AOSIS

Migrant churches and reverse mission: Missiological gaps and missionary trap

CrossMark

Author:
Phillip Musoni[1]

Affiliation:
[1]School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, Faculty of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa

Corresponding author:
Phillip Musoni, musonip@ukzn.ac.za

The migration of Zimbabweans in search of better opportunities has spurred the growth and spread of Zimbabwean Churches within diaspora communities. Currently, many Zimbabwean churches like other African Churches have crossed continental borders, setting up branches in Europe and North America. This phenomenon of African Churches engaging with diasporic communities has been described by scholars as a 'Reverse Mission'. A critical question that emerges is: To what degree is the establishment of African churches in other nations and continent an indicative of a reverse mission? The case study focuses on two Zimbabwean churches that have established branches in South Africa and other countries both within and beyond the African continent. The selection of the two churches is based on their origins that trace back to South Africa, rendering them pertinent examples for discussion in the context of reverse mission. The research identified 'missiological gaps' leading to a 'missionary trap' in the context of reverse mission, as the two Zimbabwean Churches face new frontiers. The article discusses how Zimbabwean churches, along with other African churches in the diaspora, created obstacles that impeded the dissemination of the gospel because of their insufficient cross-cultural training and experience. The researcher utilised descriptive phenomenological and interpretive phenomenological approaches for data collection and analysis, respectively.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary: The article is framed within the context of reverse mission, missiology, and the history of African Christianity. It contends that the African church should reassess its evangelistic strategies as it transcends national and international borders.

Keywords: diasporan community; migrant Pentecostal Churches; missiological gaps; missionary trap; reverse mission; South Africa; Zimbabwe.

Introduction

The article explores the effects of the expansion of Zimbabwean Churches into new regions. It centres on the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA) and the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) of Zimbabwe, which have both set up branches in South Africa and various countries across and beyond the African continent. The establishment of these church branches by the Zimbabwean church leaders in South Africa is narrowly viewed as a 'reverse mission'. The concept of reverse mission applies here because the origins of both ZAOGA and AFM of Zimbabwe[1] churches can be traced to South Africa. However, the question remains: does establishing church branches by these Zimbabwean church leaders in South Africa constitute a reverse mission? The research indicated that the mission of the AFM of Zimbabwe was to serve Zimbabweans residing in South Africa, while the ZAOGA was focused on creating an Indigenous Pentecostal church for the South African population. The article indicated that the sampled churches appear to be unsuccessful in converting the majority of South Africans, owing to their insensitivity and reluctance to incorporate compatible South African cultures into their gospel practices, leading to a repetition of the European missionary pitfalls in Africa. The article is structured into six sections. The first section establishes a historical connection between Zimbabwean Churches and the South African missionary enterprise. The second section defines key terms such as reverse mission, missiological gaps and missionary trap. The third section examines the strategies of Zimbabwean Churches in establishing their branches in South Africa. The fourth section analyses the growth and development of the Shona-speaking AFM in South Africa. The fifth section delves into the expansion of the ZAOGA church into South Africa. The concluding section examines the missiological gaps and the 'missionary trap' as obstacles to reverse mission, reflecting on the experience of Zimbabwean churches in this new context.

1.In this article, the term 'AFM of Zimbabwe' refers to the Apostolic Faith Mission church in Zimbabwe prior to its 2018 division into two separate entities.

Methodology

A descriptive phenomenological approach was employed during data collection within two Zimbabwean churches. Notably, ZAOGA that is registered as Forward in Faith Church in the Republic of South Africa, whereas the AFM of Zimbabwe has become 'the Shona-speaking AFM' in South Africa. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, participant observation and documentary analysis. Participant observations were conducted at four Forward in Faith (FIF) churches located in Soshanguve, Beria in Johannesburg, Centurion in Gauteng Province and the Mokopane church in Limpopo Province. The researcher gathered data from the Shona-speaking AFM church in Kempton Park, Gauteng Province and three locations in Limpopo Province: Naboom, Mokopane and Polokwane. Participant observation occurred over 4 months, from March to July 2024, to investigate the missiological gaps and missionary trap as the Zimbabwean churches crossed into South Africa. The interviewees were chosen through random sampling, which was selected for its ability to give every individual within a certain area an equal chance of being selected, thereby enhancing the accuracy and balance of the data collection process. Furthermore, the researcher conducted library research, utilising books and journal articles. The article used interpretive phenomenology for data analysis.

