment, particular attention is given to two specific churches, identified according to historic, stylistic and locational criteria. The intent is to contrast two instances where variables such as age and denomination are closely related, but where the difference in architectural quality allows for a critical comparison of values. In this way the influence of architectural character on the perception of heritage will be investigated to some extent.

Given the above criteria, this study will focus on the Wesleyan Church (Erf 551) situated on Lerotholi Avenue and the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church (Erf 2747), on the corner of Rubusana and Washington Streets (see *Figure 4*). Both churches had their roots in Ndabeni and were re-established in Langa during the 1930s, relatively early in the township's development. Both could be regarded as 'establishment' churches with links to mission Christianity as opposed to being regarded as African independent churches. Denominationally they are both based on Methodism. An important attribute that these churches have in common is the fact that they played a significant role in educational activities before the formal establishment of schools in the area. The Wesleyan Church is located in what is now regarded as the cultural core of Langa, just off the main axis of Washington Avenue and was built in 1932. The AME Church is also situated along Washington Avenue, at the western end of this axis, and was constructed in 1938. Although these churches were built respectively seven and thirteen years after the establishment of Langa, they are both located in the area which comprised the earliest development phases with surrounding buildings dating back to between 1925 and 1927. Despite their comparable origins, the churches are differentiated in terms of architectural style. The AME Church is a modest building of simple architectural form whereas the Wesleyan Church is characterised by more distinctive design elements typical of the era.



**Figure 2: Location of oldest churches in Langa**

The AME and Wesleyan Methodist churches are indicated by numbers 3 and 8 respectively. (CCT Integrated Spatial Information System (ISIS) - 2013 aerial photograph annotated by author)

See *Appendix A* for images of the various churches.

### **Information collection: methods and sources**

#### ***Literature review***

The literature review aims to contextualise the study within existing theory and to provide a thematic overview of relevant texts. A range of sources has been drawn on in an attempt to clarify the theoretical underpinnings of the study. These sources have been organised according to the broad themes of heritage and cultural significance. The review also touches on concepts of memory, identity, as well as church history.

## ***Indirect observation***

### Interviews

In order to understand people's values and the significances that are attached to churches by various parties, views have been solicited from the following groups: members of the clergy and congregants of the respective churches; community members residing in the neighbourhood of the identified churches; and an 'expert' group with views based on their knowledge of heritage in Langa against which to assess the findings of this study. Sixteen interviews, which took the form of focused, semi-structured discussions, were conducted. The groups have been constituted as follows:

#### *i) Community members*

A 'community' can be seen as a social grouping of varying size that shares common values or a set of interests. These values could be premised on intent, belief, resources or preferences that affect the identity of participants and the degree of cohesiveness. In this study, people of a certain geographic area are considered collectively as a type of community although it is recognised that such an approach could not be regarded as comprehensive. Langa's origin as an 'artificially' constructed community representing people from different regions, cultures and social groupings already points to the diversity and complexity present in the context. It therefore cannot be seen as a homogeneous entity which represents a uniform value system. For the purposes of this study, community members respectively residing in the neighbourhoods of the Wesleyan Methodist Church and of the AME Church have been interviewed. In some instances residents had views on both churches, given their proximity, so an interviewee might have been consulted on each example. Six people have been included in this component. Participants were chosen based on the length of their residence in Langa and familiarity with the context. Community members involved in this study were mostly recommended by people active in organised community structures in Langa and are often well-known

in the community or involved in community organisations<sup>3</sup>. Three men were interviewed, aged respectively 33, 54 and 74 and three women of the ages of 45, 48 and 78. As this is not an exhaustive attempt to ascertain the values of a 'community' as a whole, this process should be seen as a pilot study which might indicate tendencies in people's views regarding heritage significance in a defined geographic area.

### *ii) Clergy and congregants*

Three people were interviewed as representatives of each of the two churches. In each case they comprised of a member of the clergy or a church elder and two church members. In the case of the AME discussions were held with the minister, an elder as well as along-time congregant. At the Methodist Church, the treasurer was consulted (as someone who resides in Langa rather than the minister who does not live in the area) as well as two congregants.

### *iii) Expert group*

Interviews or discussions were held with a number of individuals comprising recognised 'experts' or people with academic and/or local knowledge of history and heritage in Langa. The aim of this was partly to obtain general information on Langa's churches, but primarily to enable a cross-reference mechanism regarding views on the significance of the churches and the protection actions required, if any. Their views have been assessed in comparison to those of the community members and congregants/ clergy groups in order to understand the varying degrees of significance attached to the churches. The group included: Sean Field (Centre for Popular Memory, Historical Studies Department, UCT); Alfred Magwaca (Langa Heritage Foundation representative) and Dr Phillip Mthobeli Guma (Langa historian and heritage expert).

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<sup>3</sup> An official Community Liaison Officer active in Langa was consulted in this regard.

See *Appendix B* for a list of interviewees.

### Procedure

The questions guiding the interviews were listed in advance and prepared in written format in both English and Xhosa. This was made available during the interviews. Individual interviews were recorded with permission and approval of a transcription has been confirmed by the interviewees afterwards (written notes/ printed transcripts shown to the interviewees). The meetings were arranged with the assistance of a Community Liaison Officer active in Langa. He helped to identify community members, assisted in setting up the meetings, facilitated the discussions and provided translations where necessary.

### ***Archival/ documentary sources***

In order to gain information on the history of the churches, archival material comprising building plans, historic aerial photographs, photographs, layout plans, Council minutes and correspondence, applicable legislation and policy documents have been consulted where possible.

These sources have largely been obtained from the Cape Town Archives, the National Library, the University of Cape Town's Manuscripts and Archives Division and the City of Cape Town's Environmental and Heritage Resource Information Centre (EHRIC).

### **Outline of dissertation**

Following this introductory chapter, the study consists of the following chapters:

**Chapter 2** examines the theoretical realm within which this study is located and reviews literature relevant to the research question. In this regard the themes of heritage and cultural significance are primarily explored.

**Chapter 3** provides some background on race and religion in South Africa from a historical perspective in order to contextualise the case of Langa and its churches, which is examined in detail in this chapter. Specific attention is given to the socio-political environment within which these churches were established. This chapter further includes archival research and architectural analysis related to two specific churches which are the focus of the study.

**Chapter 4** deals with the main concern of the study i.e. whether heritage significance can be ascribed to the two early churches in Langa. In addition to the historic background detailed in Chapter 4, this is essentially determined by means of a series of interviews. This primary data is analysed and discussed together with the implications thereof.

**Chapter 5** concludes this study by reflecting on the research question in light of the analysis described in Chapter 4.

## **CHAPTER TWO: Churches and heritage – a theoretical background**

To understand the theoretical context within which this topic is situated, it is necessary to reflect on the existing literature dealing with its main themes – heritage significance and value within a township context. In addition to identifying literature which provides background on churches, the aim has therefore been to identify texts which explore these subjects. These have been organised according to the broad themes of heritage and cultural significance; the overview also touches on concepts such as memory, values and identity as further background to the research question.

In terms of South African church history, an important text is De Gruchy's work on churches in the context of the apartheid struggle (2005), one of the first books to provide a comprehensive historical and theological framework within which to understand the relationship between the church and the apartheid state. Hope and Young (1981:45-62) provide useful insight into the churches in South Africa during the period of 1900 – 1960. The authors specifically focus on churches' response to racial upheavals and changing circumstances during that time. Church denominations are classified according to five types: (1) the Afrikaans Reformed Churches; (2) the member churches of the South African Council of Churches (until 1968 known as the Christian Council) – the Methodist, Anglican, Lutheran, Congregational and Presbyterian Churches; (3) the Roman Catholic Church; (4) and the conservative evangelical churches. It is interesting to note that all of these are represented in Langa. Elphick and Davenport (1997) comprehensively cover the ways in which Christianity has manifested itself in the political, social and cultural history of South Africa. The authors investigate the history of South African Christianity in the context of colonialism, capitalism and liberation. Other important texts on this topic include Hammond-Tooke's unpublished thesis on 'Native' churches (1948), Southey's overview of church history in South Africa (1989) and Chidester's authoritative study on religions in South Africa (1992). With regard to church buildings in South Africa, a useful overview of Christian architecture is provided by Radford (1997). Although written in 1963, Wilson and Mafeje's account

of social groups in Langa presents an informative overview of the churches in Langa at the time, which is still of value. Historical background and various statistics are provided. Of interest is also the discussion of churches as a social grouping, operating as one of a number of 'corporate' groups in Langa. The archived field notes for this study also include valuable information on churches at that time. Mafeje's later study (1975) further investigated the historical role of Christianity in Langa and related this to local class and ideological factors. Perhaps the most insightful source relating to Langa's churches is Hartley's unpublished doctoral thesis dealing with the influence and impact of mission Christianity in the period of 1927 - 1960. This socio-political and cultural history study explores the critical religious influences, perceptions and ideologies that shaped the development of the township.

In order to establish the perceived heritage value of churches in Langa, it is necessary to define the applicable terminology and concepts. As explained by Howard (2003:6), the word *heritage* clearly relates to the concept of inheritance and could therefore be described as that which has been, or may be, inherited. In the same vein, heritage could refer to circumstances or benefits passed down from previous generations. The first definition alludes to heritage which is not yet owned, but which may come into ownership at a later date whereas the second, while also implying inheritance, takes into account that ownership might also include group heritage and heritage which may not have a physical form. Howard goes on to define heritage simply as 'anything that someone wishes to conserve or to collect and to pass on to future generations' (2003:6). The emphasis in this definition is on people, as value can only be determined through the identification and appropriation of resources by people, who will do so for their own benefit or the perceived benefit of others. Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996:6) make a similar point by stating that all heritage is someone's heritage and that someone determines that it exists as heritage. As Howard (2003:6) argues, identification is all and things that are actually inherited do not become heritage until they are recognised as such. What is also evident in all these definitions is the importance of the passing of time and how the past is potentially reflected as heritage. Shepherd (2008:123) describes heritage as the place where a sense of the past meets the present (but goes on to state that this

easily results in history as a cliché); he suggests that heritage sits uneasily between the past and the present as it is *of* the past but exists *in* the present, whether in the form of a material remnant or as an idealised projection of the past (2008:117).

Gibson and Pendlebury (2009:1) interrogate the notion of *value* and confirm the generally accepted view that concepts of cultural, historical or social value are culturally and historically constructed. As such, value cannot be considered as intrinsic but rather as a culturally and historic meaning that is imposed on fabric, objects or environments within the context of a specific time and place. These plural interpretations and meanings in turn form the basis of establishing heritage significance.

Heritage, as something determined by people's values and which is either overtly or notionally linked to the past, is inextricably tied to memory. In the 2003 Langa heritage study, the heritage of Langa is constituted according to people's memories of spaces and places. The study explored the 'neglected significance' of popular imagination in shaping memories, identities and agency (Field et al 2007:7). The theoretical arena of memory is an important factor in establishing people's values, for as Bremner (2010:241) states, 'every act of remembering includes a forgetting' and that whenever history becomes memory, 'certain choices are made, certain forgettings sanctioned, certain remembering disallowed'. It is thus unavoidable to have a construction of identity based on 'partial' memory in which past, present and future intersect. This is an echo of Huyssen's statement that every act of memory carries with it a dimension of betrayal, forgetting and absence (2003:4). This is inevitable as the act of remembering is always related to the present, while that which it refers to is of the past and thus absent. Ralphs (2008:267) alludes to the notion of 'entangled time' (a phrase coined by Mbembe, 2001:8) which involves a non-sequential understanding of time in postcolonial contexts. Ralphs argues that by interpreting people's memories, stories, subjectivities as well as the meanings and values they place upon signs from the past in the present, a deeper understanding of the South African postcolonial environment could be developed. The validity of relying on memory as a basis for determining heritage values (as in the case of oral

history informing significance), is however questionable as it could never provide a full or accurate picture. Memory as 're-presentation', as making present, poses a threat to the differentiation between present and past and can easily lead to an imagined past 'sucked into the timeless present', in the words of Huyssen (2003:10). The author questions whether collective consensual memory is even possible, given the fragmented memory politics of specific social and ethnic groups (2003:17). This needs to be kept in mind when coming to any sort of conclusion as to what a 'community' value as a result of supposed memories.

Smith et al (2010:15) point out that identities are formed and defined by legacies of the past. The passing on of shared identifications with stories, symbols, places and other aspects of heritage allows one generational group to instil the values of the group's identity in subsequent members. Such values are often integral to national identity and also to international perceptions of this identity (Smith et al 2010:11). The authors argue that these tangible and intangible expressions contribute to a sense of belonging, of order and continuity and of a 'collective meaning' in the world (Smith et al 2010:15). At a more local scale, Ralphs (2008:258), with reference to the Langa Pass Office, asks how it may become a place of memory, identity and consciousness in a post-apartheid context. These same concerns could be explored in relation to the churches, albeit with reduced political emphasis.

In terms of heritage practice and theory, consciousness of the past and its remains – monuments, important religious buildings and other symbolic structures – started around the time of the Renaissance in Western Europe and grew exponentially to become a phenomenon concerned with the preservation of monuments for posterity. Choay (2001) traces this process and subsequently describes historic heritage as a resource which is constituted by the 'continuous accumulation of a diversity of objects assembled by virtue of their shared belonging to the past' (2001:1). Lowenthal (1998: x-xi) suggests that heritage is a 'celebration' of the past, which sometimes disregard actual events; it is a believe in a past that has been tailored to suit present-day expectations. In this regard a critique could be levelled against the notion of heritage in recognising that it is sometimes responsible for the fixing of

identity by 'designing' a past (Lowenthal 1998:x). Lowenthal (1985:187), in his earlier investigation as to how we receive the past, outlines three main elements in this regard: memory, history and relics. This is a useful framework within which to examine Langa's past and to get a sense of what might potentially be constituted as heritage. In this study this structure is applied by means of a factual overview (the history of Langa and churches), people's response (memory) and the built form (relics).

Ashworth and Howard suggest three theoretical ideas linked to the understanding of heritage (1999). The first, legitimisation, refers to the process whereby a new regime gains legitimacy by appropriating symbols of the past for its own purposes. (See also Habermas' discussion on legitimacy with respect to political theory, 1975). Linked to this is the idea of cultural capital. Although cultural capital may be valuable and have a concrete form, it is distinct from economic capital in that it could also encompass experiences and intangible values. Howard (2003:44) points out that cultural capital is often contested and is something for which societal groups compete. As it is an important aspect of legitimacy, the third area of theory is involved with identifying the group that controls cultural capital. The notion of Black heritage in South Africa could be understood in light of this theoretical background. In the pre-democratic era, cultural capital was largely controlled by the white minority. Decisions on what constituted heritage was often based on the dominant ideology of the day which prioritised the protection of colonialist-related artefacts and architecture. This fact is underlined by Davies's assertion that the conservation process in the South African past was heavily biased towards the conservation of 'white' culture as heritage (2002:2). The conception of heritage in the South African past was thus largely tied to the idea of monumental architecture and landmarks which were associated with certain cultural ideas and history. This outlook also extended to churches, where special recognition was given to those representing 'white' culture and where strong ties emerged between politics, religion and language, for example in the case of the Dutch Reformed Church which became a symbol of the governing white elite. In terms of heritage identification, this is a dangerous state of affairs because, as Howard (2003:4) points out, it can easily take on nationalistic, exclusive, elitist and

backward-looking characteristics. By the same token it could be argued that there is a risk that heritage is presently being 'created' in Langa by a bureaucratic elite to serve certain purposes. This possibility is investigated by Smith (2014) who questions the validity of assuming (and potentially proclaiming) heritage significance in the case of social housing in Langa.

Some of the major debates in the field of heritage have been concerned with such a commodification of heritage and its relationship to various political ideologies and various people (Howard 2003:32-33). One argument contends that heritage is largely controlled by and for a small intellectual group who represents a hegemonic interest. In this scenario heritage artefacts are commodified and commercialised to provide an identity, often with nationalistic overtones. This ties in with the notion of the 'Authorised Heritage Discourse', as expressed by Smith (2006). In this view, heritage is inherently political and is used by interest groups and individuals for their own purposes. As such heritage becomes bound up in power relations which determine cultural legitimacy. Over time this has resulted in the label of heritage usually being bestowed upon tangible resources and monuments of certain aesthetic qualities as opposed to other forms of expression. Shepherd (2008:117) confirms this view by stating that 'true' heritage is often perceived to be reserved for the 'weighty, the consequential, the culturally rooted'. The dominant mode of theory in the past has centred on such a conception of heritage - as a fixed set of ideas based on memory and practice which involved core identities or modes of being (Shepherd 2008:122).

