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The identity of the Church and quest for her economic sustainability: A case study of the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Practical Theology & Mission studies

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Declaration

I, **Kimion Tagwirei**, declare that this thesis, titled “**The identity of the Church and quest for her economic sustainability: A case study of the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe**”, that I submit for a PhD degree in Practical Theology and Mission studies at the University of Pretoria is my original work. I have never submitted this to any other university before. All the sources I used are appropriately referenced.

Name of Student:

Kimion Tagwirei

Signature (student)

A handwritten signature in blue ink, enclosed in a circular scribble.

Date: 4 July 2022



Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Laiza Machokoto and father, the late Dave Chitando. They did not attain high education in their lifetime, but highly valued it and sweltered against all odds to get me, and my siblings, decently educated. Although I was young to fully appreciate them then, memories of their efforts inspired me to advance my studies as I grew. While I wish my father to have lived long to enjoy fruits of their hard labour together, I am highly grateful for the presence of my mother as we celebrate this feat.



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Summary

Zimbabwe's economic predicament has been bedeviling indigenous lives and exposing the unsustainability of conventional sources of income in Zimbabwe for more than a decade. Most classical Pentecostal denominations that have been depending on tithes, freewill offerings; other congregational collections, local and foreign donations have been struggling to meet their operating costs and failing to afford holistic mission in the volatile Zimbabwean economic context while few that established businesses flourished in the same setting. Partial mindfulness to the gospel in word without corresponding deeds portrayed an exclusively Salvationist and less integral image, defaced ecclesiastic identification when Zimbabwe is anxiously in dire need of a wholesome Church that values and attends to all areas of life. The quandary was worsened by *Covid-19*, national political instability, policy discrepancies, flawed rule of law, venality, skyrocketing inflation and related constraints. Although massive devotion has been given to the abusive commercialization of the gospel by most neo-Pentecostal denominations, studies on the identity and economy of classical Pentecostal churches is scanty. Thus, this study observed the quagmire and vulnerability of classical Pentecostal churches without diversified revenue and discussed the importance of economizing them. It reviewed the nature of the selected Assemblies of God Back to God (which is referred in this study as the AOG BTG) church and interfaced ecclesiology with economics. It applied a *theonomic reciprocity* theoretical framework, which integrates divine provision, human dependence and submission to God while correspondingly and responsibly working with given human, material and financial resources towards economic tenability. The study adopted a qualitative research design, applied purposive sampling, used in-depth interviews, and employed a descriptive and interpretive data analysis approach to categorize, discuss, reflect, analyze, interpret and present meanings of gathered views. Findings of the study are that the AOG BTG church is challenged by a tension between her costly missionary identity and demands of her poor economic context. It is established that all congregational offerings, local and foreign donations are undependable and unpredictable because they are subservient to erratic availability, kindheartedness and capacity of denominational members and donors. This study uncovered that the church sweats with policy gaps, conceptual misunderstandings and conflicting perceptions on the theologies of business and volunteerism. Consequently, she repeatedly steps forward and backward as leaders keep agreeing and disagreeing on whether to embrace, shelve or shun business. More-so, the



denomination lacks feasible strategies for economic development as she only submits to faith while doing nothing much to diversify her incomes. Drawing from views of participants, and submissions of engaged scholars, this study proposes that she should theologize *theonomic reciprocity* and adopt contextually viable developmental strategies such as interlinking faith with economics, reconciling *missio Ecclesiae* with business, rebuilding congregational stewardship, setting up a business development unit, reviewing volunteerism, and harnessing available human, material and financial resources to become economically sustainable in Zimbabwe. The church is recommended to evaluate, overhaul her operating system and free herself from traditionalism through embracing the aforementioned strategies towards sustaining integral mission, pastoral ministry and welfare.



Key Terms

Church; Classical Pentecostal church; Identity; *missio Dei*; *missio Ecclesiae*; Faith; Dependence; Economics; Strategies; Business; Sustainability



Abbreviations

AOG BTG	Assemblies of God, Back to God
AOGDRA	Assemblies of God Development and Relief Agency
BDC	Business Development Companies
CARA	Centre for Applied Research in the Apostolate
Covid-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
DCC	District Council Committee
NBHS	Nicholas Bhengu High School
NE	National Executive
NGO	Non-governmental organization
Rev	Reverend
SBDC	Small Business Development Centers
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCED	World Commission on Economic Development
ZEGU	Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University
Zim	Zimbabwe

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Chapter 1: Introducing the Study

1. The Introduction

Using AOG BTG as a focal case, this study reviews the identity of the Church and pressing need for her economic sustainability in Zimbabwe. As Zimbabwe has been repeatedly beleaguered by an economic crisis for years (Nyakanyanga 2019:n.p; Pinto 2022; *The Economist* 2020:n.d; Bond 2007:149–150; Manjokoto & Ranga 2017:26–27; Chagonda 2016:131), traditional sources of ecclesial funds were rendered unsustainable. Additionally, taking into account inevitably disconcerting experiences in which the majority of citizens have been sweltering while others failing to eke out a decent personal and family living (Gudhlanga & Madongonda 2019:88–89; Mlambo n.d:58–59; Hungwe 2011:250; Fournier & Whittall 2009:n.p; Assubuji 2016:n.p; Makombe 2021:283–284), all kinds of ecclesiological giving (such as tithing, freewill offerings and other forms) respectively took a declining turn.

Unlike some mainline churches that inherited, settled and advanced businesses to support themselves (such as the Church of Christ, Latter Day Saints, Anglican church, Salvation army, United church of Christ and others), conservative classical Pentecostal churches like the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe, that presently chiefly rely on tithes, freewill offerings and donations got susceptible to crumbling incapability (Mwenje 2016:76). Furthermore, the Zimbabwean economic crunch has been worsening due to inescapable effects of *Covid-19* (Xinhua 2020:n.p; Dongozi, 2020:n.p; Nyabeze & Chikoko 2021:235–236; Chagonda 202:n.p), against a similarly distressing background of life-threatening bleakness and perpetual price hikes of basic needs. Although colossal responsiveness has heeded to the exploitation of the gospel in Zimbabwe (Magezi & Manzanga 2016:2–3; Chitando 2013:96; Chibango 2016:58–59; Bishau 2013:5–7), studies on reformist economics towards necessary sustenance of churches in the milieu of economic vulnerability is sparse. Aware of that, like a number of classical Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe, the AOG BTG church is challenged by a dilemma of either embracing or neglecting self-sustaining initiatives, commonly because of an identity crisis.

It is observed that the Church is essentially missionary, and owned by God. Thus, scholars such as Kauffelt (2011:40) strongly believe that God can meet all believers' needs as Philippians 4:19 denotes. While that is true, this study observes some AOG BTG leaders who think that it is not wise for their congregations to run business in attempts to sustain themselves. Such heads emphasize that venturing into business will deflect the focus of their assemblies against *missio*



Dei and missio Ecclesiae. The abovementioned leaders also emphasize that engaging in any profit-making venture implies low, or lack of faith in God. Limited numbers of classical Pentecostal church leaders perceive that churches should embrace commerce to multiply their God-given resources and sustain themselves. Drawing from Kitawi & Irungu (2015:1026), although the Church is divine as she is of God, she is also natural because she is made up of human beings, she has operational costs to meet, and adherents who duly anticipate responsible and developmental administration of their fiscal and material offerings.

More-so, considering the broad missionary purpose of the Church, this study examines the conflict between ecclesiological identification and search for viable inventiveness. It will explore pivotal questions like; how the house of God, which is entrusted with God's mission, can balance attention to missionary mandate and meet incurred costs? Is pursuing economic sustainability an undesirable but necessary intrusion into the sacred missionary business of the Church? Implications of having the Church embracing income generating projects as complementary in accomplishing her mandate, as well as problems and solutions of running business as a church will be attended to. As Khauoe (2008:8) outlines, the Church is purposed to pronounce the love of Jesus Christ in a comprehensive manner, through the *kerygmatic* dimension that comprises evangelism, and reaching across the cultural division; *diakonia* – poverty alleviation, justice advocacy and care for the needy; *koinonia* – fellowship which includes establishing of denominations, ecumenical participation, and the discipleship of believers as well as *leitourgia* – devotion services.

Based on the theory of *theonomic* reciprocity, this study proposes variegation of finances through entrepreneurial engagements. Throughout the entire thesis up to the conclusion, it will be spelt out that the interconnection of ecclesiology, economics and formation of church-owned enterprises will not only support self-centered institutional solvency, but propel other-centered *kerygmatic* and *diaconal* work outside congregational walls into the marketplace. Understanding that doing business as a church attracts destructive problems such as temptations of commercializing the gospel and division of ecclesial focus from missionary work, this study does not only investigate the tension between the divine being of the Church and earthly need for economic sustainability. It complementarily pursues contextually practical strategies for the

church to become economically sustainable and capacitated to accomplish her all-inclusive mission in the Zimbabwean context.

1.1 Definition of Terms

1.1.1 Church

The expression ‘Church’ is often mistaken for varied connotations that are usually subject to inferred references (Kuek 2007:1; Roden 2016:1; Howard 2017:n.p). The term is habitually used interchangeably with an allusion to a structure or construction where participants of a certain Christian grouping meet for their multifarious programs, and sometimes it is ordinarily referred to a flock. Other views portray the ‘Church’ to reflect a service, or program, for example by saying ‘let us go for church, may we have church now, please do not abscond church ...’ Sometimes the terminology is employed to indicate a group of people, and many other related allusions. Considering that the word ‘Church’ builds the bedrock of this study, it is fundamental to conceptualize it.

This study notes the usage of the concept of the invisible and visible church (such as Rodrigues 2017:220; Stibbs n.d:194–203). Their conceptualization of the invisible Church talks about an invisible Christian Church of the redeemed believers. The visible Church is taken as the institutional establishment that is tangible. That way, the noticeable Church is characterized by physicality through regular bodily gatherings and seeable practices of believers, such as singing, praying and preaching in a solid edifice.

Additionally, as postulated by Lindsay (2000:17), the term Church is deciphered in the New Testament as *Ecclesia*. It is also observed from the Old Testament (i.e. Numbers 10:2–3) that Jews used the word *Ecclesia* with reference to the meeting of Israel with God. Examples in the New Testament Greek (such as in Acts 19:41) show that *Ecclesia* referred to the convention of the free Greek city–state, which was called by the blowing of a trumpet. To those who followed Jesus Christ, *Ecclesia* speaks of to the congregation of the served community of God (Lindsay 2000:18–19).

Understandingly, this study attributes the term ‘Church’ (with a capital letter C) to the institutional body that pursues the mission of God (as also reflected by Van Aarde 2016:298–299). The usage of the plural ‘Church’ incorporates all congregations that submit to Jesus Christ

as their Messiah. The ‘church’ with a small letter ‘c’ refers to a single denomination, mainly the AOG BTG.

1.1.2 Classical Pentecostal Church

The term classical Pentecostal Church is used with reference to Loder’s (2000:2) subscription to the baptism and leading of the Holy Spirit. Classical Pentecostal churches began in California, Los Angeles, USA in 1904 as a result of the Azusa Street revival (White 2016:252). The Azusa Street revival is a Pentecostal revival, which was championed by William Seymour. It was branded by baptism by the Spirit, coupled with practical speaking in other tongues, encountering wonders and miraculous experiences (Lawance 2001:2–3; Kgatla 2016:323–325). The revival attracted millions of people from the United States of America and across the whole cosmos.

The Azusa Street Revival transpired from 1906 hitherto 1915. It inspired countless people, and subsequently led to the development of numerous denominations across the world. The revival appeared to be categorical and revolutionary. It was characterized by long prayers, prostrations, loud weeping unto God and manifestations of visible enjoyment. Some outstanding features included that those who personally encountered the Holy Spirit experienced noticeable manipulation of their faces and bodies as well as delving into involuntary uttering of words in new tongues as the Holy Spirit inspired and enabled them.

The Azusa Street eventually developed universally and underscored some replication of the first Pentecost, reenactment of experiences of apostles which are chronicled in Acts 2 as well as non-racialism and non-tribalism. General references to the classical Pentecostal Church herein accommodate all denominations that have the aforementioned characteristics, and specific references are directed to the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe.

1.1.3 *Missio Dei*

The term *missio Dei* is taken as the universal mission of God on and for humanity. The conception relates to multiple submissions that have been advanced by various scholars like Flett (n.d:75–77) who avers that *missio Dei* is firstly a call for the Christian community to worship God as He is, and it belongs to God for the reconciliation and redemption of humanity. Likewise, Wright (2006:71) defends that as salvation belongs to God who sits on the throne (referring to Revelations 7:10), and the Bible is principally about the life-bearing story of how

God brought about His salvation for the whole cosmos, mission belongs to God, and it is the prior reality out of which flows any mission that we get involved in.

Upon the same appreciation, Thomas Schirrmacher, through his book, *‘Missio Dei, God’s Missional Nature’*, observes *missio Dei* as the sending of Jesus Christ to the world by God, Holy Spirit by Jesus Christ and the Church to serve humanity through the Church up to the end of time (Schirrmacher 2017:12). The remarks are based on John 17:18, which says, “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world”, and Mark 16:15, “...Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Online NIV Bible Gateway: n.p.).

A number of different scholars (such as Padilla 1982:18; Yahya 2020:70; DeYoung n.d:1; Dreyer 2016:6; Kim 2010:2; Lephoko 2010:113 and Vit Hlasek 2017:26–27) concur that the mission of the Church can only be appropriately derived from the mission of God. They believe that it is an extension of God through inclusive delivery of the gospel in correspondence with contextual circumstances. Therefore, primarily, *missio Dei* is conceptualized as delivering holistic good news to humanity, which Goheen (2000:327) further depicts as the renewal of the universal reign of God, which has been entrusted to the Church for its communication with the world.

Thus, together with Winter and Koch (n.d:538) as well as Peters’ (1972:159–163), this study uses the term *missio Dei* as the determinant purpose for the existence of the universal Church, through a specific case study of the AOG BTG denomination towards the salvific and integral proclamation and demonstration of the gospel in all areas of life.

1.1.4 *Missio Ecclesiae*

The term *missio Ecclesiae* stands for the task of the Church. As Lutheran World Federation’s document titled *‘Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment: An LWF Contribution to the Understanding and Practice of Mission* edited by Jack Messenger rightly puts it, *missio Ecclesiae* speaks to the public delivery of the gospel, inviting people to accept Jesus Christ as the Lord and to become part of His fellowship (Messenger 2004:4–5).

Concurring, this study subscribes to the perspective that all that which leads to the sovereignty of God through the pronouncement of the gospel, and serving human beings is mission. Also in agreement with Ian Douglas, mission is God’s action in the universe to bring about His Reign.

He argues that the Church is called and empowered by the Holy Spirit to participate with God in His mission of renewal and reconciliation (Douglas 2012:7). In the same vein, Stott (1975:35) explains that the word mission is a broad term which embraces the entirety of what God tasks his people to do in the world. So, it consists of evangelism and social responsibility. Similarly, Arthur (2009:3–4) adds that God is the instigator of mission through the sacrifice of His Son and the empowering accompaniment of the Spirit. In that view, the interactive nature of the Triune God invites churches to take part in mission with Him. It is therefore imperative to keep in mind that believers are beckoned to join and take part in the work of mission.

Furthermore, Robert (2009:1) advances that the term mission essentially connotes sending. He agrees with Bosch (1991) that it also involves the sending of missionaries to designated areas, agencies of evangelical work and places where those who evangelize the gospel operated. Accordingly, the term mission is conceptualized with reference to the spread of faith, growth of the sovereignty of God, conversion of the heathen, and the founding of new churches. Some scholars reiterate that the word mission exclusively means the teaching doctrine of the Trinity, that is, of the sending of the Son by the Father and of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son (Zahniser 1989:4; Reimer 2019:1 and Snyder n.d:1). They emphasize that it is the mission of the Trinitarian God in a way that Jesus Christ puts forward through His Great Commission (Mathew 28:19–20).

In light of that realization, mission is holistic. In its *kerygmatic* form, it is the spread of the good news about the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in recipients' contexts, which portrays the salvation of God. In its diaconal form, mission highlights the demonstration of the gospel by transformative acts of love to the needy. The *diaconal* mission of the Church proposes that her manifestation in the society is holistically life-giving (Messenger 2004:4–5).

Liturgically mission displays the worship of God through services and related programs. It is further reflected that mission is also through *koinonia*, which is fellowship of brethren, denominations and bodies of churches. It is born in mind that the term mission has been widely and conventionally used in association with being 'missional', and missionary. With the clear distinctiveness of 'missionality' as the ecclesiological being, or characterization and being 'missionary' as reserved to works, this study pays heed to the AOG BTG's *missio Ecclesiae* in Zimbabwe.

1.1.5 Economics

According to Hayes (2020:n.p.), economics is a social science that is concerned with the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. It attends to how individuals, businesses, governments, and nations make choices about how to allocate resources. It is widely conceptualized that economics deals with scarcity (Backhouse & Medema 2009:222–225). As insufficiency is a state in which needs and wants are outstripping available resources and people are failing to attain what they need, reviewing how they can manage and increase the resources becomes needful.

Thus, several scholars define economics as the science of economy, which essentially involves the consideration, choice, production, use, management, development and distribution of resources for the satisfaction of needs and wants (Metu 2016:n.p.; Khumalo 2012:599). This study reflects on the economics the AOG BTG church against her missionary identification in view of income, expenditures and savings for future uses (also in view of Mitra–Kahn 2011:285). Remembering that most the church is in striking need of human, financial and material resources as initially indicated, this study deliberates that she should apply the principles of economics for effective reflection, administration and enlargement of her resources.

1.1.6 Sustainability

The configuration of sustainable development that was done by the Brundtland Commission Report from the United Nations' World Commission on Environment and Development, that is titled 'Our Common Future', helps much as the central component for nearly all scholarly delineations. The WCED (1987:n.p.) conceptualized sustainability as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

According to Butzke (n.d:4), the idea of sustainability historically arose from private inventiveness and referred to investments that were made in the production area and recoveries through profit from selling products. Paulo Afonso Butzke accentuates that in non–profit civil society organizations and churches, the concept referred only to financial survival.

Adding to that, Mebratu's (1998:503) conception incorporates a related viewpoint that was developed by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), which is based on the documentation of three systems as rudimentary to every process of development –

the ecological resource system, the economic system, and the social system. Mebratu (1998:503) clarifies that the prevailing variety of explanations of sustainable development can be categorized into the Institutional Version, the Ideological Version, and the Academic Version. The Institutional version propels economic evolution across the world as indispensable towards the betterment of livelihoods, sustenance of growing populaces, and ultimate stabilization. The Ideological Version advances principles of liberation theology and women radicalism. The academic version combines economic, ecological and sociological underpinnings of development (Mebratu 1998:503–512).

Elaborately, Heinberg (2010:2–5) asserts five axioms of Sustainability as sustainable use of available resources, controlling population and consumption, use of renewable resources and minimizing harmful substances. To my concurrence, Dillard, Dujon, and King (2009:2) elucidate that sustainability is frequently taken as a combination of environmental, economic and general maintainability. Thus, together with Costanza & Patten (1995:193–194), sustainability hinges on developing a bearable system that survives economic constraints, builds longevity and reserves for the future. In this study, sustainability refers to the economic tenability of the AOG BTG church, especially with regards to her conventional sources of revenue in Zimbabwe.

Having paid heed to the definitions and contextualization of the abovementioned terms that are regarded to be pivotal in the development, procession and accomplishment of this study, the next subsection outlines the statement of the problem which necessitated this very important ecclesiological exploration.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Church has been sustained by conventional sources (for example tithes, freewill offerings, other congregational collections; local and foreign donations) to meet her missionary and operational costs as well as to acquire and maintain her material while paying her human resources. Due to the national economic meltdown (Mwenje 2016:76), which has been aggravated by *Covid-19*, dependency on tithes, freewill offerings and donations became unsustainable in Zimbabwe. Globally, volatile economics renders the Church incapacitated, invisible and ineffective (Breuning 2017:2). Without diversified and sustainable economic base, the AOG BTG church has been struggling to sustain her operations, pastoral work and welfare – resultantly failing to attend to her essential missionary mandate fully. The church got

incapacitated and forced to narrow her focus to *kerygma* and she neglected other dimensions of missionary work. Such fractional attention to the proclamation without corresponding demonstration of the gospel in all areas of life depicted a selectively Salvationist and less integral image, defaced her identity when Zimbabwe is desperately in serious need of an inclusive Church that is contextually sensitive and attentive to their *diaconal* needs. Furthermore, the economic instability of the Church exposed pastors to corruptibility and compromised the gospel as some of them desperately adopted immoral means for survival. More-so, this study holds that the prophetic voice of Zimbabwean classical Pentecostal churches has been corrupted and divided as part of leading clerics got bribed and captured by the State. The need and urgency to connect ecclesiology with economics got so dire for the rebuilding of economic sustainability and restoration of an inclusive *missionality*. It is firmly believed that the economic sustainability of churches can curb denominational, clerical and ecumenical inefficiency, ineffectiveness, vulnerability and corruptibility by capacitating them to stand firm towards the accomplishment of their comprehensive missionary mandate. Challengingly, while the Church appreciates the necessity to embrace business for her economic sustainability, she faces problems of balancing attention to her primary missionary identity and secondary business of generating income as well as negotiating her being in the world yet not of the world in face of worldly challenges of doing business in the economically, socially and politically unstable Zimbabwean context today. Thus, a reconciliatory study to progressively interface ecclesiology with economics is very crucial in Zimbabwe.