Theoretical framework

This article examines the missiological trajectory of Zimbabwean churches in the face of emerging challenges. Prior studies show that African churches have set up congregations in Europe and North America (Adogame 2013; Ter Haar 2001), engaging in what is known as reverse mission. These churches, while establishing branches overseas and being noted for their novel approach to reverse mission, have been observed by researchers such as Anderson Moyo, who studied Zimbabwean church planters in Sheffield, to predominantly establish homogenous black churches within predominantly white communities (Moyo 2016). Drawing from cross-cultural theory, this article contends that by embracing the cultures of host nations, barriers can be dismantled, thus enabling Zimbabwean churches to fulfil the Great Commission of Jesus Christ to 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations' within the diasporan community. It suggests that African church leaders might need to explore new methods to gain a deeper understanding of the foreign cultures in which they minister (Prill 2023).

The historical link of the Zimbabwean Churches to South African missionary enterprise

The AFM in Zimbabwe has its origins in South Africa. Togarasei observes that the AFM's inception in Zimbabwe was marked by the arrival of missionaries from the USA, headed by John G. Lake, in South Africa on 14 May 1908 (Togarasei 2016:3). The mining industry in South Africa, known as 'kuwenera', drew migrant workers from across the southern African region. Togarasei found that these workers, upon returning home, brought with them the knowledge, experiences and religions they had adopted in South Africa (Togarasei 2016:4). Accordingly, Pentecostalism spread to parts of Zimbabwe through these returning migrants. For Ruzivo, the AFM, marking the first Pentecostal church in the nation, made its entry into Zimbabwe in 1915 at Gwanda (Ruzivo 2014:24). Zacharius Malamela, a convert of the AFM of South Africa, is acknowledged for founding the AFM church of Zimbabwe. In 1918, Malamela invited AFM's leadership to officially register the church in Zimbabwe. The first missionary dispatched to Zimbabwe by the AFM was GJ. Booysen (Ruzivo 2014:25:5). Rev Booysen, originally from Louis Trichardt (Makhado), was sent to Zimbabwe to officially register the AFM church in what was then Rhodesia (Togarasei (2016:7). Despite the colonial administrator's delay in registering the Pentecostal movement because of a lack of understanding of its features such as glossolalia and faith healing (Hwata 2005:10), the church continued to grow as an underground ministry in Zimbabwe. It was not until the 1940s that the AFM was finally officially registered (Togarasei 2016). The AFM of Zimbabwe has recently expanded, establishing branches in South Africa, an initiative that could be described as a reverse mission.

Similarly, the ZAOGA church, established by Ezekiel Guti in 1960 in Zimbabwe, was a direct result of Guti's interactions with two South African Pentecostal churches: the AFM and the Assemblies of God (Schoffeleers 2013). Guti began his fellowship with the AFM of South Africa in 1949 (Musoni 2024). After a decade as a black evangelist in this church, misunderstandings with the missionary leadership led to his excommunication. In 1959, Guti, who had already garnered followers within the AFM church known as the Prayer Band Group, joined another South African church, the Assemblies of God (Maxwell 2006). However, misunderstandings arose within this missionary church again, leading to the excommunication of Guti and his team. Although both two churches were Pentecostal, they appeared not to accommodate Guti's prophetic and deliverance gifts. According to Maxwell, Guti possessed the gifts of healing, prophecy and exorcism (Maxwell 2000). Whenever Guti preached, demons would manifest, which the church leadership viewed as a threat to their hierarchy. This led to accusations that Guti intended to usurp the leadership from the South African missionaries, resulting in his excommunications (Erwin 1985). Following his second excommunication, Guti established his own Pentecostal church, naming it after the Assemblies of God – the ZAOGA (Musoni 2024).

Thus, the two churches, originally from South Africa, have now initiated their own branches in South Africa. The question remains: To what extent is the establishment of Zimbabwean churches in South Africa considered a reverse mission?