Another way of thinking about Langa is offered by De Certeau (1984:xi), who investigates the ways in which 'users' – generally assumed to be passive and guided by established rules – operate. The author argues for the existence of modes of operation that is concerned with a practice of the everyday in which people or users individualise various experiences or objects. According to this philosophy, there might for example be numerous ways in which people appropriate space, rather than merely 'consuming' it in the way that was intended. As such people become 'unrecognised producers' and 'poets of their own acts' as they move about in technocratically constructed and functionalised space (1984:xviii) and develop tactics

to go about their everyday tasks. In a context like Langa, where the emphasis in the past has been on almost extreme technocratic and political control, such everyday actions might represent an alternative way of negotiating space and even institutions such as churches. The extent to which churches become representational spaces or spaces as lived and 'appropriated by the imagination through its associated images and symbols', as Bremner (2010:32) describes Lefebvre's notion of 'representational space' (1991), could also be considered.

Lambert and Ochsner (2009) consider the question of how cultural monuments of various kinds come into being - whether they are intended as such by their creators or whether they have been turned into monuments by posterity. The authors do not strictly equate monuments to physical, purpose-built structures, as is often the case in standard definitions. A monument could typically be described as a type of structure that was explicitly created to commemorate a person or important event, or which has become important to a social group as a part of their remembrance of historic times or cultural heritage, or as an example of historic architecture. The term 'monument' is now often applied to buildings or structures that are considered examples of important architectural and/or cultural heritage (World Heritage Encyclopedia 2014). Choay (2001:6) describes this change in the understanding of the concept, from the initial commemorative aspect which involved a specific act of memory to the present-day understanding of monuments as something which imposes on our attention without requisite awareness or knowledge. In terms of this broad definition, churches generally qualify as monuments and could therefore be studied as such. An important analysis of the values associated with monuments was set out by Riegl in his 1903 essay *The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Essence and its Development* (in Price et al 1996:69-83). Three types of monuments were identified which in turn corresponds to associated values: intentional value, historical value and age value. Additional values related to use, newness and art were also identified. These values are considered in the interpretation of monuments and assist in determining significance. Despite variance in modern terminology, Riegl's basic categories remain valid. In the case of Langa's churches, it is probable that historic, age and use values might be those more frequently attributed to

significance; this assumption will be tested in interviews. Churches could be considered part of a category of heritage that also includes castles, stately homes and other monumental structures. These are some of the most common forms of heritage internationally and as a result are also subject to critique with regard to the commodification of heritage. Western cultural heritage has always strongly relied on churches as monuments and symbols of identity at both national and local levels. In this regard the notion of township churches as heritage is interesting as it represents both the traditional outlook whereby heritage was predominantly conceived as physical structures of a certain monumental character which reflected western culture, but also as resources which encompass more complex and perhaps intangible values which has not always been part of the dominant mode of heritage.

A counter view to this discourse suggests that, although power might lie in the hands of a specific group, all groups within societies are able to celebrate a whole range of heritages in various ways. Howard (2003:32) for instance is of the view that although there might be an 'official' heritage dominated by certain ideas, there is also room for a more 'private' heritage which is 'customer-led', defined by the user and not the authority. During the past two decades there has been a shift in the academic notion of heritage to encompass a conception that is less concerned with a stable cultural rootedness but which rather recognises the constructed, changeable and contingent nature of heritage (Shepherd 2008:123). This allows for a more dynamic interpretation where allowance is made for values of the present to inform heritage identification rather than reliance on an imagined past. Smith (2006) outlines a similar conceptualisation of heritage where there is a move away from the preoccupation with physical sites towards an understanding of heritage as a cultural process that acknowledges multiple voices.

In his definition of heritage, Shepherd (2008:117) alludes to a fundamental paradox: heritage could simultaneously be described as a 'corporate entity' which comprises a set of values and objects held in common by a group as well as a notion always experienced from an individual point of view. It is this duality which complicates the determination of heritage value for a specific community as it is established by both

individual consciousness and the collective. This observation is particularly pertinent to the case of churches as they are associated both with societal and community value but at the same time are related to intensely personal experiences which might result in them being afforded significance on a highly individualised basis.

Smith et al (2010:10) explores the question of what the heritage is that people value and want preserved by examining heritage values in different cultures in different geographic regions. It is clear that these values differ from one person to the next and that 'structures of power' are also at play. The authors describe heritage as not simply being a series of things to be managed, but as a 'capricious coalescence of intellectual thought and emotional responses' (2010:30). Their discussion of values thus has the realm of ethics and morals as a starting point: heritage values could be defined in terms of freedom and responsibility which is expressed in ideals such as duty, honour, personal responsibility, fairness, inclusiveness, stewardship and social obligation (2010:16). The authors outline a number of themes in relation to defining and applying heritage values in contemporary society (2010:16-18). The themes are premised on the fact that value is assigned and influences the quality of life for individuals, communities or nations. This implies that choosing whether to attach a value to the past has consequences. A central theme that emerges is that heritage values underpin management and policy decision-making with regard to cultural heritage significance. It could be said that such significance is directly related to the values held by people and this in turn determines the need for conservation as a management action. Such actions necessitate the recognition of less tangible values, as set out in the Burra Charter (ICOMOS 2013).

If values are attributed to heritage, it follows that there is an implied responsibility to care for that particular heritage (Smith et al 2010:9). Heritage values thus form the basis for management of the collective cultural heritage (Smith et al 2010:16). Conservation of the built environment could be seen as a broader process of enabling and ensuring continued access to a heritage resource once the significance or value has been determined. Such conservation should however not merely be concerned with heritage which is associated with individual sentiment and nostalgia.

Huyssen (2008:9), in his take on preservation, argues that the importance of the 'museal dimension' for urban economies and urban life should not be underestimated as cities depend on 'cultural engineering' to attract capital, business and power. The creation of such cultural images and legacy serves to attract both tourists and new residents and satisfies the desires of the local elites and inhabitants.

Davies, in his discussion on Black heritage, points out that the need to preserve urban landscapes is regarded as a reminder of people's cultural past rather than just items of particular beauty or uniqueness (2002:1). On the other hand, Anderson & Field (2003: 10) describes the dilemma of heritage conservation in Langa as being the issue of merit in the conserving of urban fabric that was 'imposed from outside on a community' and which 'represented the control and oppression of people', a concern central to the colonial and apartheid systems. This varied impulses towards conservation is understandable in a multi-cultural context which reflects the problematic history of South Africa's past. Herwitz (2012:3) sees political history itself as an object of heritage making and describes heritage as a window into the relation of aesthetics to politics as it emerges in the postcolony. The author argues that, in the postcolonies, this process of turning formerly dispossessed or devalued pasts into 'heritages' is related to a need for acknowledgement and identity politics but also often to possible commercialisation and tourism potential. It could be questioned whether churches should be seen in such a cynical light; it might well be possible to conceive of churches as heritage which stands slightly outside of this moral and political framework concerned with recognition, reparation and social power.

The question of what constitutes heritage and who declares it as such, particularly in a contested environment such as Langa where official proclamations have the potential to compete with local views, is an important point to get to grips with. This issue is highlighted by Shepherd (2008: 118) who states that the current notion of heritage in South Africa arises both from below as a spontaneous and decentralised action while in practice it often comes from 'above'. For while heritage in a post-apartheid South Africa claims to involve a bottom-up approach in terms of ascribing

significance, it is often managed through a highly controlled and bureaucratised process. As Rassool (2000: 1) points out in relation to in community museums and local cultural projects, almost every sphere of heritage production has seen complexity, controversy and contestation. Previous heritage-related processes in Langa could possibly be interpreted as such a top-down approach and should be interrogated in this light.

Where do Langa's churches fit into this discourse? Township churches might be categorised somewhere between the notion of high culture normally associated with monuments and grand or old buildings and that which is of a more 'local' level of importance and related to the memories and experiences of a particular community. Church buildings might easily be considered as having innate rather than associative values. Such a view would be premised on the idea that material qualities indicate (heritage) significance. In Smith's explanation of the Authorised Heritage Discourse (2009:3), this is described as a typical scenario; the monument is conflated with the cultural and social values that are used to interpret it and give it meaning. It could be argued that Langa's churches are thus subject to the influence of the Authorised Heritage Discourse. A further implication of this might be the risk that heritage decision-making is entrusted to so-called 'heritage experts' rather than being an organic, community driven practice. This possibility is explored by Smith (2014), who finds that this has indeed been the case in the context of Langa's social housing and that a top-down imposition of assumed heritage values has occurred.

In order to explore the potential heritage values associated with Langa's churches in the context of this theoretical background, it is necessary to have an understanding of how the present physical and socio-political character of the township came about. The next chapter therefore deals with the development of Langa and its churches.

## **CHAPTER THREE: The development of Langa and its churches**

In order to gain an understanding of the history and development of Langa's churches, archival material comprising historic aerial photographs, settlement layout plans, official correspondence and minutes as well as applicable legislation and policy documents are investigated in this section. This is examined in the context of the role that churches and race relations have played in the history of South African urban development.

### **Race, religion and South African urban development**

From the earliest days of the Cape colony, race and religion could not be easily separated (Giliomee & Mbenga 2007:98). Christianity defined socio-political identity and determined the societal standing of European colonists. The idea that Christianity should encompass racial equality, particularly with regard to slaves, was not readily accepted. This outlook changed towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century as missionary activity increased. The arrival of the British in 1795 brought about greater cultural pluralism and gave rise to the acceptance of different church denominations. During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century numerous missionary societies were at work in South Africa and by 1884 nearly 400 mission stations had been established (2007:98). This evangelical zeal was not only exhibited by European settlers, but was also seen in African converts, who as lay clergy or interpreters ensured the dissemination of Christian ideas in isiXhosa.

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Christianity was widely embraced by African people and by 1911 there were nearly 300 000<sup>4</sup> confirmed Christian church members of Indian, African and Coloured background (Giliomee & Mbenga 2007:101). At this time there were three ecclesiastical alternatives for black Christians in South Africa (De Gruchy 2005:40). They could be members of mission

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<sup>4</sup> According to the 1911 census, the non-white population was approximately 4,5 million at the time. This data is however considered unreliable with regard to the African population (South African History Online 2015).

churches, whose membership was wholly black, but which were under the control of white missionaries and their mission boards in Europe or North America (or South Africa in the case of the Dutch Reformed Church). It should be noted that, although theoretically non-racial, churches such as the Dutch Reformed, Methodist and Wesleyan Church for the most part already operated on a racially segregated basis by the beginning of the century (2007:188). Another option was to be members of multi-racial denominations, churches largely of British origin where there was less of an overt racial divide. Here again however members were subject to white leadership, European customs and often also discrimination and paternalism. The third possibility was for black people to leave the mission and multi-racial denominations and initiate their own churches. This led to the establishment of so-called Native or independent churches (2005:40).

West (1975:1) provides clarity on the distinction between the missionary churches and independent churches. He describes African independent churches as autonomous groups with an all-African membership and leadership. The independent church movement arose from a number of breakaways from white-controlled mission churches. These churches are mostly small and include a variety of types: some have remained close to their original mission bodies while others have combined Christianity with certain traditional beliefs. Such independent churches have no links with churches that have any white members. In simple terminological terms, these can be distinguished from so-called 'mission churches', 'white churches', 'historical churches' or 'established churches' (1975:3). The independent churches can further be classified according to three groupings: the 'Ethiopian' churches, where the emphasis in the breakaway was on racial independence; 'Zionist' churches, which were based on a dynamic synthesis of Christian faith and African tradition and 'Messianic' churches which referred to those following the leadership of 'Native Messiahs' (De Gruchy 2005:44).

The focus of this study is on the AME and Wesleyan churches in Langa, both 'established' churches and member churches of the World Methodist Council. The Methodist Church of Southern Africa is the largest mainline Protestant denomination

in South Africa (Forster & Bentley 2008:97). The Wesleyan Methodist Church can be classified as Protestant with a Methodist orientation and following a Wesleyan Theology. This theology is a movement based on the 'methods' of the 18<sup>th</sup> century evangelical reformers John and Charles Wesley and comprises a theological system based on their sermons, treatises, hymns and other spiritual writings.

The AME Church grew out of the Free African Society, a mutual aid organisation founded by Richard Allen in 1787 in Philadelphia (World Methodist Council 2014). After a racial incident at a Methodist church, Allen started another branch of Methodism which aimed to practically assert the equality of all human beings. The autonomy of this church was legally confirmed in 1801 and by 1816 Allen convened black Methodists from across middle-America to form the African Methodist Episcopal denomination. The church spread rapidly across the United States and into Canada and Haiti. It also has a long history in Africa and has become a significant black institution; it has been active in South Africa since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Bickford-Smith et al (1999:29) describe the AME Church as a vehicle for black empowerment in Cape Town during the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was started in the city in 1879 by the American-born Rev. F.M. Gow. Although it was primarily a black movement, the founding of the church-related Bethel Institute in 1901 also established an important education centre for coloured and black people. According to West (1975:3), there is a view by many independent churches that the AME cannot be regarded as truly independent since, although it has no contact with mission churches in South Africa, it still has strong links with the American church – despite the fact that this has a predominantly black membership.

According to Mafeje's notes on Langa in the early 1960s, two categories of churches were discernable depending on whether they were 'respectable' or not (M&AD: BC 880 - K3). People at the time apparently recognised some churches as 'real' and others as 'self-made' ('oozenzele'). Mafeje concluded that the reason for this was the fact that all the 'orthodox' churches worked together, for example through a ministers' association and ministers' wives association. These 'respectable' churches also co-operated to organise social events and fundraising endeavours. Fifteen

churches are listed as being respectable and include the Methodist Church and the AME. All of these had their own buildings while it is noted that only two of the 'oozenzele' category had their own church buildings. This was largely due to the fact that they were too poor to afford buildings and because government would not provide sites to 'unregistered' churches.

### ***The church and apartheid***

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, increasing numbers of black people started to relocate to urban areas in search of employment. In response the idea of racial separation gained ground and between 1902 and 1904 various South African local authorities had started practices that would result in the relocation black people to segregated 'locations' (Giliomee & Mbenga 2007:187). This was done in terms of the Native Reserve Locations Act, no 40 of 1902, which made provision for the establishment of 'Native Reserve Locations' in or near urban areas for the occupation or residents of 'Natives' employed in these particular areas, with Native being defined in the Act as meaning and including any 'Kafir, Fingo, Zulu, Mosuto, Damara, Hottentot, Bushman, Bechuana, Koranna or any other aboriginal native of South or Central Africa'. The act made provision for the Governor for the Cape of Good Hope to allot sites in any Native Reserve Location to religious societies for church and school purposes.

With the Native Land Act of 1913 the territorial separation of races was instituted and the legislation diminished black people's basic right to the acquisition of land. This act was followed by the Native (Urban Areas) Act, no 21 of 1923 which had the stated intent of providing for 'improved conditions of residence for natives in or near urban areas and the better administration of related affairs'. More pointedly it also enabled the 'regulation of the ingress of natives into and their residence in such areas'. It should be noted that exemption was provided to ministers of religion who were marriage officers (together with teachers and court interpreters employed by the state) from the requirements set out in the act which deals with the mandatory registration and documentation of 'natives' in the urban areas. The act illustrates the

artificial and highly controlled nature of such locations or 'native villages' through the legislative aspects catered for: a predominant focus on the housing of single men and its related administration was followed (to a much lesser extent) by provisions for trading (including that of 'kaffir beer') and other more general regulations. Naturally the urban local authority in question also had the right to make regulations pertaining to the erection and use of dwellings, buildings and other structures, the removal or destruction of unauthorised buildings as well as the building of schools. More specifically the local authority had the power to allot sites for church and schools and to determine the conditions of tenure for such sites. The act thus makes provision for the acquisition of a limited interest in land for public, mission or educational purposes, if such interest has been sanctioned by the local authority and approved by the Minister of Native Affairs.