1.3 Background

Bearing in mind that context is very imperative for the comprehension of the matter under study (Dohn, Hansen & Klausen 2018:1–17), reviewing the Zimbabwean economy is vital for this study towards ecclesiological identification and economic sustainability. The country has been in an unsettling economic catastrophe since the long reign of the late Robert Gabriel Mugabe, through the militarized rise of incumbent president Emerson Mnangagwa in November 2017, up to today (Cook 2017:1; Moyo–Nyede 2021:1–2; Fenga 2018:95–103; Magezi & Manzanga 2016:1–2). According to Masunungure & Bratton (2018:1), President Emerson Mnangagwa formerly promised reformist governance when he got into power, but has not yet fulfilled it.

To–date, costs of living have been rising, leading to massive exodus of millions of people, and depriving the economy of highly skilled workers who are seriously needed for industrial growth (Chitiyo et al 2019:4). Accordingly, Matiashe (2021:n.p.) asserts that the ruling government hypes with developmental publicity through state media to entice international funding as multilateral or bilateral partners who normally prefer putting resources in an economy that is well–managed and balancing fiscal books, but the country’s economic problems remain the same. Kanyenze, Chitambara and Tyson (2017:6–14) concurringly uncovered that the economy has been distressingly failing, undergoing severe structural degeneration which is confirmed by increased dependence on primary commodities such as platinum, diamonds and gold; immense deindustrialization and *informalization* of the economy. The nation has also scared potential investors away with her continuous political instability, and policy inconsistencies that undermine business confidence. Kanyenze, Chitambara and Tyson (2017:6) additionally mention the ruining of the economy by politicized weakening of public institutions through systemic corruption.

Furthermore, high inflation, liquidity constraints and high interest rates worsened national underdevelopment (Pasara and Garidzirai 2020:2). As such, Chitiyo et al (2019:25) add that Zimbabwe’s state of affairs has been upsetting households, businesses and the social fabric of the country. The economic outflow was then exacerbated by *Covid–19* lockdowns which were meant to curtail the surge of the globally dreaded disease (Dongozi 2020:n.p.); continual weighty taxation, command policies, and flawed rule of law which suppress free market and deters private investments (Bhoroma 2021:n.p.). Increasing numbers of citizens have been subjected to horrible suffering (Chingono 2021:n.p.). This has been unbearable because common Zimbabweans have been bearing the brunt of an economy that was already imploding well before the coronavirus calamity. Businesses and jobs were seriously affected by *Covid–19*. In such a context, ecclesial economics got shaken as members congruently got economically hard–pressed. The Church’s financial, material, human resources respectively got weakened and querying ecclesiological sustainability today is very critical.

The AOG BTG church, which is the chosen case for this study, was founded in Zimbabwe in 1959. She turned sixty–three years old in year 2022, but still struggles to afford integral missionary work in Zimbabwe. While some enterprising churches like Reformed Church in

Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe Assemblies of God in Africa have established active missionary wings; AOG BTG's missionary operations have been weakened by economic instability.

Further in view of the Zimbabwean economic quicksand, a number of clerics who envisioned and led their churches to establish businesses like prophet Apostle Ezekiel Guti (head of Zimbabwe Assemblies of God, Africa), Tom Deuschle (founder & leader of Celebration church), Emmanuel Makandiwa (founder and leader of United Family International) and prophet Walter Magaya (founder and head of Prophetic, Healing and Deliverance ministries) have been thriving while those running without businesses appeared struggling.

The massive development of some Pentecostal churches in Africa (Kakwata 2017:166 & Togarasei 2016:1) imply that churches that incorporated entrepreneurship utilized resources at their disposal, built various properties and other investments for their self-sustainability. Although some of the enterprising churches faced stiff criticism for their theologies of prosperity, healing and prophecy, they managed to thrive in times of economic quagmire and during the coronavirus pandemic. This has been also evidenced by their maintaining of presence using their television channels, and attention to holistic (*kerygmatic, diaconal, liturgical* and *koinonia*) dimensions of ministry regardless of economic turmoil.

Ecclesiological sustainability has been highly recommended from the global meeting on Church and Society which was held in Geneva, 1966 (Klaasen 2013:183). The majority of local Pentecostal churches have been economically unsustainable in Zimbabwe (Mwenje 2016:74). It is born in mind that economic instability causes ineffectiveness and vulnerability (Goold, Ogara & James 1998:n.p). Understanding the need to accomplish *missio Ecclesiae* comprehensively (Khauoe 2008:9), respect for collectiveness and interdependence (Uberoi 2016:130) and applying *theonomic reciprocity* (which is well explained in the next chapter two), this study integrates ecclesiology with economics for the advancement of *missio Dei*, sustenance (Ngome 2015:9) and restoration of *missio Ecclesiae*. Informed by this background of a disturbing economic crisis, unsustainability of churches without diversified incomes and rising operating and other missionary costs, it is crucial to explore ecclesiological quintessence and quest for economic sustainability Zimbabwe.



1.4 Aim

- i. To review the identity and sustainability of the Church in Zimbabwe by engaging AOG BTG as a Case Study.

1.4.1 Objectives

- i. To review the identity of the Church
- ii. To discuss *theonomic reciprocity* for the Church
- iii. To examine AOG BTG's conception of ecclesiological sustainability
- iv. To review the history of AOG BTG's economic sustainability in Zimbabwe up to today.
- v. To explore strategies for the economic sustainability of AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe

1.4.2 Research Questions

- I. What is the identity of the Church?
- II. What is *theonomic reciprocity*?
- III. What is sustainability?
- IV. What is the history and identity of the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe?
- V. What are the AOG BTG's sources of income?
- VI. How sustainable are the AOG BTG's sources of income?
- VII. Which business projects can the AOG BTG run?
- VIII. What are the difficulties and solutions of doing business as a church?
- IX. How can the AOG BTG become economically sustainable in Zimbabwe?

1.5 Justification of the Research

Generally, the establishment and development of most African churches is historically backed by missionary donor support. There has been limited advancement towards self-provision (Tower 2016:125). In the poverty-stricken Zimbabwean classical Pentecostal Church context, embracement and enhancement of commerce for self-sustenance has been very low. Meanwhile, the missionary being of the Church has been demanding prime attention and, in turn, attracting more costs. Thus, the Church's need for economic sustainability has become high.

Denoting that much scholarly responsiveness has been given to commercialization of the gospel by neo-Pentecostal churches, this study identified a reconciliatory ecclesiological sustainability research gap in the classical Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe. Considering that, commendably, most related theological researches probed the nature of the Church, dependency on tithes, freewill offerings and donations (Altman, Bunta & Mazimpaka 2012:49; Murunga 2011:10),

reconciling classical *missio Ecclesiae* with developmental economics is long overdue. While some submissions about conjoining commerce and ministry have been given (Tongoi 2016:23), they fall short of the impact of each focus to the other. What are the positive and negative effects of the mission of business on the business of mission, and *vice versa*? Can a missionary focused church embrace entrepreneurship and remain fully missionary? Does being missionary and entrepreneurial concurrently attract obstructive problems? Since operating and missionary expenses are high while economic instability rages on in Zimbabwe, how can feasibility be realized? This study seeks answers to such questions, eyeing optimal vantage points through which missionary and complementary commercial work can be synergized.

It is strongly believed that this study will enlighten churches to contextually review and relearn ecclesiological identity and its nexus with economics. It is held that this will empower denominations to carefully reconcile ecclesiology with economics towards meeting their operating liabilities, accomplishing missionary work and regaining their identification. This study will inform church leaders and members to appreciate negative and positive effects of dependency syndrome as well as income generating ventures to missionary work. That will ultimately capacitate them to fuse faith with work for sustenance, efficiency, effectiveness and longevity. All in all, the study will empower churches to interlink mission with entrepreneurship wisely, responsibly and progressively.

1.6 Literature Overview

As this study is an exploration of the being of the classical Pentecostal Church and necessity of her economic sustainability, the issue of quiddity will be separately given due attention in chapter three. Therefore, this section seeks to provide a survey on the interplay of ecclesiology with economics. This delineation brings to account the serious need and urgency to integrate ecclesiology with economics in the Zimbabwean context, against striking difficulties of harmonizing attentiveness to the primary missionary mandate and secondary business of generating supplementary income. It is also brought forward together with the essence of managing the Church's being in the world yet not of the world in face of unavoidable problems of doing business in the hot-blooded Zimbabwean environment as indicated in the preceding introductory segment. It is pivotal to review what has been observed by other scholars about the interface of ecclesiology and economics, so as to locate the gap that this study fills.

Throughout this subdivision, some views of different scholars shall be reviewed and analyzed to observe outstanding issues that may require further attention. Simultaneously, the relevance of all the engaged literature to the local Zimbabwean Church setting will be addressed. This overview does not review all the literature that is related to the economics of churches. Thus, it is not exhaustive. It is however representative of scholarly contributions which are considerably relevant to the quest for the economic tenability of the contemporary classical Pentecostal Church in Zimbabwe.

1.6.1 The Interplay of Ecclesiology and Economics

This study draws a lot of enlightening insights from Healy's (2004:3) observation that previous ecclesiology has been more systematic, theoretical, somewhat practically detached from the visible Church and consequently less helpful. He observes that ecclesiology has been minimally profound, less impactful and resultantly dull in the communities and public spaces because it was mostly limited to theoretically discerning what is right and wrong without addressing practical issues that are troubling believers and non-believers.

The contribution of Healy (2004:3–24) mirrors the limitedness of systematic and theoretical ecclesiology that excludes practical issues that the Church is, up to today, battling with in innumerable and different contexts. I agree with Healy's (2004:4) call for scholarship to give some close attention, and refocus theological reflections to the concrete Church rather than narrowing considerations and studies on her theoretical identity. Accordingly, such a shift can expose us to multiple problems that must be confronted, and lead to the disclosure of circumstantially workable approaches that can be employed. For Healy (2004:4), there should not be any separation between the bodily and the spiritual Church. This study observes that the disruptive problem in solemn need of attention is extremist exclusivism towards either spiritualization or secularization of the Church. However, Healy (2004:3–24) just observes the problems of systematic, theoretical ecclesiology and advances the need for attention to practical issues, but does not deal with them. Thus, an inquiry into the holistic nature of the Church and needful expedition for her economic sustainability towards effectuating her wide-ranging purpose of existence is a very critical gap that this study attempts to approach.

Somehow, ecclesiology has been generally spiritualized in diverse forms (Yong 2018:12) and economics, which affect the tenability and distinctiveness of the Church, got secularized in most

classical Pentecostal churches for ages. As Cho (2020:38) discerns, the contraposition between the Christian faith on the one hand plus work and economics on the other hand is commonly predominant across denominations. “Throughout the history of the Christian Church, the relationship between spirituality and work has been one of debate, confusion, and neglect. According to this split–world view, any activity which took place in the Church was ‘sacred’. All other activities which went on outside the Church or in the marketplace were downgraded as profane.” Cho (2020:37–39) exposed that there has been a tendency to distinguish sacrosanct issues of the soul such as the ministerial engagements as if that is the only matters that concern God.

Agreeably, Cho (2020:38) argued that ecclesiology should be concerned with all issues that affect humanity. For him, the difference between work and spirituality fashioned piercing conflicts of values between Christians’ religious life and sustainability. Additionally, Cho (2020:38) commendably remarks that the contradiction between the Christian faith and economics has been fostered by selective scriptural reading which easily dismisses economic subjects as too worldly” (Cho 2020:38). The work of Cho (2020:37–50) reveals general blindness to biblical texts about economic issues. His findings creditably unfold that ecclesial emphasis on spiritual matters, silence on congregants’ day to day issues and neglecting economic problems made the Church irrelevant to, and disconnected from the public society.

Having observed that, Cho (2020:37–50) also disclosed the resultant incapacity of the Church to accomplish meaningful *missional* impact to the public sphere and marketplace. He went on to give a detailed biblical survey of the theology of work and economics in the Old and New Testament. Although it is perceived from, and limited to the Western context, the work of Cho (2020) enriches this study with the biblical interface of ecclesiology and economics, up to its consideration, discussion and application in the Zimbabwean context.

Similarly, Augustine (2016:79) contests the secularization of economics and interfaces ecclesiology with economics. He deducts communal economics from the event of Pentecost (Acts 4.32–33). For him, ecclesiology intertwines with economics in the sharing and managing of people’s resources together, which is ideally against individualism and capitalism. While his work covers a laudable ground in interconnecting economics with ecclesiology, it is limited to communalism, which is generally not sustainable without contextually feasible commerce in

economically volatile places like Zimbabwe where poverty-racked congregations cannot meet their ecclesial needs with their inadequate resources. That means the work of Augustine leaves some spacious room for further studies on other aspects of ecclesial economics such as investments to establish and diversify sustainable income towards accomplishing holistic missionary work and regaining the currently blurry identity of the Church.

Many scholarly submissions (i.e. Ayuch 2018:5–6; Nkansah–Obrempon, 2017:283–283; Tagwirei 2022:2) concur that the Church bears a broad and costly missionary mandate (Ayuch 2018:5–6; Nkansah–Obrempon, 2017:283–283; Tagwirei 2022:2), hence the value of intersecting ecclesiology with economics. In agreement with the observations Woolnough & Ma (2010:27), ecclesiological tasks are all-encompassing and demanding corresponding economic engagements. In view of such all-incorporating missionary being of the Church, there is a grave need for the Church to rethink about how she can identify, utilize, manage and sustain God-given resources to meet increasing and unavoidable costs that she incurs in executing her mandate, beyond traditional sources such as freewill offerings, tithes and donations. Therefore, for any enlightened and reformist consideration, economics cannot be ignored in today's ecclesiology.

Having noted that economics attends to insufficiency and calls for the multiplication of resources (Buchanan 1964:216–217; Hayes 2020; Metu 2016; Kirzner 1965:260; Khumalo 2012:599–600), this study seeks to review ecclesial consideration and attention to self-development and restoration of her being. Befittingly, Laurence R. Iannaccone exposes part of the monumental essence of studying religious collections, expenses and capacities. According to him, the economics of religion should be developed enough to tackle outstanding questions such as why some denominations blossom while others decline (Iannaccone 2010:1–3).

Well keeping in mind De Mey's (2001:n.p) introspective warning against pursuing self-reliance at the expense of *missio Ecclesiae*, this study agrees that what matters most in God's eyes is not the self-centered flourishing of the Church, but His other-centered missionary work for the integral salvation of humanity. However, understanding that economic unsustainability in unstable contexts has been crippling and disabling the very primordial mission and disfiguring the identity of the Church in Zimbabwe. So, the Zimbabwean setting demands rigorous responsiveness to Iannaccone's (2010:1–3) submissions. As reflected in the introductory

segment of this study, many classical Pentecostal churches that rely on traditional sources of revenue fail to pay their obligations while enterprising ones flourish. Denominations such as the Church of Christ, Latter Day saints, the Zion Christian church and the Apostolic Faith Mission church established agricultural, educational investments and generated extra income. Although the tenability of their enterprises were also severely impacted by national economic and related challenges, they still contribute to their regular incomes.

Considerately, this study contends that denominations and congregations struggle without sufficient income. Although faith can yield positive results when people believe in the supplies of God (as Philippians 4:19 indicates), disengagement from working and growing God-given resources is irresponsible laziness that is depicted through Proverbs 6:6–8. Moreover, Shane Clifton voices that the linkage between ecclesiology and economics is commonly necessitated by contextual realities (Clifton 2014:254). As such, while fully given in to God by faith, this study discerns the need for ecclesiological engagement with economics to sustain the work of God, especially when contributions of congregants are inconsistent and low (Iannaccone & Bose 2010:1), like in the recessed Zimbabwean economy where Mwenje (2016:80) observed the unpredictability and unsustainability of conventional sources of income.

Well informing to this study, Clifton (2014:274–277) asserts that Pentecostal spirituality establishes confidence in people, and enables them to believe that they do not have to be victims but, instead, they can succeed and prosper, and should do so in and through contemporary systems of trade and wealth creation;

“They should think differently and seek the Spirit for entrepreneurial creativity, hunger for change and growth in the face of the stagnation that has entrapped many churches in the context of failure. Pentecostalism is a victorious spirituality, a trait it brings into the economic attitudes of its community. Setbacks and challenges will occur, but Christ died to bring victory, and the Spirit is present as a foretaste and promise that this victory is certain. To believe in victory, both personal and corporate, is to accept that life is a fight, a competition; a competitive drive that is redemptive, which give people the power to break through personal weaknesses and social oppression, encourages self-improvement through education, discipline, and hard work as well as renewal and instillation of virtues of faithfulness, hopefulness,

creativity, responsibility, generosity, cooperation and trustworthiness towards establishment and development of trading and companies” (Clifton 2014:274–277).

With that in mind, despite the fact that economics is inherently ‘**in and of the world**’, “fundamentally technical and integrating it with Christianity may be hopelessly quixotic, as there is no honest way to Christianize economics” (Richardson 2014:293), while Christians are ‘**not of this world**’ (Philippians 3:20; John 17:16), there is contextually spectacular necessity to economize ecclesiology. Considerations of the scarcity of her essential resources and the need to sustain ecclesial being compel mindfulness to the interface of faith and collaborative efforts. Accordingly, this study engages the *theonomic reciprocity* theory which encompasses praying and working along the provisions of God for sustainability. Such a cooperative approach appreciates that while God provides, the Church should work as she can, while God accommodates, blesses and enables her to yield envisioned sustainable outcomes (Butzke n.d:9) towards the accomplishment of comprehensive missionary work.

1.7 Research gap

Studies about the relationship between ecclesiology and economics have been given supreme attention in European and Western contexts, and minimal consideration in Africa for the past decades. Generally, the majority of literature that has been reviewed in the previous unit fundamentally covered the nature of the Church, significance and inevitability of studying religions and economics, especially considering a critical question about how some churches are thriving while others are struggling to survive and realize their missionary work against global and local economic recession (as reflected through the works of Iannaccone 2010; Iannaccone & Bose 2010; Clifton 2014; Augustine 2016; Butzke 2006).

Locally in Zimbabwe, huge devotion has been given to the manipulative commodification of the gospel by emerging indigenous charismatic churches (i.e. the works of Chitando 2013:96; Marongwe and Maposa 2015:15; Chibango 2016:52; Maxwell 1998:351–370). Scholarship about the economics of classical Pentecostal churches is minimal. Amidst historic economic adversity in Zimbabwe (Chitiyo et al 2019:4; Kanyenze, Chitambara and Tyson 2017:6–14; Pasara and Garidzirai 2020:2; Bhoroma 2021:n.p; Chingono 2021:n.p); customary sources of ecclesial income have been rendered unreliable, and untenable. Correspondingly, my literature

review showed that most churches running without engaging proper and progressive economics and diversifying their revenue are struggling to sustain themselves.

Bearing in mind the identity of the Church as principally missionary, this study observes that most classical Pentecostal denominations have, and the AOG BTG church in particular, has been avoiding important calls for them to pay attention to their contextual need to integrate their ecclesiology with commerce. This has been so, remarkably due to an identity crisis, fears of swaying their faith from divine provision by pursuing self-sustenance, and worries of their vulnerability to diversion of attention from missionary work to monetary engagements. An acute gap of reconciling ecclesial identification and quest for economic sustainability, balancing attention to the business of mission and the mission of business is detected. Thus, this study fills the identified gap by exploring the reconciliatory being of the Church and sustainability in the economically insecure Zimbabwean context.

1.8 Research Design and Methodology

1.8.1 Introduction

Envisioning an in-depth interrogation of the identity of the Church and quest for her economic sustainability in Zimbabwe, this study employed a qualitative research design. Taking the research design as the scheme that guides the studying process, with a layout of specifications to be adhered to in tackling the identified problem (Mouton 1996:107), a qualitative design was considered because it accommodates a naturalistic approach which respects a holistic and contextual focus (Marshall 2006:2). Additionally, it seeks people's interpretations of their experiences, construction of their worlds, meanings to their encounters (Merriam & Tisdell 2016:6) and begets contextually substantial data with explanations, illustrations, and primacy of informants' language and concerns (Leavy 2017:19 & Yin 2016:3).