Reverse mission, Missiological gaps and Missionary trap: A definition

Reverse mission

The term 'reverse mission' is often used to specifically denote the presence of African churches within diasporic communities, characterised by 'the sheer presence of these [African] churches' outside their home countries (Biri 2014). This implies that these churches primarily serve black Africans living abroad (Musoni 2019). Africans in the diaspora gather for fellowship in the form of a church, focusing their gospel outreach on the 'lost sheep' of Africa residing overseas (Musoni 2019). A typical of this reverse mission that denotes the sheer presence of African churches in the diaspora is what Moyo described as the planting of homogenous black churches in overwhelmingly white communities (Moyo 2017). Additionally, 'reverse mission' can refer to the adaptation of a particular type of Christian spirituality that incorporates African spiritual traditions in the diaspora (Counted 2019). These churches represent a reorientation of the social significance for the peoples of Africa within a new world context, marked by the scars of marginalisation and sociocultural disparities, to transform their faith into a life-enhancing reality (Counted 2019). The third definition of the term describes 'the intentional efforts and activities of African Christians to connect with the indigenous populations in their communities' (Adogame 2009). Lukonsolo (2019:7) defines reverse mission as the evangelical and missionary enthusiasm of those previously evangelised, aimed at revitalising Christianity in the historically Christian West, particularly in Europe and the United States. In this article, the term 'reverse mission' is specifically used to describe the efforts of Zimbabwean churches to spread the gospel and convert the local people of the country where these churches were originally established, namely South Africa.

Missiological gap

The term 'missiological gaps' refers to the challenges and shortcomings in the missionary methods of African churches overseas. These churches frequently encounter obstacles in adapting their practices and teachings to the diverse cultural contexts they find themselves in, which may impede their capacity to attract and retain members from various backgrounds (Musoni 2019). Language barriers are a notable issue; some African churches continue to hold services in their indigenous languages, potentially alienating those who do not speak these languages (Musoni 2019). Furthermore, overseas African churches may tend to be insular, concentrating on their own ethnic communities instead of integrating into the wider society. This often stems from a deficiency of properly trained leadership capable of managing the complexities of ministry within a multicultural and predominantly secular context (Wan 2012).

Missionary trap

The 'missionary trap' describes the difficulties faced by African churches in the diaspora as they strive to maintain their faith and identity within a new cultural setting. These congregations often find it challenging to reconcile their traditional practices and beliefs with the cultural norms of their new communities, resulting in internal tensions and conflicts with the wider society (Green 2018). Balancing the preservation of a distinctly African identity with the need to adapt to a different cultural and religious landscape is strenuous, and this dual identity can cause a sense of entrapment between two worlds (Murray 1999). Additionally, the leadership and governance structures of African churches may not always align with those in their host nations. Such misalignments may lead to conflicts and misunderstandings, occurring both within the church's internal dynamics and in its interactions with governing authorities (Kwabena 2008).

Zimbabwean Churches' strategies for planting church branches in South Africa

The narrative in Acts 11 about the Antioch church carries profound implications for church planters throughout history (Moyo 2016). Beginning with Acts 11:19, the narrative is a direct continuation of the events that unfolded after the dispersion of Christians from Jerusalem following Stephen's martyrdom. This event marked the beginning of the Christian mission to the Gentiles in the 1st century (Ac 8:4) (Moyo 2016). The dispersion signifies the crossing of geographical, cultural and ethnic boundaries, spreading the good news of Lord Jesus to the ends of the earth (Moyo 2016). This biblical model of mission is mirrored in the expansion of two Zimbabwean Pentecostal churches within diasporic communities. For more than two decades, Zimbabwe has faced significant challenges. From the year 2000, with the initiation of land expropriation without compensation, and the 2005 Operation Murambatsvina, where many Zimbabweans saw their homes demolished by the ZANU-PF leadership under the guise of a cleanup campaign, to the controversial 2008 election rerun under the slogan 'VaMugabe office' (Musoni & Masondo 2024), there has been a significant migration of Zimbabweans to neighbouring countries in search of political security and better opportunities. While many have relocated to countries such as Botswana, Namibia and Zambia, or even further abroad, it has been observed that a large proportion have settled in South Africa. The article found that the ousting of Mugabe did not end the persecution and impoverishment of Zimbabweans who stayed in the country (Mujinga 2020). South Africa still sees a steady flow of undocumented Zimbabwean immigrants necessitating the growth and expansion of Zimbabwean Pentecostal churches, both within the nation and among diasporic communities.

