



Taking Integral Mission to the Back of Beyond in Zimbabwe: A Case Study of the Assemblies of God Church, Hwange – Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

Zimbabwe's rural areas are politically, socio-economically and environmentally volatile and in dire need of the integral mission of the Church. Many publications confirm that the Church in Zimbabwe has talked and walked much about its integral mission in urban and peri-urban areas. This is commendable, as urban residents who have enjoyed the transformative fruits of integral mission can eventually apply its teachings in their various spheres of influence. However, a gap exists in Zimbabwean rural grassroots buy-in, ownership, involvement and development. Thus, this paper acclimatises the Church with the need to take an integral mission to the countryside, to contextualise and empower villagers to proclaim and demonstrate the gospel in their communities, and to achieve inclusive sustainable development and transformation. The study applied a qualitative case study research design, and literature review coupled with purposively sampled in-depth interviews, observation and interpretive data analysis. The study uncovered that the majority of churches have done very little in rural areas due to economic incapacitation. Drawing lessons from the Assemblies of God church in Hwange, which has exemplified a sustainable integral mission in rural areas, it concludes that reaching out to grassroots interconnects urban with rural God-given gifts and resources to achieve inclusive sustainability and transformation.

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INTRODUCTION

It is thought provoking that Zimbabwe is very rich with natural and human resources, yet so poor politically, environmentally and socio-economically. Chigumira et al. confirm that “Zimbabwe is richly endowed with natural resources which include renewables (land; forest, water; wildlife; sunshine) and non-renewables (oil; gas; minerals) among others ... The country can leverage on resource revenues to support diversification into industry.”¹ Zimbabwe is wealthy in minerals that are

¹ Gibson Chigumira et al., “Enhancing Natural Resources Management in Zimbabwe,” ZEPARU Research Studies 305818 (Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis and Research Unit, March 31, 2019), <https://ideas.repec.org/p/ags/zepars/305818.html>.

in high demand, such as gold, diamonds, platinum, lithium and chrome;² furthermore, Zimbabwe is endowed with abundant human capital and a burgeoned youth demographic.³ Paradoxically, the nation is hard-pressed by multifaceted political, environmental and socio-economic crises.⁴ Since integral mission demonstrates the gospel, it can, as a result, transform society and change the volatile Zimbabwean situation. This is why Tagwirei argues that the Church can transform society by doing the Word,

“If the Church rises as the salt and light in every facet of life, it can oversee, undertake, and contribute to the transformation of its holistic missionary being in national and international socio-economic, political, and environmental life in Southern Africa.”⁵

Commendably, some churches have achieved some milestones of integral mission in urban and peri-urban areas, through initiatives such as instilling inclinations to innovativeness and entrepreneurship in urban residents and initiating clean-up and substance abuse rehabilitation campaigns. However, most churches have done very little in rural areas mostly due to economic limitations. Yet, people in rural areas would also be able to change their circumstances if they were enlightened and empowered to live out the word of God holistically. Unfortunately, national political, socio-economic and environmental crises have disrupted ecclesiological operations in Zimbabwe.⁶ Zimbabwe has, for decades, been impoverished by political intolerance, violence, command and inconsistent policies, systemic corruption, bureaucracy and flawed rule of law.⁷ According to Tagwirei, the bulk of churches in Zimbabwe are dependent on inconsistent and unreliable traditional sources of income such as tithes, freewill offerings, donations and related collections.⁸ Considering that prices of basic needs, such as food, water, housing, electricity and fuel continuously increase while economic haemorrhage disrupts incomes, many churches are struggling to meet the costs of operations in towns, and cannot afford to reach out to remote areas.⁹ Yet, neglecting rural areas portrays exclusivity and defaces the integral mission of the Church. Since rural people also need the gospel, like everyone else, studying a denomination that has sustained and established an integral mission in rural areas is needful.

So, this paper reviews the Assemblies of God Hwange church’s contextualized integral mission and economics. It considers the significance of taking integral mission to rural grassroots communities in order to widen and deepen the impact of the gospel in neglected areas. This paper unpacks the potential of ruralising integral mission. After a brief methodological statement, it starts by conceptualising an integral mission. Subsequently, it locates the context of the integral mission of Assemblies of God Hwange Church (hereafter AOG Hwange), historicises the church, which is used as a case study, and reviews its holistic mission. Successively, the paper evaluates the grassroots model

² Energy Capital & Power, “Top 5 Minerals Produced in Zimbabwe,” April 20, 2023, <https://energycapitalpower.com/top-5-minerals-produced-in-zimbabwe/>.