For the purposes of feasibility, I took the AOG BTG church for a case study. A Case Study was considered because it captures issues under study in a detailed way (Flick 2014:122), and leads to the depth and width of matters in question (Barbour 2014:24; Babbie 2014:318).

Complementarily, this study also utilized online libraries, journal articles, books and other theses to get deep and wide exposure of the identity and economics of the Church. Respondents of this study were mainly AOG BTG National Executive leaders, regional leaders, branch pastors, elders and congregants.

1.8.2 Sampling

Figure 1: Table of the sampled population

AOG BTG National Executive	3
AOG BTG Regional leaders	12
AOG BTG congregants	15
<u>Total population</u>	<u>30</u>

A population of thirty participants, in form of three national executive members, twelve leaders from representative regions and fifteen congregants from different assemblies were purposively sampled and engaged in in-depth interviews towards a thorough examination of the study.

This study employed purposive sampling because it is enlightening, cost-effective, least time consuming, most convenient and it yields needed information about the study with selected participants (Tracy 2020:82; Tongco 2007:147; Taherdoost 2016:23–24). Purposively, in-depth interviews were considered because they enabled engaged partakers to share their views with total freedom as advised by Seidman (2006:9). Concurring with Books (1997:6), in-depth interviewing was employed to obtain unlimited amounts of data in a natural and free process in a fairly short timeframe. As a result, in-depth interviews allowed me to study and discover the tension between the being of the Church and need for her economic sustainability as interviewees spoke out freely and expansively in largely unstructured ways.

1.8.3 Research Instruments

This study used in-depth interviews and desk research (secondary research) to gather information for this study.

- **Interviews**

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews. Interviewing is defined by Boyce & Neale (2006:3) as qualitative inquiry which involves holding exhaustive interviews with a small number of respondents to gain their perceptions on a specific issue. Interviews enabled an effective exchange of views (as reflected by Magwa & Magwa 2015:71). I used an open and unrestricted method which allowed me to intensely explore respondents' feelings and standpoints on my study, gaining wealthy and relevant information, as reflected by Guion, Diehl & McDonald (2001:1) and Dellman (2013:n.p). In-depth interviews begot vast quantities of results in a quite short period of time.

The open ended nature of questions were typically natural and gave participants freedom to respond in detail, as observed by Books (1997:141). The main questions I used are presented in

appendices 4 and 5. All in all, thirty participants were selected from the AOG BTG national and regional leadership as well as congregants from different assemblies in Zimbabwe. Purposive sampling enhanced the selection of few people with more experience and knowledge about the case in question, who could provide insightful information (Merriam & Tisdell 2016:96). The chosen people are also those who could give the most relevant and plentiful data (Yin 2016:93) for the accomplishment of the aim and objectives of the study.

- Desk Research (Secondary Research)

Desk research is secondary research (Travis 2016:n.p). Having done primary research by personal engagements through in-depth interviews, secondary research by reviewing what other scholars have studied and observed was complementarily important as it begot a broad understanding of the field under study.

As Bhasin (2020:n.p) asserts, secondary research is basically collecting data from existing print and online resources. This means that such secondary information can be gathered from exterior sources (for example, research published in some academic papers and reports) or from in-house sources such as any materials that were available within the researcher's exposedness. Various scholars (such as Martins, da Cunha & Serra 2018:2-4; Church 2001:41-42; Sorensen, Sabroe & Olsen 1998:435) accede that desk research gains voluminous information from what other researchers have gathered. They concur that it is informative, enlightening, cheap and easily accessible as most of it will be available online and in libraries.

Thus, to complement information collected through interviews, I fielded some dissertations, theses, books, journal articles, newspaper and magazine articles that have been written by others with regards to the ecclesiological identity, economics; the history and nature of the AOG BTG church as well as strategies that can help the church to become economically sustainable in Zimbabwe.

Some of the works that were consulted in this study include *'Theological Aspects of Church Sustainability'* by Butzke (n.d); *'Casting the Nets in Deeper Waters: Perspectives for the Future of the IECLB'* by Butzke (2006); *'The Coming of Revolution in Church Finances: Why Tithes and Offerings are no longer enough, and what you can do about it'* by DeyMaz (2019); *'A Call to Self-Reliance of the Church in Africa'* by Kalilombe (2002); *'Interface and Integration in Christian Economics'* by Richardson (2014); papers and books about the Church, theological,

missional and financial issues by scholars such as the following: Arthur (2009); ‘Sarot (2010); Tongoi (2016); Mwenje (2016), Seabright (2016); Smith (2011); Graafland (2013); Having taken the above–mentioned researches and many well referenced others into account, this study comes as an enriching, contextually essential contribution to the identity, economics and sustainable holistic missionary development of the church in Zimbabwe.

1.8.4 Data Presentation & Analysis

A descriptive and interpretive data analysis approach was employed substantially because it describes gathered views; categorizes, reflects on, and interprets data and presents meanings from the context of participants (Elliott & Timulak 2005:152–153). Procedurally, data preparation, delineating and processing meaning units, consideration of an overall structure for the data, generation of categories, developing the findings, and interpretation of results was done as briefly explained below;

- a) **Data preparation** – careful and thorough reading, translation of vernacular expressions into English language and typing the data from handwritten notes that were gathered through in–depth face–to–face and telephone interviews, emails as well as *WhatsApp* written and audio conversations, together with additional information from researched materials was worked on. All that reading and typing yielded deep and wide understanding, pre–analysis and interpretation of the data. Additionally, some repetitions, redundancies and irrelevant digressions that do not contribute to this study were removed from the compilation.
- b) **Delineating and processing meanings** – Having compiled gathered data, I then divided it into applicable components that conversed information and contributed to answers of this study’s questions. Each view of engaged interviewees was given outstanding attention, decoded, transferred and attached to related contributions from other informants. In some instances, notions of participants were linked with quoted scholarly observations whenever need was discerned. In the process of outlining and processing meanings, unreasonably long sentences were carefully summarized and short ones were explained and elaborated towards attaining needful clarity and accomplishment of the goal of the study. In order to realize the intended meanings, all the outlined data was contextualized, connected to applicable publications and to the specific Zimbabwean

location where this study was done, in order to yield meaning, credibility, verifiability and applicability, as suggested by Shehadeh (2020:327–334).

- c) **Developing overall structure & categories** – the organization of data was determined by the purpose, study questions and theoretical framework. I generated topics to accomplish each objective and answer respective questions. Additionally, the meanings of outlined and processed data also contributed to the formulation and revision of headings and subheadings of the study. However, the structuration process was kept evolving and flexible enough to accommodate further revisions and refining as and when any relevant and complementary sections needed to be added and whenever anything irrelevant needed to be deleted. Overall, all established units were interactively structured and categorized within clarified domains that established particular meanings. Eventually, headings and subheadings were placed in accordance with their relationships and contributions to each other, under their certain chapters.
- d) **Developing the findings** – The outline of main and complementary findings was determined by viewpoints and meanings from specific units, and sub–units of the study. While the collected data was being compiled and categorized, key and supportive findings were discerned through what the majority of interviewees concurred, reiterated, emphasized and clarified. In the whole data presentation process, answers to research questions were noted and marked as contributory to findings. Conclusively, the composition of findings covered all essential responses to the problem and questions of the study.
- e) **Interpretation and analysis of the results** – While some passive interpretation and pre–analysis was done during the production and development of chapters, compendious interpretation and analysis of findings was done in the discourse of outcomes in chapter five; which is duly titled *‘Presentation & Analysis of Findings from Interviews’*. The interpretation and analysis of results reflected on the outlined data and gave the researcher’s observations, opinions and relevant scholars’ standpoints towards drawing conclusions. The findings of this study were located in the Zimbabwean context under Butzke (n.d), Butzke (2006)’s *theonomic* reciprocity and sustainability framework, as well as in observation of Kitawi and Irungu’s (2015) complementary assertions.

1.8.5 Delimitation

Delimitations basically concern aim(s), objectives, geographical and theoretical boundaries or limits that are consciously laid down by the investigator, mainly to enhance the achievability of the study. That way, the investigator would be in control as pointed out by Theofanidis & Fountouki (2018:157).

According to Miles & Scott (2017:7–8), delimitations are usually concerned with the scope of the study. They explain that delimitations prescribe the latitude of the study. Therefore, delimitations prevent the investigator from generalizing results of the study beyond the specified area. Miles and Scott (2017:7) clarify that delimitations are self-imposed restrictions to one's study and they are different from limitations. Additionally, delimitations are commonly the constrictions on the populations within which results of the study can be generalized. So, delimitations similarly act as parameters of the study.

Drawing from Miles & Scott's (2017:8) theses, they are the factors that restrict the researcher from claiming that his/her findings are true for everyone everywhere. For a qualitative study like this one, such factors limit the relevancy of the study beyond the given boundary. This delimitation therefore clarifies the specific focus and aspects of the investigation. In this part, the researcher specifies how this inquiry is narrowed to the concentration of the study by identifying a precise plan, involved parties, and phenomenon. This is deemed to be very exigent because it informs readers what will be encompassed, what will be left out and reasons behind all the considerations.

Akanle, Ademuson and Shittu (2020:n.p) explain that the spectrum of a study is to make it manageable, researchable, optimal and smart. They further elucidate that a researcher should determine the coverage early so as to enhance its accomplishment. Furthermore, Akanle, Ademuson and Shittu (2020:n.p) argue that researches should not be too ambitious, multitudinous, multifaceted, complex, or inexhaustible. They advise that the confines of a study should be clearly defined and settled in order to enable manageable generation of questions and topics.

Agreeably, delimitations clarify the geography, scholarship, population and time of the study. When done well, they ensure that the terms of reference are clear and attainable. As such, the

compass of the inquisition does not only show the account of a study, but it also effectuate credibility, validity and reliability of the study.

Considerately, this study is contextually and geographically delimited to the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe. The AOG BTG in Zimbabwe was considered because I am pastoring with her. Thus, I am strategically positioned to effectively engage with leaders, fellow pastors and congregants. More—so, the AOG BTG church is one of the oldest churches in Zimbabwe. She was established in 1959. She mothered several denominations like ZAOGA (of Ezekiel Handinawangu Guti), Glad Tidings (founded by Richmond Chiundiza), Wealthy Word International Ministries (of Judge Dube), Assemblies of God Movement (of the late Francis Nyika), Josh Moyo Ministries (of Josh Moyo), Impact Ministries (of Silas Dube), Kingdom Ministries (of John Chiweda), Oasis of Love Ministries (of Magret Mhlanga), Eternal Vessels Covenant church (of Busani Sibanda) and Christian Light International Ministries (of Peter Zhangazha). She also accommodates old and young gospel ministers and congregants. Hence, I perceived that studying with such a giant could beget highly enlightening insights on the matter under scholarship.

1.8.6 Limitations

Limitations of the study refer to possible flaws that are beyond the investigator's control.

Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018:156) attest that limitations are ordinarily associated with the chosen methodological plan, population, sampling and other factors.

Concurringly, Miles & Scott (2017:2–3) further avouch that primarily, “limitations revolve around the methodological means that has been chosen in gathering and analyzing the data”. For them, as the research method and design remain constant, limitations are inbuilt limits of the strategy that usually pose some inevitable limitations to the researcher.

As such, limitations are expected shortfalls of the study which could affect the generalizability of the results. While planning to withstand the challenges, declaring the limitations demonstrates that the researcher was aware of what restricted his approach to the study. Arguably, such an awareness enhanced the actualization of the study.

In this exploration, some of the purposively sampled interviewees like senior leaders were too busy to attend in–depth interviews and physical meetings were sometimes disturbed by coronavirus national control measures such as constrictive lockdowns in 2021. Additionally, three of them were very far away from the researcher's location, and travelling to meet them was

costly. In face of such limitations, I mitigated them by complementarily using telephone calls, emails and *WhatsApp* written and audio conversations which they could conveniently respond to, from the comfort of their homes as well as offices and own free times.

1.9 Ethical Considerations

The investigator upheld research ethics in the entire studying process by adhering to principles of informed consent, accuracy and fairness, protection of privacy, confidentiality and participants' protection from harm as a set of standards advised by Magwa & Magwa (2015:104); Pruzan (2016:291), Akaranga & Makau (2016:6), Hammersley and Traianou (2012:75) as governing the conduct of a researcher in carrying out investigations.

1.9.1 Informed Consent

Bearing in mind Stuart & Barnes (2005:6), Hammersley & Traianou (2012)'s recommendations for informants to participate from informed positions; I fully identified myself as a *bonafide* PhD student carrying out an academic study and got their consent before all engagements. That way, potential participants cooperated accordingly.

1.9.2 Accuracy & Fairness

Further submissions of Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden (2000:95), Akaranga & Makau (2016:2) were adhered to; that fabrication, distorting or exaggerating data or results; manipulating materials, equipment, processes or changing results or findings is violation of ethics. Fabrication of data and results were avoided. The researcher also avoided manipulation of data gathering strategies. Data was handled accurately and fairly.

1.9.3 Protection of Confidentiality & Privacy

The value of confidentiality was given adequate clarification that those who wished to remain anonymous would have their wish respected and that this information is strictly intended to be used for academic purposes. I considered that this helped participants to provide information in good faith, without deceiving me. This aspect of ethical consideration is also highlighted by Marshall (2006:82) who states that confidentiality and anonymity should be taken into account when doing research.

1.9.4 Protection from Harm

The researcher protected research participants from physical, mental and emotional harm by interviewing them in conducive environments and considerable day times that they kept

comfortable and free to speak out informatively as Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden (2000:95) Magwa & Magwa (2015:105) recommend.

1.10 Synopsis of Chapters

Chapter 1: Introduction	
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework	
Chapter 3: Reviewing Ecclesial Identity	
Chapter 4: History of AOG BTG in Zim	
Chapter 5: Presentation & Analysis of Findings	
Strategies for AOG BTG's economic sustainability	
Overall Summary, Conclusions & Recommendations	

Chapter 1: *Introduction of the study* – It is mainly introductory. It defines pivotal terms, captures statement of the problem; discusses the background and justification of the study. Subsequently, it reviews related literature, identifies the research gap and delineates the methodology, delimitation, limitations and ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter 2: *Theoretical Framework – Exploring Theonomic Reciprocity and Ecclesiological Sustainability model* – It conceptualizes the theoretical framework and complementary model upon which this study is premised. The chapter unravels the background of Butzke (n.d)'s *theonomic reciprocity* theory, and sustainability proposition by Kitawi and Irungu (2015). Afterwards, it recounts the tenets of *theonomic reciprocity* and their application in this study. Towards the end, the subdivision delineates the significance and biblical reflection of economic sustainability for the Church.

Chapter 3: *Reviewing the Identity of the Church* – it reviews the being of the Church through her portrayal as the creature of God, people of God, body of Christ, temple of the Holy Spirit, *koinonia*/communion and as essentially missionary. Thereafter, it outlines the AOG BTG identity, foundational and ongoing holistic missionary work in Zimbabwe.

Chapter 4: *History of the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe* – It gives an account of the history of the AOG BTG church. It draws her roots from the United States of America, through South Africa up to her foundation and development in Zimbabwe. It historicizes her national, regional

and local assembly leadership structures. It captures the recruitment and deployment of pastors, elders, organizers and local committees in the AOG BTG church.

Chapter 5: *Presentation & Analysis of Findings from Interviews* – It presents, interprets and analyzes primary outcomes of the study. The unit details the conceptualization of the identity of the Church, *missio Dei* and *missio Ecclesiae* in the AOG BTG church. It chronicles leadership and congregational views on ecclesiological economic sustainability, traditional sources and sustainability of AOG BTG finances, inclusive challenges of business as a source of finances, effects of national economic crisis and *Covid-19* to church finances. The section also covers the positive impact of business on missionary work as well as the difficulties and remedies of doing business as a church.

Chapter 6: *Strategies for the AOG BTG's Economic Sustainability: Interacting with Theonomic Reciprocity* – It unpacks the necessity and theology for ecclesiological economic sustainability. After that it offers contextually considerable strategies that the AOG BTG church can embrace towards her economic sustainability in Zimbabwe.

Chapter 7: *Inclusive Summary of chapters, Overall Conclusions and Recommendations of the Study* – It sums up the entire study, gives inclusive conclusions and recommendations of the study. Accordingly, and conclusively, it indicates areas for further research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework – Exploring *Theonomic Reciprocity* and Ecclesiological Sustainability model

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter delineated the contextual setting and introduction of the tension between the identity of the Church, and quest for her economic sustainability. Considering that this study is grounded on *theonomic reciprocity* which is propounded by Butzke (n.d); Butzke (2006) and complemented by Kitawi and Irungu (2015), this chapter explores the theoretical framework and the development of ecclesiological sustainability.

The contributions of Paulo Afonso Butzke, Caroline Njambi Kitawi and Dancan Njagi Irungu are very fundamental for the conceptualization and development of *theonomic reciprocity* and ecclesiological sustainability. Thus, this section conceptualizes *theonomic reciprocity* and sustainability from their submissions.

Beginning with an introductory background to *theonomic reciprocity* and sustainability, this unit provides the tenets of the theories and their application in this study, together with other relevant scholarly engagements, to synergize their perspectives and draw some lessons towards developing indigenously applicable reconciliatory strategies for economic sustainability and enhancement of ecclesial whatness. After that, a reconciliation of spirituality, mission and sustainability is given. Subsequently, a review of traditional sources of church income is done. Having done that, proposals drawn from the tenets of *theonomic reciprocity* and sustainability are recounted – such as advancing stewardship, harnessing available resources, developing human, financial and material resources as well as establishing entrepreneurship and embracing strategic management. Following that, the significance and biblical reflection of sustainability for churches is reviewed. Thereafter, a summary of the chapter will be featured.

2.2 Conceptualizing *Theonomic Reciprocity*

This study is undertaken from the theory of '*theonomic reciprocity*' which reconciles supernatural provisions and human responsibility towards ecclesiological tenability (Butzke n.d:9–10). The theory relates with ecclesiastic sustainability which is professed by Kitawi & Irungu (2015). Both the theory of *theonomic reciprocity*, and the model of ecclesiastic sustainability intersect the supplies of God and collaborative work of people in a way that is identical to the relationship between theology and philosophy.

Looking at the contextual probability of adopting self-support raising tactics to sustain ecclesial and pastoral work against high fears of swaying faith from God, Paulo Afonso Butzke came up with '*theonomic reciprocity*' from observing theologian Rudolf Bohren's submissions on preaching, in his book that is titled "*Predigtlehre*". Bohren studied the connection between the Spirit and method. He submitted that preachers should fully trust and depend on the Holy Spirit to gain inspiration and empowerment, while responsibly devising contextually viable methodology for effective deliveries. His perspective indicates that the Holy Spirit inspires and capacitates gospel ministers to be efficient in any of their chosen approaches. Thus, Butzke (n.d:9) explains that the Holy Spirit is not exclusive, but inclusive and accommodative enough to work with human reciprocation, hence he named the theory '*theonomic reciprocity*'. Butzke (n.d:9) conceptualizes it as '*theonomic*', averring that God remains sovereign while human beings ought to strategize and work in submission to His guidance.

Therefore, this study follows Butzke's (n.d:9) *theonomic* concept by keeping the place of God fully respected and submitted to, while calling for human contribution as cooperative towards desired ecclesiological sustainability. That means human efforts are never mistaken as effective without the leading and blessing of God. Similarly, the theory suggests that the provisions of God may not be sustainable if recipients are lazy and not reciprocally taking the responsibility of proper management, strategic distribution and utilization of availed resources.

When churches are facing economic challenges, like in the Zimbabwean case, Kitawi & Irungu (2015) observe from the Kenyan context that establishing profit making businesses augment their going concern. However, pursuing commerce attracts a mixture of positive and negative reactions because some denominations and believers collectively and individually take it as a progressive inventiveness for self-sustenance while others deem it as an attempt that is not part of the mandate of the Church, hence may distract her from concentrating on ministry. Nevertheless, both Butzke (n.d) and Kitawi & Irungu (2015) indicate the pivotality of reconciling mission with business for needful economic sustainability.

Taking a leaf from the concept of sustainability in environmental conservation, private enterprise, and productive investments and recovery through profits (Butzke n.d:3), *theonomic reciprocity* begets ecclesial survival and longevity. Thus, this study takes its departure from the grounds of Butzke's (n.d) *theonomic reciprocity* and Kitawi & Irungu's (2015) commendation of

establishing Church owned income generating projects towards tenability for holistic missionary effectuation. So, the following sub–section conceptualizes sustainability as a model that complements *theonomic reciprocity*.