The growth and development of the Shona-speaking Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa

The Apostolic Faith Mission of Zimbabwe Church (AFM) ranks among Zimbabwe's largest Pentecostal denominations. It remained a part of the AFM of South Africa, the largest

Pentecostal church in South Africa, until Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 (Togarasei 2016). Around 2008, this Zimbabwean AFM registered its presence back into the Republic of South Africa with a new name 'the Shona-speaking AFM'. The Shona-speaking AFM inaugurated its first branch in Kempton Park, Gauteng Province (Personal interview, 03 March 2024). Between 2005 and 2008, as raised elsewhere in this article, Zimbabwe underwent its worst crisis. During this period, Pastor T. Munemo, a Zimbabwean AFM serving in the Warren Westlea Suburbs of Harare, advised the most impacted members of his congregation to consider relocating across the border for a better life (Personal interview: 03 March 2024). Three families from Pastor Munemo's AFM branch moved to South Africa. Upon their arrival in Midrand, they sought an AFM church. At that time, they encountered two AFM churches: one for Afrikaners and another for black South Africans, both conducting services in their mother tongue. Because of the language barrier, the three Zimbabwean families who were Shona-speaking could not understand the local languages used in church. Consequently, they began to hold Sunday services in their homes. That same year, Pastor Munemo commenced informal cross-border trading between Zimbabwe and South Africa to purchase and sell goods. During his visits from Zimbabwe, Pastor Munemo stayed with these Zimbabwean families. In their conversations, they expressed their difficulties in finding a church where they felt comfortable as Shona-speaking people in South Africa. In response, in 2008, Pastor Munemo and Pastor Bernard Mberi, both from the AFM of Zimbabwe, set out to evangelise and bring more Zimbabweans who reside in South Africa who might have a similar problem with languages used in churches (Personal interview: 03 March 2024). Their efforts were fruitful, and the first Shona-speaking AFM church was founded in Kempton Park, Gauteng province, in 2008. This church expanded, establishing branches across various South African provinces. Interviews reveal that this Shona-speaking church is now officially recognised as a branch of the AFM of South Africa. This article, through interviews, observed that the missiological focus of the Shona-speaking AFM in South Africa was to follow up with the Shona-speaking Zimbabweans dispersed in the diaspora. The gospel outreach of the Shona-speaking AFM church in South Africa is exclusively targeted at black Shona Zimbabweans residing in South Africa.

It can be argued that the Shona-speaking AFM in South Africa emerged because of the pre-existing, fragmented AFM of South Africa, especially at the assembly level. Although prior research indicates that the AFM of South Africa underwent racial divisions for over 88 years, which were resolved in 1996 when the church unified its members into a single AFM in South Africa (Andrew 2005), this article finds that significant efforts are still required for this unity to manifest at the local assembly level. As supported by Nel, the celebrated unification of the AFM church is apparent only at the national level (Nel 2007). Nel argues that the unification of the AFM church is jeopardised by an insensitivity to and lack of appreciation for cultural differences, particularly at the assembly level (Nel 2007). Thus, while unity at the national level is a significant step, much work remains to achieve true oneness at the local level (Nel 2007). Nel observes that although departments and regional structures have been reformed on a non-racial basis, this change has yet to be fully realised in most local assemblies (Nel 2007). The belief that the Church has become a united entity remains an aspiration despite the abundant goodwill to achieve this (Nel 2007).

Language and culture remain pivotal to the ongoing racial divisions within the AFM Church of South Africa. Clark observed that the AFM united constitutionally in 1996, and the four churches became one, however, at congregational level the church remained as four separate communities (Clark 2009:182). For Clark, a few urban churches might reflect a racial mix, but most assemblies are mono-cultural (Clark 2009:184). Most black South Africans interviewed in this article maintain that language and culture are essential to preserving one's identity, and using one's mother tongue in church creates a sense of belonging. Thus, there is a persistent concern within the AFM Church that unification could lead to a loss of identity, defined by language and culture, and that worship should be delineated by these elements (Nel 2007).

Another significant challenge in the unification of the AFM in South Africa is the constitutional allowance for non-geographic region networks (Kgatle 2021). Since 2000, the church's constitution has permitted AFM assemblies, for example, those from Polokwane, to form a region with an assembly in Gauteng. This provision has led to discomfort among many large urban AFM churches regarding submission to the church's geographical regions. Consequently, some have ceased their financial support to these regions, citing misalignment with their ministerial financial needs. So, the 2000 constitution enables these churches to establish non-geographical regions or networks, many of which are predominantly white Afrikaans networks (Kgatle 2021). A case study in the Limpopo Province reveals that there is an AFM for Afrikaans speakers known as AGS-*Apostoliese Geloofsending* in central Mokopane, which is exclusively for white individuals. Concurrently, in the same geographical area, another AFM exists in the Mahwelereng township, serving the black community. Despite their proximity, these two churches do not constitute a single region. It is perhaps in this current setting the Shona-speaking AFM thrive in South Africa. This article suggests that the fragmentation of the AFM church in South Africa, particularly at the assembly level, has fostered an environment that is favourable for the emergence and growth of the Zimbabwean Shona-speaking AFM in South Africa.