De Gruchy (2005:47) points out the importance of the church in facilitating resistance to the increasing racial oppression during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Much of the leadership of the emerging Black nationalist movement was Christian and many of the leaders were ministers within the mission and English-speaking churches. Worden (2000:91) also touches on this topic and points out the irony of the beginnings of Black independence which emerged largely as a result of the impact of mission-educated thinkers. At the time of the establishment of the South African Native National Congress (the forerunner of the African National Congress) in 1912, many of the leaders were trained at missionary institutions and a significant part of their motivations stemmed from Christian principles and convictions (2005:47). (The establishment of this body in fact took place in church, the Waaihoek Wesleyan Church in Bloemfontein).

It would appear that, as black people's political power diminished in the context of urbanisation, churches responded by aggressively establishing new congregations in cities (Elphick 1997:8). This particularly took the form of Zionist Christianity which offered a supportive community to newly urbanised Africans. Despite this process, Elphick (1997:9) notes that it was only the churches with significant political power –

the English-speaking and Dutch Reformed churches primarily – that had the resources to attempt organised nationwide responses to urbanisation.

From the late 1950s onwards 'influx control' became even more stringent with the introduction of the Urban Areas Amendment Act in 1957. Anything that might strengthen the possibility of a stable and settled African community in urban areas was discouraged. In the greater Cape Town area more people were 'endorsed out' and sent to reserves than ever before; the majority of African men were classified as migrant labourers who had to return to the reserves yearly and could only re-enter the peninsula if their previous employer could still provide a job for them (Lodge 1978:220). Elphick (1997:9) argues that the system of apartheid was to some extent a secularising process, despite the early Nationalist government proclaiming its Christian commitment. An example of this was the change in society as churches had to relinquish mission schools in the wake of the Bantu Education Act of 1953. In 1957 the government promulgated a 'church clause' as part of the Native Laws Amendment Bill which made it difficult for black people to attend worship in white group areas. Although it caused an outcry among all the English-speaking churches and even the Dutch Reformed church, the bill was eventually passed in a slightly revised form (De Gruchy 1997:162). This experience created a new unity among the various churches and strengthened its protest against apartheid policy. In Langa political unrest intensified and during an anti-pass march on 21 March 1960, a number of people were killed. In further riots during this period a number of churches, including the AME, were burned in protest action (M&AD: BC880 – K3).

A further response to the worsening political conditions came in the words of Albert Luthuli after the banning of the ANC in 1960 when he warned against churches' complacency with regard to apartheid (Walshe 1997:385). During this era the Dutch Reformed churches supported segregation while the English-speaking churches, although officially condemning apartheid, failed to offer a practical response to the racially oppressive system (1997:385). During the next decade a number of individuals like Father Trevor Huddleston, Beyers Naude, Rev. Allan Boesak, Rev. Frank Chikane and others took it upon themselves to challenge the pervasive

passivity and led various processes of dialogue and protest (1997:386-391). By the 1980s the South African Council of Churches, under the leadership of Bishop Tutu, oversaw a range of politically related outreach projects and set up crisis centres during the state of emergency in 1985 and 1986. A more direct involvement of Christian activists in the struggle was seen in the formation of the United Democratic Front in 1988, which was initiated by Allen Boesak and by supported Rev. Chikane, Beyers Naude and Archbishop Tutu. Church leaders also became involved in the Defiance Campaign of the late 1980s which illustrates that the 'meshing' of Christianity and the liberation struggle was far advanced (1997:394).

Although religion, and specifically Christianity, has often been seen as a tool of the dominant classes, it has helped shape the political ideas and behaviour of most groups and classes in South Africa in complex and sometimes contradictory ways (Mills 1997:337). As Elphick (1997:12) points out, the battle over segregation and apartheid led to the formation of new, distinctively South African cultural forms. This was for example expressed in the formation of the Afrikaner nationalist theologies based on neo-Calvinist separate-sphere philosophies and later in the more radical English-speaking and Black theologies which challenged the ideology of the apartheid state. This dual role of religion in South African political history is also noted by Hartley (2000:13-14). Christianity was used to uphold the developing segregationist momentum and to support processes of social cohesion along 'non-political', 'respectable' and moderate lines among black people. On the other hand Christian symbols and traditions were appropriated by Africans in the socio-political struggles for liberation, which had the effect of bringing about social change, differentiation and dissent in reaction to conservative forms and influences of the Christian religion. Christianity consequently became implicated in the racial, class and gender relations of an industrialising South Africa, to be used by black and white conservative Christians alike to legitimate existing socio-economic and political structures (Hartley 2000:13)

In Langa, Hartley (2000:2) argues, Christianity has continuously exerted a powerful influence on the community, particularly during the interwar and early apartheid

years. It would appear that early residents were broadly conscious of the pervasive role of Christianity in the historical development of the township and this dominant religious atmosphere was viewed as a central binding force in the local community. This point also comes across in the Wilson and Mafeje study (1963:91-112) as well as in the work of Mafeje (1975) and Whisson & West (1975:167), in which it is suggested that the majority of people in the township was at least nominally Christian. Hartley (2000:3) notes that this wide-ranging role of churches impacted on various socio-cultural, educational and political forms and that religious institutions remained the dominant forms of association throughout the period.

In a report on the progress of the Langa research in 1955-1956, Wilson states that the churches were chosen as the first groups for study on the grounds that they are 'strong, friendly and sophisticated' (M&AD: BC 880 – K1.1.). It is mentioned that over thirty 'sects' were to be found in the township, of which about a third formed part of nation-wide, multi-racial denominations. At that time it was estimated that a third of the inhabitants were church members but that the churches exercised a 'profound influence' over the entire community.

Wilson (M&AD: BC 880 – K1.1.) alludes to a correlation between class and church types. It is argued that a higher proportion of established church adherents are middle class but that the independent churches do not altogether 'lack respectable or educated men'. The AME is cited as an example of an independent church which compares favourably in terms of class with other established churches. It is confirmed that despite their origins, the established churches operated on a racially segregated basis at the time and that contact with other races only happened at the 'apex' of these organisations. In this way, even the mission churches functioned as 'self-contained African groups' which shared the aspirations of their 'independent' compatriots. The churches are generally described as 'a means of acquiring status' and are seen as a 'stabilizing factor' in the township.

Hartley (2000:7) suggests that the various impositions of restrictive local, regional and national legislation served to draw the various classes and social groups in

Langa closer together in increasingly defiant opposition. This is partly ascribed to the influence of the 'social gospel' - those forms of the Christian religion that identify with the whole of society and go beyond personal religious experience to promote social reform and justice - which shaped black consciousness and black religious, cultural and political responses (2000:15). Bickford-Smith et al (1999:89) describe churches as the most important of all social institutions in Langa, especially for women. Various women's associations for example assisted those in need, an important charity action in the impoverished community. Hartley (2000:18) ascribes the early moderate and socially cohesive nature of Langa to the religious nature of the township.

## **Development of Langa**

The history of Langa is relatively well documented and its heritage has been assessed to some extent by various studies. A comprehensive account of the origins and development of both Ndabeni and Langa are provided by Coetzer (2009). This history is discussed with reference to segregation, control and the Garden City ideals of the time. From an architectural and spatial perspective, Coetzer traces the establishment of Langa as a suburb indirectly influenced by the principles and philosophy of the Garden City. In *Building Apartheid* (2013:181–208) Coetzer uses Ebenezer Howard's triad of 'country', 'town' and 'suburb' as a structure to discuss the influence of British architectural ideas on spatial ordering in the context of Cape Town.

Saunders (1979) is one of the first authors to trace the early establishment and development process of Langa. This was followed by the scholarly work of Kinkead-Weekes (1993) and Musemwa (1993 and 1997) who explored themes of policy implementation and resistance in the case of Africans in Langa and broader Cape Town during the first half of the 20th century. The subsequent Langa Heritage Study of 2003 (Anderson & Field) presents a wide-ranging, if cursory, overview of some of the developmental and historical aspects necessary to understand the context. The oral history study conducted by Field in 2002 (2003a & 2003b) provides insight into the experience and memories of members of the Langa community. It is interesting

to note that, despite initiatives like the Langa Pass Office museum emanating from this research, Nieves (2005:7) argues that little change has been brought to the understanding of the cultural significance of Black heritage resources in the still isolated townships.

A broader understanding of migrant settlements is important to comprehend the societal context in which Langa's churches developed. Bremner (2010:154) describes this system (of migrant workers) as one which 'calibrated dependency with contempt to produce territorial fragmentation and fractured, transient, precarious lives constantly on the move'. This resulted in workers becoming 'citizenshipless vagrants' with an ambiguous sense of 'home'. Murray and Witz (2013) extensively discuss issues regarding migrant labour hostels with particular reference to Lwandle, many of which are also pertinent to Langa. The question arises as to whether, in the case of Langa, this transitory environment was mitigated by a sense of relative stability brought about by the churches as elements of permanent settlement and community-oriented amenity absent in other similar environments.

The following account of Langa's development is primarily drawn from the work of Coetzer (2009) unless indicated otherwise.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the socio-spatial discourse in the colonial world was dominated by the ideals of the Garden City Movement which, as a reaction to industrial urbanisation, sought to achieve a rationalised environment reflecting the values of the picturesque English village (2009:1). The first Garden Cities were developed in England and provided housing to middle and working class residents in segregated residential zones amidst a semi-rural context. These utopian ideals were applied to the pre-apartheid Cape Town context where issues of envisaged racial segregation added further complexity. In this regard, the story of Langa is connected to two other local settlements, Ndabeni and Pinelands.

Ndabeni was established outside of the city boundaries as a residential centre for black Africans who had come to Cape Town as migrant labourers at the end of the

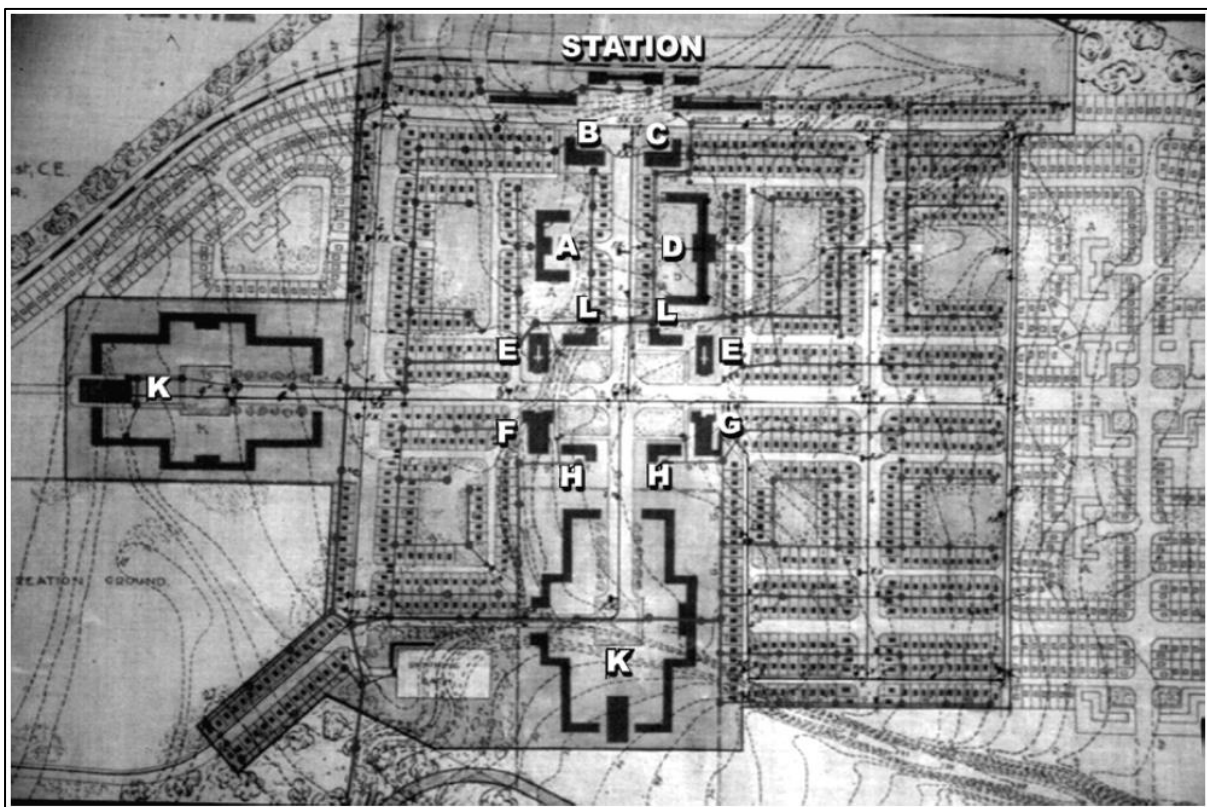
19<sup>th</sup> century (Saunders 1979). Although it had formed part of the government's strategy for migrant labour control for some time, the 1901 plague led to a rapid increase in its development as people were relocated from the city centre. Ndabeni was legally defined as a 'location' and became the only territory in which black Africans could officially live in Cape Town. It grew haphazardly and although churches and a recreation hall were planned to make the environment more 'attractive and differentiated', this never came about and the settlement remained sterile and featureless (2009:4).

As more efficient management of 'natives' were deemed necessary, the Native (Urban Areas) Act no 21 of 1923 sought to rationalise the responsibility of the central state and local municipal governance with regard to the control of migrant labour and the location of black people in the urban areas of South Africa (2009:5). The obligation of providing accommodation for 'native' residents now resided with the City Council. As Ndabeni reached capacity, the development of a new 'Native Location' was investigated by a committee during the early 1920s. Interestingly this particular new development was frequently referred to as a 'township' which denotes a comprehensive residential development rather than merely a 'location' space for 'the other' (2009:6). In this way the township of Langa was conceptualised as a 'native village' to be located close to Ndabeni (2009:7). Langa was to be a model township and the chairman of the Native Affairs Committee visited a number of towns in South Africa and made recommendations as to the type of development that should be considered (Wilson & Mafeje 1963:4). A final agreement was concluded in 1922 and land was made available at Uitvlucht, about 11km from the city, for the forced relocation of black residents from Ndabeni and elsewhere.

The English architect Albert Thompson, who completed the design of the adjacent Pinelands Garden City, was contracted in 1923 to design the spatial layout for the new township which was to accommodate between 5000 and 8000 residents. Although not overtly racist, the Garden City Movement ideology, employed by Thompson, did encompass a form of social ordering along class lines where distinction was made between tribal 'natives' and Christian 'natives' with middle class

aspirations (2009:7). Langa was developed as a place where differentiation between those who were married permanent residents and those who were single migrant workers would determine residential location and societal standing.