³ Faith Sibanda, “Unleashing Transformation: Zimbabwean Youths Harnessing the Power of Information Technology and Innovation,” *Chronicle*, March 6, 2024.

⁴ Mavis Thokozile Macheke, “Environmental Management and Practises in Zimbabwe’s Chivi District: A Political Ecology Analysis,” *Cogent Social Sciences* 7, no. 1 (January 1, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2021.2000569>.

⁵ Kimion Tagwirei, “Doing the Word: Reawakening the Church to Save Society in Southern Africa,” *Religions* 15, no. 5 (May 15, 2024): 608, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15050608>.

⁶ Kimion Tagwirei and Maake Masango, “Rethinking the Identity and Economic Sustainability of the Church: Case of AOG BTG in Zimbabwe,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 79, no. 3 (March 10, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i2.8129>.

⁷ Sydney Kawadza, “2025: Another Tough, Uncertain Year Predicted for Zimbabweans,” *The Standard*, January 5, 2025, <https://www.newsday.co.zw/thestandard/news/article/200036648/2025-another-tough-uncertain-year-predicted-for-zimbabweans.>; Molly Manyonganise, “‘The March Is Not Ended’: ‘Church’ Confronting the State over the Zimbabwean Crisis,” *Religions* 13, no. 2 (January 22, 2022): 107, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13020107>; Kate Bird and Martin Prowse, “Vulnerability, Poverty and Coping in Zimbabwe,” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2009, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1531723>.

⁸ Kimion Tagwirei, “The Identity of the Church and Quest for Her Economic Sustainability: A Case Study of the AOG BTG Church in Zimbabwe” (University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2022).

⁹ Tanatswa Kandenga and Tendaiishe Nyamukunda, “Fresh Price Hike Hit Zim,” *Business Times*, January 11, 2024, <https://business-times.co.zw/fresh-price-hike-hit-zim/>; eBusiness Weekly, “Cost of Living Soars in January According to Zimstat,” January 30, 2025, <https://www.businessweekly.co.zw/cost-of-living-soars-in-january-according-to-zimstat/>.

and makes conclusions and recommendations for other churches to consider the AOG Hwange integral missionary model.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative Case Study research design and literature review coupled with purposively sampled in-depth interviews, observation and interpretive data analysis. This was considered for holistic, detailed and contextual focus. The Case Study enabled the researcher to closely examine data within the participants' specific contexts. Two AOG Hwange National Council members, three pastors and five congregants were interviewed. The Case Study uncovered the lived experiences, interpretations and reflections of AOG Hwange leadership and congregation on their integral mission and sustainability in Hwange, Binga, Lupane, Siabuwa, Gokwe, Kariba and surrounding rural areas in Zimbabwe, Southern Africa. The Case Study yielded enlightening information about the matter under study. Complementarily, the researcher utilized related literature and participant observation to assess the church's integral mission, and economic sustainability and draw some lessons. Since integral mission is the heart of this study, the following subsection conceptualizes it.

Conceptualising Integral Mission

Integral mission refers to the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel in all spiritual, social, political, economic and environmental areas of life.¹⁰ It references the inclusive and multidimensional mission of God, which addresses all issues of life in all contexts. According to the Lausanne Movement:

“Integral mission is defined as the task of bringing the whole of life under the lordship of Jesus Christ and includes the affirmation that there is no biblical dichotomy between evangelistic and social responsibility in bringing Christ's peace to the poor and oppressed.”¹¹

Historically, “the concept was born among the Evangelical theologians from Latin America who addressed the conviction that today's Christian mission needs a more solid biblical foundation than the traditional missionary movement.”¹² Accordingly, an integral mission is defined as a mission that addresses the body, mind and spirit of a human being.¹³ Thus, an integral mission focuses on wholeness, completeness, well-being and the comprehensive salvation of all people and relationships. Scholars describe it as a multifaceted mission that integrates the spiritual with the social, economic and political well-being of humanity.¹⁴ They explain that integral mission ministers the gospel fully through evangelism, discipleship and inclusive sustainability. Crizaldo affirms that an integral mission is doing the Word, through which actions local churches transform their local communities.¹⁵ When Christians live the Word of God, as instructed by James 1:22, they can become the exemplary, influential and transformative salt and light of the world (Matt 5:13–16) and transform their communities.