The development of the Forward in Faith church in the Republic of South Africa

The article posited that the New Testament, particularly the Gospel of John, emphasises the concept of a missionary as inherently connected to the acts of 'sending' and 'being sent'

(Guti 2006:2). My research informants suggests that the inception of FIF church in South Africa dates back to 1982, initiated by a Zimbabwean Pastor Ramiyos Maposa, who was commissioned by Archbishop Guti to establish an assembly in Messina. Pastor Maposa, now a Bishop in Zimbabwe, was at that time serving as a Pastor in Beitbridge, a town bordering Zimbabwe and South Africa. Pastor Ramiyos Maposa recounts that the efforts to establish a church came to fruition only after a Zimbabwean Alfred Netshianani, who resided in South Africa, returned to his hometown in Beitbridge. Alfred Netshianani joined ZAOGA FIF and subsequently introduced Pastor Maposa to the devout Christian, Wilson Risenga Mabasa, who resided in Pretoria Soshanguve. Pastor Maposa began corresponding with Wilson Mabasa, who eventually invited him to Pretoria. In 1983, Pastor Maposa, along with the late evangelist Choto, were dispatched by Archbishop Guti to Pretoria. At that time, Mabasa was serving as a caretaker at the Full Gospel Church in Soshanguve. Upon their arrival, Mabasa shared Archbishop Guti's vision of founding an Indigenous Pentecostal church for South Africans, leading Mabasa to collaborate with ZAOGA. Renowned for his street and train preaching, Mabasa's support was pivotal in establishing the Forward in Faith Church in South Africa, attracting many local followers. The church was founded in 1985 in Soshanguve, South Africa, where the first building of the Forward in Faith Church stands today (Guti 2014:102). By 1988, the church was officially registered as the Forward in Faith Church in the Republic of South Africa. It operated with short-term missionaries until 1991, when Archbishop Guti sent the first long-term missionary, Langton Mpanduki, to South Africa. Prior to the arrival of the first long-term missionaries in South Africa, the church in Soshanguve counted key members such as Wilson Risenga Mabasa, Dorothy Mhlongo, Jim Khazamula Mhlanga, Elias Zwelipane Soko, Abel Vilakazi, Daniel Sekgobela, Abednego Mndebele, Abraham Tsotetsi and Lucas Masilela, who all remain with the FIF church to this day. The year the church was established, Lucas Masilela was dispatched to Zimbabwe to undergo pastoral training that was aligned with the objective of founding the church for South Africans. Subsequently, for identical purposes, Wilson Risenga Mabasa proceeded to Zimbabwe in 1991. Later, in 1994, Daniel Sekgobela, Abednego Mndebele and Abraham Tsotetsi were also sent to Zimbabwe for training. In 1997, Elias Zwelipane Soko heeded the call for pastoral training in Zimbabwe. The Forward in Faith Church of South Africa continued to send members to Zimbabwe for this purpose until 2013. That year, Archbishop Guti founded a Bible training college at the FIF church headquarters in Olifantsfontein, Midrand, South Africa. Today, the Forward in Faith Church has expanded to include all nine provinces of the Republic of South Africa.

While these Zimbabwean churches have founded branches in South Africa, this article observes that numerous challenges impede their reverse mission endeavours. The following section will discuss the missiological gaps leading to a missionary trap as the Zimbabwean churches face the new missionary territories.

Missiological gaps: An impediment to reverse mission within the Zimbabwe churches in South Africa

Language barrier

The article has observed that the Shona-speaking AFM of South Africa's practice of using Shona in the diaspora highlights a missiological gap among Zimbabwean churches abroad. It contends that this selective mission approach, which targets only Zimbabweans in South Africa, is at odds with Jesus' command to 'go and make disciples of all nations' (Mt 28:19). The article further suggests that the exclusive use of Shona may limit the church's ability to attract and retain non-Zimbabwean members, thus becoming a missionary pitfall. Although the FIF church appears to have embraced local languages and avoided the dominance of Shona in services, it has been observed that most Zimbabwean members are hesitant to learn local languages, continuing the use of Shona in church. The article suggests that these churches should adopt cross-cultural approach by being sensitive and accommodative of other languages to ensure non-Zimbabwean members feel welcome, which includes understanding and respecting various cultural backgrounds and traditions (McMullen 2019). While the use of Shona in the diaspora may maintain a crucial cultural connection for Zimbabweans abroad, fostering community and belonging, the article argues that such practices may make Zimbabwean churches in the diaspora seem irrelevant and could even encourage xenophobic sentiments. The unchecked use of Shona language in some of the FIF churches in South Africa has resulted these Zimbabwean churches being colloquially referred to as 'Tše ke dikereke tša matšwantle', meaning 'These are churches for foreigners'. Research indicates that black South Africans, who were forced to speak Afrikaans during apartheid, show reluctance to attend churches conducting services in a foreign language. For them, attending such churches is synonymous with a loss of identity. The pursuit of identity, deeply rooted in the extensive history of apartheid, has led black South Africans to favour the use of their indigenous languages in church settings.