The only layout drawing remaining from the initial design is a drainage plan based on the general proposed layout. This formalised design shows the axial arrangements envisaged for the township as well as some of the main spatial features. Idealistically it indicates a number of community facilities including a school and two churches located around or near a central square, typical of Garden City principles. (See *Figure 3*)



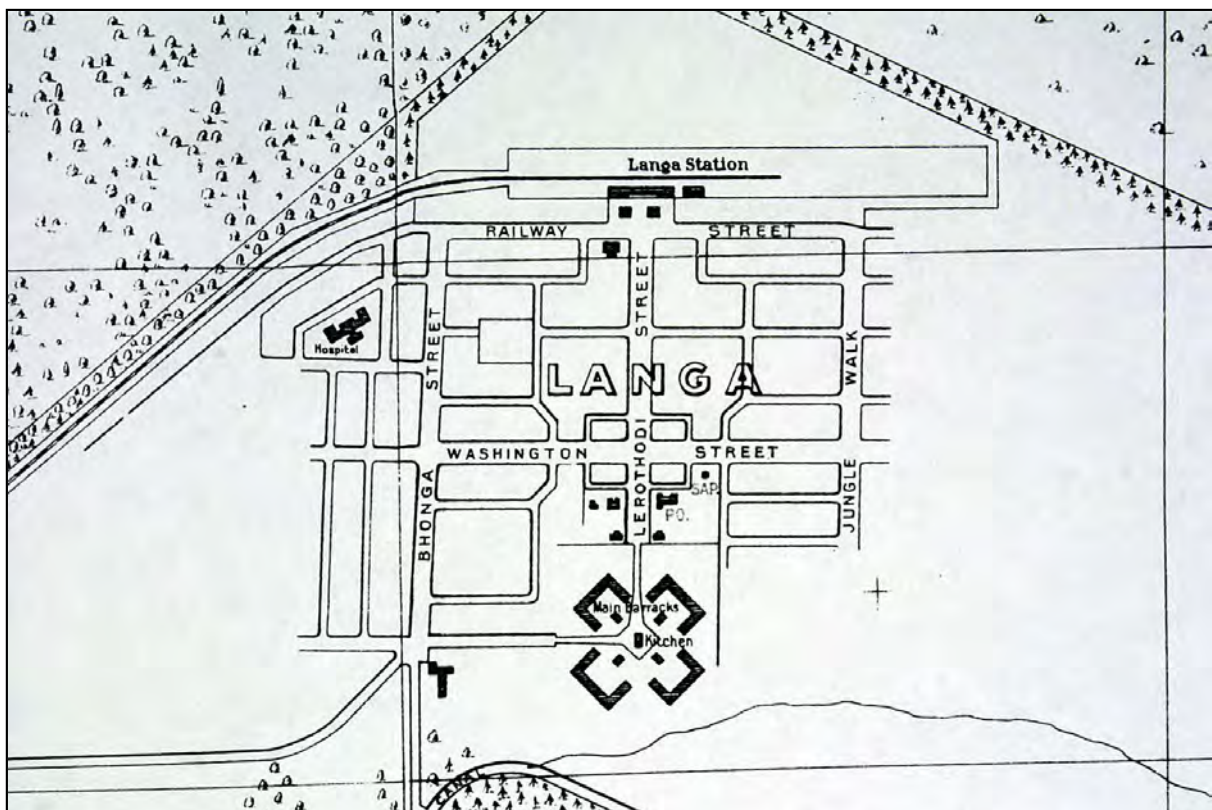
**Figure 3: Langa 1923 layout**

Key: A. School; B. Meat Market, C. Fruit & veg Market, D. Single Women compound, E. Churches, F. Picture theatre, G. Police Station, H. Admin, K. Single Men compound, L. Church House  
(Original plan Cape Archives M3/4005 amended by Coetzer 2009:8)

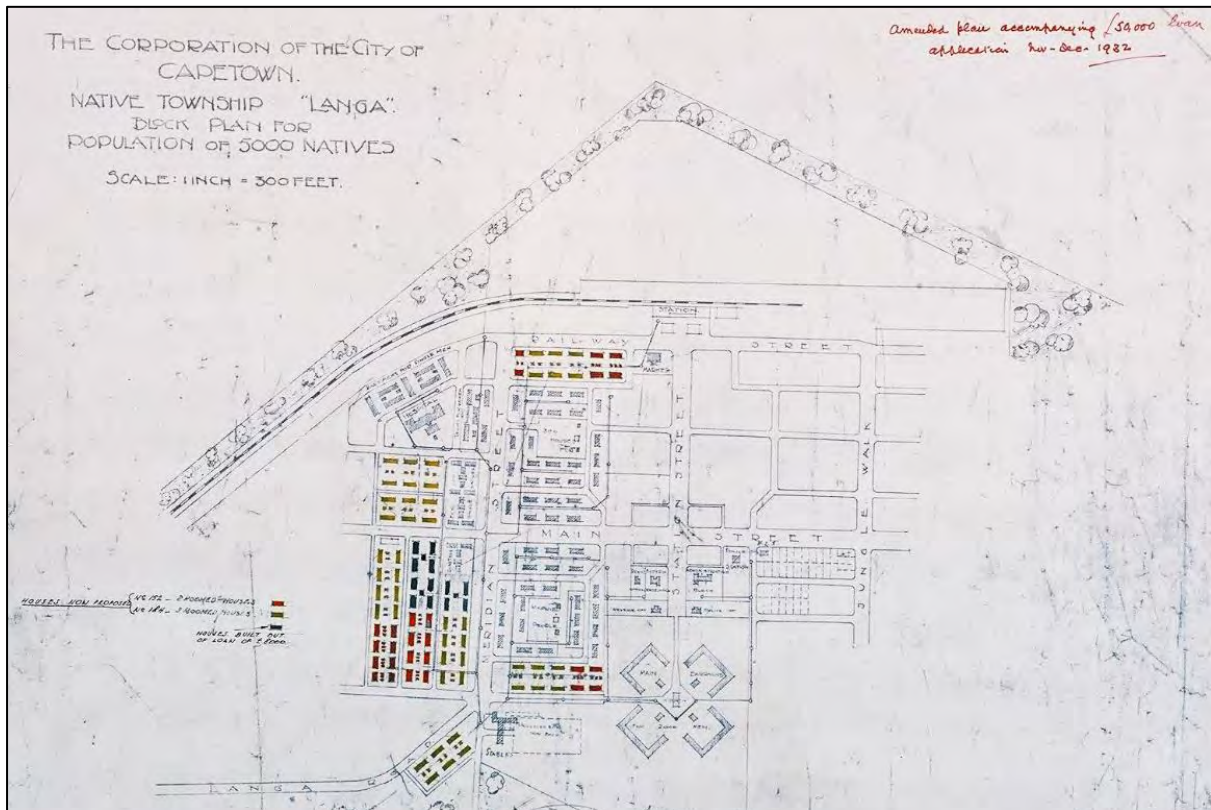
Various amendments of the design subsequently took place. Increasing importance was attached to the control of residents and segregation of the various housing types. Initial detached family units were for example replaced with grouped units. This lowering of standards led to the eventual abandonment of Langa as a Garden

Suburb and also the recognition of it as a 'township' as opposed to a 'location' lost support. Langa was formally constituted as a location in terms of the act after approval by the Minister of Native Affairs and a notice to this effect was published in the Government Gazette of 18 March 1927 (Cape Archives: 3CT – 4/1/5/1247 – N48/5).

Despite the apparent absence of churches and other community facilities in the final layout planning of Langa (see *Figure 4*), an article published during the initial development idealistically made mention of the fact that 'churches, schools and a recreation ground are all included in the final plan', presumably to create a positive impression of the 'clean and healthy conditions' envisaged (Architect, Builder and Engineer Magazine, 1926). By 1932 various church leases had been entered into, yet no potential church sites are indicated on a spatial layout of the time, perhaps signifying that limited importance was attached to such facilities compared to housing needs (see *Figure 5*).



**Figure 4: Plan of original section of Langa, c 1925**  
(1931 Cape Series)



**Figure 5: 1932 block layout of Langa**  
(CCT – EHRIC: F1000003)

With regard to the spatial location and role of churches in townscapes, some interesting differences can be observed between the highly controlled manner in which Langa was developed compared to the more organic nature in which towns traditionally came into being. Churches historically played an important role in town settings, often from the earliest establishment phases. This is evident from examples cited by Fransen (2006:65,77,88) where churches were either the *raison d'être* for settlements (as at Malmesbury and Tulbagh) and as such were prominently located; where churches created attractive precincts with tree-shaded spaces valued as public open space as at the Strooidakkerk and Toringkerk in Paarl; or where churches as landmark buildings act as street focal points which in turn assists in setting up the remainder of the street layout - a typical town planning principle – seen for example in Stellenbosch. These churches also often have an associated churchyard in close proximity. In the case of Langa, the cemetery was established to the north of the settlement and not directly related to any of the churches. It is

interesting to note that a few churches, including the Wesleyan Church, were however allocated separate allotments in contrast to the remaining combined allotments which also included the separatist church bodies (Cape Archives: 3CT – 4/1/9/1/81 – GN9/9/2).

If one considers the work of Lynch (1960) in establishing urban-settlement patterns, it is clear that churches can play an important role in urban legibility. Lynch identified distinct features of a city which he defined as paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. It is particularly the concept of landmarks – physical objects that act as reference points – which can be applied to churches to explain their ability to assist in orientation and to act as character-giving elements in a streetscape or node. Langa's historic churches perform this function in a subtle and almost unnoticeable way. (See *Figures 6 and 7*). With the exception of the churches prominently located along Lerotholi Avenue, most of the churches are fairly integrated into their residential surroundings and conform to a low-rise suburban pattern of space-making. Often the buildings' relatively unadorned exteriors add little interest to streetscapes and unobtrusively blend into their contexts. This could be ascribed in part to Langa's atypical development origins but also to the way in which development has taken place around the churches which has reduced visual impact and landmark value in some cases.



**Figure 6 (left): View up Lerotholi Avenue, Langa**

Some of Lynch's spatial features applied to Langa: Lerotholi Avenue and its line of trees as linear path elements; the Apostolic, Dutch Reformed and Wesleyan Methodist churches as landmarks along the route and the intersection of the two main roads and the associated public infrastructure as a minor node. (CCT ISIS aerial photograph annotated by author)



**Figure 7 (right): Rubusana Avenue, Langa**

In the AME area, Rubusana Street forms the main linear path element together with the tree-lined edge to the blocks behind. The AME church acts as a landmark, although it is not greatly differentiated from its surroundings in terms of scale. (CCT ISIS aerial photograph annotated by author)

## **Historical background of churches in Langa**

From the mid-1920s onwards various applications for church sites in Langa were made by representatives of churches existing in Ndabeni. The earliest of these included the applications of the Mission Church of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa and the Presbyterian National Church of Africa (both in 1924), the United Ethiopian Catholic Church of Africa (1925), the Ethiopian Catholic Church of Africa and the African Presbyterian Church (both in 1926) and the Salvation Army (1927) (Cape Archives: 3CT – 4/1/5/1271 - N244/5 (a)). By the beginning of 1927 approximately twelve applications had been received for sites at Langa. Various responses were provided by the Town Clerk. In some cases standard conditions of leases were indicated to potential applicants in order to continue with the formal lease process while other applications met with resistance on religious grounds. The Ethiopian Catholic Church for example received a response from the Secretary of Native Affairs stating that, as a Native Separatist Church, the church had not been recognised as being of 'sufficient stability and fitness'. This supports Hartley's argument (2000:23) that the more established or mission churches were shown partiality by state authorities and that they in this way came to dominate the religious sphere in Langa, both ideologically and sociologically.

Those that received a positive response were invited to make contact with the Superintendent of Natives in Langa, Mr G.P. Cook, to discuss possible sites in terms of a 1924. The fact that development in Langa was still in its infancy impacted on some of the earlier applications as decisions on church sites were only taken by the Native Affairs Committee from 1926 onwards after various official discussions had been concluded. A draft lease agreement, to be concluded between the Council and recognised religious bodies, was approved by the Native Affairs Department upon the inception of the township in 1927 (Cape Archives: 2/OBS – 3/1/680 – N9/10/2).

Some of the standard conditions at that time indicated that the letting of sites could only be considered for recognised religious bodies, subject to supervision of a minister of religion, and that the erection of approved church buildings had to

commence within a period of six months from the date of signing the lease (Cape Archives: 3/CT – 4/1/5/1271 - N244/5 (b)). The last item in particular presented difficulty as members of churches only gradually moved over from Ndabeni and the short timeframe for development and relocation of services could not easily be adhered to. Over the next decade a number of churches, mostly from established denominations, were constructed.

A letter from the Assistant Native Commissioner in 1939 marks the beginning of a more direct influence of the national government and its race-related policies on 'native' churches in urban locations (3/CT – 4/1/9/1/177 – GN43/2 (a)). According to this correspondence, 'inspections have revealed that large numbers of [school and church] sites are being occupied without the necessary approval from the Minister of Native Affairs'. By that time a total of eight leases had been formally concluded between the Council and church bodies, including that of the Wesleyan Methodist Church 3/CT – 4/1/9/1/177 – GN43/2 (b)). These were duly investigated by the Town Clerk and were confirmed as having the necessary approval. Although noting this response, the reply from the Department of Native Affairs emphasised the need for limiting the interest of church authorities in land. It was suggested that fixed periods be inserted into all lease agreements that local authorities entered into with church bodies, although a vague statement confirmed that these leases might be for 'fairly long periods'. Whereas the original lease conditions made provision for an indefinite lease period, it was now limited to a period of twenty years, subject to various termination clauses, and a further renewal period of twenty years.

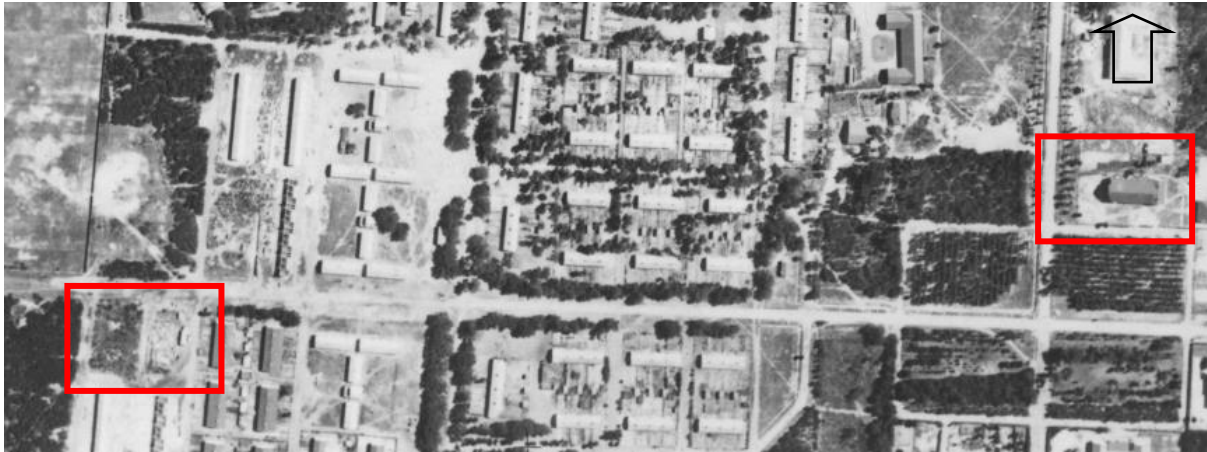
Further engagement continued from this point onwards between the City Council and the Department of Native Affairs, with the latter being increasingly concerned with the content of lease agreements 3/CT – 4/1/9/1/177 – GN43/2 (c)). To its credit, the City Council pointed out early on that any alteration of the existing leases would 'cause unnecessary trouble and expense to the lessees out of all proportion to the importance of the point involved'. This resulted in various iterations of the lease document as amendments to the Department's proposed clauses were requested over a period of 15 years. In a letter dated 8 December 1955, the Town Clerk once

again pointed out his frustration with the clauses suggested by the Department by stating that it will 'raise many controversial issues' and 'potential disputes in which the Council will willy nilly be involved; but, as I have already said and now repeat with respect, my views, even on the wording required by the Native Affairs Department to be inserted in the documents, seem to me to be quite irrelevant'. It is with this sense of despair that a number of final changes are agreed to and incorporated into the church lease agreements. The changed clauses primarily relate to the exclusive use of the sites for church purposes and the fact that the Minister of Native Affairs can terminate a lease where, in his opinion, 'activities of the occupier or any of his or her representatives, whether on the site or elsewhere, are such as to encourage or tend to encourage deterioration in the relationship between Natives and the Government or governmental persons'.

A further indication of the stark reality of the racially-based thinking of the time is evident in the extensive correspondence relating to permission for 'Europeans' connected to churches to reside in Langa (Cape Archives: 2/OBS – 3/1/680 – N9/15/3). In terms of S9 (8) of the Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945, the approval of the Minister of Native Affairs had to be obtained in such cases. When the initial request for clergy to reside in Langa was denied after a protracted process, the Catholic Church had to go so far as to obtain support from the Prime Minister, Dr DF Malan. In their letter it was pointed out that residence at the location was not for 'social contacts' and was in no way at variance with governmental policy.

Both the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the AME church already existed in Ndabeni and as such have a long history (Sambumbu 2010:89). Although incorrectly stating that the Wesleyan Methodist Church was the first to be constructed in Langa, Sambumbu (2010:91) affirms that its first congregation was predominantly composed of former Ndabeni residents. The following images (*Figures 8 and 9*) trace

the development of these churches in Langa and are followed by a more detailed description of the actions related to their respective establishment processes<sup>5</sup>.