2.3 Conceptualizing Sustainability

The issue of sustainability is broadly quintessential, relevant and demanding in the development of the Church. Historically, sustainability comes from the concept of sustainable development. Bansal (2004:197) says that the term sustainable development was extraordinarily promoted by the World Commission on Economic Development (WCED) in 1987 in its extensively quoted report that is titled ‘*Our Common Future*’.

In accordance with the WCED (1987:43), the term sustainable development refers to any advancement, or development that addresses current needs while building up some capacity or resources towards the betterment of the future. The WCED provided that tenable development demands concurrent embracement of ecological, economic and social principles. This study bears in mind that deliberations about tenability have been mostly revolving around ecology, economic and social integrity (WCED 1987:43).

As well averred by Korosvolgyi (2017:93), sustainability talks to the capability of being upheld at a progressive space and the property of biological systems to remain diverse and productive indefinitely. While traditionally sustainability has been largely taken up on issues with regards to environmental protection, waste management, economic consumption and recycling, recently the benefits of sharing economies and knowledge; collaboration, service design or even political design have been involved, mostly on the professional side. Relatively, Korosvolgyi (2017:93) talks of “eco–spirituality, the science of connecting ecology with spirituality, which aims at bringing religion and environmental activism together, a manifestation of the spiritual connection between human beings and the environment”. That conception engages the Church to be involved in sustainable development, utilization and management of God–given resources not only for external sustainability, but over and above that, for her own economic tenability.

Thought–provokingly, the term ‘sustainability’ has been rarely used with reference to ecclesiastic matters. The less it has been talked of speaks volumes about the minimum attention that it attracted and got in Church since time immemorial, hence the consideration for this study to be carried out for ecclesiastic advancement. As Kitawi & Irungu (2015:1026) reckon, the

Church is, and must be part of corporate organizations' economic, environmental and social drives, to ensure continuity, efficiency and advancement of her services to, and with the community. Kitawi and Irungu hold that ecclesial tenability is not merely about numerical growth and viability, but more with observance to establishing relevance to the congregation, as well as effective headship that is equipped and capacitated for ministerial and economic efficiency and tenability.

The implications of Kitawi and Irungu's assertions are that ecclesial sustainability occurs when sustainable value is given to the congregants, beyond spiritual to integral benefits, through enlightenment and empowerment towards provision of mundane life needs such as food for the hungry, economic and social justice for the disadvantaged and oppressed, stewardship of God's gifts and talents. Such essentials are indispensably interwoven with the central teachings of Christianity and not addenda to the ecclesial commission but inherently part and parcel of the *missio Dei* (Hiagbe 2015:175).

Kitawi and Irungu's proposition recommend the Church to work on holistic missionary ministry that feeds the human soul, spirit and body; spiritual and material or the divine and earthly needs. It is such an inclusive approach that gives life-bearing value to congregations. Considering that the Church can only afford accomplishing that kind of a broad ministry when financially, materially and humanly adequately resourced; development and diversification of income, material and human resources that beget ecclesiastic economic sustainability becomes critical.

It is acknowledged that Church sustainability relates to any organizational sustainability, which Aldaba et al (2000:n.p.) take as 'the capacity of non-governmental organizations to consolidate and to increase their interaction with society to fulfil their mission'. The term 'capacity' is used to emphasize that sustainability is a dynamic concept, based on the value of the activities carried out, their central proficiency, together with their capability to connect with ecological issues. From this point of view, sustainability stands as an intrinsic process that reaches beyond financial factors to take into account numerous others, including, but not limited to, human and material resource mobilization.

Notably, there are various conceptions of sustainability. While taking all this into consideration, much of this study roots, shoots and branches from Butzke (n.d)'s notion that sustainability is the capability of an institution to uphold available resources and withstand exhaustion for its current

and future usage. That conception exposes that the Church can only realize economic sustainability when developing and diversifying her revenue and building up human resources enough to withstand lack; avoid exhausting attained resources, boost, maintain, multiply available resources and develop a conducive working environment for continuous financial, material and human resources development. It also refers to building sustenance for continued service into the unforeseen future as well as constructing a spiritually, materially, financially and humanly concrete foundation for forthcoming ecclesial generations to keep on running effectively.

As historically referred to, the idea of sustainability is one of the mounting concerns on matters that concern mobilization, management and advancement of resources for environmental and humanitarian welfare. It is extensively considered that the motive and ideology of tenable development is to nurture cohesiveness and inclusive progress towards the betterment of life among certain people and groupings. Similarly, it propels guardianship and conservancy of given resources. The ecological issue and the worldwide population conundrum, exhaustion of natural and material resources and climate changes indicate the mounting need for broad mindfulness to tenability. Sustainability is therefore not only a local, but global matter, which, as submitted by Butzke (2006:4), inspires adoption of responsible management and development for a sustainable future.

2.3.1 Background of the *Theonomic Reciprocity & Sustainability model*

Following observations about experiences of other churches and his Lutheran church in missionary work, Paulo Afonso Butzke proposed that every organization should reflect about their economic sustainability if they are serious and intentional about accomplishing their purpose of existence (Butzke n.d:1). He narrated that the Latin American and the Caribbean Lutheran churches considered to pursue feasibility of their missionary activities and interfaced their ecclesiology with economics.

Accordingly, the then secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean in 2005, Rev. Martin Junge facilitated reflections on ecclesiological economic sustainability in conferences, such as one in 2005, in Bogotá, Colombia, and 2006 Conference in Coronado, Costa Rica (Butzke n.d:1). The mainly outstanding matters that were tabled and discussed included how to build up the Church, make administration of resources efficient; investments that churches can pursue to diversify

their income sources as well as models of sustainable leadership and sustainability. Butzke (n.d:2) submits that Reverend Martin Junge stressed that their churches and missionary teams faced challenges of contextualization, poverty, exclusion, insecurity and frustration without economic sustainability.

Additionally, the decrease of congregational giving, resultant financial constraints, incapacity to attend *diaconal* and *koinonia* missions have been growing. More–so, human resources have also been resigning due to lack of support. Butzke (n.d:2) says that ecclesial challenges root from poor management and neglecting the need to attend to economic development. For him, the church struggled as a result of the absence of a broad consensus concerning ecclesial identity, progressive models and effective management. Upon realizing the above mentioned challenges, Butzke (n.d:2) says that the Lutheran church eventually decided to have a series of reflections on the projection of their sustainability, primarily with three components:

- a) Thinking and building up a church;
- b) Participative and strategic planning and;
- c) Development of human and economic resources.

A team that was made up of representatives of all Lutheran churches was established to pursue their economic sustainability. During the time of configuration and development of the Sustainability Program, Paulo Afonso Butzke wrote a theological paper that was headlined “*Casting the nets in deep waters – perspectives for IECLB (Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil) future*”, and delivered it at the IECLB’s Council on 1 October 2006. He outlined three issues that he prioritized: the challenge of ecclesiological economic tenability, the challenge of quantity, quality and identification (plus of continual Christian learning). Complementary, Reverend Martin Junge wrote a complementary paper that was titled “*With confidence in the future – Defining horizons for the projection of sustainability of churches of the LWF in Latin America*”. The two papers gave transformational impetus for the Lutheran church to cross–examine their circumstantial need for economic sustainability. They eventually interlinked ecclesiology with economics, faith and work as well as spirituality and sustainability.

In the same view, Caroline Njambi Kitawi and Dancan Njagi Irungu creditably suggest that churches should make continuous efforts to rebuild their financial, human and material resources in order to withstand their liabilities and achieve their core obligation, especially in economically

unstable contexts (Kitawi & Irungu 2015:1026). They observed that in African countries like Kenya, the numbers of denominations and para-church institutions was growing and causing unavoidable unsteadiness of support and competition for followers and well-wishers' contributions and donations. Understandingly, fiscal problems that have been crippling the non-governmental sectors have similarly impacted churches and necessitated adoption of feasible strategies to rebuild economic stability.

Caroline Njambi Kitawi and Dancan Njagi Irungu cite some examples of denominations that have established businesses like the Catholic, Latter Day Saints and Anglican churches, and argue that their investments have resourced and enabled them to accomplish their missionary work in a broad way (Kitawi & Irungu 2015:1026). This study keeps in mind that in the Zimbabwean context, dependency on foreign aid, local tithes, freewill offerings and donations is unreliable and unsustainable. This is due to various reasons ranging from prospective givers' changing financial circumstances and capacities, suspicions on alleged personalization and abuse of church money by some leaders, lack of adequate, effective teachings on the need and significance of giving, ignorance on stewardship etcetera.

Additionally, the economic sustainability is observed against the backdrop of low ecclesiastic embracement of entrepreneurship in classical Pentecostal churches and distressing national economic meltdown which has been worsened by *Covid-19*. Resultantly, most ecclesial plans and operations have been repeatedly disturbed, delayed and at times shelved and eventually neglected due to avoidable economic incapacity.

Submissions of Paulo Afonso Butzke, Caroline Njambi Kitawi and Dancan Njagi Irungu offer cardinal lessons that can be applied in the Zimbabwean environment. As well depicted in the introductory background of this study in my previous chapter, the factors (mainly deteriorating financial, human and material resources against rising missionary demands) that led to the pursuit of ecclesiological sustainability in the Lutheran churches (as observed by Afonso Butzke) and in Kenyan churches (as highlighted by Caroline Njambi Kitawi and Dancan Njagi Irungu) are the same as in the Zimbabwean setting. Although the Church is remarkably a very unique institution, arguably because she has both divine and earthly identity (Kitawi & Irungu 2015:1026), which Chatira & Mwenje (2018:103) describe as both a social organization and

spiritual entity whose elements must be cautiously interrogated, advancing her economic sustainability is very crucial.

While she is in the secular planet and not of the same kind (as well pointed out through the Biblical books of John 15:19 and John 17:14–16 point out), she lives in a changing and uneven environment. Thus, she needs to, and can only keep up in Godly ways without conforming to worldly standards (Romans 12:2 and James 1:27), accomplishing her total missionary mandate on earth when economically well managed and sustainable. It is therefore contended that the Church requires professional, accountable and transparent management for desired effectiveness, and advancement (Smith 2011:n.p.).

While she is foundationally spiritual and supernatural; economic, political and social tenuousness in Zimbabwe affected her the same way that other varied faiths and secular organizations have been negatively impacted. In view of such realization, ecclesiastic viability and sustainability demand due attention (Bahme & Tsague 2009:n.p). Consequently, the *theonomic reciprocity* and sustainability model provide a strong foundation upon which this thesis is built from.

2.3.2 Tenets of the Theories & their Application

Figure 2: Cycle highlighting Proposals of *theonomic reciprocity* & sustainability



In view of Paulo Afonso Butzke, Caroline Njambi Kitawi and Dancan Njagi Irungu's advancement of *theonomic reciprocity* and ecclesiological sustainability, strategic proposals like reconciling spirituality and sustainability, reviewing traditional sources of income, advancing stewardship, harnessing available human, financial and material resources, establishing entrepreneurship, employing strategic management were observed. This section consequently looks at their strategic proposals for the economic sustainability of churches.

2.4 Reconciling Spirituality, Mission & Sustainability

Considering conflicting conceptualizations of ecclesial tenability rooting from how to balance divine provision and complementary human strategies, Paulo Afonso Butzke proposed that spirituality, mission and sustainability should be reconciled. He explicates that organizational management, strategic planning, marketing, and systematic theories should be applied in *theonomic reciprocity* with God, by fully submitting to Him for His blessings and enablement while humanly using any feasible methods to establish sustainability (Butzke n.d: 8–9).

Accordingly, since traditional strategies like faith, love and hope are immeasurable, Butzke's (n.d:8) proposition of engaging strategic management, planning and marketing appear to be very progressive. The Bible presents a number of indications that strategic planning is Godly, thus spiritual. We read through Exodus 18 that Moses received the advice of his father-in-law, Jethro, on how to organize service for the people. Human strategic management was needed, valued, called for and observed.

Complementarily, Ecclesiastes 10:10 depicts the issue of the dull and unsharpened axe, which needed some sharpening and development for effectiveness to be realized. Therein stands out the requirement for and importance of capacity building, relating to current ecclesiastic needs for skills and abilities to be developed towards intended sustainable milestones. In Luke 14, Jesus talks about discipleship and asks that the costs of the work and future growth should be calculated: “for which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it ... or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand...” (Luke 14:28–31).

Such biblical provisions mirror Butzke's (n.d:8) *theonomic reciprocity* provision which stresses the importance of strategic management and planning, which precipitates economic sustainability.

Concurringly, Butzke (2006:6) adds that Apostle Paul underscores what he terms ‘*kybernesis*’ – whose original meaning is the ‘art of piloting or steering a boat’ – among the charismas of the New Testament communities. It relates to the gift of ‘governance’ (1 Corinthians 12:28) or the ‘guidance’ of the community. According to Butzke (2006:6), to navigate a boat requires great ability, knowledge, innovativeness and strategic planning. Accordingly, several business organizations and non–profit organizations have realized economic sustainability by utilizing strategic planning for countless years. Formal strategic planning has helped much in the mobilization and motivation of organizations so that institutional goals can be attained. By employing a reasonable, orderly, and impartial approach, such administrations became tactful and forethoughtful in building their intended future. A premeditated plot works as a guide with which an institution can envisage where it heading to. In the same way, churches can attain economic tenability when they become visionary and tactical.

Butzke (2006:6) actuates the marriage of ministry and commerce to realize economic sustainability. In agreement with Butzke (2006:7), it is observed throughout this study that the comprehensive missionary identity of the Church is expensive, hence the need to interface spirituality and *missionality* with commerce for economic sustainability by diversifying and developing sources of financial, human and material resources.

Butzke (n.d) and Butzke (2006) emphasizes the exhaustive nature of *missio Ecclesiae*, and calls for mutual attention to its rising liabilities. As Khauoe (2008:9), Van Aarde (n.d:284) and Lephoko (2010:12) conceptualizes with some engagement with Bosch (1998:389), the mission of the Church is inclusive (covering *kerygma*, *diakonia*, *koinonia* and *leitourgia* dimensions), very essential, demanding and pricy.

Propelling Paulo Afonso Butzke’s *theonomic* reconciliation of missiology and sustainability, Stout (2008:46–47) furthers that while the modern practice of ongoing funding of missionary churches in the developed world is scriptural, that is normally based on the principle of generosity and, that way, not guaranteed. There is consequently grim need for local churches to develop and diversify their income generation in order to become capacitated to fund local missionary work effectually. Complementarily, Hodges (2009: n.p.) says that churches which we read of in the New Testament did not rely on donations, but they were self–sufficient as indigenous entities. To my concurrence, he argues that a church that depends on outside help

today is retrogressive and cannot be well-organized and operative in executing her holistic missionary work.

As highlighted before, missionary work is so total and demanding that it attracts high accountabilities. Thus, stimulated by the tenable New Testament churches, Butzke (n.d:8) opines that the Church should, and can only pursue her all-inclusive missionary work when sustainably resourced. As Irungu & Kitawi (2015:1033) underscore, the Church can only sustain her survival and longevity when she heightens her mobilization of resources. The more that the Church can do is normally determined by the more profit-making businesses and finances she manages. Drawing from the *theonomic reciprocity* principle of reconciling spirituality, mission & sustainability, the complete ecclesiastic missionary work challenges and inspires the Church to review and reconsider her sources of financial and material resources towards diversified income generating projects, which are more sustainable than offerings and donations.

However, Butzke (n.d:12) also perceives that mission does not belong to the Church and is not an occupation of the Church. He avows that the Church is a function of God's mission. In view of that, he suggests that the Church is a vessel of God which is like an empty boat at His disposal. While sometimes she may appear to be like a floating warehouse, troubled by political, social, economic and ecclesiastical interests, traditions, and rules, Butzke (n.d:12) recommends a humble engagement whereby the Church gives herself unto God for Him to guide, resource and use her for his purposes in the universe. For him, availing herself is very crucial for *missionality*. He argues that the Church should be prepared to empty herself and allow God to mould and use her in His own way. In that perception, Butzke (n.d:12) reflects the importance of the Church's submission to God for His provision and leading while she reciprocally utilizes given resources towards sustainability.

Both Butzke's (2006) and Butzke's (n.d) proposals for the marriage of spirituality, mission and sustainability inform this study about the need for wholesome spiritual, missionary and economic sustainability for the transformative submission to the will of God. It is therefore drawn that the Church needs to attend to both the missionary and economic issues in order to accomplish her dictate. Without economic sustainability, the Church struggles to pay operating costs, limit, shelve and or completely cut out certain onuses. When congregants lose out some commitments that way, they may grow spiritually poor, fail to mature towards submitting to God for His work

and that eventually negatively affects the whole Church. The principle of interfacing spirituality, mission and sustainability calls the Church to attend to her comprehensive missionary identity and corresponding costs that are normally incurred for its realization. This study therefore reviews the tension between the being of the Church and expedition for her tenability in line with *theonomic reciprocity*.

2.4.1. Balancing Missionary Work & Business

Having observed the *theonomic* reconciliation of spirituality, mission and sustainability, this subdivision looks at balancing attention to missionary work and business in the lenses of like-minded scholars for the Church to generate income and sustain herself effectively.

Interrelatedly, exploring the need for ecclesiological economic sustainability and challenges of running businesses, Munyoro & Ncube 2020:11–12 and Yidana & Issahaku (2014:7) avow that there is need to strike a balance between missionary work and income development. They say that though ecclesiastic leaders may be gifted by God, they cannot realize ecclesiological sustainability if they do not pursue contextually needful strategic skills. They put forward that the Church should engage and build up visionary, enterprising and professional management skills to develop and succeed in entrepreneurship so as to fund her operations. In such a case, Pastors, elders, deacons and related ecclesiastic leaders will not overburden themselves, or be overburdened to take leading positions on business projects. In that view, the *theonomic* tenet of balancing missionary work and business recommends the Church to employ, and or engage trainers and get selected congregants trained to occupy their congregational businesses positions, run professionally and accomplish intended results for the sustainability of the Church, and for their advancement.

Concordantly, Aldaba et al (2000:676) also speak about the necessity of acquiring new, both theoretical and practical skills that enable and advance productive partnerships towards balancing risks, strategic planning, management abilities, technical and financial expertise for sustainability. Respectively, Chatira and Mwenje (2018:112) who address issues of management call for the pastors and other ecclesial leaders to acquire necessary managerial skills and professional principles such as basics of budgeting, fundraising, book keeping and managing income and expenditure for efficient accountability and tenability. They emphasize that fiscal carefulness enhances integrity and advancement.

Additionally, for them, mismanagement and misuse of church funds are ordinarily due to pastors and leaders' ignorance of elementary financial education. *Theonomic* reciprocity suggests that the clergy should be educated about financial management because it is necessary towards the reconciliation of missionary work and business. Correlatively, Chatira and Mwenje (2018:n.p.) also say that financial literacy can help towards serving denominations from avoidable errors and developing them into desired tenability. Chatira and Mwenje (2018:n.p.) aptly suggest that pastors should be trained and empowered to oversee resource mobilization, maintenance and growth – which eventually begets economic sustainability. In agreement with that, while pastors may not take leadership roles in business, having such skills will equip them to develop visions that accommodate successful ecclesiastic entrepreneurship, and generally oversee church business arms effectively.

Besides that, Chatira and Mwenje (2018:n.p.) support strategic planning as the backbone of ministry. They find strategic planning as helpful in the direction of sustaining ministry with long term planning and development. Effectiveness is also realized when Church expenses are met on time and operating in debt is avoided, as debts can eventually enslave her. Chatira and Mwenje (2018:n.p.) link that with human resource management which looks after ecclesial employees and volunteers during and after their tenure.

Concurringly, Mawudor (2016:84–93) accentuates the need for skills development, diversified resource mobilization for capacity building and accomplishment of ecclesiastic missionary work. He reiterates that fully depending on donors without making efforts to attain indigenous tenability is retrogressive. Mawudor engages the World Bank's (2000:n.p.) opinion that generating income is a focal tactic to multiply avenues of living. He calls for the pursuance of self-sustenance for fruitful realization of one's being. Mawudor regards that entrepreneurship creates and grows unrestricted incomes that can flow freely than donations as donors may indirectly follow up and control how their financial and material resources are used in manners that may promote their interests.

According to Mawudor, diversification of income should be embraced for inclusive development. For him, diversifying income means increasing the quantity of sources of revenue. Instead of depending on traditional sources of income (i.e. tithes, freewill offerings and

donations), the Church could take heed to piling advices of pursuing other potential financial and material sources like enterprises.