Cultural imperialism

The emergence of African Churches in the diaspora has elicited varied interpretations. Some argue that African church leaders are motivated by a spiritual revival, answering the call to 'go ye therefore and teach all nations…' (Adogame 2014). In contrast, others view these churches as agents of cultural imperialism within diasporic communities (Coertze 2005). Theoretically, the growth of African Indigenous/Pentecostal churches in Southern Africa signifies a quest for identity (Daneel 1987). These institutions strive to decolonise Christianity by incorporating African spiritual practices that are in harmony with the fundamental principles of the Christian faith (Musoni 2017). The incorporation of African cultural elements into African churches is a move towards decolonisation. This stems from a historical context where Africans were compelled to regard their own cultures and languages as inferior due to the influences of colonialism and apartheid (Coertze 2005).

Therefore, the rise of African Indigenous churches was not just about forming congregations of predominantly black individuals; it was also about fostering environments that celebrate African cultures, languages and traditions. I have argued that Zimbabwean churches in South Africa may have crossed a line, falling into the same trap as early European missionaries by imposing Zimbabwean culture on South African natives in their reverse mission efforts. Consequently, I believe that Archbishop Guti's vision of founding an African Pentecostal church in South Africa, intended primarily for South Africans, is being undermined by the influx of Zimbabweans, particularly those from the Shona-speaking tribes, into South Africa.

For Archbishop Guti:

> As a missionary wherever you go remember this, you are going there to help them to improve their lives. Show them what they do not know. Make them feel that they are very important in their own country. Again, remember this that in their hearts and in their minds, there is fear of domination by other nation. When you know this, you will be a wise missionary. Remember every nation, every tribe there is fear of domination by other nation or people. It could be a church; it could be a group of people. True they want your help, but they don't want you to dominate them. When you preach the gospel to them, and they repent and give their lives to the Lord. Train them so they can lead themselves. When you know that you have trained the leaders, and they can now run the church or ministry its time to handover them and move to other places. Do not wait until they say we don't like you here. A missionary is send to a country where there are also churches. The people over there are worshipping God. They are more knowledgeable and learned more than you who is sent by your church because they know their countries. So, what should be your approach? When you go as a missionary you should go with a view to assist the locals spiritually, financially and materially. Not only that but to be a blessing. You have to do something as a helping hand to build friendship. (Guti 2006:22–25)

Contrary to Guti's missionary theoretical framework, the researcher through interviews observed that majority of FIF church members in South Africa and elsewhere do not adhere to the expected missionary approach of prioritising locals in church. These Zimbabweans are primarily in the diaspora for economic and political reasons, rather than evangelism. The Zimbabwean church in South Africa acts as a sanctuary for them, with scant regard for the sentiments of South Africans. This results in a missionary conundrum, as Zimbabweans in these diaspora churches fail to address the concerns of South Africans within the congregation. Instead, they partake in playing Zimbabwean music, which is not familiar to South Africans. A South African native explored the reasons behind the scant number of South Africans in these churches originating from Zimbabwe, stating:

> Prior to the establishment of Zimbabwean churches, indigenous people associated church services with the *Ntente* musical sound. The distinctive sound of the Ntente played within a tent or home is immediately identifiable to a South African native as indicative of a Christian gathering. Therefore, if FIF, was to incorporate the *Ntente* musical sound into its worship services, it could attract more South African natives into the church (download Ntente

video clip https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lBzjGQNQbeU. (Interview, 03 March 2024)

The research recognised the positive impact of Zimbabwean churches in South Africa while carefully addressing the missiological challenges and missionary dilemmas these churches encounter in the diaspora. Guti, who aimed to establish a church for South Africans, appointed Elias Zwelipane Soko as the Archbishop of the church in South Africa, a position equivalent to Guti's role as the founder of ZAOGA. He also appointed Wilson Resenga Mabasa, Jim Mhlanga, Abel Vilakazi, Daniel Sekgobela and others as South African Bishops' representatives. Some were named Apostles for the FIF Church of South Africa. Before COVID-19, Guti selected more South Africans for roles at the church's headquarters after they received training in church administration. In 2021, to continue his vision of creating an Indigenous African Pentecostal church for South Africans, Guti temporarily closed the Africa Multination for Christ Bible College in South Africa when he noticed that Zimbabweans, rather than locals, were predominantly being trained as full-time pastors. Guti believed it was more practical to train South Africans in a local Bible school to prepare them for church leadership.