**Figure 8: 1935 aerial of Langa**

This image shows the Wesleyan Church already in existence, while the site of AME has been demarcated but not yet built upon apart from some small scale ad hoc structures. (CCT ISIS)



**Figure 9: Oblique aerial showing Langa and surrounds.**

Churches at this stage had more of a landmark function – see St Francis Catholic church to left of image, the Presbyterian Church just to the right of it and the AME to the right of the image. (EHRIC: F1040013)

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<sup>5</sup> Although not strictly related to this study, this information provides interesting background and suggestions for further research.

## ***Wesleyan Methodist Church***

The establishment of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Langa is first mentioned in a letter dated 17 December 1926 by the Reverend Peter F Williams, the Wesleyan parson of Woodstock, in his capacity as secretary of the Cape Peninsula Church Council (CPCC) (3CT - 4/1/5/1247 – N51/5 (a)). In response to the demolition of churches in Ndabeni, Rev. Williams requested that a deputation of the CPCC, which ‘represents practically all the churches of the city’, make a representation to the City Council’s Building Committee in order to discuss the possibility of receiving compensation for the compulsory closure and relocation of the existing churches in Ndabeni and the construction of new buildings in Langa. (This somewhat contradicts the view that the ‘European’ churches could easily obtain funds, as later asserted by Rev. Matshiqi from the AME church). A deputation of the CPCC was eventually invited to a meeting of the Native Advisory Board in March 1927, although no record of their input is captured in the minutes (3CT - 4/1/5/1247 – N51/5 (b)). A subsequent request for information to the Town Councils of Bloemfontein and Port Elizabeth confirmed that compensation for the relocation of churches was generally not paid but was decided on based on the merits of each case (3CT - 4/1/5/1247 – N51/5 (c)). The final response from the Town Clerk to Rev. Williams on 20 April 1927 stated that the Native Affairs Committee was ‘unable to recommend that any steps be taken in this matter’(3CT - 4/1/5/1247 – N51/5 (a)).

Plans for the proposed Wesleyan Methodist Church in Langa were submitted during December 1926 although there is no record of a lease being in place at that time (Cape Archives: 3/CT – 4/2/1/3/269 – B1970)<sup>6</sup>. The lease for the Wesleyan church site was concluded on 30 April 1929, one of the earliest in Langa (3CT – 4/1/5/1271 - N244/5 (a)). The building plans were drawn up by William Black & Fagg Architects, a local firm with offices in central Cape Town. It was circulated to the chief officer of the fire brigade and the medical officer of health and placed before the Native Affairs

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<sup>6</sup> All reference numbers in this section refer to sources held at the Cape Archives unless otherwise indicated.

Committee for approval; no objections were raised in this process. Unfortunately records do not exist of this original plan nor is it clear when final approval was obtained. Further communication from the architects indicates detail of proposed drainage as the site was not yet served by an intercepting sewer at that stage. It would appear that this was the only required amendment and that the plans were generally supported (3/CT – 4/2/1/3/284 – B446). The building plans were approved on 24 January 1927 but not immediately acted upon and a request for amendment was submitted by the architects two years later (3/CT – 4/2/1/3/373 – B728(a)). It was intimated that 'owing to the position of matters', only the vestries, without internal partition, would be erected at that stage and that revised plans would be submitted as the previous scheme had lapsed after a period of twelve months. Other than this notification, the request chiefly sought approval for two wood and iron earth closets as a temporary measure until such time as permanent brick water closets could be installed upon completion of the building or when the sewer drainage was laid. This was considered by the Health And Building Regulations Committee who recommended it for approval; the final decision however rested with the Native Affairs Committee and the proposal was turned down with the instruction that drainage must be provided in accordance with the sewerage scheme for the township (3/CT – 4/2/1/3/373 – B728(b)).

It is not clear what caused the delay, but it was only by 1932 that construction commenced after the submission of yet another set of plans (3CT – 4/2/1/3/519 – B592(a)). The Council's response to the revised plans included very specific concerns for example that aisles of the church had to be at least 3 feet 5 inches wide; that exits had to be at least 5 feet 10 inches in width and that rain water disposal had to be indicated. During May of that year plans were also submitted for a small manse to be added to the church and from the architect's letter it would appear that construction was underway at that time (3CT – 4/2/1/3/519 – B592(b)). This proposal was agreed to by the Native Affairs Committee as a lease was in place. It would appear that the manse had been completed by 1937 as a request was made at that time for a small wood and iron shed to be added to the back of the parsonage (3CT - 4/1/9/1/91 – GN9/18/2/24/3 (a)). This was apparently necessary to

accommodate the Ministers family as the manse was not big enough. The request was however not approved (3CT - 4/1/9/1/91 – GN9/18/2/24/3 (b)).

The church's lease was later amended to allow for a building to house the Methodist Mission School (3CT – 4/2/1/1/202 – S84). During July 1935 plans for the proposed school were submitted to Council by Black & Fagg (3CT – 4/2/1/3/707 – B1952). No departmental objections were received. Plans for additional classrooms to the school were submitted and approved in 1946 (3CT – 4/2/1/1395 – B1724). By 1948 work was also underway to add a new kitchen and store to the school. Plans to extend the church were submitted in April 1948. This work was completed by the end of 1948. Lerotholi Avenue was still referred to as Station Road at this time. By July 1952, plans were approved for a garage, tool shed, kitchen and storeroom on the church site, in what was now known as Lerotholi Avenue (3CT – 4/2/1/3/2346 – B783). This presumably encompassed the previous proposals for additions which had not yet been constructed.

It is interesting to note that a breakaway group from the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the Bantu Methodist Church (BMC), applied for rental accommodation in the North Barracks in 1935 (3CT – 4/1/5/1271 - N244/5 (a)). The application was first submitted by Rev. J. Molebaloa, the newly appointed minister in charge of the church in April 1935. In the minutes of the Native Affairs Committee of that month, the church was described as a separatist body with its headquarters in Johannesburg. It was recommended that the views of the Methodist Church of South Africa be obtained before a decision could be taken. This confirms Hartley's view that the City Council closely collaborated with the mainline churches and obstructed certain efforts for access to premises (2000:29). At the next committee meeting in July, it was confirmed that the Minister of the Wesleyan Native Mission was indeed against the granting of any facilities to the small group. Since both the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches of South Africa were losing adherents to their distinctly black parallel bodies, they sought to restrict the activities of the separate movements (Hartley 2000:30). In accordance with these concerns, the request was refused.

In 2005 the Wesleyan Methodist Church was finally able to buy the property (at a price of R25 000) and it is now registered in the name of the Methodist Church of South Africa.

### ***African Methodist Episcopal Church***

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of January 1927, Rev. J.G. Matshiqi wrote to the Commissioner of Native Affairs, Dr C.T. Loram, outlining the financial constraints that independent churches like the African Methodist Episcopal church faced in the required move to Langa from Ndabeni (Cape Archives: 3CT – 4/1/5/1247 - N51/5(a))<sup>7</sup>. The churches had by that time been informed by the City Council that no compensation for removal would be available and that new structures would have to be constructed from brick. The reverend questioned the ability of small churches to comply with this decision and requested a sympathetic approach from authorities. It was stated that their existing wood and iron church in Ndabeni had been erected at a cost of £600 and that this could not be recouped unless the same material could be re-used at Langa. The reverend further pointed out that independent denominations like the AME as ‘solely native churches’ are financially not as strong as other churches such as the ‘Wesleyans’, where ‘European help has always to be counted’. He implored the commissioner to investigate the possibility of assistance as otherwise the ‘Council will crush the life out of these Churches’. Dr Loram took up this issue with the Superintendent of Native Affairs and confirmed that the AME church would not be able to obtain the necessary funds as they were ‘too poor’. He suggested that stringent building conditions for Langa be laid down but that wood and iron should not be banned in the case of AME if they can meet the conditions.

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<sup>7</sup> All reference numbers in this section refer to sources held at the Cape Archives unless otherwise indicated.

A relatively formal approach was later followed by the AME church in its application for a church site in Langa<sup>8</sup>. Halperin and Horwitz Attorneys were instructed by the church to apply on their behalf and submitted a request to the Town Clerk on 16 November 1931 (3CT – 4/1/5/1271 - N244/5 (a)). It was stated in the letter that the chapel had existed in Ndabeni since about 1902 and that it comprised approximately 200 communicants, of whom 62 were single male adults. The church apparently elected a site at the corner of what was then Station Street (now Lerotholi) and Main Street (now Washington Road) as being the most suitable for their purpose. A piece of land measuring approximately 150 by 80 feet was requested. It was pointed out that the church was not in the financial position to bear the cost of demolishing the existing wood and iron structure and to remove the materials and build a new structure in Langa without assistance from the Council. The letter went so far as to state a proposed loan amount and repayment schedule. (An advance sum of £100 was requested which was to be repaid at £12 every quarter, commencing three months after the erection of the new church until the full amount was paid). It was somewhat obsequiously added that ‘our clients would point out that the policy of the Pastors of their Church has always been one of loyalty to the authorities, and it is their intention to persuade the adherents of their Church and others to comply as soon as possible with the Council’s wishes in the matter of the removal to Langa’.

Superintendent Cook’s comment to the Town Clerk dated 23 November 1931 (3CT – 4/1/5/1271 - N244/5 (a)) clarified that the land requested was directly opposite the Wesleyan Church and bordered on the site already allocated to the ‘English Church’ (presumably St Cyprians Anglican Church). A site to the east of Station Road, next to the station and opposite the Market Building was suggested instead. The loan agreement outlined by the church was not rejected out of hand as might have been expected but was non-committally dealt with by acknowledging that many churches would have the same predicament and that the question of security would therefore have to be investigated. It was furthermore made clear that only brick or concrete

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<sup>8</sup> In the application, the church was also referred to as ‘Allen Chapel’, a reference to the nineteenth century founder of the A.M.E., Richard Allen.

buildings were allowed at Langa and also that the site would only be granted for the use of the church's 'native adherents'. This response was communicated by the Town Clerk to the applicants on 26 November 1931 and it was confirmed that their request would be submitted to the Native Affairs Committee for consideration. The standard wording of church site leases was also included which confirmed that the letting of sites to recognised religious bodies could be authorised by the Committee at a rental of 10/- per annum for a stand of 100 by 50 feet. In a reply on 30 December 1931, the applicants confirmed that the church was however still interested in the site originally identified by them and that they have 'inspected the spot and have definitely decided'. The application for this site was eventually considered by the Committee during February 1932; the request was denied.

Although the eventual lease agreement entered into between the Council and AME church could not be obtained, a request for ministerial approval (in relation to S26 (3) of Act 21 of 1923) provides some of the detail (3CT – 4/1/5/1271 - N244/5 (c)). The lease was entered into on 1 December 1938 and comprised a site along Rubusana Avenue of approximately 20 000 square feet with a rental set at £2.0.0d. Plans for the proposed church were circulated during September 1938 (3CT - 4/2/1/3/930 - B2850). No architectural firm is mentioned; the unassuming design suggests that the building was designed by a draughtsperson. Various amendments were subsequently requested by the Council regarding minor building details and seating arrangements and the last correspondence is dated 17 Oct 1938 and addressed to the minister, Rev. J.C. Johannisen from Lansdowne. Construction of the church started at the end of 1938.

After more than 50 years of occupying the site, the African Methodist Episcopal Church eventually took ownership of the property in 1994. No purchase date or price could be confirmed, but it is assumed that the church took transfer from the City Council at a nominal cost.

## **Church architecture**

As this study is concerned with the values attributed to the physical structures of churches, this section explores some background relating to church architecture. Church architecture typically refers to the buildings of Christian churches and has evolved over time to respond to changing beliefs, practices and local traditions (Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust, 2014). These are often ornate and architecturally prestigious buildings which historically were dominant features of the townscapes in which they were located. This holds true even for simpler parish churches, although much variation exists in terms of regional diversity and vernacular styles. The following account of the architectural history of churches in South Africa extensively draws on Radford's work on Christian architecture (1997:327-336) and traces the stylistic development of churches up to the time during which the AME and Wesleyan Methodist churches were constructed in Langa.

The practice of religion at the Cape under Dutch rule was mostly monopolised by the Dutch Reformed Church. The initial small size of the settlement and the Calvinist precedent for unadorned settings and simplicity of worship, provided little incentive for many or large places of worship. Low levels of available building technology as well as conservative cultural tastes inhibited architectural innovation during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. The first purpose-built church structure was a wooden building within the new stone castle built in 1666. By 1678 the foundations of a permanent church were laid at the top of Heerengracht and it became known as the Groote Kerk or Great Church, the mother church for Dutch Reformed churches in the country. The building took the form of a Greek cross (where the arms of the cross are equal in length) and geometrically comprised two interlocking thatch-roof rectangles with gables at either end, typical of Cape Dutch architecture. The church was repeatedly remodelled and its current form is rectangular with a combination of classical gables and Gothic windows. During the same era the first church in Stellenbosch was constructed as a simple rectangle with a hipped thatch roof and was set in a small walled churchyard. After a fire it was reconstructed as a smaller version of the Groote Kerk.

Other early churches included that of the Lutherans in Cape Town and a number of mission churches further afield. The Lutherans initially used a warehouse in Strand Street and received permission in 1780 to add a church-like façade, designed by Anton Anreith, to the complex. A tower was added during the early 1800s. The Moravians built their first large mission church in Genadendal by 1800. This building of North German inspiration was something novel in the Cape particularly because of its steeply pitched thatched roof with crow step gables at each end in contrast to its otherwise plain white washed walls. In Cape Town the first 'Sending Gesticht', a mission to the coloured community, was built in 1799 as a simple rectangular box with a façade which resembles that of the Lutheran church.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century mission societies began their activities in the hinterland. Stations or settlements were founded beyond the boundaries of the colony and here converted and unconverted Africans lived under their control. They determined the physical layout of the mission and directed the erection of buildings. These mission churches were often not directly influenced by European architectural trends and had very little internal or external architectural ornament.

It is only by the 1820s that British occupancy came to influence church architecture. With the new government came new religious denominations and a need for more churches. The Anglican Church established a prominent position in Cape Town and St George's Cathedral, as it later became, was built on a site at the lower end of the Company's Gardens during the late 1820s. This earlier design was based on St. Pancras in London and was classically influenced with a style derived from Greek prototypes like the Parthenon and Erechtheum in Athens. Another Greek Revival example is St. Andrew's Presbyterian. Outside Cape Town such neo-classical innovations were gradual and most new churches were essentially barns with Dutch gables.

Church architecture in South Africa during the Victorian period, like elsewhere in the Anglo-Saxon world, was dominated by the Gothic Revival with its emphasis on stone construction, the form of the Latin Cross, pointed windows and doors and a strong

commitment to reproducing medieval prototypes. The style was adapted according to the needs of various denominations and the interior arrangements varied accordingly. Robert Gray, the Anglican bishop who arrived in 1848, and his wife Sophie were principally responsible for bringing a more 'correct' version of the Gothic Revival to South Africa. The churches built under their influence are all fairly similar in form and details with long naves separated by an arch from chancels or sanctuaries. The idea that Gothic was the only acceptable style for churches in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century influenced even churches which might ordinarily have favoured a more austere approach. An example of this is the Methodist church on Greenmarket Square. This building, designed by prominent architect Charles Freeman, is basilican in form and has a short chancel and conspicuous tower and spire. Its elaborate interior fittings include an organ, choir, pulpit and communion table grouped together at the chancel end, all the essentials considered necessary for a preaching church distinct from Anglican or Roman Catholic churches of the same style.

Many Dutch Reformed churches were rebuilt during the nineteenth century. The original T-shaped thatched buildings were replaced by grander structures which were often Gothic in style but also varied in detail so that no few examples are really typical. The basic form was still a 'preaching box' but on a much larger scale than before. The church designs of Carl Otto Hager, which relied on elements like buttresses, pinnacles, pointed arches and niches to emphasise verticality, came to dominate many small towns around the country. Most churches during this time preserved the nave/ chancel pattern where the nave is dominant and where the chancel was more of a vestry, a room used for church meetings and not really part of the worship space. These churches were mostly plastered and characterised by simple detailing. Some classical inspired churches were also built during this time, for example the Dutch Reformed church in Cradock which was constructed of local stone in the 1860s and was based on the design of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London.