Concurring with the necessity for skills development to oversee establishment, diversification and balancing of ecclesiastic financial sources and missionary ministry, Smith (2011:16) thinks that “even though a church may not recognize its functions as being business oriented, or may only distinguish certain ventures as entrepreneurial; all churches operate to some degree on a business level”. Therefore, the *theonomic* reconciliation of missionary work and business urges churches to have a set plan in place before any action is taken with regards to traditional and non-traditional economic engagements. That way, every action plan will have to be communicated in an effective manner; otherwise, misinterpretations of information may arise and conflicts may develop. No matter how well a church may communicate its missionary goals and objectives; there is always room for improvement.”

Respectively, Smith (2011:21) gives a consequential *theonomic* scheme that while the Bible is constant;

“The way it is presented has changed over the years. Churches being integrated in the community may remain the unchanged, but how they connect with people will continue to change. Whether or not people agree that businesses should be a part of the church structure and whether or not people take the church as having business-like characteristics is not the message. The message is that churches need to understand how to successfully manage their organizational structures, their businesses – traditional or non-traditional – and their members. As long as the churches realize that the way affairs were conducted five, ten or even fifteen years ago are not necessarily the best way it should be handled today, the churches will continue to progress and prosper well into the future.”

More-so, Aldaba et al submit that if envisioning beyond-aid scenario, seeking economic sustainability can be realized by re-orienting resource mobilization from foreign to local and diversifying income streams. For them, this is only part of the big picture. An exploration of the notion of sustainability in Central America led to the conclusion that it must be understood as an integrated capacity-based concept. Aldaba et al (2000:678) append that the primary options can be chosen from concentrating on non-financial support; self-generating revenue as part of, or

alongside what is done developmentally and generating income from third parties such as service payments. While they were talking of non-governmental organizations and not directly about the Church, Aldaba et al's submissions support the *theonomic reciprocity* tenet of balancing missionary work and commerce for self-sustenance. Their ideas of self-sustainability through diversified income generating ventures resonate with Butzke's (n.d) and Butzke's (2006) views against dependency on foreign, local aid, tithes and freewill offerings.

Additionally, the *theonomic* principle also calls the Church to give value to their communities. As Kitawi & Irungu (2015:1036) and York (2010:n.p.) assert, non-profit organizations (which include the Church) should differentiate themselves by raising and developing sufficient resources and facilities that give value to receivers, to deliver their services effectively. They express that the Church can and should distinguish her products by valuing and incorporating activities that positively impact communities to become germane by contributing to communal development. They suggest that the Church should work on projects that create developmental opportunities for individual congregants, and people in the communities where she is located. Eventually when such broad based entrepreneurial projects open up employment and new business opportunities for people within and outside the Church, they give value to them and that way directly and indirectly enable missionary work to grow. The Church can thus minister to citizens beyond the word, through deeds – such as creating developmental opportunities and enhancements.

From the same viewpoint, Ike (n.d:10–11) writes that considering the enormous responsibilities facing humanity, the local church should face her problems, unite, focus on missionary work; reaffirm her interest to recognise and utilize available quantifiable and measurable resources (such as material and human resources) for the attainment of a state of sustainable self-reliance. He adds that the church should acknowledge the relevance of trained personnel, equip and upgrade them for continual inclusive tenability.

Accordingly, the *theonomic reciprocity's* idea of balancing missionary work and business recommends the Church to promote the upholding of available funds and contextualization of her being as the mainstay for her tenability. Thus, Ike (n.d:11) further says that it is important in any ecclesiological engagement to adhere to the value of professional responsibility, uprightness and transparency in the use of funds.

Reconciling missionary work and business is also supported by Vanderbloemen (2020:n.p) who talks of leaders' need to look for ways to minimize expenses to help take the resource burden off the Church, innovatively explore creative ways for the Church to generate income, examine areas that need restructuring and leveraging available resources in order to generate sustainable income and create multiple seedbeds of income. It is emphasized that as missionary work costs much financial, material and human resources, given arguments point to cutting operational expenses, building and expanding income in order to accomplish ecclesiastic work. The observation discourages blind management and calls for visionary leadership in which evaluations and projections are made, all resources are scrutinized and innovatively developed towards balanced monetary, human and material resource sustainability.

Developmentally, *theonomic reciprocity*'s fusion of missiology with commerce is also professed by Johnson and Rundle (n.d:36–37) and Mitchell (2016:5) who add that the Church should conceptualize profit making business engagements as mission with some redemptive potential of business, not only as mere mobilization tactic but as a broadly involving approach to missiology. They challenge the old–style understanding that God only commissions a selective part of humanity into ministry and aver that God also calls various people into different kinds of ministry for the active and collaborative participation in comprehensive *missio Dei* and *missio Ecclesiae*. They proclaim that God provided trading as a way of helping human beings through each other and congregants can take part in serving others by engaging in entrepreneurial ventures in missionary ways. For them, people in business are nowadays also engaged in ministry by evangelizing in the marketplace. Their views affirm that the Church should not mistake and misplace business and entrepreneurial ideas as foreign, but as innately part of the wholly missionary Church.

So, this study observes that missionary work is difficult and almost impossible to accomplish without business support. This study develops with a cautious appreciation that entrepreneurship attracts various challenges that demand professional management to avoid disturbing the essential business of the Church – *missio Ecclesiae*. It applies the marriage of commerce and missionary work that way, observing concerted ecclesiastic leadership and congregational efforts, decolonizing profit making entrepreneurship as missionary, or complementary to

missionary work for the accomplishment of ecclesiological sustainability and purpose of the Church's existence.

2.4.2 Reviewing Traditional Sources of income

Butzke (n.d)'s *theonomic reciprocity*, and complementary views of Kitawi and Irungu (2015) additionally propose that the traditional sources of income should be reviewed. Their views call for an evaluation of the economic sustainability of tithes, freewill offerings, donations and supplementary congregational collections as outlets of Church income. Commendably, this study observes that the principle can help the Church to realize challenges and find considerably strategic ways for the growth, multiplication, diversification and betterment of her income towards necessitous economic sustainability.

The Church has been traditionally largely funded from tithes, freewill offerings, local and foreign donations since time immemorial. However, it has been broadly minded that monetary and material contributions from congregants are unreliable and inconsistent so much that they have become a seriously distressing problem in the Church in most developing countries (Prot, Ntibalema & Mugaya 2012:7–8). The amounts of individual freewill offerings, tithes and material contributions cannot be quantified, guaranteed and, as a result, cannot be well planned for.

Since the majority of congregants and donors are usually not part of ecclesiastic planners, but supporters, it is perceived that problems usually arise when the leading planners estimate amounts to be collected, and at times the expected congregants and supporters fail, may be selective, or decide not to respond positively and timely. When the ability to contribute declines, monthly, annual and other plans correspondingly get disturbed. A number of projects and programs get unaccomplished, some half attended while others wholly unattended. Eventually that usually leaves the concerned management failed and frustrated. The need for the Church to run income generating projects that can guarantee, meet and sustain her operational costs is therefore dire, hence the cruciality of the *theonomic* principle of reviewing ecclesial bases of income in this study.

Appiadu (2019:76–77) concurs that most Church funding has been overly from congregants and donors. He says that the majority of cases that he studied banked on congregational collections such as tithes and offerings for their day to day operations. He observes that the scenario should

inspire scholarship on the tenability of such traditional sources of ecclesial income, especially considering that congregational giving is often affected by inflationary challenges that have ripple effects in the Global South. This over-dependence has relaxed the Church from exploring other considerable means of funding such as forming of cooperatives and creating some businesses for supplementary revenue generation.

In the lenses of *theonomic reciprocity*'s proposition for the review of traditional channels of revenue, Appiadu further holds that the Church should develop her capability to keep up her work and long life. His view links with *theonomic reciprocity*'s call for creating wide-ranging ways to increase income in line with the provision, blessing and direction of God. This advances the *theonomic* principle of incorporating heavenly and human cooperation for ecclesiological economic tenability.

It also suggests that churches should embrace strategic reviews and secular professional management to safeguard funds. That includes developing competence through engaging financial technocrats. This study utilizes these *theonomic reciprocity*-driven suggestions throughout different sections and mostly in the formulation of tactics that the AOG BTG church may think through to apply in pursuit of her economic sustainability in Zimbabwe in chapter six.

The *theonomic* notion also developmentally inspires a review of the missionary history of the Church for her economic development. That the Church was introduced in Africa by foreign missionaries has been problematic. It is vied that most missionaries got support from their native countries, and their funds purportedly had some strings, or conditions attached to their gifts (Barman 2007:39). According to Barman (2007:39), multifarious foreign aid coerced indigenous denominations to give in their control to them. Moreover, issues about aid fatigue also came up gradually (Awadari 2020:194; Niyonkuru 2016:3). That way, dependence on donations is now unbearably problematic.

As noted by Awadari, the *theonomic reciprocity*'s call for a review of traditional conduits of Church finances challenges indigenous churches to brainstorm towards new ways of funding themselves. Moreover, there have been both direct and indirect calls for foreign aid recipients to grow and stand on their own. As missionary presence has decreased in Africa, foreign financial, human and material support has correspondingly also shrunk, resulting in financial challenges

and raising the need for raising local support. That development further raises the issue of self-reliance and resource mobilization high on the list of current ecclesiastic priorities.

As such, Ike (n.d:9) adds that the search for indigenous tenability is not a rebellious or self-centred move. Concurringly, De Mey (2001:9) explains that since it is not priests or religious leaders that can make a church self-reliant, but the laity, because they are the Church, the majority among the people of God, and therefore the only force that can decisively influence the life of the Church as a whole is her laity. Thus, the *theonomic reciprocity*'s call for the review of traditional founts of income commends the adoption of new ways and means of rendering the local church self-ministering and self-supporting, so that the Church can grow *en-route* to real selfhood.

Agreeably, this study observes, through different chapters, selfhood as a key base for the Church's life and activities through developing financial, material and human sustainability. As Butzke's (n.d:9) *theonomic reciprocity* reflects, Dey Mey (2001) clarifies that seeking self-reliance does and should not mean exclusivity, but must be accompanied by submission to God's provision, attention to and exchanges with other local and international Church denominations. Thus, this study utilizes such conceptualization, avoiding isolation or the attitude of absolute self-sufficiency. As no man is an island, no church can be genuine and dynamic unless it is in continual vital links with God and other churches in a relationship of mutual giving and receiving.

Overall, this study discerns that while a denomination needs some outside support, she should not be highly dependent on external back-up. Subsequent chapters of this study reflect the need for complementarity and subsidiarity: total submission to God, utilization, management and development of God-given resources for self-sustainability and openness for outward support in areas of necessity. As Kalilombe (2002:261) detects, only a home-grown and locally sustained denomination that is conscious and advanced on her self-sufficiency, self-government and global mandate may expect to make a difference in the world. Drawing from *theonomic reciprocity*, Kalilombe (2002:264) argues that the local church should work towards self-dependence to become self-ministering, self-supporting and self-propagating (as also perceived by Bowers-Du Toit 2020:313).

Accordingly, there should have been complete handover of responsibility from the missionaries to local leadership but to–date in the second year of the new millennium, most Zimbabwean classical Pentecostal churches have not progressed towards self–reliance and still seek external help in many ways. While there might be a few local cases, most indigenous classical Pentecostal churches continue to look for help from outside, even for the very basics of their existence. Why is this so? Kalilombe argues that most African countries have become desperate and hence, dependent.

Advancing *theonomic reciprocity*'s notion of reviewing local avenues of income, Kalilombe (2002:264) further proposes assessment of local strengths and realization of available resources as the first task towards self–sustainability in the Church in Africa. While poverty is usually attributed to most African problems, Kalilombe reasons that Africa is not poor. He says that she is rich with natural and human resources in abundance. He notes that most of the aid poured into our African coffers has come from African lands and as a result of African labour, which Africans have failed to exploit and manage efficiently.

Furthering *theonomic reciprocity*, Kalilombe observes that most African countries have been impoverished, regardless of having received huge amounts of external aid. For him, the actual problem lies in the misuse of natural resources, and foreign aid by political leaders who sometimes embezzle the funds to alleviate their own poverty. Likewise, some Church organizations own spacious land with natural resources, which past generations of missionaries managed efficiently in order to cater for the needs of the local Church. Local churches also have members who have the knowledge and skills required for exploiting these resources, who may be serving in government or private employment. According to Kalilombe, those human and natural resources should be utilized towards ecclesiastic sustainability.

A close look at some African countries gives a clear picture of the need for *theonomic reciprocity*'s review of traditional sources towards pursuing economic sustainability.

Interestingly, there have been inspiring appeals for ecclesiastic sustainability in Zambia (Zulu 2013:n.p.; Mwansa 2009:5), generalization of economic tenability across Africa (Carlsson, Somolekae and van de Walle 1997:210), Europe and America (Thiani 2016:8). The same calls are reminiscent to the voices of the Moratorium on Missions campaign instigated by the All Africa Conference of Churches leadership and member Churches in the 1970s (Thiani 2016:9).

Fostering the *theonomic* principle of reviewing income sources and diversifying income for sustainability, one of the Zimbabwean progressive bishops whose church runs some business enterprises in Harare, Tudor Bismark commendably contended that everyone must pursue entrepreneurship to diversify income and rise from poverty (Appiadu 2019:38-39). Observations by Appiadu (2019:n.p.) relates with Butzke (n.d) and Kitawi and Irungu's (2015) calls for the Church to observe *theonomic reciprocity* by professionally reviewing her income and embracing legal businesses towards achieving economic sustainability.

As scores of churches in Zimbabwe have been depending on tithes, offerings and donations as their main income sources since time immemorial (Mwenje 2016:76–80), Church members are usually taught to tithe ten percent of their incomes every month-end and give any amounts as freewill offerings each Sunday service. It has been emphasized that tithes have been unreliable as some congregants do not pay due to various reasons such as not understanding the New Testament biblical basis as most references used are taken from the Old Testament, suspicions on poor financial handling by leaders, and family challenges usually faced by those who have unbelieving spouses. More–so, there has been submissions that Christians have no New Testament obligation to tithe (Vhukani 2021:n.p., Davis 1987:88, and Ditzel 2015:7) and therefore not biblically supposed to observe tithing. Such reflections expose the problems and unsustainability of tithes and related traditional bases of Church finances, hence this study interrogates the need for the review of ecclesial sources of finances as a principle of *theonomic reciprocity*.

2.4.3 Advancing Stewardship

This study also beholds Butzke's (2006:6–7) *theonomic* consideration that the Church can realize her economic through persistent and continuous preferment of Christian stewardship. What is significant in the value of stewardship is the teaching and submission of human, financial and material resources to support the work of God through the Church. Butzke (n.d:6) asserts that believers should collaborate with God in serving the world in His whole mission.

The concept of stewardship also integrates the human obligation for the upkeep and running of the natural world (Chervonenko 2017:34). According to Attfield (2015:n.p.), agents do not possess what they are entrusted with, but they are indirectly accountable to the one who entrusted

them with what they have. So Cox (2015:1) avers the need for ecclesiological submission to stewardship as a way that can avail needed resources for the tenability of *missio Ecclesiae*.

Consequently, Butzke (2006:7) voices that stewardship must be considered as a useful instrument for fomenting a faith life that, through gratitude, can also be expressed and affirmed through financial and material commitment. For him, the Church, therefore, should commit herself through financial, human and material resources, as well as establishing entrepreneurial projects that yield increased incomes to meet operational costs and other ecclesiastic needs. According to Butzke (2006:7), the Church should not wonder about how she can raise capital for entrepreneurial projects for self-sustenance, or for other needs when congregants are available.

Therefore, Le Roux (2017:215) says that congregants should be taught stewardship in order for them to give towards *missio Ecclesiae*, as well as towards capital for business ventures in order to sustain the Church from proceeds thereof. The principle of stewardship builds a central part of ecclesial and clerical life because God entrusted them with His resources for the accomplishment of His purposes on earth. This study is developed with this principle of stewardship in mind that ministers of the gospel are commissioned to edify believers to become responsible stewards in the advancement of His kingdom.

Commonly, the value of being stewards is derived from biblical provisions such as Mathew 25:14–31 and Psalms 24:1. In respect of that, all Christians are called to demonstrate and actively practise it in contributing to human and natural care – which encompasses holistic mission (Le Roux & Cheryl 2017:215; Meier 2001:6). Under the *theonomic reciprocity* theory, such conceptualization leads to total commitment towards building and sustaining human, material and financial resources to support *missio Ecclesiae*.

Throughout different chapters, this study is informed by this philosophy of *theonomic* stewardship towards the pursuance of human, financial and material development for ecclesiological sustainability, advancement of *missio Ecclesiae* and actualization of the identity of the Church in Zimbabwe.

[2.4.4 Harnessing Available resources](#)

Professing *theonomic reciprocity*, Butzke (n.d:23) advances the development of human, financial and material resources that are at the disposal of the Church for the realization of economic sustainability. The following subsections dig into the principle and its application in this study.

i. Developing Human Resources

Butzke (n.d:23) speaks of the development of human resources as a rudimentary principle of *theonomic reciprocity* and ecclesiological sustainability. He takes individuals as elements of social systems that determine sustainable development of the Church. He says that they are the pillars in the relationship between God, humanity and nature who should take active continual participation in serving God through ministering to the needs of mankind and natural resources. For him, congregants are essential and should be valued and developed to build the Church while the Church also builds them up. So Butzke (n.d:23) adds that,

“Sustainable systems are existentially relevant for their members offering possibilities of accomplishment, meeting their needs and expectations. Members have the perception of receiving more than what they give in terms of time and money. The capacity of a system to meet its members’ (or potential members) wishes, interests and needs result in advantages that compete with competitor systems and significantly increases the possibilities of growth and sustainability. When a system meets the expectations (subjective and objective) of its members with quality, efficiency and reliability, it gains fidelity and commitment from members, which in turn results in sustainability. Through volunteer work from members the Church has energy and resources available. If these members are motivated, trained and followed properly, they will contribute significantly for ecclesiastic development and sustainability”.

This study deciphers from Paulo Afonso Butzke’s conceptualization that ecclesiastic sustainability can be realized when the Church values and develops her human resources – either as volunteers and or full time employees and collaborators. According to him, developing human resources should not be an optional but necessitous and deliberate process of engaging congregants towards sustainable development of the Church. Without faithful and competent human resources, ecclesiastic sustainability may remain a fiction (Butzke n.d:23). That is why Accra & Love (2015:190) say that human resources determine all developments of the Church. They argue that leaders should always appraise and develop their human resources to meet contextual targets.

Conclusively, together with Abraham, Kusi, and Mensah (2018:55), this study also attends to the development of a personnel that is proficient enough to build the economic tenability of the Church. Thus, from the historical and developmental exploration of the AOG BTG church in

chapter four and in the propositions of strategies that the AOG BTG church may consider for her economic sustainability in Zimbabwe in chapter six, this study features an assessment of the church's national, regional and local congregational human resources to find out how she utilizes them and how the church can progressively use them for her economic development.

ii. Developing Financial Resources

For the Church to fulfil her ministry, Butzke (n.d) suggests that she must mobilize, manage and develop adequate financial resources. Observing *theonomic reciprocity*, McFate (2010:5) supportively argues that finances dictate the success of programs; determine workforce, developmental, outreach, general morale and witnessing.

Following Butzke's (n.d:22) reflexion that resources are limited and finite, this study applies the conception in the Zimbabwean context, examines the mobilization and management of available financial resources in the AOG BTG church. Similarly driving *theonomic reciprocity*, Shaibu (2013:219–220) takes finances as the engine that propels the growth and sustenance of the global Church, and suggests that to develop finances, she should adopt and employ prudent measures that beget effective and efficient management such as recruiting spiritually mature and faithful trustees to collect funds, do banking, recording all collections and transactions, accounting as well as setting up a committee of professionally trained people to oversee financial management. For him, such strategies can yield efficiency, confidence, competence and effectiveness in financial development of the Church.

Additionally, McFate (2010:5) suggests that that any church can increase her financial resources if she mutually builds up a Biblical theology of stewardship, rediscovers her purpose of existence, cascades her vision down to her grassroots, creates a contextually relevant Christian education, re-strategizes for her economic growth; pastoral, leadership, congregational and resourcefulness towards attending mission holistically.

This study is developed in view of these, and additional submissions such as Chan, Fawcett and Lee's (2010:19) *theonomic* assertions that redoubling efforts in teaching about biblical giving, and investing in their young people and leaders who can help them to diversify their finances.

Engaging with the abovementioned, and various other scholars, this study applies the provision of *theonomic reciprocity*, especially in the analysis of data from in-depth interviews in chapter

five; the mobilization, management and development of available financial resources for the economic sustainability of the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe.

iii. Developing Material Resources

The *theonomic reciprocity* theory also engages the importance of material resources for the economic sustainability of churches. Supportively, a story by Wittenberg (2020:n.p) about the Arlington Presbyterian Church in Virginia which realized the need to develop her building when *Covid-19* disrupted their financial sustainability is enlightening. He wrote that the church built a spacious seven-story complex, accommodated multiple purposes such as congregational services and letting secular organizations, raising extra revenue and creating opportunities for marketplace evangelism.