Conclusion

The article pointed out that Zimbabwean Pentecostal churches have encountered numerous challenges and mistakes in their missionary endeavours, particularly in South Africa. For example, the Shona-speaking AFM church in South Africa faced criticism for its limited outreach to the Zimbabwean diaspora, which appeared to be at odds with the wider Christian mission to evangelise all nations. In a similar vein, the FIF church's initiative to establish an indigenous South African Pentecostal church, marked by the appointment of local leaders and the establishment of a Bible school for pastor training, was hindered by Zimbabweans in South Africa who continued to use their native languages during worship services. Zimbabwean missionaries seem reluctant to adapt and enculturate their gospel message to include compatible South African traditions and cultural norms. The article posits that without substantial cross-cultural training and enhanced cross-cultural competence, Zimbabwean missionaries may persist in successfully founding and expanding church branches abroad; however, they will likely face ongoing challenges in engaging with the local indigenous populations.

Recommendations

The article suggests that for Zimbabwean churches in South Africa to significantly contribute to reverse mission, missionaries must acknowledge and employ a cross-cultural paradigm. Moreover, Zimbabwean churches in South Africa should start community engagement projects that offer employment to local residents. Social involvement is proposed as a pathway to evangelism, breaking down barriers of prejudice and suspicion, opening doors previously

shut and gaining a hearing for the Gospel. The article also advises that Zimbabwean churches should adapt their gospel to resonate with local communities. Contextualisation addresses the problem of cultural imperialism. Ethnocentrism has impeded previous missionary efforts; thus, Zimbabwean missionaries should learn from the errors of early European missionaries, who thought salvation could only be attained by severing Africans from their own cultures and traditions.

Acknowledgements

References

Adogame, A., 2009, 'African Christians in a Secularizing Europe', *Religion Compass* 3(4), 488–501.

Adogame, A., 2013, *The African Christian diaspora: New currents and emerging trends in World Christianity*, Bloomsbury, New York, NY.

Adogame, A., 2014, *The Public Face of African New Religious Movements in Diaspora: Imagining the Religious others*, Ashgate Publishing, Ltd, London, pp. 1–28.

Andrew, D.N., 2005, *From vision to structure: Assessing the Apostolic faith mission of South Africa in the Light of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church*, University of the Western Cape, viewed 01 June 2024, from https://etd.uwc.ac.za/handle/11394/2.

Biri, K., 2014,'Migration , transnationalism and the shaping of Zimbabwean Pentecostal Spirituality', *African Diaspora* 7, 139–164. https://doi.org/10.1163/18725465-00701007

Clark, M., 2009, 'Mission effort in the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa', *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 26(3), 174–185. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265378809104835

Coertze, S.V., 2005, *Challenges facing the African Church:South African theologians speak out*, thesis, University of Pretoria, viewed 13 January 2024, from https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/28004/dissertation.pdf;sequence=1.

Counted, V., 2019, 'African Christian diaspora religion and/or spirituality: A concept analysis and reinterpretation', *Critical Research on Religion* 7(1), 58–79. https://doi.org/10.1177/2050303218823258

Daneel, M., 1987, *Quest for belonging : Introduction to a study of African Independent Churches*, Mambo Press, Gweru.

Erwin, D.G., 1985, *African Apostle:The life of Ezekiel Guti*, Abebooks, Toronto.

Green, S., 2018, 'Missions to, through, and beyond the diaspora', *Afrigo* 3(1), 1–12, viewed 15 May 2024, from https://afrigo.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Afrigo-Vol-3_1-Disapora.pdf.

Guti, E., 2006, *Mission and missionary calling: Good news for missionaries*, EGEA publication, Harare.

Guti, E.H., 2014, History of ZAOGA *Forward in Faith: The Book of remembrance: How it began and where it is going*, Fifth edition, EGEA Publications, Harare.