Rural churches were often carefully sited and associated with their own square so that any architectural features such as facades or towers set up an axial relationship to the principle street. Although church interiors were now much larger, the basic layout from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with its focus on the pulpit as central focal point, still prevailed. A new feature towards the end of the century was the introduction of organs, usually with an impressive collection of pipes set up against the back gallery or in combination with the pulpit. By the end of the Victorian era and the conclusion of the Anglo Boer War in 1902 many churches were in existence across the country and expressed a level of sophistication equal to that of churches elsewhere in the colonial regions.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Herbert Baker was appointed as Anglican diocesan architect in the then Transvaal. Baker became one of the most important church architects and the concepts he developed influenced most new churches during the first thirty years of the century. He stressed simple forms and insisted on the use of 'honest' traditional materials like stone and wood rather than iron and plaster. Early English Gothic was considered as an appropriate stylistic model. Baker constructed a number of Anglican churches in Transvaal but one of his most prominent projects was the rebuilding of St. George's Cathedral in Cape Town. This was typical of his Gothic-influenced style and the use of local materials such as the Table Mountain quartzite walls and red clay roof tiles.

After Baker's departure from South Africa, his former partners continued to design and build churches, including the notable example of the former Church of Christ the King in the African township of Sophiatown. This was designed in a Gothic style in 1933 and consecrated in 1935, more or less during the same era as the Wesleyan Methodist and AME churches in Langa. Although described as a 'holy barn' due to its low cost design, it does however appear to be slightly more imposing than its Cape Town township equivalents (Johannesburg Heritage 2011). The church is built of blue stock bricks and is basilican in form with a central aisle lit by clerestory windows and side aisles, which was subsequently raised to accommodate galleries. It also has a distinctive bell tower which is a landmark in the area.

The other architectural influence during this era was the work of Gerard Moerdyk. During the 1920s and 30s the architect produced many Dutch Reformed churches which were characterised by a mixture of historic elements. Moerdyk's work was eclectic and sophisticated and utilised an interesting choice of materials. Byzantine-inspired domed central plans could for example be combined with neo-classical and Gothic elements as well as Cape Dutch style gables.

Although the work and styles of Baker and Moerdyk dominated the early decades of the twentieth century, interesting buildings were also constructed by others during this period. One notable example was St Patrick's church in the Batho African location in Bloemfontein, which was described as the 'Parthenon of the Corrugated Iron Style' (1997:334). Sadly demolished in 1954 because of the Group Areas Act, this church illustrated some of the principles of the great English Gothic cathedrals and achieved a monumental status despite being constructed from a simple wooden framework covered in corrugated iron.

## Church descriptions

### *Wesleyan Church*



**Figure 10: The Lerotholi Avenue view of the Wesleyan Methodist Church**  
(Google Street View 2013)

The majority of Wesleyan/ Methodist churches in the Cape region were constructed during the late 19th century. In terms of date, the closest to the Langa church is the Trinity Wesleyan Church in Bloemfontein, constructed in 1927 and designed by one Frederick Masey (Cumming-George 1933:146). It has a large belfry and perpendicular Gothic detailing and window treatment – all typical features of church building at the time that is notably absent in the Langa churches. Although relatively simple in its layout, this church is constructed of stone and brick and substantially more imposing in its scale and appearance than the township equivalent.

The architecture firm of Black and Fagg, the designers of the Wesleyan church, was also responsible for numerous other buildings in and around Cape Town including a number of schools and other institutional buildings. The Wesleyan church displays architectural similarity to the Langa Presbyterian Church in Lerotholi Avenue which dates from 1931 (See *Figure 16*). This is not surprising as it was built in the same

street the year before, and might have influenced the design of the WMC. Both are of a similar scale and built form with simple rectangular windows and narrow buttresses. The Wesleyan church's design appears to be influenced by the neo-Gothic style typical of the era in the way its vertical elements are emphasised, but no overt stylistic elements are adopted in this regard. An Arts and Crafts influence is also discernable in the craftsmanship and simple medieval-inspired forms.

The Methodist church was built according to a typical cruciform plan and is architecturally more distinctive due to its imposing scale and detailing than the AME. The footprint is that of a Latin cross with a relatively long nave transversed by a short transept. The church is constructed from plastered masonry. Visual interest is provided by brick detailing in the form of a base and slightly protruding buttresses which sets up a vertical rhythm with the interspersed windows. The front façade provides architectural interest by means of a round window and simple painted gable fretwork and brackets, typical of earlier Victorian domestic architecture. Two tiled-roof side porticoes, slightly set back, create a sense of balance in the façade composition.

The interior is relatively formal, with an interesting sense of scale and atmosphere created by the long nave and shallow vaulted ceiling. Entrance is gained through an intact set of timber doors which open up on the right-hand side of the church. Despite the intrusion of modern lighting and sound equipment, the overall character appears mostly unchanged from what it would have been initially.

The design of the church does not appear to be particularly influenced by its context and siting. It is placed centrally on the plot with plenty of open space surrounding it. The church building has some external structures occupying the space to the back, including the vestry and manse which now functions as a church office complex. (It was mentioned by interviewees that this conversion took place when a new residence was purchased for the minister outside of Langa in order to allow him and his family more privacy). The remaining open space is covered by lawn and no attempts to formalise the space is evident.

The Wesleyan Church - similar to the AME and many of the historic churches in Langa - has been 'suburbanised' largely as a result of being enclosed by a vibracrete wall. This approach to placemaking, if it could be considered that, certainly undermines the landmark potential of the sites. In both cases, this type of boundary treatment reduces the churches to everyday sites within the nondescript surroundings rather than emphasising their respective settings and potential for public space creation. Yet, the Wesleyan church in particular still contributes to a sense of place, partly due to its style but also being located adjacent to an open space with clusters of mature trees. (See *Figures 11 – 15*. Photographs by author unless otherwise credited).



**Figure 11: Oblique aerial view of Wesleyan Church**

The image shows the manse to the back of the church (now the church office), the open space on the corner of Washington and Lerotholi Avenue and a portion of the adjacent school building showing at the bottom of the image. (CCT – ISIS)



Figure 12: The Wesleyan Church seen from Lerotholi Avenue



Figure 13: Interior of the church looking towards the front



**Figure 14: Front facade of Wesleyan Church**



**Figure 15: Position of church in relation to street (Lerotholi Avenue)**



**Figure 16: Langa Presbyterian Church in Lerotholi Avenue, circa 1930s**  
(South African Library: PHA 96)



**Figure 17: Bishop Lavis anointing the foundation stone of the new St. Cyprians church in Langa in 1934**  
The procession indicates some of the solemnity associated with the establishment of a new church during Langa's early years. (Published in Cape Times Supplement 29/05/1934; South African Library: PHA 100)

## ***African Methodist Episcopal Church***



**Figure 18: The Rubusana Avenue view of the AME church**  
(Google Street View 2013)

It unfortunately appears that none of the original building plans for either the Langa AME or Wesleyan church are in existence<sup>9</sup>. This assessment is therefore based on the buildings as they exist today and on documentary evidence as set out above.

The AME church is essentially a rectangular box-like structure without any typical architectural church features such as steeples or spires or extraneous detailing. As an oblong building with a central nave forming the main space, the floor plan suggests a basilican form of church building.

The church is sited in the centre of the site, close to the street boundary although this has little effect in creating a stronger street interface. It has the remnants of an external bell tower on its grounds which has largely been demolished. The entrance

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<sup>9</sup> This was confirmed by Mr Lugulwana, the treasurer of the WMC who also undertook research into the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Mention was made of a set of plans that was held by the district office of the church during the 1980s but it has not been possible to trace this. Personal communication, 10/12/2014.

is emphasised by a small gabled portico with Doric columns and two rectangular windows on either side. Some of the detailing suggests a Gothic influence typical of the time, for example the crenulations as well as the distinctive trefoil-shaped window on the front gable. The church has a plaster finish and little decorative detailing apart from the crenulated feature and ends of the front gable which matches that of the portico gable.

The interior of the church is equally unadorned and its simplicity is striking. There are very few permanent fixtures in place and the only original feature seems to be the timber floor. It would appear that the windows have been replaced with modern steel-framed versions. An arched doorway to the back has been bricked up. The remainder of the site appears unused; the entire erf has been enclosed with a vibracrete fence. Maintenance is a concern and some of the old fabric, such as the roof sheets and plaster work, is in need of repair. (See *Figures 18 – 24*. Photographs by author unless otherwise credited).



**Figure 19: Oblique aerial view of AME Church in its context  
(CCT – ISIS)**



Figure 20: The front entrance of the AME Church (left)

Figure 21: Interior view of the church (right)



Figure 22: Back of the church showing former external door bricked in



Figure 23: Foundation stone on front corner dated 24 December 1938



Figure 24: Grounds of the AME Church with bell tower remnants and disused container

## **CHAPTER FOUR: Heritage values relating to Langa churches**

As a point of departure, it is interesting to note some of the themes from the 2002 Oral History Study with regard to churches (CPM: BC 1223 - D5.3). Although these comments do not necessarily suggest potential heritage significance, they provide some indication of notable associations attached to churches. The link between churches and schools is something that is frequently referred to. Events and celebrations, sometimes spatially associated with churches, for example the use of Mendi Square next to the Methodist Church for various functions are also often mentioned. (Festivals and memorial days traditionally held in Langa include the Mfengu Memorial day, the Moshoeshoe Memorial Feast, the Ntsikana Day celebration and the Mendi Memorial Day celebration, as discussed in Field 20013b:17). Similarly, churches are used as landmarks to describe the location of an event or place. Churches are sometimes associated with weddings, although it would appear that customary, non-church weddings are equally common. Religious practices often seem to play a role alongside more traditional or tribal activities. Other than that, churches are mostly discussed in relation to social activities such as choirs and charity organisations. Churches are also cited in respect of political activity during the apartheid years as they sporadically functioned as covert meeting venues or even places of hiding. It is above all evident that churches play a significant part in the daily life of the interviewees with most people indicating some involvement with a particular congregation.

The next section is based on the discussions and interviews with congregants, members of the clergy, community members and heritage professionals in respect of the research question of this study. The aim is to determine the extent to which the people of Langa think of the older churches in the township as heritage resources and what values they attach to these churches. These interviews do not set out to establish all the numerous ways in which people relate to the respective sites; it is however a starting point in trying to capture some of the different associated stories and experiences. Views and observations have been grouped according to a number

of themes which emerged during the discussions. The responses from church members are dealt with first, followed by that of the community and heritage professionals. See *Appendix B* for a list of the interviewees.

Historically there was a noticeable divide between permanent Langa inhabitants – those originally coming from Ndabeni and other places in Cape Town - and migrants from various areas and cultural backgrounds (Field 2003b:4). Such differentiation also affected churches; the different status attached to mission and independent churches illustrates this type of thinking. Today it would appear that differences along such lines are less pronounced. In various discussions mention was however made of the difference between so-called traditional churches and those with a more charismatic approach.

Congregants' choice of church seems to be strongly influenced by historical ties to a certain denomination. Various church members stated that they were 'born into' a specific church and that irrespective of where they live, they would keep on being members of that church. Many of them also trace their familial commitment to a specific church to the time before the relocation from Ndabeni took place. A number of people agreed that their particular church forms part of their identity. Mr Boyce, a church elder at the A.M.E, was born and raised in Langa. He has been a member of the AME 'since [he] was born' as his parents were also members. The AME is described as being a big part of his life and '[he is] very proud of this church'. Ms Mogatle, another congregant, has been a member of the AME church for fifteen years; she had lived in Langa for fifteen years before moving away five years ago. She described the Langa AME as her 'home church' to which she feels more of a connection than to any other church. Even though she no longer lives in the area, she still attends the AME as she likes 'this thing of a community that we have'.

Church-going was repeatedly emphasised as part of people's culture and traditions. The relationship between religious and traditional culture was sometimes alluded to and was portrayed as being complementary. Mr Batembu Lugulwana moved to Langa 1965 and has been involved with the Wesleyan Methodist Church since 1971.

Both his parents were members of the church. He is the treasurer of the church and is also a member of the Black Methodist Consultation (BMC). As a member of the BMC, Mr Lugulwana 'believes very strongly that the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, in as much as it was introduced by missionaries, that by and large it has more of an African heritage, because the majority of people here are Africans'. Methodism is 'part and parcel of our culture'. He described being Methodist as not just being religious, but that as part of 'being African in a very big way, therefore we regard it as part of the African heritage'. He went on to explain that most of the former key national leaders were Methodists: 'the people who set up the African National Congress in Bloemfontein, the people who set up the Pan-Africanist Congress, Robert Sobukwe was Methodist, Mandela was a Methodist'. 'The African ethos has everything to do with Methodism'. The church is generally described as being African: 'Yes, the missionaries did what they could do, but we took it over and we are running with it in our African way. We have changed it [the white missionary culture], it's our own now.' Mr Mazwi Dlakiya, who has lived in Langa for most of his life (since 1949, when he was five years old, similarly described the WMC as being part of his personal history throughout his life. For him the church is important as 'it moulded me, [made me] what I am'.

It seems that young people in Langa are still involved in churches and that church-going, at least from time to time, forms part of a typical lifestyle. There are however concerns about attracting new (younger) members and keeping them involved. According to Rev. Tuku Thasibona from the AME, 'it is a problem with our youth today if the church does not have a band'. '[Young people] like to come, now if we can just have something to keep the church vibrant, just to involve them also, to have something for them'. Although acknowledging this need, Rev. Thasibona also mentioned that it is equally important 'not to change', stating that 'our church has got discipline'. He did however suggest that a balance between tradition and change would be possible.

With regard to the WMC, Mr Lugulwana observed a marked change in the demographics of the church during the time that he has been a member. He

described the church as initially being 'half-full' with about 400 members but that it has now grown to 1500 active congregants. He mentioned that younger people now more frequently form part of the leadership of the church and that nearly 80% of the congregation is below the age of 40. This is attributed to the fact that most young people 'grew up in the church', but also to evangelic outreach programmes.

Rev. Thasibona has only been with the AME in Langa for a short time, having been transferred from the De Aar congregation a year ago. As a result he does not have much background knowledge of the Langa church or its history. He did however describe it as a 'vibrant church' which '[works] together with the community'. The membership is estimated at about 45 people and is described as a close-knit group with most people having been part of the church for a long time. Mr Boyce mentioned that in addition to the forty or so permanent members, there are more who 'come and go'. They are all known to each other and there appears to be a strong sense of community amongst them. Ms Mogatle also feels that, because of the AME's small size, people are noticed and that there is a compassionate atmosphere. She values this 'sense of closeness' and 'sense of connection' that the church offers, something she says she has not experienced in other congregations.

The main value that Rev. Thasibona attaches to the church is its role in the community. The AME church is described as playing a supportive role in this regard. During the week, the AME building is offered to other churches that do not have their own facilities. Rev. Thasibona has found that many people in Langa have links to churches and described the community as being 'mostly religious'. The churches are therefore important in his view. With regard to the adjacent neighbourhood, Ms Mogatle stated that people have a sense of responsibility towards the church, even if they are not members. Neighbours would for example keep an eye on the church and report suspicious behaviour or security concerns.

Ms Nokuzola May has been a member of the WMC since 2007, although she lives in Khayelitsha. She started to attend the Langa Methodist church after she was appointed as secretary. She mentioned that 'the church is playing a big role [in the

community] because we've got an outreach programme here in church so when people [are] in need, the church go and deliver parcels. Even if there is fire here in Joe Slovo, the members all come with clothes and take them to the squatter camp'. Mr Dlakiya similarly emphasised the church's support to the sick and the poor. An important social aspect of the churches, particularly in the WMC, is the men's and women's guilds. These associations (manyano) hold meetings for prayer and discussion and perform fundraising activities. Their identity is expressed by a specific uniform, according to Mr Lugulwana stated, is part of the heritage of the church.