Besides that, Elsdon (2021:n.p.) noted that churches should establish preschools, build housing projects, commercial kitchens, recreational facilities and related businesses within their lands. To my concurrence, Elsdon argues that churches should reimagine acquiring more land, and or use their available land and properties to generate income, sustain themselves and serve communities – towards the accomplishment of holistic missionary work. Corroborating the same view, Weems and Michel (2021:n.p.) add that churches can lease their buildings and get rentals.

Some local churches in Zimbabwe have developed their material resources towards sustainability and execution of missionary work. Confirming the value of material resources (Sunday News 2021:n.p.), Harvest House international church built a 10500-seater-state of the art auditorium in Bulawayo, which also accommodates a gym and two restaurants (Dube 2021:n.p.).

Celebration church, Zimbabwe Assemblies of God, Anglican, Catholic, Reformed church in Zimbabwe, Church of Christ and Methodist churches have also acquired and developed material resources like land, buildings, established farming, real estate, catering, education and other commercial ventures.

In view of the *theonomic reciprocity* theory's principle of developing material resources, foreign and local examples, this study examines the acquisition, usage and management of AOG BTG material resources such as her farms and buildings, bearing in mind that material resources are pivotal for the economic sustainability of a church.

2.4.5 Establishing Entrepreneurship

Butzke's (2006) paper that is titled '*Casting the nets in deeper waters – Perspectives for the future of the ECLB*' (*Igreja Evangelica do Confissao Luterana no Brasil IECLB*), outlines the challenge of sustainability, quantitative and qualitative growth as well as identity.

It primarily exposes the necessity of ecclesial sensitivity to resourcefulness for diaconal, educational, missionary, projects and survival of parishes in Brasil and her sister Lutheran churches in Latin America.

Globally, it is extensively notable that foreign aid and local donations have dwindled over the past years of worldwide economic recession and it is highly considerable for every organization that seeks operational effectiveness, holistic development and continuity to look beyond aid (Aldaba et al 2010:669). Aldaba et al looked at Central and South America, as well as in the Philippine, and detected that there is growing competition for international aid funds and donor aid is decreasing due to various reasons such as growing interest in supporting African humanitarian cases. Their views appeal to the African, and Zimbabwean context in particular.

The outbreak of *Covid-19* in year 2019 from Wuhan, which spread fast, sickened and killed millions of people, deteriorated economic situations across the world (Fernandes 2020:n.p.; Asare, Sackey & Barfi 2021:n.p.). As they reflected, the coronavirus pandemic ruined the global economy, impoverished most of populations and generated multiple uncertainties. The effects of *Covid-19* have definitely further affected foreign aid and local support. As a result, financial constraints, similar to those in different sectors and countries necessitate the espousal of native approaches of rebuilding economic capability. Taking *theonomic reciprocity* and its call for establishment of entrepreneurship in churches into account, this study probes the church's optimization of her activities for the realization of economic tenability and continuousness.

This resonates with various other scholarly advances for ecclesiological engagement in profit making businesses to avoid retrogressive dependency and build self-sustainability (Kitawi & Irungu's 2015:1026–1027; Hamilton–Pennell 2009:n.p.; Bahme & Tsague 2009:16; Mabwe, Dimingu and Siyawamwaya 2018:149; Shumba 2015:155; Muchamiri 2018:n.p.).

Given the worsening social, political and economic circumstances in Zimbabwe from the long reign of the late Robert Mugabe up to the administration of president Emerson Mnangagwa who took power through military assistance and gave empty developmental promises (Besada &

Moyo 2008:n.p.; Hoyes 2020:n.p.; Melber & Southall 2021:n.p.; Gruzd and Lalbahadur n.d.), the ecclesial and congregational growth got adversely affected. The majority of denominations can no longer afford her great missionary mandate.

Churches that run without diversified incomes often fail to resource their pastors and ministers to execute their duties effectively (McFate 2010:95). As previously referred to, many local churches in Zimbabwe have been gathering in schools and council halls. As *Covid-19* led to government reviews towards alleviating its tragic spread, churches have been banned from using schools and that has compelled them to gather in residential places and under trees. That confirms their struggles to finance desired places of gathering and operational needs. As a step towards financial self-reliance, *theonomic reciprocity* calls for income-generating schemes as best strategies for the local Church to realize her own development and self-sustenance. Agreeably, Asantemungu (2011:73–79) discredits dependency and calls for self-sustenance. He suggests that there has to be a general mindfulness of self-tenability. According to him, self-reliance does not mean disengaging from foreign partnerships but it is rebuilding home-grown involvement in the ecclesiological establishment.

Asantemungu (2011:79) engages Ruwa (2002:17) who clearly states that while the Church may continue needing donor assistance to supplement local contributions in the areas of evangelization, pastoral care, health, education, and other social services. However Asantemungu (2011:79) reasons that local income generation projects should be seriously pursued to enable self-responsibility for indigenous growth and integral development. “It is only self-reliance that will give the Church the confidence and effectiveness she needs in order to play her prophetic role in the society” (Asantemungu 2011:79).

The Zimbabwean economic and political state confirms failures of the aboriginal Church to exercise her prophetic role due to lack of self-sustenance. Allegations of being corrupted, divided, co-opted, used and abused have been high since the past and current regimes (Dombo 2014:144; Muromo 2018:170 and Mujinga 2018:249). Instead of standing with, and for the poor and oppressed, several Zimbabwean heads of churches were bribed with farms, residential stands, financial and material resources by ruling elitist leaders to sanitize an oppressive leadership. Few churches such as the Catholic and Anglican denominational voices remained

unwaveringly uncorrupted voices of the voiceless arguably because they are self-sustaining and not easily tempted by bribes.

Besides that, *theonomic* ecclesiological sustainability has been a long-standing concern outside (Elliot 2020:86–87; Kuo 2017:n.p.; Kighoma 2019:1 and Zurlo, Johnson & Crossing 2019:9; Chong 2020:n.p.; Ameba 1996:113–114) and in Zimbabwe Shoko (2014:n.p.; *ZimEye* 2019:n.p.). Netsianda (2020:n.p.) reports that the incumbent president Emerson Mnangagwa encouraged churches to engage in business and contribute to community development.

While the president focused on the need for the Church to complement the government's economic developments, the idea of awakening the Church to the importance of entrepreneurship for development adds to increasing voices for ecclesiological sustainability. Small and medium enterprises development minister Nyoni, first lady Auxilia and president Mnangagwa's sentiments are part of various Zimbabwean secular leadership voices that find the Church progressive and effective if she delves into profit making business ventures. They observe that Church life, operations, development and continuity can be best realized with diversified and developed resources. They view that Church involvement in national affairs and development can be self-financed instead of having her joining secular organizations that burden government treasury with requests for financial and material support. Such minds note that the Church is divinely capacitated enough to subdue, develop and sustain the earth, contrary to begging for survival when she can and must be the helping hand to the secular world.

The *theonomic reciprocity's* overture for the Church to engage in entrepreneurial projects therefore commendably reiterate self-financial, human and material capacity building towards reliable current and future self-sustenance and contribution to ecclesiastic sustainability. Although some local calls are secular and could have been motivated by political propaganda, power conquest and retention spirit; this study observes that business appeals are welcome, helpful, progressive and greatly supportive to the development and economic sustainability of the Church, as reflected throughout chapter four to six.

2.4.6 Strategic Management

Theonomic reciprocity and sustainability views of Butzke (n.d), Butzke (2006) and Kitawi and Irungu (2015) also recommend that churches should embrace strategic management to develop their economic sustainability. Since numerous denominations have been reluctant to interface

ecclesiology with economics, Aukerman (1991:n.p.) suggests that church leaders should seek management skills to be able to reconcile ministry and commerce.

The *theonomic* value of strategic management is also supported by biblical verses (Online NIV Bible Gateway:n.p) about visionary planning and delegation, such as the following:

- Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint; but blessed is the one who heeds wisdom's instruction. ... (Proverbs 29:18)
- Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed. (Proverbs 15:22)
- Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise (Proverbs 19:20)
- Plans are established by seeking advice; so if you wage war, obtain guidance. (Proverbs 20:18)

The above-stated Bible verses are some of scriptures that promote vision and counsel, which involve strategic planning, and people-engagement as critical for personal and organizational sustainability. According to Auckerman (1991:n.p.), leaders of churches need to seek formal education in professional management. For him, getting educated can capacitate them to execute their duties efficiently and effectively. Auckerman observed declining membership and attendance levels as part of consequences of not planning, or having poor planning.

With different ecclesiastic sustainability conceptions, Butzke (2006:6) and Butzke (n.d:7–8) allude that church leadership that does not embrace strategic planning resultantly gets out of touch with congregational needs and eventually lose them to denominations that embrace strategic planning. Auckerman (1991:n.p.) elucidates that efficiently managed churches can identify congregational and community needs, strategically set and achieve their objectives.

Scholars like Shah, David and Francis (n.d:28) reassuringly emphasize the need for strategic management in churches for sustainability. Supporting the same standpoint, Malphurs (2013:n.p.) stresses that strategic management should be incorporated in church planting, church growth, church revitalization and sustenance. Malphurs spells out that being strategic should be complemented by establishing effective leadership that can navigate the Church through desired developmental changes. Navigation requires careful planning. Like in the case of boat navigation, comprehensive understanding of the sea and environmental factors enables involved people to safely reach their expected destination port. The Church can be likened to a ship, which

needs human, financial and material resources and management development for efficiency and effectiveness.

Likening the Church to a ship is apt as driving, managing and leading her in face of various ecclesiastical leadership demands strategic planning, management and sustainable development for effective navigation of God's people towards their destinies. As Butzke (2006:6) notes, there are numerous problems faced in building a culture of sustainability-bound premeditated planning, management and development in the Church as she has been traditionally over-spiritualized since time immemorial. Butzke says that his personal experience of directing Lutheran church Strategic Planning processes since 2004 for almost twenty parishes has transformed his conceptualization of, and drive for ecclesiastic sustainability. He says that some Lutheran parishes took strategic planning seriously as a process of rebuilding their tomorrow and became effective.

In agreement with that, Leon (2001:15–18) says that economic sustainability should be developed beyond income generation and diversification, to varied pillars that can get and keep it strong, standing and growing. Leon conceives that there are four central backbones for the sustainability of an organization; strategic planning (which is a mechanism that clarifies organizational mission, objectives and actions to accomplish set plans), income diversification (multiplying sources of organizational income), sound administration (resource management) and own income generation (self-owned projects that generate unrestricted income).

This study makes use of such *theonomic* management towards achieving economic sustainability as an inclusive process (as alluded to by Malphurs 2013:197). It appreciates that realizing economic tenability requires leaders, subordinates and members to talk, walk and work together.

This study thus applies the *theonomic* reciprocity theory in examining AOG BTG church's economics, and observing strategies that can help her to maximize her potential for economic sustainability (as highlighted by Leon 2001:29). It is conceptualized, from *theonomic reciprocity*, that achieving economic sustainability demands strategic management in raising, administrating and developing ecclesial resources.

2.5 The Significance of Sustainability for churches

The vitality of the concept of sustainability from the theory of *theonomic reciprocity* has influenced the government and organization of several establishments in almost every sector across the entire world (Butzke 2006:5). This study notes the validation and application of the concept within civil society, non-governmental and governmental organizations.

Butzke (2006:5) points out that sustainability challenges institutional development and missionary accomplishment. Arguing that it determines the mobilization and management of resources, organization, autonomy, workflow and credibility, he clarifies that sustainability enables an organization to grow beyond fund-raising, to balance aspects of what it is to be the Church. The conceptualization of Butzke stimulates the rethinking of comprehensive ecclesial mission in all *kerygmatic*, *diakonia*, *leitourgia* and *koinonia* dimensions.

Paulo Afonso Butzke accentuates inclusive approaches, for example in the case of *koinonia*, that it should not only be viewed narrowly just as fellowship of brethren, but as a whole outlook on life whereby the common life and common good are at the core of all relationships, meaning that the corporate gifts conferred on the Church are for the whole people of God for service to all and the whole of creation. Understanding this, ecclesial communion ought to be given its outworking in the life values of sharing and participation in a holistic interrelationship between God, humanity and nature (Sakupapa & Nalwamba 2018:78).

Sustainability therefore does not only look at becoming financially stable; monetary, material and human capacitation for the execution of an all-encompassing missionary work. Sustainable capacity building can then empower the Church to operate and realize her missionary goals without total dependency on, although somewhat getting some support from foreign donations and local freewill offerings, tithes and other gifts.

In the same vein, Mawudor (2016:48–51) voices that sustainability advances corporate and membership welfare and longevity. That way, it creates the preferred standard of living and addresses the needs of unborn generations. It enables strategic management of individual and institutional life. In doing that, sustainability grows a secure and developmental way of life for the best of human beings.

Reflections on this signify that if today's Church obtains economic sustainability, tomorrow's Church will not begin where today's Church began. Tomorrow's Church will begin at a better level with inherited capacities arguably because firm foundations and part of needed capacities would have been built today. Butzke (n.d) denotes that today's Church must develop and maintain trans-generational visions, strategic plans and action points for today and tomorrow.

Interestingly, Mawudor (2016:n.p.) further connotes that sustainability also capacitates the indigenous church and liberates her from the obstructive bondage of dependency in foreign support. For him, it goes on to include the organization's consideration, plans, and capacity building, generating its own funds and multiplying incomes. Sustainability is therefore highly important because it enhances tactical envisioning, commitments; administrative principles and begets sustainable results.

This study finds sustainability highly valuable in that it capacitates a church to afford her operational expenditures in anticipatable terms through a combination of locally generated income and supportive donations. An economically sustainable organization will therefore be able to withstand and avoid dependency on any single (internal or external) cradle of revenue. Sustainability enables takers-in to cope with their running expenses while engaging external helpers just for back up to boost their developmental efforts.

Concurringly, Stout (2008:27) avers that sustainability capacitates the Church to carry out her core biblical functions without depending on foreign funding or leadership. As highlighted before, ecclesial attainment of the core biblical functions such as upward aspects (worship and prayer); inward aspects (discipleship, shepherding, and community life); and outward aspects (evangelism, benevolence, and missions) costs much that can be best attended with economic sustainability. The Church cannot execute her missionary work by prayer and fasting only, but with money, material and human resources. Resultantly, the capability to generate, maintain and develop those resources defines ecclesiastic sustainability, which is very critical and demanding serious attention.

Over many years, it has been appreciated that there are several benefits of ecclesiastic economic sustainability. Stout (2008:27) mentions local ownership, that believers can only assume responsibility and ownership when they meet working needs of their church. Considerately,

congregations cannot claim ownership and control of their denomination when their operations are met largely through external financial, material and human resources.

Arguably, as funders' support usually determine what and how operations are done, those who give consequently indirectly own and control the dependent church. Such a church cannot govern, propagate and develop freely as she ought to. That is why Barrick (2017:n.p.) and Barman (2007:41) echo corresponding possibilities of independence. (Barman 2007:41).

Given that resource providers distribute their resources based on their own considerations and preferences, some non-profit organizations, churches and departments are selected to receive revenue whereas others are overlooked. Sometimes even when external funders do not explicitly ask or demand anything in return, local leaders tend to feel thankful by asking what they can do for the donors. Alternatively some local leaders may silently, submissively give donors room to feature somehow on influential positions and levels that ultimately leave the local church without total ownership and control of their operations and or authoritative decisions. In order to gain, maintain and secure ownership and control, local churches can, and must stretch their faith, give sacrificially out of their earnings or harvest, and find creative income generating projects for the church to run and sustain herself (Stout 2008:27).

While numerous local churches appear to be struggling without adequate financial and material resources, Stout argues that if they get inspired and conditioned towards self-sustenance, they can work out and find ways and sweat towards funding their core ministries and step up local church growth. His argument suggests that, driven by some conviction, and having self-willingness, even constrained congregants can wholeheartedly flesh out themselves to find resources for the development of their church. This is also argued out of a view that congregants can give sacrificially if they are highly motivated that their efforts will enable their church to generate income and liberate their church from dependency syndrome.

Besides that, Bahme & Tsague (2009:16) underscore that the church should value sustainability arguably because it inspires entrepreneurship and complements congregational giving and capacitates the realization of the Great Commission. Without sustainability, most churches tend to run financially and materially incapacitated that they may only dream and pray for what just needs money and material resources to be done. It seems agreeably so because missionary work costs finances and materials. Whenever local funds dry up, or get low, attention goes to foreign

help, which can be given, delayed, or denied due to varied factors, and all that ultimately obstructs strategic missionary accomplishments.

The Church is thus recommended to value sustainability and embrace commerce. While that has been somewhat done by some churches, drawbacks on several other denominations to pursue it have been affected by misunderstandings raised by others who think that attending income generation tempts the love of money, and a stern commercialization of the gospel (Seabright 2016:2001). Examples of emerging indigenous neo-Pentecostal churches that have diversified their income generation through selling anointing oils, wrist bands, denominational regalia, charging prophetic meetings code-named “one-on-ones” and many other controversial fundraising strategies have been specified as part of what triggers endless debates and misgivings on Church engagement in profit making business ventures for self-financial sustainability.

Resultantly, some fundamentalist Christians have been arguing that the Church should just focus on her missionary mandate and avoid any commercial undertakings to safeguard herself from falling into evil traps of the love of money. This necessitates further interrogation of how to progressively realize ecclesial sustainability, hence the value of a biblical engagement below.

2.6 Biblical Reflection on Sustainability

From the perspective of Christian faith, it is believed that the world is a complex and interdependent system which is capable of offering needful resources for the well-being of all living creatures (Butzke n.d:4). The work of Paulo Afonso Butzke shows that the supporting networks of the cosmic system that God created got destructed and disconnected by the selfish direction of resources into the hands of few and exclusion for many.

For Butzke (n.d:4), the selfish abuse of resources by few individuals at the expense of the masses besmirched and insulted the creation in various ways that have been resultantly impoverishing humanity. Viewpoints of Paulo Afonso Butzke bring to light enlightening observations that sustainability can only be realized by relinking natural and human systems to integrally uphold and advance tenability. According to Butzke (n.d:4), such a system corresponds with the biblical worldview that sees the world as “*oikos*”, “house” of God in which all elements are integrated, are interdependent and receive life from His Spirit.

Progressively, sustainability biblically depends with God who makes up everything, as reflected through Psalms 104:24;

“How many are your works, Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures” &;

Psalms 104:27–30; “All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground” (Online NIV Bible Gateway: n.p)

Butzke (2006:4) explains so well that each life bears a stream that supports and interconnects everything. He says that faith teaches that life is wholly interconnected. For him, faith reflects overcoming the lack of togetherness, overcomes the disconnections, conflicts and challenges that are caused by sin and breakdown of relationships between God, humanity and nature. Drawing from Butzke’s (2006:4) views, the Bible engrains sustainability in the reconciliation, salvation and restoration of humanity by God. He argues that the Church lives like the space in which the needed reconciliation, salvation, restoration, development and tenability can be encountered and applied. With that, hope and abundant life can be realized.

Agreeably adding to Paulo Afonso Butzke, Thebe (2015:14) and Beltran (2020:40) trace sustainability from the Bible and observe that sustainable development is firmly biblically founded. They find that the concept of human dominion over nature and assignment to work (indicated through Genesis 2:15) implies stewardship for economic sustainability.

This is why Torsu (2020:31) interprets Matthew 25:14–29 beyond stewardship to necessitating entrepreneurship and emphasizes the need to pursue economic sustainability;

“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. ‘After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man

who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’ ‘His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ “Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ “His master replied, ‘you wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. “So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.” (Online NIV Bible Gateway: n.p)

To my agreement, Torsu (2020:n.p.) argues that doing business for profit, and thus, establishing economic sustainability, is the will of God while doing nothing is devilish “idleness and wickedness”. Further professing economic sustainability, Roseman (2003:11) laments the separation of the sacred from secular work in ecclesiology. He discerns that anthropological endeavours demonstrate stewardship towards utilizing available resources to meet identified needs and foster supporting all creation, hence should be upheld as reciprocal participation in the work of God. Roseman (2003:11) recommends work and business, contending that doing that will advance God’s continuing work to uphold creation (Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:3); to meet a broad range of needs that his many creatures have (Psalm 104:10-30); to work out His purposes in history (Deuteronomy 11:1-7); and to accomplish the great work of redemption in Jesus Christ and will ultimately fulfil this work in the final consummation (John 4:34; Psalm 111).