Locating the Context of AOG Hwange's Grassroots Integral Mission

AOG Hwange is advancing its integral mission in Hwange, Binga, Lupane, Kariba, Siabuwa, Gokwe and surrounding rural areas in Zimbabwe, Southern Africa.

¹⁰ Tagwirei, “Doing the Word: Reawakening the Church to Save Society in Southern Africa.”

¹¹ Lausanne Movement, *Integral Mission*, accessed May 27, 2025, <https://lausanne.org/network/integral-mission>.

¹² Piotr Kopiec, “The Concept of an Integral Mission as the Evangelical Proposal of a Systematic Social Teaching,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 80, no. 1 (April 5, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v80i1.9500>.

¹³ Brian Woolnough, “Good News for the Poor: Setting the Scene,” *Holistic Mission: God's Plan for God's People*, 2010, 90–110.

¹⁴ Andre Jansen, *Heart, Hands and Voices: God's Mission: Integrating Word and Deeds* (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 2017); Rebecca Waweru, “Integral Mission: An Overview of Four Models and Its Role in Development,” *International Journal of Novel Research in Humanity and Social Sciences* 2, no. 1 (2015): 13–18.

¹⁵ Rei Lemuel P. Crizaldo, “Local Churches Transforming Local Communities: Advocating for the Doing of Integral Mission,” Paper presented at 2017 Annual Theological Forum by the Asian Theological Seminary., Manila, Phillippines, 2017, https://www.academia.edu/31870097/Local_Churches_Transforming_Local_Communities_Advocating_for_the_Doing_of_Integral_Mission.

Hwange is a town in Zimbabwe, located in Hwange District, in Matabeleland North province, in north-western Zimbabwe, close to the international borders with Botswana and Zambia. According to the 2012 National Census report, Hwange District had a total population of 62,670 people.¹⁶

Hwange area has high solar irradiance, vast coal resources and the potential to provide secure and sustainable electricity generation.¹⁷ Hwange is in Matabeleland North province, in the north-western part of Zimbabwe. It is located approximately 336 km north of Bulawayo, the second-largest city in Zimbabwe, and 100 kilometres southeast of Victoria Falls, the nearest large city. As the AOG Hwange has an intensively ruralised integral mission in Binga district, it is imperative to locate the area too.

Binga district is in Zimbabwe's Matabeleland North province, 445 km northwest of the city of Bulawayo. This is a lowveld area which is comparatively hotter than other neighbouring districts like Gokwe to the east. Despite its proximity to significant fish sources (the Kariba Dam and the Zambezi River), the district remains one of the poorest in the country. Droughts and poor soils are typical in this area, making agriculture difficult and forcing the communities to rely on the fishing business for livelihood.¹⁸ The majority of Binga people derive their livelihood from harvesting fish from Kariba dam, such as *kapenta*, bream, *tilapia* and tiger fish. The district is divided into twenty-five wards, with a total population of 159,982 (72,393 males and 87,589 females) dispersed at a density of 10.43 people per square kilometre. The average household size is 4.4 people, and 90 % of the population is chronically impoverished. Most portions of the district are inaccessible, especially during the wet season, due to poor or non-existent transport infrastructure.¹⁹ Binga is remote, marginalised and the second-poorest (second to Kariba) region in Zimbabwe.²⁰ The same is true about surrounding areas (such as Lupane, Kariba and Gokwe) where AOG Hwange is doing its integral mission. Having located the context of this study, the following section historicises the church.

Historicising AOG Hwange

It is necessary to trace the history of the selected case under study, namely the AOG Hwange denomination in Zimbabwe. AOG Hwange was the subject of this case study, with the intention to explore the establishment of an integral mission at the rural grassroots. While talks and activities of integral mission are popular in urban areas, they are still scarce in Zimbabwean rural areas. This is why observations that AOG Hwange has been, and is consistently taking integral missions to remote places necessitated this case study, to review how the church is doing it, and to draw lessons that could serve as recommendations to other churches. Although the main focus of this submission is integral missionary work, the history of the AOG Hwange is important for readers so that they can appreciate the church from an informed position.