A number of people pointed towards the integration of their Christian spiritual and ancestral beliefs and valued the fact that the churches are capable of accommodating this. The churches represent a mix of western style services and more traditional African activities and this unique blend of spirituality could be considered to be of social significance. The role of music in church ceremonies was repeatedly emphasised and most of the church members see this as an important component of cultural heritage. The AME relies on singing with one person beating an ordinary object as rhythmical accompaniment. The reason for this appears to be financial – the church owns one out-of-order piano and, according to Rev. Thasibona, does not have the financial means to repair it or to obtain other instruments. Mr Boyce confirmed the importance of music and particularly having a band as this is seen to attract young people - the Baptist Church is for example described as having lots of followers 'just because of the band'. Despite this concern, singing figures prominently in AME services and is an important part of religious practice.

In the case of the WMC, Mr Lugulwana attributes a spiritual shift from more conservative Methodism to a more 'worshipping' style to the use of African instruments like the drum. That is described as big change as they previously sang without accompaniments, apart from an organ, whereas they now have 'piano, drums, singing, horns'. This is 'completely different as when you worship in Pinelands, which is much more quieter, traditional'. 'We are more boisterous here, we sing heavens high and we shake our booties all the way', Mr Lugulwana stated.

'This is something that comes... we inherited it from our elderly people. It has always been like that because if you look at the Methodist church, the Young Men's Guild for an example originated from the Eastern Cape but it flourished in the mines in Johannesburg...that's why we believe the Methodist Church of Southern Africa is the heritage of black people'. Mr Dlakiya also referred to music as heritage, particularly the choir. 'The Methodists had a powerful church choir which sometimes was invited even out of the church...Even now, most visitors are fascinated, more especially white people'. He voiced a concern about the church organ: 'what worries me most, what I used to like, the remains of it is still here, it is the organ... Nobody was using it until it got dysfunctional. Now it sits as an ornament'. He added that choir is 'respected in the location for the music'.

Some significance is attached to the fact that the churches functioned as safe spaces and places of refuge during the apartheid era. It was mentioned that the churches were sometimes used as cover, for example during police raids and that covert political meetings would take place inside. Such activities could be considered in light of De Certeau's tactical action of the ordinary (1984) as ways in which people have appropriated church spaces for their own means, not necessarily in the way that it was intended to be used. It was also mentioned with some pride that Mandela used the Methodist church as a hideaway at some point, although this could not be verified. He did however give a speech at the WMC and alluded to the important role that churches played in the struggle against apartheid (South African History Online 1999). Mr Lugulwana emphasised the role of the church during apartheid and stated that 'it was mainly the churches that were really driving the changes in this country, resisting oppression and making it understandable that one day things will come right. They were taking people, giving them hope all the time. It was the churches that really kept people moving forward in those dark days of apartheid'. Ms May added that 'people from Langa, they say [the church] is special because...I don't remember the year, but Mandela came here. So because of that they regard it. It was before [the end of apartheid]. I think it is those years when he was still ducking and diving. Many people in Langa knows this'. Another aspect of this history was

mentioned by Mr Dlakiya, who pointed out that many funerals for victims of apartheid were conducted in the WMC and that 'even now [it is] still visited by old politicians'.

The roles of the respective churches in education were cited a number of times, particularly by the older church members interviewed. An interesting effect of being schooled in the churches is that time spent in the church buildings literally took up most of people's time as they attended school on a daily basis as well as Sunday school and other church activities. As a result the physical spaces of the church forms a substantial part of childhood memory to many people.

One of the questions considered at the start of this study was whether the churches in Langa are viewed as a colonial imposition in respect of culture and architectural style. Most church members interviewed regarded this concern as irrelevant. The fact that the churches are 'on African soil' makes them African and as such they are respected as part of history. Mr Lugulwana for example mentioned that '[the WMC] is an African building now, because it is part of this integration we believe in'. Davies (2002:7) questioned why black people in Langa, emerging from an experience of repression, would wish to conserve fabric that illustrates and symbolises their past lack of control. Although important, this concern was never raised by the community and one can assume that the values they attach to the churches are not substantially influenced by this outlook.

It could be argued that the influence of architectural character in determining heritage significance is limited. People mostly referred to the functionality and size of the churches rather than any specific appreciation of its style or appearance. The AME building which is substantially less imposing in character compared to the Wesleyan church is by no means seen as less significant by its clergy and congregants. It would appear that its age value and role in the community makes up for whatever heritage value might otherwise have been associated with appearance.

In Western culture, the value of churches is often defined by their interiors or by what they contain. As a result, relics and art contribute towards an appreciation of specific

churches and ornate, highly decorative interiors are usually favoured by the Authorised Heritage Discourse. As a potential embodiment of heritage significance, this aspect is notably absent in the churches of Langa. In fact, it would appear that people attach more value to the pure functionality of the church buildings than any other symbolic or decorative function. The interior is however regarded as heritage in the sense that it provides a link to the past, as in 'my father sat in that bench'. Similarly mention was made of the various places where people habitually entered and took their seats and how the specific benches were a reminder of those people.

There is generally an awareness of shortcomings in the maintenance and care of these buildings. The AME building is described as having 'to be seen to' in places by Mr Boyce. The size is described as sufficient and no immediate need for expansion is evident but maintenance is however required. With regard to the WMC, Mr Lugulwana pointed out that obtaining ownership had made a big difference to the church. There are now plans to 'to develop infrastructure' and fundraising is taking place.

Age and tradition appears to play an important part in people's perception of heritage and as such churches are often deemed significant. With regard to the AME, Mr Boyce clearly stated that '[he] can't say that the church is not heritage' and that in his view it definitely constitutes heritage. He confirmed that heritage for him is 'about the building' and not merely the congregation and church functions. This value is ascribed to the fact that the building is old and that it has always been part of his and his family's life. He confirmed that he sees all the old churches in Langa as being part of heritage. When asked about the main reason for attaching value to the church Mr Boyce's answer was that 'it is historic' and that his parents have 'told him a lot about the church'. It is clearly seen as an inherited tradition. In the view of Rev Thasibona, 'heritage is about traditionally' (sic); it is about 'doing things in a traditional way'. This is unequivocally described as being good because 'it gives a memory of some times where we come from which we should not forget'. Ms Mogatle on the other hand is aware of the history of the church and feels that '[it being one of the oldest churches] makes a difference to people. She mentioned that

[in the wider AME community] the Langa congregation is referred to as the 'mother church', despite it being 'disadvantaged', and that the church is 'quite respected'. Heritage to her means 'anything...that we would like to keep as it is'. Ms Mogatle also included Methodism as something that she sees as heritage in contrast to many of the charismatic churches, with the reason being that 'it is something old'. She attaches significance to the 'cultures and traditions of the church' and sees this as heritage. In her view the Langa AME church 'definitely is [heritage]'.

Mr Lugulwana is convinced that the WMC building constitutes heritage. 'The buildings in particular' is heritage, 'the architect[ure]'. To illustrate his point, Mr Lugulwana said that the space in front of the church (presumably the adjacent open space) had been declared 'a heritage and even our church...here has been declared as a heritage building – we cannot touch it and change its architect[ure]'. This understanding presumably results from previous heritage identification processes in Langa. This perceived heritage value is seen as being 'very very important because it speaks to our African heritage to some extent'. Mr Lugulwana described Langa's churches as being 'a heritage of this community'. Ms May's understanding of heritage is 'how long the church has been here'. She is therefore of the opinion that all the old churches in Langa is of heritage value because of their age. Mr Dlakiya defined heritage as 'what was left here by maybe the parents or their forefathers. It is not only in the form of a building; it is many things you feel that it should be preserved for some time'. He sees the WMC as heritage but 'not in the manner that this is a heritage site, not in that way'. It seems that he rather values the role of the church as an institution in the community.

Although church members mostly agreed on the need to conserve these churches, it appears that they have different views on what such conservation might entail. A number of people felt that the old structures should remain but also emphasised the possibility of having to enlarge the buildings in future to accommodate growing demand.

Mr Boyce definitely agreed that it is important to protect the AME church building. He linked this to the fact that the church also needs to attract younger people to ensure its sustainability. Rev. Thasibona on the other hand did not feel that the building should necessarily remain unchanged and would for example support it being enlarged should the need arise. In an apparent contradiction he however also stated that 'we can preserve [the building]; it is also important – we can preserve [it] as it is'. In the view of the reverend, the church needs to be protected 'as history', but must also be able to accommodate change. One possible change that is supported with regard to the AME site is the provision of a residence for the minister. The need for additional space for a Sunday school was also mentioned by Ms Mogatle. It was mentioned that the site offers sufficient space for these things to happen without affecting the church building itself. Ms Mogatle feels that, because of 'changing demands', and 'to keep young people', it is important to 'make the church beautiful'. It was suggested that the front could remain as is but that 'the back' can be amended.

With regard to the WMC, Mr Lugulwana alluded to debates on its presumed heritage status and the need for change. 'Some people have been saying it is high time we expand the church, but the majority of people said no we want it [as it is]'. He elaborated that this is because 'the old man so-and-so used to sit in this chair... old man so-and-so, you know...when I got converted, I received my communion from... especially the exterior and the interior: people, they've got a claim in terms of what would regard the seats... my father used to sit in this seat with the old people when we joined the church, the elder used... and its almost still the same, the way it is still structured.' As a result the current intention is apparently to rather use the surrounding vacant land to build. Mr Lugulwana mentioned that a resource centre cum hall is envisaged to accommodate big events, like Easter celebrations which are apparently attended by about 2000 people. This would be on the same site, 'at the back there'. It is argued that this should not impact on the church because of the view that the church building itself cannot be altered: 'no no we can't touch; it will be completely separate'. Mr Lugulwana is clear in his support for conservation of the building. 'Yes, we have to [conserve the building] – it is part of the African heritage.

Because it is part of the Methodist Church, we want it like this, it's the sweat and blood of our forefathers that really made this to be what it is today. They came here to pour their hearts out – we believe that spirit still resonates, that those prayers are still here with us...Therefore if we start meddling with this church it means we are meddling with those blessings which were left here'. Ms May however feels that the function of the church is more important than the building, but '[for] some of them, the building means a lot; it tells a story'. 'Many people know these stories and care about the buildings especially people from this community'. She added that 'the building should be protected' but at the same time acknowledged that it is getting too small for the congregation and might require extension.

Mr Dlakiya provided a cautious and more ambivalent answer as to his views on conservation: 'now, I don't want to be caught... Is it important for this building to be a heritage site, I need to know what does it involve. Ja, it can be heritage but it need to be spelled clearly to the membership of the church'.He mentioned the fact that one of church leaders previously said in a meeting that the WMC is a heritage site and that most of the members were not aware of that. He referred to a crack in wall of the church which has been repeatedly repaired but which is apparently used as a motivation for the potential demolition and extension of the building. Mr Dlakiya appeared to be in favour of this approach and argued that any extension can be 'technologically' built to appear old if needed. Based on his statement, it seems that there are varying opinions regarding conservation in the church leadership and uncertainty as to the implications thereof. 'When it comes to the question that this is a heritage site and should be left as it is... Now, okay I agree it could be left as it is, what if now if it is left as it is, it caves in because we are using it and then what happens? I don't understand it. But to say that it is a heritage site, I don't understand'.

It could reasonably be assumed that most church members would in one way or another ascribe significance to their respective churches. This was indeed confirmed by many of the responses. In some cases people strongly argued in favour of protecting the church buildings. Reasons for this were predominantly based on the

age and history of the churches and also relied to some extent on assumed significance which resulted from previous heritage processes in Langa. It however also became clear that many of the values attached to the churches are of an intangible nature and include aspects such as tradition, culture and social activities. This conclusion is supported by the author's experience in attending a church service at the AME: the importance of social interaction, singing, personal engagement and a sense of familiarity and compassion among congregants was evident and stood out as the defining quality of the occasion<sup>10</sup>. While heritage is often linked to the past, the churches in Langa and its significance to members and the clergy is very much of the present. They represent an ongoing sense of value and importance in people's daily lives in addition to those values constituted by memories and past events.

All community members interviewed for this study were born in Langa or have resided there for a substantial period of time. They all live or work in close proximity to the Wesleyan Methodist and AME churches.<sup>11</sup> For ease of reading, their names have been omitted from the text but are listed in *Appendix B*.

It is interesting that, in discussions with neighbourhood community members, many values and associations with churches were mentioned which correspond to those expressed by church members and clergy. Churches were generally described as important in the community, even though they might not directly form part of a person's spiritual life.

Neighbour A described the churches as being 'very much important' and as being 'part of heritage'. He mentioned that the missionary influence in Langa assisted in establishing 'a religious side of life in addition to a cultural side'. These missionary

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<sup>10</sup> A morning service was attended at the AME Church on 14 December 2014.

<sup>11</sup> As some of the interviewees were identified by a Community Liaison Officer who is also active in the Langa Heritage Foundation, it could be presumed that they might have an interest in or knowledge of heritage that might not otherwise have been the case. It should also be noted that some of the community members indicated an affiliation with other churches in Langa and that this might have a bearing on their response.

churches were described as being multi-cultural and not necessarily reflecting a 'white' culture. In his view, the churches 'are still very much important [in the community]'. He explained that community meetings will normally be opened by prayer and that because of this, some of the clergy in Langa are also seen as community leaders. His understanding of heritage is that it is 'every part of which it was a start of Langa, how it was actually developed'. As a result he sees all the old material fabric, like the churches, as being equally important as heritage resources because it represents the history of Langa. In the view of Neighbour A, it is 'very much important' to conserve the 'very same' church buildings because of the fact that any rebuilt structures or new designs will bring 'another different perspective' which is not in keeping with Langa's history. He described the churches as being 'pretty much unique'. 'This is not an African design churches; it's an international design churches'. Despite this, the churches are described as African 'because it is on the home soil of Africa'. He went on to say that the churches were 'not forcibly put here' but that it came about through negotiation with the missionaries and this has led to 'new' version of culture, which exists in harmony with the African spiritual and ancestral culture.

Neighbour B sees the old churches as heritage because 'people were moved from Ndabeni and it was part of their removal from Ndabeni to here, so it has been part of the people from way back.' The churches were described as part of the culture of the people of Langa, even of young people. The role of churches in apartheid was highlighted ('people would go to churches when they were chased by police and it has always stood for the right') as well as its role in the community today: 'the church protects the morale of the community...the family values...it promotes good'. Heritage was defined as 'what we inherit from our parents, our values, our community systems and it is very important to us because it's what makes us our beings, what makes us different from other cultures. It's what we got from our forefathers'. In light of this definition, Neighbour B sees the churches as heritage. Although she stated that the buildings need to be protected, her motivation seems to rely more on intangible values: 'it is one of the institutions which guide us'. She added slightly ambiguously that 'it has been part of us since way back and it has to

be guarded; it has to be protected' but then clarified that she referred to the function of the church more than the building: 'it doesn't matter whether you meet at school or you meet under a tree, it is the functioning of the church that is important'. However, in an apparent contradiction, she confirmed that it is important to keep the old buildings as 'it reminds us of our old ways, it has to be kept like that - it's part of our history and we have to keep it like that.'

Neighbour C pointed out that churches form a substantial part of tradition in Langa as 'you are born into a church, baptised there, go to Sunday school, become a leader of a group'. He also alluded to the role of churches in politics in the past: 'men would carry bibles while discussing politics so when police would come they would see people are busy'. When the police chased people, they went into church buildings where they could not be arrested. A memory that stands out to Neighbour C is his attendance of school in the AME. He described how 'on Friday you remove the desks for church on Sunday and Monday you move the desks back to their normal places'. He did not have particularly strong views on church buildings apart from saying that tourists would for example rather go to the WMC than to the AME as it is bigger. He supports the potential expansion of churches, but not demolition as this would 'destroy the character'.