Hwata, B., 2005, *An investigation of different phases of Pentecostal experience in the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM)in Zimbabwe*, University of South Africa (UNISA), viewed 11 February 2024, from http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/1655/dissertation.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

Kgatle, M.S., 2021, 'A quarter Century of structural unity in the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa: A socio historical analysis', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 47(1), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/8088

Kwabena, A.-G., 2008, *African-led Christianity in Europe: Migration and diaspora evangelism*, Trinity Theological Seminary, viewed 05 Septmeber 2024, from https://lausanneworldpulse.com/themedarticles-php/973/07-2008.

Lukonsolo, V.M., 2019, *The African Church having become a new homeland for Christ, is now responsible for the Evangelization of the Continent and the World*, current trends in African Theology, viewed 10 March 2024, from https://www.academia.edu/40273830/TheAfricanChurchandMissionsCurrentTrendsinAfricanTheologyResearchPaper.

Maxwell, D., 2006, *African gifts of the spirit: Pentecostalism & the rise of Zimbabwean transnational religious movement*, Ohio University Press, Athens, OH.

Maxwell, D., 2000, '"Catch the cockerel before Dawn"': Pentecostalism and politics in post-Colonial Zimbabwe', *Journal of the International African Institute* 70(2), 249–277. https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2000.70.2.249

McMullen, M., 2019, 'Insights into: Attracting and keeping congregational members', *Faith Communities Today*, pp. 1–17, viewed 14 May 2024, from https://faithcommunitiestoday.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Insights-Into-Attracting-and-Keeping-Members.pdf.

Moyo, A., 2016, 'Missional strategies from Antioch : Lessons for African missionaries in Britain', *Missio Africanus Journal of African Missiology* 1(2), 40–58, viewed from https://www.academia.edu/66085940/Missional_Strategies_from_Antioch_Lessons_for_African_Missionaries_in_Britain.

Moyo, A., 2017, 'Church-planting considerations for African Reverse Missionaries in Britain in the Postmodern Era', in I.O. Olofinjana (ed.), *African voices: Towards African British theologies Carlisle*, pp. 65–82, Langham Global Library, Carlisle.

Mujinga, M., 2020, 'A reconstruction of Matthew Jacha Rusike's contribution to the re-humanisation of dehumanised children in Zimbabwe 1950–1978', *Studia Historiae ecclesiasticae* 46(3), 7970. https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/7970

Murray, A., 1999, *Missions giving in Southern African Black Churches: Present and future challenges*, Christian youth outreach, Magogong, viewed 05 September 2020, from https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/5619/Murray_Missions%282007%29.pdf?sequence=1.

Musoni, P., 2017, *Inculturated African Spiritual Elements in Johane Msowe WeChishanu YeNyenyedzi Church in Zimbabwe*, PhD Thesis, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.

Musoni, P., 2019, 'African Indigenous Churches for Black Africans: A study of the Johani Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi (JMCN) Missiological thrust in the Diaspora', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 45(2), 16.

Musoni, P., 2024, 'Burial sites as contested memorial terrain: Historicising burial places of African Indigenous church founders in Zimbabwe', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 50(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/14410

Nel, M., 2007, *The process of unification of the AFM of SA*, School for Biblical Science and Biblical Languages at North West University, viewed 28 August 2024, from https://www.academia.edu/53462431/The_process_of_unification_of_the_AFM_of_SA.

Prill, T., 2023. 'Equipping Twenty-First Century missionaries for cross-cultural ministry: African and western realities and perspectives', *Foundations: An International Journal of Evangelical Theology* 4(1), 9–23. https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.8501348.5

Ruzivo, M., 2014, *A history of the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe 1908–1980*, UNISA Press, Pretoria.

Schoffeleers, M., 2013,'Pentecostalism and neo-traditionalism: The religious polarization of a rural District in Southern Malawi', in D. Maxwell & I. Lawrie (eds.), *Christianity and the African imagination: Essays in honour of Adrian Hastings*, pp. 225–269, Brill, Leiden.

Ter Haar, G., 2001, *African Christians in Europe*, Action Publishers, Nairobi.

Togarasei, L., 2016, 'Historicising Pentecostal Christianity in Zimbabwe', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 42(2), 1–13, viewed 10 March 2024, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317449158_Historicising_Penteoostal_Christianity_in_Zimbabwe.

Wan, E., 2012, 'The phenomenon of diaspora: Missiological implications for Christian missions', *Diaspora Study* 19(5), 1–23, viewed 15 May 2024, from www.GlobalMissiology.org.