Through purposively sampled in-depth interviews, one of the executive administrators of AOG Hwange revealed that the church emerged from the evangelism work of white missionaries and the late Apostle Simon Winston Mukolo. White missionaries had come to Zimbabwe as part of the fruits of the monumental spiritual revival that had taken place in Azusa Street, Los Angeles, from 1904 to 1915. The Azusa Street revival had influenced many people and, consequently, it led to the emergence of several denominations across the world. It defined massive encounters and foundational bridges, through which various believers engaged in missionary work and church planting.

¹⁶ Environmental Impact Assessment, "Report for Hwangwe Coal Mining Activities," Harare, Zimbabwe: Centre for Natural Resource Governance, 2017, https://cnrgzim.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/e33f9c_8a0e1f20bed347b0aa5c268bf3fa8d1a.pdf.

¹⁷ Bruce Mutume, "A Feasibility Assessment of Utilizing Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) in the Zimbabwean Regions of Hwange and Lupane," *Heliyon* 9, no. 7 (July 2023): e18210, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e18210>.

¹⁸ Mark Makomborero Matsa et al., "Binga's VaTonga Communities Involvement in Zambezi River Fishery Resource Harvesting and Management," *Scientific African* 23 (March 2024): e02041, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sciaf.2023.e02041>.

¹⁹ Matsa et al., "Binga's VaTonga Communities Involvement in Zambezi River Fishery Resource Harvesting and Management."

²⁰ Lloyd Mbiba, "Underdevelopment, Marginalisation and Poverty Rule in Binga South," Community Podium News (blog), October 28, 2020, <https://communitypodiumnews.org.zw/underdevelopment-marginalisation-and-poverty-rule-in-binga-south/>.

Simon Winston Mukolo received the call of God to enter pastoral and apostolic ministry in 1965. He was born to James Mukolo and Evelyn Zulu on 1 April 1937 in Hwange town. In an in-depth online interview held on 2 October 2024, his son, Godfrey Mukolo, reported:

In 1966 Apostle Simon Winston Mukolo started preaching in Hwange, got a job and relocated to Kamativi where he planted a church and some AOG General Council white missionaries from Livingston confirmed his call. After that, he was assigned to serve with Zambian Reverend Kekani in Livingstone. Due to the liberation struggle, it was difficult to work with Zambian nationals. So the white missionaries who were in Hwange referred him to Assemblies of God Back to God (AOG BTG) white missionary John Bond who then referred him to Reverend Nicholas Bhengu who headed the AOG BTG which focused on Black missionary work. Reverend Nicholas Bhengu referred Apostle Mukolo to Zimbabwean AOG BTG representative, the late Geoffrey Mkwanzani. Thereafter, Apostle Mukolo was deployed as a pastor and he pastored AOG Tshabalala and Luveve assemblies in Bulawayo.²¹

AOG BTG was officially opened in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) in 1959 by South African Apostle Nicholas Hepworth Bhekinkosi Bhengu but had been founded before by white missionaries who had moved from South Africa and who also had roots in the Azusa Street revival. White missionaries, including James Mullan, John Bond, Fred Burke, E.D. Rillan and G.W. Bates, pioneered AOG ministry in Mashonaland and Midlands and Matabeleland.²² Similarly, white missionaries had evangelised the Hwange region.

After a short unrecorded time, Apostle Mukolo left Bulawayo and returned to revive AOG Hwange, because white missionaries were gradually leaving the area. Eventually, Simon Winston Mukolo established and institutionalised the church in Hwange. He retained the regional name Hwange as part of the name of the denomination. Apostle Mukolo expanded the church into many remote areas beyond the Hwange region, even to other countries, such as Zambia and Namibia.

Unfortunately, the incumbent AOG Hwange has yet to document and publish historical documentation to authenticate its history. However, a broad spectrum of AOG Hwange leadership views concurs that Apostle Simon Winston Mukolo took oversight of the AOG Hwange region in the late 1960s. Apostle Mukolo had been inspired by the call of God to save lives and was passionate about uplifting his remote and unreached fellow villagers, which motivated him to integrate a ruralised mission in unreached areas, and beyond.