Similarly, Robert H. Nelson uncovers that sustainability is the mainstream economic devotion to eliminate poverty through economic growth and progress is an essentially Christian way of being relevant in the world. He traces it from the Old Testament historical and gracious narratives where humanity succumbed to evil and deserved to die but God graciously saved them and keeps doing the same today (Nelson 1995:n.p.). For him, although sustainability today appears more popular in secular economic circles than churches, it remains a biblical concept derived from messages of hope, redemption, divine provision, sustenance and corresponding human work.

Together with Noell and Smith (2020:n.p.), this study contends here, and throughout next chapters up to the conclusions, that contemporary ecclesiological economic growth is very biblical in nature because it values and fosters the theology of work, the utilization, management and multiplication of economic provisions of God and reciprocal human collaboration. Conclusively, ecclesiological tenability from stewardship and through totally submitting to God, taking up some employment or entrepreneurship can yield sustainable welfare which honours the loving, caring, responsible and working *imago Dei* in humankind, hence very biblical, and should be advanced, especially in poverty–stricken contexts like Zimbabwe.

2.7 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter explored the *theonomic reciprocity* theoretical framework, and complementary sustainability model which this study is based on. It conceptualized *theonomic reciprocity* theory, sustainability model and discussed their tenets – namely reconciling Spirituality, Mission and Sustainability; balancing missionary work & business, reviewing traditional means of church income; advancing stewardship, harnessing available human, financial and material resources as well as establishing entrepreneurship and embracing strategic management. The chapter ended with a reflection on the significance and biblical basis of sustainability. Throughout the exploration of *theonomic reciprocity*, sustainability and tenets thereof, it is observed that the contexts in which Butzke (2006); Butzke (n.d) and Kitawi and Irungu (2015) developed *theonomic reciprocity* theory and sustainability model are similar to the current Zimbabwean setting. Thus, the capricious economy of the AOG BTG church is the rationale upon which this study applies *theonomic reciprocity* and sustainability model for her sustainability in Zimbabwe.

Chapter 3: Reviewing the Identity of the Church

3.1 Introduction

Having given a close gaze at the chosen theoretical framework in the previous chapter, this division pays a thorough devotion to the identity of the Church. Bearing in mind that the aim of this study is to review the identity of the Church and quest for her economic sustainability, and the first objective is to study the identity of the Church, it is highly essential for this unit to appraise the identity of the Church.

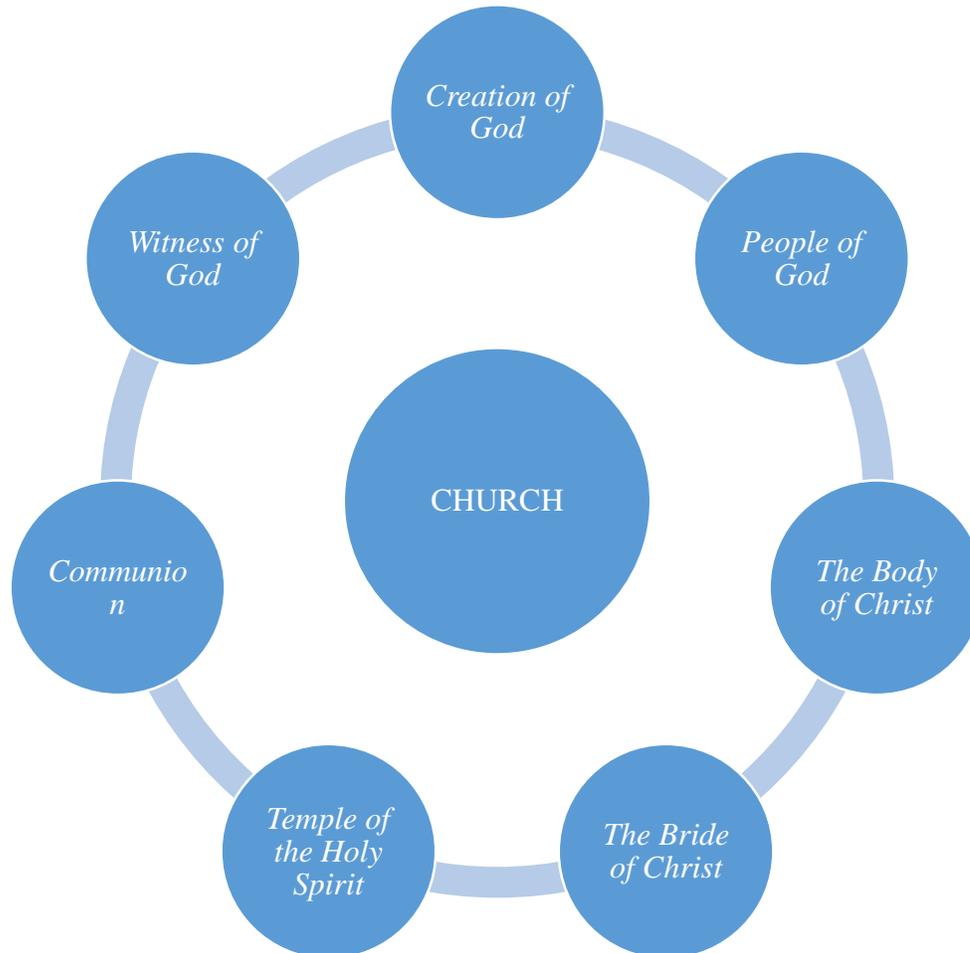
Identity traditionally speaks to a very fundamental ecclesiological issue of who and what an individual or an entity is, distinctively, including innate and developed principles that they value and adhere to (Kok 2011:2). Amidst a pluralized, globalized and dynamic modern world, identity is no longer a homogenous, static or conventional reality. As it has been historically problematic with Israelites who periodically suffered from an identity crisis by drifting from God and their core mission (Linden & Nel 2016:1); identity has remained changing, challenging, and demanding attention. As such, the identification of the Church no longer has a fixed social nucleus, exclusive and immutable emblem or sacrament across the universe, denominations and contexts. Due to various religious, social, economic and political developments, the identity and meaning of the Church has continued to change from one habitation to another.

So, this chapter explores various general and metaphorical portrayals that express ecclesial identification. The Faith and Order Paper 198 (2005:4–8) of the World Council of churches gives an informative overview of the essentiality of the Church. It conceptualizes *ecclesia* as the creation of God. It goes on to metaphorically identify the Church as the people of God, the body of Jesus Christ, bride of Christ, temple of the Holy Spirit, Communion, witness of God and conclusively finds her as fundamentally missionary. In agreement with that, this section reviews such holistic identity of the Church with various scholarly engagements. The first unit presents the Church as the creature of God, followed by the Church as people of God and the Church as the body of Christ. Thereafter, the Church will be portrayed as the temple of the Holy Spirit. After that, the Church will be also depicted as *koinonia* and subsequently as essentially missionary.

Considering that the AOG BTG church is the case study of this thesis, an exploration of her denominational identity, and missionary work in Zimbabwe will be done. In view of missionary

work as broad, a comprehensive outline of the *kerygmatic, liturgical, diaconal* and *koinonia* dimensions of the AOG BTG missionary work will be given. When all that is done, this division will end with a summary of the chapter.

Figure 3: Cycle Portrayals of the Church



3.1.1 The Church as the Creature of God

The Church is broadly conceptualized as a gift of God, created through Jesus Christ (Bunning 2020:11) by the word and the Holy Spirit. According to the Faith and Order paper 198 (2005:4), she is called into being by the Father who loved the world and gave His only one Son for the salvation of everyone who would believe in Him (John 3:16) and gave His Holy Spirit to teach and guide mankind in all His truth (John 14:26). The Church is thus the creature of God's word and of the Holy Spirit. In such a way, it is understandable that the Church is fully owned and enlivened by, therefore she cannot live by and for herself.

Concurringly, Hanson (1985:345–355) submits an instructive interpretation that the Church is present in the world as an ambassador of God who created and commissioned her to live up to His missionary purposes. It is understood that the purpose of her creation is to serve humanity from sin, guide and sustain lives as confirmed from foundational stories in the book Genesis, from the migration account in the book of *Exodus*, from the historic constructions of *Torah*, and from the prophetic literature and New Testament provisions. Hanson (1985:356) contends that the Church exists from, and for God to fulfil Isaiah 61 and Luke 4 mission of delivering good news to the poor, announcing liberation of those who are captured and deliverance of those who are blinded and oppressed.

In the same vein, Simon Chan expresses that the Church owes her existence to the action of the triune God. “In the economy of redemption, God called people from the old creation and reconstituted them a new creation in Christ. This body is invigorated by the Spirit of life who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. The Church is God’s doing and we are baptized into it and nurtured by it” (Chan 2016:23–24).

That is why House (2013:2) declares that the Church originated from God. To my concurrence, he takes the Church from the Old Testament as Israel, New Testament’s followers of Jesus Christ and asserts that the Church did not create herself. “The Church has her identity and purpose from him”. For House, scriptural references such as Exodus 19:1–6 and 1 Peter 2:9–10 indicate that the Church belongs to God;

- Exodus 19:1–6; “On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on that very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai. After they set out from *Rephidim*, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain. Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, “This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you[a] will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.” (Online NIV Bible Gateway:n.p)



- 1 Peter 2:9-10; “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”
(Online NIV Bible Gateway:n.p)

The origin of the Church from God is also mirrored from her centralization and grounding in His word. According to Olson (n.d:1), “the Church value Scripture as the only perfect rule for her faith, doctrine and conduct. She desires to know, understand and live out the truths of the Bible”. Thus, she is formed, guided and sustained by the word that became flesh – by Jesus Christ who is incarnated, crucified and risen. This is indisputably so because she grew from the preached, believed and lived word of God through Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the World Council of Churches’ Faith and Order paper 198 (2005:4) explicates that the Church is;

“The communion of those who, by means of their encounter with the Word, stand in a living relationship with God, who speaks to them and calls forth their trustful response; it is the communion of the faithful. This is the common vocation of every Christian and is exemplified by the faithful responsiveness of Mary to the angel of the annunciation: ‘Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word’ (Luke 1:38). For this reason Mary has often been seen as a symbol of the Church and of the individual Christian, called to be Jesus’ ‘brother and sister and mother’ in doing the will of his Father in heaven (Mathew 12:50). Hence the Church is the creature of God’s Word (*creatura Verbi*), the Gospel, which, as a living voice, creates and nourishes the Church throughout the ages. This divine Word is witnessed to and heard through Scripture. Incarnate in Jesus Christ, the Word is testified to by the Church and proclaimed in preaching, in Sacraments, and in service (Mathew 28:19-20; Luke 1:2; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11)”.

Further expressing the Church as the creation of God, Kostenberger (2013:34–59) surveys the Church in the gospels and discerns that as the Old Testament promised the coming of the Messiah and a gathered messianic community, and the gospel presents Jesus Christ as the promised *Messiah* who gathers believers who eventually make up the Church, the Church is

therefore from and for the *Trinitarian* God. Kostenberger expounds that Jesus Christ taught believers the nature of their community, which is rooted in its hallmark as his followers (e.g., Matt 16:18; John 15:1–10). Accordingly, the gospels anticipate an extension of the messianic community further than the cultural boundaries of Israel to accommodate the Gentiles (e.g., Mathew 12:17–21; see Isaiah 42:1–4; Mark 12:1–12; Luke 2:28–32; see Isiah 42:6; 49:6; John 10:16; 11:51–52). For Kostenberger (2013:55), although Jesus’ earthly mission was first to the Jews, his mission would extend to the Gentiles through the ongoing ministry of his disciples.

In view of that, the messianic community would be essential to His present and future mission. “Thus, Jesus teaches his disciples throughout the Gospels about the nature of discipleship. His ministration at the mountain sets forth the type of love and unity that should be exemplified by his community (Matthew 5–7)” (Kostenberger 2013:55). It is remarkable that the fourfold Gospel canon uniformly affirms Jesus’ expectation that the Church will carry out its mission after his exaltation (e.g., Mathew 28:18–20). The purpose of the savior will be carried out by Jesus’ followers under the anointing and enablement of the Holy Spirit (John 17:18; 20:21; Luke 24:49; John 14:15–17; 16:7–11). This ministry will then outspread to all populations (Mathew 28:19; Genesis 12:1–3), incorporating Gentiles into the people of God. The *Messiah*’s victory over sin and death made possible the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile in the Church. The mission of Jesus’ messianic community is ultimately a victorious ministry, for not even death will overcome it (Mathew 16:18).

For Kostenberger (2013:56), “when the fourfold Gospel canon closes, we have the messianic community gathered, commissioned, and poised to embark on the mission of the Messiah under the authority and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. The undertaking of the Savior will continue in the establishment and growth of his Church by his word and his Spirit”. For that reason, the book of Acts seamlessly continues the New Testament presentation of God’s plan as the sequel of Luke’s Gospel narrates the exaltation of Jesus, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the Church’s establishment by the spiritual capacitation from Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria and to the geographical parameters of the planet earth.

It is therefore agreed that the Church is a creature of the *Trinitarian* God, which depends on Him as her maker and savior (John 17:11, Ephesians 4:1–6) who keeps her to himself by His word. So, the Church is not just the collection of individual believers in a supernatural fellowship with

God, nor principally the communion of singular followers among themselves. It is their shared involvement and membership in the everlasting life of God (2 Peter 1:4), who, in His Trinitarian nature, is the foundation and focal point of all the fellowship.

Submissions of Lints (2020:1) and Cody (1973:15) also fittingly affirm that the Church is created and bound by God through the Holy Spirit by means of the living voice of the Gospel proclaimed in preaching and in the sacraments. They concurringly emphasize that the Church is founded by God with the indispensable involvement of His son Jesus Christ and made alive and progressive by His Holy Spirit. Drawing from this scholarly engagement, the Church crosses fundamental divides of culture, language, nationalities, tribes and race.

3.1.2 The Church as the People of God

From the Old to the New Testament, the Church is also identified as the people of God. The recollection, clarification and purpose is made clear in some verses of the Bible; “I will be their God and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 37:27; echoed in 2 Corinthians 6:16; Hebrews 8:10). This study observes that God formed the Church through His word of God and the Holy Spirit to make use of her for the salvation of all humanity (Isiah 49:1–6).

The work of Ernest W. Durbin II upholds an understanding that the Church is the people of God. He fuses the contemporary believers’ society with the historical community which originated in God’s covenant promises. Engaging 1 Peter 2:9–10 which states that “Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people”, Durbin argues that the Church is shown as the chosen people of God, a “treasure–people” of God’s own possession; an assembly called by God. He also takes John Calvin’s conception that 1 Peter 2:9–10 proposes that the Church is God’s priestly, prophetic, and kingly people (Durbin II 2005:3). As she is transformed into a people of God, a royal priesthood, the Church is therefore called to the vocation of declaring God’s wonderful deeds on earth. As the image of the people of God, the Church reveals a whole historical fellowship of God’s own possession; a people assembled out of darkness to proclaim the Divine message of transformation (Durbin II 2005:4).

Concurringly, House (2013:1) concurringly provides a similarly instructive conceptualization. He gives a broad scriptural picture of the Church, saying that “the Bible calls His people many things that highlight their close bond with him – friends of God (Exodus 33:11; Isiah 41:8), sons of God (Exodus 4:22; Jeremiah 31:9; Hosiah 11:1–9), God’s priests (Exodus 19:1–6; Isiah 61:6),

God's assembly (Numbers 16:3; Deuteronomy 23:2–4; Nehemiah 13:1), God's people (Exodus 6:7; 8:23; Deuteronomy 7:6; Psalms 53:6; 81:11; 100:3; Hosiah 1:10), God's bride (Isiah 54:1–7; 62:4–5; Hosea 1–2), God's flock (Psalms 77:20; 78:52; 100:3), God's servants (Isiah 56:1–8; 66:14–23), and subjects in God's kingdom (Isiah 4:2–6; 11:1–12:6; 65:1–66:24)".

For House (2013:1), "because it appears often in the Old Testament and because it links many other images, the term 'God's people' is probably the best summative concept to use. It is discerned that the actual phrase 'people of God' appears only eleven times, but phrases such as 'my people,' 'your people,' and 'his people' are numerous. As it progresses, the Bible presents God and his people in a connected scheme in which they walk together from the beginning in Genesis 1–2 to the new formation in Revelation 21–22, through promise texts such as Isiah 65:17–25; Deuteronomy 6:4–9; Mark 12:28–32. Submissions of House (2013:1) clarify that the presentation of the Church as the people of God correspondingly run through the Old to the New Testament.

According to Verster (2022:4–5), as the people of God, the Church is the *missional* community that proclaims and emphasizes that we belong to God. In the same manner, Bosch (1991:370–372) depicts a comprehensive observation that God is the main author of mission and not the Church, thereby demonstrating that all creatures should be involved. Wright (2006:398–400) also refers to the fact that the people-of-God portrayal has implications for the whole of creation. For him, creation is done by a universally good God, and as such, it is globally transformative. An overview of that reflects that the disciples of God should relate with mankind inclusively. This indicates that the followers should live among their fellows as messengers of renewal and lifelong fellowship with God.

From the New Testament, Verster (2022:5) says that the people of God are called out by God to be a united communion under the leadership of Jesus Christ. He explains that the believers live this expression by delivering and exemplarily living the word of God. Accordingly, the Church showcases that she is not of the planet earth, as she is of God. However, this does not mean that they disconnect themselves from fellow human beings, but they live righteously in ways that give imitable examples for unbelievers to follow.

The book of 1 Peter 2:4–10 in the Bible gives a detailed explanation about the implications of the Church as the people of God very clearly;

“As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house[a] to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”[b] Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”[c] and, “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.”[d] They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (Online NIV Bible Gateway:n.p).

Flemming (2014:62) explains well that Peter’s first concern in this passage is with what God’s people are. He avers that their distinguished being as the chosen, holy and unique people of God is a supernatural assignment of conveying the liberating word of the loving, gracious and almighty God to the entire weak and needy world.

3.1.3 The Church as the Body of Christ

In accordance with Pauline theology, the Church is typically gestated as the body of Jesus Christ that has different members and spiritual gifts that work together (i.e. 1. Corinthians 12–14; Romans 12:3–8; Ephesians 4:7–16; 1 Peter 4:10–12). As Paul proclaims, the member functions are generally the spiritual and natural gifts of the Church. Jenssen (2018:6) explains that the notion of the body of Christ and gifts are dominant in the ecclesiological and developmental writings.

The Bible provides insightful information that those “who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13–14). Hence, Jesus Christ broke down the disconnection and hatred that was between the Jews and Gentiles. He reconciled all of them with God in one symbolic body through the cross (i.e. Ephesians 2:16). Ephesians 1:23 also states that the Church is the body of Christ. Jesus Christ is shown as the leading head and sustainer of the body with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:26).

According to Durbin II (2005:6), the Church as the image of the body of Christ, is grounded in redemptive history; “the body in which our reconciliation is accomplished is the crucified body of Christ.” He adds that such formation is “redemption from the body of death (as indicated from Romans 7:24) through the body of Christ (Romans 7:4).” Discernibly, such an image implies a transition from death to life. It is also distinctively emphasized that the image of the Church implies requisite unity and inclusivity of her members.

Durbin II (2005:6) adds that Paul reminds us that the body of Christ is composed of “Jews, Greeks, slaves or free” (1 Corinthians 12:13). As such, all are unified in one body without differentiation of status or any earthly classification (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). Being a part of one body, the Church is also one in hope, Lordship, faith, baptism and position under one God and father of all (Ephesians 4:1-16). Spiritual gifts in this society of oneness are intentionally given for the ministry and building up the body of Christ; ultimately for “the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Ephesians 4:11-13).

“As the body of Christ, not only are we to suffer together, but also to abate suffering. The image of the body of Christ reflects a church open to all regardless of race or social status, grounded in redemptive history, and unified for the purpose of divine reconciliation. In the images studied, the People of God, the Fellowship in Faith, and the Body of Christ, similar characteristics about the nature of the church emerge. The church is seen historically a possession of God, assembled for purpose. Its vocation is the very redemptive work of God, made possible in partnership with the Holy Spirit. Leaving their differences behind, those involved in this noble task are called from every segment that divides earthly existence. Themes of possession, purpose, and unity are evident in all of these images” (Durbin II, 2005:6–7).

Furthermore, Sarot (2010:38) examines the account of Saul’s conversion in Acts (9:4, 22:7, 26:14), when Jesus asked Saul ‘Why do you persecute me?’, and argues that the story infers that ‘by persecuting his followers, Saul was persecuting him’, hence believers are the body of Jesus Christ. In that case, God and human beings are not just separate individuals that may become related to one another. By becoming a believer, every member automatically becomes a key part of the discipleship community in the same way that the human body needs all parts of the body to be well–organized and operative. Drawing from a question that was asked to Saul in the book

of Acts 9:4; ‘Why do you persecute me?’ It echoes that the followers of Jesus Christ that Saul was persecuting were part of his body.