Neighbour D described the Anglican and Methodist churches as the two most prominent churches in Langa followed by the Presbyterian and the AME. He mentioned that people mostly attend the churches to which their families belong, even if they no longer live in Langa. The new generation however, especially the 'model C's-and-whatnot' goes to 'these modern spiritual churches'. The old churches are described as not being as 'super-strong' as they once were although the Methodist and Anglican churches are still seen as 'very strong old churches' which command big volumes of people. He sees churches as important in the community because 'the black person is a devoted religious person' and Christianity 'plays a very big part'. According to Neighbour D, heritage plays a 'very big important' role because 'our cultures... we still maintain our cultures, we're a cultural people so

obviously heritage goes with that'. Although seeing the old churches as heritage he argued that many of them definitely need improvement and expansion.

When asked about the churches in Langa, Neighbour E described the WMC as the most prominent in Langa. She sees churches as important in the community because it 'changes the behaviour of the people' and has a good influence. Heritage in her view is 'about the culture' and is viewed as important. Churches are heritage, because it is a link to the past: 'because there are people in the church [who] were there when it opened, when they developed the church... there is a time when you'll remember them, when you'll do the slaughtering and when you'll do the mass...and remember them'. The buildings to her are meaningful because of this link to certain people. She stated that it is important to protect the buildings but at the same time argued that new churches could also be built in their place because 'there are cracks on the...churches'. Similarly she felt that they can be demolished if expansion is required.

Neighbour F, although stating that the churches are heritage, did not elaborate on her understanding of the meaning of heritage. She did however confirm that for her the value resides in the congregation rather than the building: 'we don't care about the building, we don't mind'. She felt quite passionate about the role of churches in the community, particularly its charity function. When asked about the need for the conservation of church buildings, she contradicted her earlier statement by saying that it is 'very important to conserve the churches'. This is probably an indication that she means the church as an institution rather than as a physical construct.

With reference to Riegl's categories of monuments and values (1903), it would indeed appear that historic, age and use values are those most frequently stated as a motivation by the community for assigning heritage value to the churches. What stood out in these discussions was the emphasis on what Davies (2002:4) calls the functional, non-material culture. As such people value the role of the churches in terms of history, culture and tradition and also for their social, moral and religious aspects.

Lowenthal (1985:42), in his discussion on the benefits of the past, draws on the ideas of Lynch (1972:40) and argues that the endurance of historic fabric assists in establishing and maintaining identity. As symbolic landmarks, churches - although they might not necessarily be regularly visited by all members of a community – are able to convey a sense of security and continuity to a range of people and thereby help to sustain identity. Interestingly the community interviews have indicated that less importance is attached to this aspect than might have been expected.

The ‘experts’ seemed unanimous in their view that the churches of Langa indeed represent heritage value. This was generally argued in terms of their functional role in the historic development of Langa. Sean Field from the Centre of Popular Memory at UCT, highlighted the role of the churches in education and also pointed to the broader issue of mission education and how this aspect of religion influenced a number of prominent leaders. He argued that this link is interesting historically and sees it as a justification for preserving the old churches. He was hesitant to differentiate between tangible and intangible values and described it as a dichotomy which, as a conceptual hierarchy, usually prioritises the tangible. In his view, it is of more use to look at the interconnections between material traces and emotional or cognitive processes in order to ascertain the meaning of places to people. In this respect, he emphasised the importance of churches as having ‘a sense of place’ in Langa both physically and figuratively.

Alfred Magwaca, a Langa Heritage Foundation representative, similarly cited the historic value and age of the churches as ‘a measure of heritage’ and also pointed out that ‘there’s history there because our grandmothers and fathers grew up in those churches’. He also alluded to the education function and remembered the impact of being in the same building for most of the week during his childhood (he attended the Methodist Church school). He definitely sees the churches as heritage as they are ‘part of the history of Langa and the things that have happened in and was caused by the church’. An example of this is the role of churches in apartheid. He explained that churches were not necessarily seen as representing another

'layer' of restrictions, as might have been assumed, but that they acted as places of refuge and were used as 'places to hide, to discuss political stuff, to hide behind the Word'. To him the built fabric is important as it contributes to visual variation and identity in the townscape: 'in the way they are built, you can differentiate between the Catholic and the St Cyprians and the Methodist and the Zionist because they all talk differently. The walls will tell you that this one is not a Roman Catholic because of the structure or the way it is built'. To him the churches also represent intangible values and they form part of people's identity. 'If I'm talking to someone who knows my family, my church history will also be discussed. They know the values and standards of family, [I am] judged on this'. In his view, the churches 'need to be protected, preserved and treated as [heritage]'. Even though it might result in limitations, Mr Magwaca supports the conservation of the buildings as he sees them as 'monuments that deserve to be protected'.

In the view of Dr Guma, a Langa historian and heritage practitioner, the churches represent a significant component of the cultural history of Langa. He argued this in light of the fact that they were in one way or another linked to the presence of European culture in the township, the movement of people from rural areas to cities, the establishment of schools, political activity, a shift from Bantu education to more mainstream schooling as well as a concentration of leadership in the community. He mentioned that in the past people identified through religious affiliations and that as a result, the various denominations had a direct influence on the community. In Dr Guma's view, it is important for churches to be studied further so that this might inform SAHRA as to a way forward with regard to the heritage status of Langa and the formal protection of the churches.

In conclusion, to return to the UNESCO principles (2013:22) used to determine integrity and authenticity in the context of cultural significance, it appears that values relating to form, design, material and substance are less prevalent than those of use and function, according to the views of those consulted in this study. Similarly tradition, spirit and feeling and other forms of intangible values were strongly expressed. Notwithstanding the importance that some people attach to the built

fabric, these broader socio-cultural values predominantly constitute an argument for ascribing heritage significance to the old churches of Langa.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusion**

This study aimed to investigate the perceived heritage significance of churches in townships. This was done by means of the single case study method: Langa served as the examined case and the emphasis was on churches dating from the early development phases. Two churches were investigated in particular – the AME and the Wesleyan Methodist Church – in order to contrast instances where variables such as age and denomination are closely related, but where the difference in architectural quality allows for a critical comparison of values

The hypothesis of this study is that certain churches of Langa are regarded as heritage resources. It has been attempted to prove this by following of a number of steps. As a start the intellectual realm of churches and heritage values was explored. The next phase involved historical research related to the development of the churches in order to establish background facts that might be of importance in understanding values. The main focus of the study was on ascertaining the values of the Langa community in relation to churches by means of a series of interviews. In this regard, views were solicited from members of the clergy and congregants of the respective churches, community members residing in the neighbourhood of the identified churches and an 'expert' group with views based on their knowledge of heritage in Langa against which to assess the findings of this study. As this is not an exhaustive attempt to ascertain the values of a community as a whole, this process should be seen as a pilot study which indicates tendencies in people's views regarding heritage values in a defined geographic area.

A number of themes emerged out of the various interviews. These can roughly be categorised as follows: the role of the churches in the history of Langa; intangible values associated with churches; and churches as heritage resources that potentially need to be conserved.

Education and apartheid often came up with regard to the role of the churches in Langa's history. The churches were primarily responsible for establishing education

and this features strongly in the memories of some of the older generation. Similarly the role of the churches in the struggle against apartheid was repeatedly mentioned.

With respect to intangible values, many people felt that the churches are part of their culture and tradition, even though they might not be members of the congregations. Some attach a spiritual value to it which is also related to African customs - these divergent traditions do not seem to be in opposition to each other. Churches were described as communities in themselves but also as being part of the broader community; the supportive role of churches in this regard was repeatedly emphasised. Another significant intangible value often highlighted is church music.

Despite a nearly unanimous view that the churches represent heritage significance, contradictory statements were made at times with regard to what this might imply. It could reasonably be assumed that most church members would in one way or another attach significance to their respective churches; this was confirmed by their responses. In most cases people strongly argued in favour of protecting the churches. If one uses Howard's definition of heritage as that which is 'anything that someone wishes to conserve' (2003:6), it is clear that there is strong evidence of such a sentiment in relation to Langa's churches. There is however an apparent ambiguity in respect of what people sees as 'church': references to the physical structure, the use and function of the church and the congregation were used interchangeably when expressing values. This is illustrated by the fact that people often confirmed the importance of protection and conservation of the buildings but simultaneously supported alteration and even demolition as long as the church function itself remains. Interestingly the neighbourhood community, who are not necessarily church members, shared many of these views. Churches are seen as representing history and because of this are regarded as heritage; less importance was attached to the buildings themselves.

In light of these values, the following can be tentatively concluded regarding the churches as heritage resources:

- The majority of values associated with the churches are of an intangible nature. As such it does not indicate a clear position that affirms the buildings themselves as heritage resources requiring formal protection.
- People's responses came across as ambiguous with regard to differentiating between the building and the function of the church. Buildings were often described as constituting heritage value which requires protection but were simultaneously also seen as functional structures that could or should be amended as necessary.
- In most responses there was only a tenuous link discernable between people's values relating to the church and the physical fabric of the building and the nature thereof. For the most part the significance attached to the churches would remain valid irrespective of the character of the buildings. The difference in architectural quality between the AME and the Wesleyan Methodist Church did not appear to make a difference to the values attached to these churches.
- Throughout the interviews, little mention was made of the architectural, spatial and landmark value of churches. It would appear that these qualities are of lesser importance to most people.

If cultural (heritage) significance is taken to mean aesthetic, historical, architectural, spiritual or social value or significance as inter alia stated in the Burra charter (ICOMOS 2013), it could reasonably be assumed that some of the values expressed in relation to Langa's churches indicate such significance. Although the findings of this study suggests this, these values need to be more comprehensively assessed before any conclusions can be drawn with regard to formal declaration as heritage resources as provided for in the NHRA. As Holtorf (2010:51) points out, cultural heritage is part of the cultural sector at large and thus subject to policies which aim to guide the management and protection of the heritage. Importantly however such 'management' also need to acknowledge specific conditions in a society. When the

significance attached to buildings is largely based on intangible social and cultural values, the need for intervention by authorities becomes debatable. In the case of Langa it is particularly important to avoid an approach whereby heritage status is conferred by presumed expert opinion. The findings of this study suggest that the community of Langa values the churches as heritage resources but that a flexible management approach needs to be adopted with regard to the conservation of these resources.

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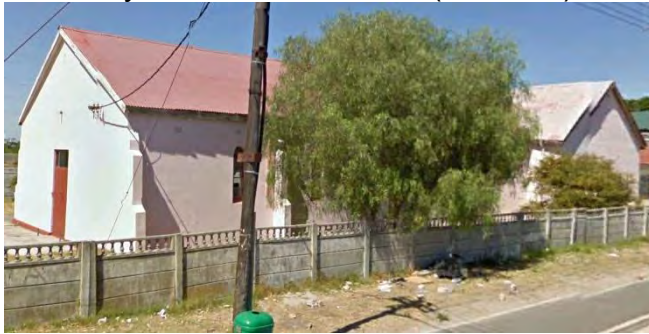
Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013 (Adopted 31/10/2013)

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Langa's early churches

(See *Figure 25*, numbered correspondingly)

1. Presbyterian Church Africa (Erf 3582), Ndabeni Street



2. St Francis Catholic Church (Erf 3583), Ndabeni Street



3. African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) (Erf 2747), Corner of Rubusana and Washington Streets



4. Universal Congregational Church (Erf 344), Bennie Street



5. St Cyprians Anglican Church (Erf 164), Papu Street



6. Apostolic Church (Erf 113), Brinton Street



7. Langa Presbyterian Church (Erf 413), corner Lerotholi and Papu Street



8. Wesleyan Methodist Church (Erf 551) Lerotholi Avenue



9. Order of Ethiopia Church (Erf 818), Mendi Avenue



10. Reformed Presbyterian Church (Ethiopian Church) (Erf 545), Corner Jungle Walk and Livingston



11. Dutch Reformed Church (Erf 417), Corner Jungle Walk and Brinton Street



12. Langa Baptist Church (Erf 1182), Sandile Avenue and Washington Street corner

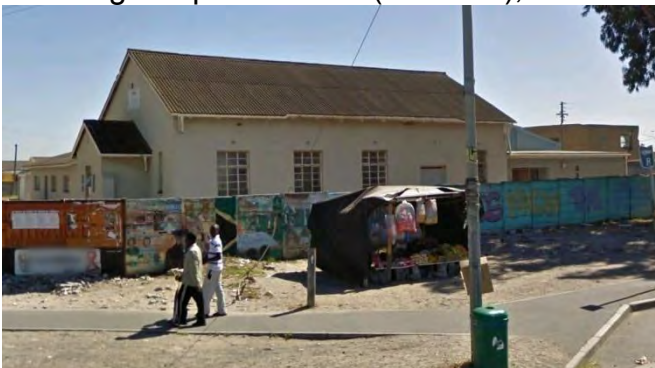




Figure 25: Location of churches

## Appendix B: List of interviewees

### Church members/ clergy

#### *Methodist Church*

- Mr Batembu Lugulwana - Treasurer  
Personal interview – Langa  
10 December 2014
- Ms Nokuzola May – Congregant  
Personal interview – Langa  
10 December 2014
- Mr Mazwi Dlakiya - Congregant  
Personal interview – Langa  
12 December 2014

#### *AME Church*

- Rev. Tuku Thasibona – Minister  
Personal interview – Langa  
11 December 2014
- Mr Jeffrey Boyce – Congregant & church elder  
Personal interview – Langa  
9 December 2014
- Ms K. Mogatle – Congregant  
Personal interview – Langa  
14 December 2014

## Community members

- Neighbour A:  
Thami Sijila - Langa resident and curator at Pass Office Museum  
(33 years, born in Langa)  
Personal interview – Langa  
9 December 2014
- Neighbour B:  
Ms Mandisa Giyose – Langa resident  
(Mid-40s, moved to Langa in 1989)  
Personal interview– Langa  
8 January 2015
- Neighbour C:  
Mr Dumile Nkomo – Langa resident  
(54 years, born in Langa)  
Personal interview – Langa  
8 January 2015
- Neighbour D:  
Mr Zuma - Langa resident  
(74 years, lived in Langa since 1963)  
Personal interview – Langa  
9 December 2014
- Neighbour E:  
Ms B. Oliphant - Langa resident  
(45 years, born in Langa)  
Personal interview – Langa  
8 January 2015

- Neighbour F:  
Ms Ernestine (Ouma) Nokwazi - Langa resident  
(78 years, born in Langa)  
Personal interview – Langa  
8 January 2015

#### Langa Heritage/ History group

- Sean Field – Academic: Historical Studies Department, UCT  
Personal interview – Cape Town  
2 December 2014
- Alfred Magwaca – Langa Heritage Forum representative  
Personal interview - Langa  
10 December 2014
- Dr Phillip Mthobeli Guma – Langa historian and heritage expert  
Personal comment during CCT Heritage discussion, Cape Town  
18 March 2014

## **Appendix C: Interview guide**

### **Typical questions: Community**

- 1) How long have you lived in the area?
- 2) Do you have any background on the history of the Wesleyan Methodist Church/ AME church?
- 3) What memories do you have of the church during your time spent in this area and from what has been told to you?
- 4) What is your understanding of 'heritage'?
- 5) Would you describe Langa's historic churches as heritage? Why?
- 6) What values do you attach to this church?
- 7) In your view, what role do the churches play in the community?
- 8) Do you feel it is important for the church to be conserved (and legally protected) for the next generation?

### **Typical questions: Church members/ clergy**

- 1) How would you describe your involvement in this particular church?
- 2) Do you have any background on the history of the Wesleyan Methodist Church/ AME church?
- 3) What memories do you have of the church during your involvement/ time spent in this area and from what has been told to you?
- 4) What is your understanding of 'heritage'?
- 5) Would you describe Langa's historic churches as heritage? Why?
- 6) What values do you attach to this church?
- 7) In your view, what role do the churches play in the community?
- 8) Do you feel it is important for the church to be conserved (and legally protected) for the next generation?

### **Typical questions: Heritage professionals**

- 1) What has your involvement been in terms of heritage identification and related processes in Langa?
- 2) What information do you have on Langa's churches and how could this assist in defining heritage significance?
- 3) Do you have any specific views on the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the AME church?
- 4) Would you describe Langa's historic churches as heritage? If so, why?
- 5) If so, does it relate predominantly to tangible or intangible heritage?
- 6) In your view, what role do the churches play as heritage resources in Langa in comparison to other identified resources?
- 7) Would you say that the churches contribute to people's identity?
- 8) If seen as important heritage, what protection mechanisms should be considered?