According to the present AOG Hwange leadership, the church has now established 23 branches in Hwange, 17 branches in Binga North, 11 in Dete, 30 in Kamativi, eight in Lupane, 30 in Lusulu, 26 in Victoria Falls, 20 in Siabuwa, four in Nyaminyami, four in Gokwe, four in Mbire, four in Namibia and is in the process of planting some branches in Zambia. During their national 2023 leadership conference, the apostolic, regional and district leaders discussed changing the name of their church from AOG Hwange, arguably because the denomination is no longer limited to the Hwange region. One of the names put forward was AOG Mukolo, after the late pioneer Apostle Mukolo. The leadership is still yet to make a decision on the issue. The ministry of Apostle Mukolo had been characterised by personal, one-on-one evangelism and deeply wise and transformational teachings. He is well known for multiplying disciples and nurturing them to disciple others. Through this discipleship strategy, he raised and sent out many leaders.

Apostle Simon Winston Mukolo died on 28 July 2018 and left AOG Hwange under the leadership of an appointed Apostolic Council. In an interview, the late apostle's son, and namesake, Pastor Godfrey Simon Mukolo, who is also a member of the incumbent apostolic Council said that "Apostle Mukolo had identified, ordained and mentored four people to make up AOG Hwange Apostolic Council, namely pastor Charles Katiyatiya, Pastor Abion Mwembe, myself Pastor Godfrey Mukolo and administrator, Elder Herbert Makwala."²³ After his death, one of Apostle Mukolo's senior lieutenants, Pastor Katiyatiya, was unanimously chosen by the Apostolic Council to lead the church.

²¹ Interview with Godfrey Mukolo by the author, October 2, 2024.

²² Tagwirei, "The Identity of the Church and Quest for Her Economic Sustainability: A Case Study of the AOG BTG Church in Zimbabwe."

²³ Interview with Godfrey Mukolo by the author.

Today, he oversees the Apostolic Council, which comprises Pastors Abion Mwembe, Herbert Makwala and the late apostle's son, Godfrey Simon Mukolo.

The church continues to uphold personal evangelism and life-building teachings. According to the leadership, its Apostolic Council is a permanent, supreme custodian of the denomination as a whole. It applies a mixture of Presbyterian and congregational governance. The Apostolic Council oversees the policing, resourcing, administration and operations of the church, regions and districts. As it operates from the ecclesial headquarters in Hwange urban, the Apostolic Council operates with regional and district councils that comprise regional pastors, elders and deacons who are elected every three years. Their constituencies fall under political regions, such as Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South, Midlands and Mashonaland. AOG Hwange branches are semi-autonomous as the Apostolic Council allows them to operate freely while they uphold the policies of the church. Regional councils oversee regions while district councils oversee their respective districts; local areas are under the leadership of area pastors, who are assisted by local branch pastors, elders and deacons.

Reviewing the Mission of AOG Hwange

As signposted before, the AOG Hwange church identifies itself as an integral missionary church. In order to effectually historicise and come to terms with its missionary work, this section presents a graphic illustration of the asserted missionary focus from this study (Fig. 1).

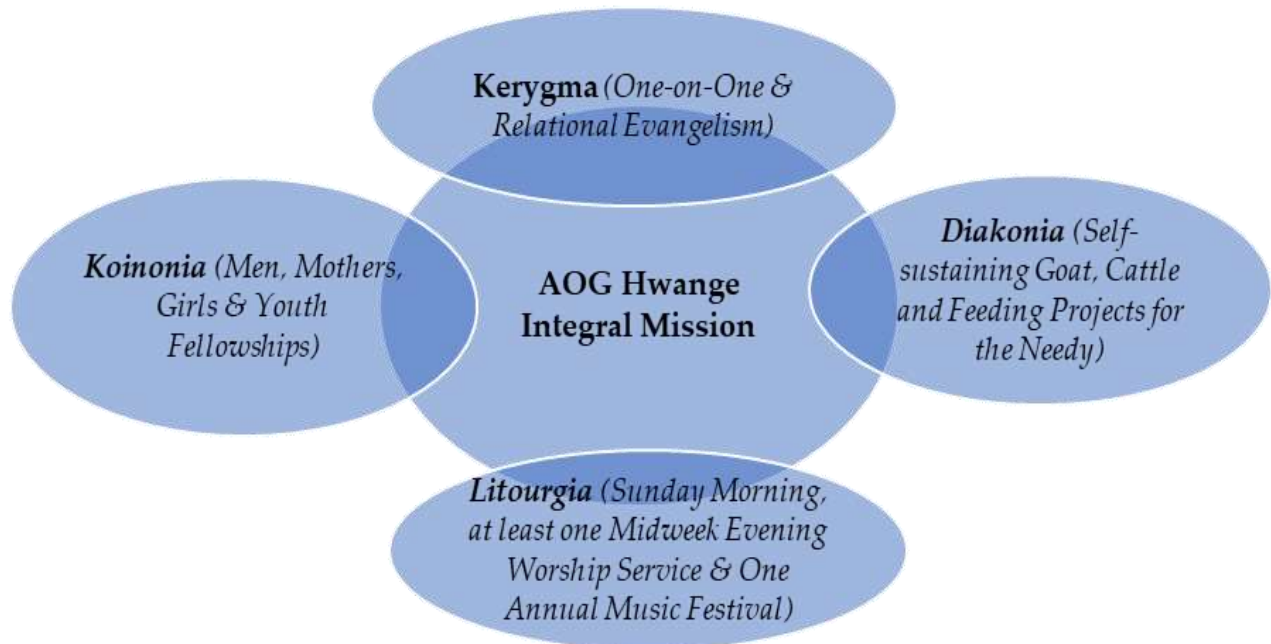


Fig. 1: Author's illustration of the missionary radial cycle of AOG Hwange

Exploring AOG Hwange's Kerygma

The term *kerygma* is conceptualised as the proclamation of the gospel.²⁴ Scholars explain that the term *kerygma* is usually applied to heralding or publicising a message or an issue. *Kerygmatic* work, therefore, accommodates acts of evangelising, converting, following up and winning souls for God. In an in-depth interview for this study on 1 October 2024, one of the AOG Hwange Apostolic Council members reported that the church emphasises personal evangelism, while sometimes showing a film about Jesus Christ and holding crusades for public evangelism. He stated, "As we speak, our local missionaries have been sent out on an evangelism and church planting mission in Kauzhumba and

²⁴ Nate Wilson, "The Essentials of the Kerygma. What Must We Preach?," January 2021, <https://onthewing.org/user/Gospel-Essentials-of-Kerygma-Wilson.pdf>.

Kalundu village in Mola under Kariba district, as well as Malembela in Siabuwa.” The Council member explained that souls won through any of the abovementioned methods are taught, interceded for, encouraged and eventually sent out to evangelise, disciple and multiply souls for Jesus Christ. Since its inception in the 1960s hitherto today, the church has won 9,706 souls through its various branches in Hwange urban, Binga, Gokwe, surrounding rural areas and, outside Zimbabwe, in Zambia and Namibia and envisions multiplying across the African continent.

Exploring AOG Hwange’s Leitourgia

Leitourgia is a Greek word that means worship services. Generally, it is used conventionally by churches with reference to congregational service for God and fellow believers and involves worshipping God and taking part in services through, for example, singing, sharing testimonies, attending to sermons and related items together throughout service programmes. *Leitourgia* covers all activities of worship and the glorification of God in church gatherings.²⁵ In this case, the liturgy of the AOG Hwange church is presented through its annual international and local congregational worship programmes. The church presents an international worship festival annually, in December, which is facilitated by Pastor Godfrey Simon Mukolo. For the annual festival, the church invites choirs from sister churches and branches in Zambia, Namibia, Eswatini and Zimbabwe. The programme is usually a massive worship concert over two or three days, with guest sermons and sporting activities.

Meanwhile, AOG Hwange engages in open morning worship on its main Sunday services, in which congregants participate in mass or concert prayers; and routine special prayer for national, political, Church and other leaders. The intercessory prayer is derived from 1 Timothy 2:1–5 which encourages prayers for leaders and everyone else. Usually, a member of the congregation is called to the front to intercede on behalf of other people. Commonly, the church’s main Sunday worship services also include sermons by pastors and appointed leaders, choir-led worship singing, testimonies by congregants and scripture recitation.

During midweek services, church assemblies present different programmes, because of varying factors in their contexts. Most AOG Hwange assemblies hold a prayer service on Mondays that every member is encouraged to attend. Mothers’ prayers are held on days that are convenient for particular branches, and all mothers are called to attend to pray for issues relating to motherhood. At girls’ services, girls share or receive teachings that concern their gender, while youth services are for both male and female members, who receive teachings suitable for their age. At praise and worship practice (for the music team), members of the choir practise what they are planning to sing during main Sunday services. Furthermore, regular conferences are presented.

Exploring AOG Hwange’s Koinonia

Koinonia is derived from its Greek root *koinon*, which means in common or communal. Nalwamba and Sakupapa explain that, in English, *koinonia* is translated to mean “fellowship, commonality, mutuality, partaking, participating, reciprocity, relief, sharing, society, solidarity, togetherness, union, and unity.”²⁶ Broadly, *Koinonia* is the fellowship of believers with God, and with each other. The Church is expected to live by continuously fellowshipping with God and, simultaneously, with fellow congregational and ecumenical members. According to 1 John 1:3: *We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*²⁷

In the AOG Hwange church, *koinonia* is professed as sisterhood and brotherhood among brethren, as represented by meetings for pastors, couples, mothers, men and youths. The church fellowships with God through their main Sunday and midweek services. All AOG Hwange assemblies

²⁵ Peter John McGregor, “Leitourgia: The Missing Link in *Evangelii Gaudium*,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 84, no. 1 (February 5, 2019): 57–76, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021140018815855>.

²⁶ Kuzipa Nalwamba and Teddy Chalwe Sakupapa, “Ecology and Fellowship (Koinonia): A Community of Life,” *The Church in God’s Household: Protestant Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ecology*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2016, 75–93.

²⁷ Salem Web Network, “The New International Version (NIV) Bible - Read Online,” accessed February 9, 2025, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/niv/>.

are traditionally encouraged to facilitate the fellowship of brethren by organising programmes and services, such as men's fellowships, mothers' fellowships, youth get-togethers and Sunday ministry parties. These programmes are intended to promote love, unity and transformation through togetherness and their regular teachings. Clerically, the AOG Hwange Apostolic Council organises an annual leadership conference every year, in July, to enable leaders to fellowship and attend training and related programmes. One of the Apostolic Council members said in an interview for this study that "Annual leadership seminar in July is the platform for developing, unifying leaders and addressing doctrinal issues or other matters of interest to the leaders."

Regional and local leaders of the church correspondingly organise their programmes to promote the same cause. The purpose of the leadership conference is to edify and refresh pastors, elders and subordinate leaders, to promote theological, doctrinal, ministerial and administrative effectiveness, and to facilitate personal development. During the conferences and seminars, AOG Hwange pastors are given time to share their experiences, challenges and testimonies and they encourage each other to manage their pastoral work and welfare progressively. In addition to leadership fellowship, the church also holds local couples', men's, mothers', youth and children's fellowships to edify members with programmes and teachings that are tailor-made to address issues that concern each group's respective ecclesial and personal lives. Although not all members attend all the programmes, most of them do, and those do not eventually receive the message from those who attended.

Ecumenically, the church subscribes to and attends the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ). AOG Hwange pastors attend EFZ and local Pastors' Fraternal fellowships, where, they learn from others as iron sharpens iron (Prov. 27:17). Remarkably, the Apostolic Council continues to associate with the AOG BTG, from which its founder, the late Apostle Mukolo was grounded. To confirm that they value the relationship, the incumbent leadership regularly invites AOG BTG leaders to attend and even minister at some of its annual conferences.

Exploring AOG Hwange's Diakonia

Diakonia is the demonstration of the love of God through caring for the needy, advocacy of justice and environmental stewardship;²⁸ "the *Diakonia* of Christians is not just looking after the Christian community but caring for everything."²⁹ *Diakonia* enhances the total being of the Church by living out its mission holistically by applying the gospel in all social, political, economic and environmental areas of life.³⁰ In the case of AOG Hwange, the church has contextualised its mission extensively. The church runs a self-sustaining goat and cattle project to emancipate its poverty-stricken congregants from economic meltdown, as well as a humanitarian feeding project for orphans and other needy people.

The AOG Hwange Goat Project

In an interview held on 2 October 2024, an AOG Hwange executive administrator stated:

We run a goat and cattle project at our national conference centre. Meanwhile, we run what we call a goat-pass-on project which is facilitated by Pastor Godfrey Mukolo. He mobilised some funding, bought more than a thousand goats and gave them to the needy. Beneficiaries are taught to manage, and multiply their goats commercially, to sustain themselves and to give back to the church.

To enhance the project, the church has employed an agronomist who specialises in animal husbandry to manage the projects and train beneficiaries to sustain their projects effectively. It should be noted that some of the goats die due to diseases and other beneficiaries still fail to manage the project successfully. However, ten of the beneficiaries confirmed in an interview that some of them

²⁸ Kimion Tagwirei, "Serving the Needy from the Greedy: Reviewing Diakonia in African Neo-Pentecostalism," *In Die Skriflig / In Luce Verbi* 57, no. 1 (October 9, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v57i1.2981>.

²⁹ Song Kon Lee, "Diakonia as Christian Mission: With Particular Reference to Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements in Korea" (University of Birmingham, 2020).

³⁰ Tagwirei, "Serving the Needy from the Greedy: Reviewing Diakonia in African Neo-Pentecostalism."

have multiplied their goats, sold others, bought cattle and developed themselves in various ways. One of the beneficiaries explained:

We appreciate that the church has been a vehicle for the lifeline and economic transformation of the needy, and many of them give back to the church. We no longer buy meat for our conferences because we, beneficiaries of our goat project, give some of our goats.

The AOG Hwange Cattle Project

AOG Hwange established a cattle ranching project at its international conference centre in Hwange town, which has been renamed the Simon Winston Mukolo Conference Centre. After multiplying its own cattle, the church gave two cows to each of its district centres, such as Binga and Gokwe. One of the AOG Hwange church leadership explained: “The project is to boost our local churches’ self-sustenance. Some of our churches have multiplied the cattle we gave them, while others failed to steward them and are still in need of help.”

Meanwhile, the church has grown its herd to 25, while donating at least one head to its national and international conference budgets annually. The church’s executive administrator reported, “Instead of buying beef at our conventions and seminars, we just slaughter our own cattle and goats.” In addition, beneficiary churches and individuals donate some of their goats and cattle to the national office, to contribute to the national and international conferences’ need to feed attendees.

AOG Hwange Humanitarian Project

The church has also established a feeding programme for orphans at nine centres in its rural communities. In an online interview held for this study on 2nd October 2024, the AOG Hwange national administrator said “We feed orphans lunch in about nine centres every day, Monday to Friday.” Under the professional coordination of a farming expert, the church is also involved in crop production and produces maize and related crops for food for diversification and economic sustainability. From the proceeds of the cattle and goat projects, the church feeds orphans, sustains their general upkeep, and makes it possible for them to attend school by paying their fees. By educating the needy, the church enhances inclusive sustainability because beneficiaries will eventually give back and continue proclaiming and demonstrating the gospel in all areas of life.

Evaluating the Grassroots Model

What the grassroots model of the integral mission of AOG Hwange has yielded in terms of inclusive sustainability is highly remarkable. By advancing the gospel to remote places which have not been evangelized, and establishing the self-sustaining goat and cattle projects, beneficiaries and the whole church have benefited spiritually, economically, theologically and integrally. In a spiritual sense, beneficiaries have been exposed to the life-changing gospel and have been transformed for life. As stated in 2 Peter 1:3, salvation begets divine power to attain everything people need in life. Economically, the goat and cattle projects have empowered beneficiaries to meet their needs, help fellow villagers and give back to their church, for which the donations help cover ecclesial operating costs. So in empowering congregants and communities, the church empowered itself, because members give back and boost its economic sustainability. Theologically, reaching out to remote rural people embodies the all-embracing love, grace and inclusivity of God.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of this case study, it is recommendable for all churches to take integral mission to their rural constituencies, thereby embodying the omnipresent love, grace and care of God as well as inclusive sustainability.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that the rural people of Hwange, Binga, Kariba, Gokwe and surrounding areas are predominantly marginalised. The AOG Hwange denomination demonstrates that God is inclusive, loving, and caring and His agent, the Church can advance *missio Dei* to the back of beyond if

contextually strategic and economically sustainable. By attending to all dimensions of missionary work in the countryside, the AOG Hwange exhibits commendable integral mission. Limiting integral mission to urban areas implies exclusivity while taking it to rural areas promotes proletarian inclusion, ownership, wholehearted involvement and all-encompassing sustainability. This study established that grassroots engaged integral mission builds inclusivity, interconnectedness and collective utilization of God-given gifts, natural, financial, material and immaterial resources for comprehensive sustainability. When people migrate from rural areas to towns, or vice versa, they can continue to live out the gospel holistically and collectively. Such connectedness promotes sustainable transformation against all odds.

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