According to Sarrot (2010:38), each member is important, and this particularly applies to all members (strongest, moderate and weakest), who should be treated with special honor. For him, if we fail to do so, we thereby introduce disharmony into the body (1 Corinthians 12:12–31). Paul is not entirely consistent in the way in which the Church is Christ’s body. At times he finds the Church with Christ’s body (1 Corinthians 12:12–13, 27). Sometimes Paul specifies that Christ is the head of this body (Ephesians 1:22, 4:15, 5:23; Colossians 1:18), that our bodies are members of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:17) or that the Church is a body in Christ (Romans 12:5).

In the Johannine submissions we find a complementary metaphor that Jesus is the true vine, and his followers as the branches (John 15). In view of Sarrot (2010:39), the idea is that Jesus’ followers form one organism and are part of him. Thereon, it is vied that the disciples are in Jesus and that Jesus is in the disciples (John 15:5–7). Sarrot focusses on texts that identify the Church with Christ, and underlines that becoming one with Christ is becoming a member of the Church (Sarrot 2010:39). He elucidates that the relationship of the Church with God is an affair of the Christian community rather than of Christian individuals.

Agreeably, Hanson (1985:346–347) brings Philippians 2:5–8 into picture by attesting that the Church is ambassadorial and representative of God in redemptive ways as an agent of His mission. His views recognizes the Church in the humility and servant–hood of Jesus Christ that stands for the sake of total salvation for mankind. Such ecclesial base that is firmly entrenched in the Bible entails that the missionary agency determines her engagements. In consequence, as the body of Christ, the Church finds herself preoccupied by holistic missionary work of service for humanity beyond her walls.

Verster (2022:5) also explicates the Church has a direct relationship between the living Christ and the people who are living as community and congregation. As further explained by Migliore (2004:254), involvement, fellowship and being are altogether tremendously important with regards to the Church as fully part of Christ. Henceforth, Jesus Christ is the overall leader of all ecclesial undertakings. There is no denomination that does not acknowledge and appreciate the presence of Jesus Christ as their Lord and savior.

Jesus Christ delivers the globally needed redemption and eternal glory for the Church. In agreement with Van Aarde (2015:54), ‘God’s plan is to gather everything into a living unity with him. He takes the initiative to reveal his purpose and plan for the Church (Ephesians 1:23)’. The Church is called to be the body of Christ, as exemplified below:

- Romans 12:5: “So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others (Online NIV Bible Gateway:n.p)
- 1 Corinthians 12:12: “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.” (Online NIV Bible Gateway:n.p)

Thereupon, the Church of Christ is a complete being in the same way that varied organizations make up the wholeness of a human body. As the body of Christ, the Church is the united fellowship that relates with one another and with the *Trinitarian* God (Conzelmann 1975:n.p.). Mare (1976:n.p) also stresses the harmony of disciples in the body of Jesus Christ. The *missional* Church should then also live as a good example of love, grace, compassion and unity to the earthly community. This study also realizes the concept of *inter-culturality* of the ecclesial fellowship by embracing each other in membership diversities that goes beyond tribal and racial divides (DeSilva 2004:570). The model exhibits that the Church is one in Jesus Christ despite being represented in different denominations, individuals and contexts (Fee 1993:583). As a renewed community of God, the Church is recognized as united in her stunning diversities.

- Ephesians 3:6, “This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus” (Online NIV Bible Gateway:n.p)”.
- Colossians 1:18: “And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.”(Online NIV Bible Gateway: n.p).

As observed by Moses (2018:474), such aforementioned scripture refers to the importance of the body of Jesus Christ that is crucified and gathered for the sacrificial renewal and refreshment of humanity. This signifies that the Christian congregations are identified by glorifying God and delivering the good news about the birth, life, death, resurrection of Jesus Christ and resultant restoration of mankind. Groppe (2019:25) links this with the *Eucharist*, saying that the Church is identifiable by her commemoration of the missionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the salvation of humanity.



3.1.4 Church as the Bride of Christ

The Church as the bride of Christ is her loving submission to, and waiting for the glorious second coming of Jesus Christ in (Verster 2022:6). For Verster (2022:26), the bride lives in the expectation of the Bridegroom's coming. Accordingly, the bride is, consequently in this planet earth while yearning for the coming of her husband, Jesus Christ. Like a human bride who is waiting for her bridegroom, the Church is longing for Him to be with her and, in that contextualized sense, she also proclaims the coming of the living Lord as indicated through Ephesians 5:25.

Furthermore, Van Zyl and Nortjé-Meyer (2018:6) expatiate that the supernatural love that Jesus Christ demonstrates is selfless (Ephesians 5:25.). That being the case, the collective life of believers is identifiable as loving, selfless and caring. Relatively, Ademiluka (2020:5) also connotes this important aspect that the model is copiously built up in n Ephesians 5:25–27 where he pronounces the duties of a husband to his wife;

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing[b] her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”[c]This is a profound mystery— but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. (Online NIV Bible Gateway: n.p)

There are also some references in the book of Revelation that present and elaborate this:

Revelation 21:9: “ One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” (Online NIV Bible Gateway: n.p).

Revelation 19:7: “Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready” (Online NIV Bible Gateway: n.p).

Additionally, Aune (1998:n.p) speaks out that it is significant and informative to remark that the lovely relationship of the Church as bride and Christ metaphorically identifies the Church as submissive, obedient, present and flexible to the will and direction of God while God lovingly and graciously keeps her intact. Agreeably, Mounce (1990:340) adds that the metaphorical portrayal displays that the Church anxiously waits for the monumental coming *Parousia* as the bride awaits the coming of her bridegroom.

As such, everyone who is invited to prepare for the coming of Jesus Christ are part of the bride by disconnecting themselves from worshipping idols and connecting themselves to fulltime adoring, worshipping, giving in to God and living in accordance with His word (DeSilva 2004:910).

As Revelation 22:17 says: “The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.” (Online NIV Bible Gateway: n.p).

Most notably, DeSilva (2004:910) emphasizes that the bride of Christ always stands in diametrical opposition to unbelievers who worship idols and not Christ. Identifying the Church therefore demands some discernment that although believers live together with heathens and associate with them in communal issues, they remain distinctively submitted to God in worship and living standards in the sense of resisting sinful acts and pursuing holiness.

To my concurrence, Shealy (2012:4) further construes that the Church does not graduate from being the bride to a mother as we may expect in the culture of the world in which one marries and eventually becomes a mother. This relates to what is reflected through Ephesians 5:26–30;

“...to make her holy, cleansing[b] her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— for we are members of his body.” (Online NIV Bible Gateway: n.p)

3.1.5 The Church as the witness of God

Dawning from being the bride of Jesus Christ, the Church is also called and commissioned to be the witnesses of God in the world. The Church is the witness of God and is the agent of God for

His mission on earth. The Church is, on this account, an ambassadorial fellowship that should always humbly witness God before the planet. Living with a transformative promise and expectation of the new life in Christ, the Church witnesses to the world that God is the living God and that new life is promised and guaranteed in Him (Migliore 2004:254).

This is further affirmed by Guder (2005:430) who says that “when one examines the imperatives in the New Testament epistles, it becomes very clear that the ‘work’ of early Christians was their ‘witness’. Every dimension and aspect of their life before a watching world, to borrow John Howard Yoder’s often cited phrase, was crucial to their witness. Witness was, as we said above, not one of several activities, but the description of who they were and what they were for”.

Relatively, Niemandt (2015:95) also refers to the World Council of Churches’ report that is titled ‘*Together Towards Life*’, and explains that the ecclesiological witness is all-encompassing. He reiterated the significance of mission as wholehearted to God and life-bearing to believers. His elucidation echoes the *missiological* essence and significance as distinctive characteristic of the Church in any context.

The book of Acts 5:32 demonstrates the gravity of *missionality* as follows;

‘We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.’ (Online NIV Bible Gateway: n.p).

Acts 1:8 consonantly further adds that;

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
(Online NIV Bible Gateway: n.p).

As such, Robinson (2019:141) avows that every congregation that professes and propels faithfulness to the gospel of Jesus Christ should understand the concept of witnessing as essential and determinative to all their undertakings. Thereby, Garstecki (2019:376) also says that “the authors of the guidelines do not speak in their text of ‘Christians’ service for peace’, but deliberately argue from the standpoint of the church’s witness to and service for peace”.

The Church as the witness of the glory of God in the world must therefore be outgoing and walking the talk of witnessing. Yielding to that, mission is all-time essence of the Church. Consequently, she is identifiable by living for others and not for herself (Migliore 2004:253).

The postulation is that the Church as witness is not just in word, but indeed – through exercising

all *koinonia*, *diakonia* and *marturia* dimensions of missionary work. Therefore, the Church is always distinguishable as a determined congregation of mission. She is always recognizable by tenacious missionary engagements through in and outside her walls, proclaiming the word of God integrally.

Manyaka–Boshielo (2018:n.p.) argues that the Church is acknowledged as missionary and should develop herself economically in order to finance her broad being. Economic tenability enables the Church to stand prophetically firm and boldly call the secular world to repentance without succumbing to possible vulnerability, corruption and capture. Thus, Armstrong (2015:241) writes that the Church should effectively prioritize and pursue mission in both word and deed all times.

Concurringly, Pillay (2015:6) further proclaims that the Church does not exist just for believers, but for the world. True to that, the Church should and can only stand as the salt and light (Mathew 5:13–16) of the world, witnessing the gospel of Jesus Christ and eventually transforming the world. The Church is seen as the witness of God always in relation to her calling. In that regard, the *missional* Church as witness is expected to live a new life in the society.

In that respect, Guder (2015:143) writes that “we could examine the community’s acts of prophetic challenge in interaction with the world into which it is sent, its conscious alternativeness in its larger context, as worthy parables of Christ’s kingdom breaking in”. To this end, the Church as the witness of God conclusively stresses her missionary identity in all contexts, in the present and future.

3.1.6 The Church as the Temple of the Holy Spirit

The Church as the temple of God means that congregations should live in ways that are not accustomed to worldly standards (Verster 2022:6). Accordingly, it should be a community that observes the word of God. It should be a morally upright fellowship of a life that is renewed by and in Jesus Christ. The Church must be the community that is engrossed in declaring Jesus Christ as the outstanding Son of God to whom all mankind ought to submit to. The Church is therefore supposed to understand her missionary tasks in the cosmos as her primary assignment. Therefore the Church should be recognizable as a holy fellowship that strives to be always above reproach. Respectively, Van Engen (1991:n.p.) explains that the Church should be one holy and

apostolic Church. From his observations, the sacredness of the Church as temple of God becomes essential. Additionally, Van Niekerk and Niemandt (2019:8) gives a close attention to the concept of deep incarnation. They submit that the Church is also detectible as the fellowship in which the *Trinitarian* God is incarnated through proclaimed and demonstrated monotheistic love and related essentials of Godliness.

As the Bible says in the following verses, the Church should live as God's temple. This is further clarified through 1 Corinthians 3:16:

“Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?” (Online NIV Bible Gateway:n.p)

2 Corinthians 6:16 also emphasizes this:

“What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people’” (Online NIV Bible Gateway: n.p).

Martin (1998:n.p.) and DeSilva (2004:586) expands this view in a succinct manner by saying that the way that believers live should be distinctively upright so as to showcase that the past bond between them and unbelievers is broken and they continue graciously ministering to the world towards repentance to represent God who is concerned with monotheism, holiness, repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, restoration and transformation. Page (2020:9) comments that the implications of being the temple of God is that ecclesiological life should be clean enough to accommodate the *Trinitarian* God, and to advance the transformation of mankind.

Being the temple of the Holy Spirit also entails comprehensively living the upholding the Holy Spirit in life and service (Pinnock 2016:47). He submits an informative thesis that the Church is also identifiable by as the temple of the Holy Spirit by demonstrating and imparting the power of God to everyone who is in need of it.

To my concurrence, Pinnock (2016) predicates that the Church is a fellowship of the Holy Spirit much like the free-Church model, except for the charismatic dimension, whereas in Pentecostal spirituality we find a mystical/experiential approach that emphasizes an encounter with the supernatural. For him, the real Church is identifiable by refusing to gather merely to get some well researched and presented lectures but to experience the living power and presence of the

Holy Spirit. Views of Pinnock propose that the power of the historic Pentecost is distinctively relived in the real Church.

Discerning from the conceptualization of Pinnock, the Church, as fellowship of the Holy Spirit, should be predominantly marked by manifesting the presence of God in which partakers experience the Holy Spirit. As Pinnock (2016:54) observes, encountering the Holy Spirit does not exclude the word and sacraments. They are God-given and important and no one should demean them as means of grace”. From the observations of Pinnock, the fellowship must transcend the merely institutional. The emphasis falls on the community that has gathered to share in the fellowship of the Spirit.

It is enlightening to note from Pinnock’s submissions that beyond the proclaimed word and/or ritual activities, God consistently communicates by the Holy Spirit as takers-in speak in tongues while others interpret tongues and prophesy. Hence, all believers have an opportunity to contribute to ecclesiological life with their God-given gifts. For Pinnock (2016:55), the work of the Holy Spirit essentially identifies the Church. With it, God is no longer a distant figure but a reality that is frequently encountered. In the words of Pinnock (2016:55), it requires that people know God, not just about God, but experience Him from the reality of Pentecost. In such an atmosphere, God is not absent from the world. The secular paradigm is rejected.

It is a model where believers speak of the *Trinitarian* God not only as real but personally encountered in day to day living. I find Pinnock (2016:55) very instructive because he expands the New Testament imagery of “temple” and “house”, saying that the relationship of the Holy Spirit and the Church is that about indwelling and giving life from within. Accordingly, the Holy Spirit enlivens the believers more than it becomes an instrument of general global transformation. Thus, as a household of God, the Church exists as the container and vessel of the Holy Spirit so by the spiritual enablement, congregations grow into ‘a holy temple in the Lord’ (Ephesians 2:21-22), a ‘spiritual house’ (1 Peter 2:5) that is filled up by the Holy Spirit and equipped to witness (Acts 1:8) across various nations (Pinnock 2016:55).

3.1.7 The Church as *Koinonia*/Communion

The Church naturally shows up with noticeable expressions of a symbol, as well as a tool of communion with God and of the unity of all (Mayer 2012:114). This communion or *koinonia* has a three-way interpersonal aspect of connecting with the triune God, human beings and nature.

Mayer (2012:114) gives a spectacular apperception of the Church's *koinonia* by saying that the mission of the Church to and in the world is a testimony about the companionship of the *Trinitarian* God in human affairs Christ. She terms it mission-in-*koinonia* in which believers delve and keep in communion with God, fellow mankind and nature for lifelong sustainability. The biblical view of *koinonia* refers to communion, participation, fellowship and sharing. According to Peacore (2010:1), the concept of communion is driven from fellowship in the Church. Scripturally, Paul delineates the relationship of believers to one another as a shared experience of divine salvation. This is what is mostly denoted from Greek as *koinonia*. This study conceptualizes *koinonia* broadly from denominational to ecumenical fellowships.

From the work of Peacore (2010:1), Pauline writings stress the idea of participation in spiritual realities, such as in the description of the Lord's Supper to the Corinthians. Accordingly, the Lord's Supper signifies human fellowship with Jesus Christ with which the sharing of a common meal represents His involvement in human affairs for their salvation and restoration. Peacore (2010:1) traces the community from a Trinitarian perspective, and outlines it from the following:

- “God’s rule from the rule of God comes membership in a community that consents to that rule. This implies taking up discipleship, a discipleship that is shaped by conversion and baptism, nourished in the life of Christ through participation in the Lord’s Supper.
- The centrality of Christ – through the centrality of Christ emerges a community of faith defined by the story of Jesus Christ. The Church is bound to the faith of its members, since faith is not an individual human accomplishment, and shares a mutual commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord. It is a fellowship shaped by the crucified and risen Christ.
- The power of the Holy Spirit--by the work of the Holy Spirit believing and confessing human beings are constituted into the church. It is not that each person fashions himself or herself into a member of the church, but rather through their *pluriform* confessing the Spirit makes them into one body”.

Drawing from her conception, and engaged scriptural references, the intellection of community has both an individual and a communal aspect and the integral involvement of the Holy Spirit. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, the primary work of the Holy Spirit is to bestow shared life on the people of God. That is why there are many stories in the Old Testament about the Spirit enlivening people. The case of Israel’s longing for a corporate bestowal of the life of the Spirit on God’s people comes to mind. More--so, the New Testament maintains the cognition

of bestowal of life, power, and vitality on individual participation. From Peacore (2010:1), the narrative of the Day of Pentecost is notable for its corporate emphasis where we see the outpouring of the Spirit which results in a life of community (Acts 2:42-47). The Holy Spirit constitutes the unity of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:1-4) and sustains fellowship that keeps believers united (Philippians 2:1-2).

Additionally, the Faith and Order Paper 198:8–9 provides a detailed view of *koinonia* as extracted below,

- “The relationship between God, humanity and the whole of creation is a fundamental theme of Scripture. In the narrative of creation, man and woman are fashioned in God’s image, bearing an inherent capacity and longing for communion with God, with one another and with creation as its stewards (cf. Gen 1-2). Thus, the whole of creation has its integrity in *koinonia* with God. Communion is rooted in the order of creation itself and is realized, in part, in natural relationships of family and kinship, of tribe and people. At the heart of the Old Testament is the special relationship, the covenant, established by God between God and the chosen people (cf. Ex 19:4-6; Hos 2:18-23). God’s purpose in creation is distorted by human sin, failure and disobedience to God’s will and by rebellion against him (cf. Gen 3-4; Rom 1:18-3:20). Sin damages the relationship between God, human beings and the created order. But God persists in faithfulness despite the sin and error of the people. The dynamic history of God’s restoring and increasing *koinonia* reaches its culmination and fulfilment in the perfect communion of a new heaven and a new earth established by Jesus Christ (cf. Rev 21).
- Through the death and resurrection of Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Christians enter into fellowship with God and with one another in the life and love of God: “We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3).
- The Good News is the offer to all people of the free gift of being born into the life of communion with God and thus with one another (cf. 1 Tim 2:4, 2 Pet 2:9). Paul speaks of the relationship of believers (cf. Gal. 2:20) to their Lord as being “in

Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:17) and of Christ being in the believer, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

- It is only by virtue of God’s gift of grace through Jesus Christ that deep, lasting communion is made possible; by faith and baptism, persons participate in the mystery of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection (cf. Phil 3:10-11). United to Christ, through the Holy Spirit, they are thus joined to all who are “in Christ”: they belong to the communion - the new community of the risen Lord. Because *koinonia* is a participation in Christ crucified and risen, it is also part of the mission of the Church to share in the sufferings and hopes of humankind.
- Visible and tangible signs of the new life of communion are expressed in receiving and sharing the faith of the apostles; breaking and sharing the Eucharistic bread; praying with and for one another and for the needs of the world; serving one another in love; participating in each other’s joys and sorrows; giving material aid; proclaiming and witnessing to the good news in mission and working together for justice and peace. The communion of the Church consists not of independent individuals but of persons in community, all of whom contribute to its flourishing.
- The Church exists for the glory and praise of God, to serve the reconciliation of humankind, in obedience to the command of Christ. It is the will of God that the communion in Christ, which is realized in the Church, should embrace the whole creation (cf. Ephesians 1:10). The Church, as communion, is instrumental to God’s ultimate purpose (cf. Rom 8:19-21; Col 1:18-20)”.

With further clarification, Durbin II (2005:5) provides that *koinonia* also identifies the Church through the concept of interdependence. His view enlightens that *koinonia* is characterized by both mutuality and independence, whereby humanity appear physically free to fellowship with God and each other while spiritually dependent on God for everything.

Although the Church is called to be ‘saint’ it is also called to be ‘slave’. Frequently, the New Testament refers to the Church as slaves of God and of Jesus Christ. It is revealed that the Church is thus not a movement from freedom to slavery, but rather a progress from serving multiple masters to the one Holy Lord (as 2 Corinthians 4:5, Galatians 5:13 and 2 Corinthians 7:3 reflect) (Durbin II 2005:6).

3.1.8 The Church as Essentially Missionary

The identity of the Church is largely comprehended as essentially missionary (van Aarde 2017:2). This study takes the Church as not wholly freely existing but incarnational. As Mayer (2012:100–101) observes, the Church was born in the context of the mission of Jesus Christ.

“Therefore, from a *missiological* perspective, the Church in history has not always existed but, both theologically and empirically, came into being for the sake of mission. It is not possible therefore to separate the Church from mission either in its theological or historical origins. Nor is it possible to separate Church and mission in terms of their purpose. The Church is a result of the purpose of God to bring salvation to the world. The missionary intention of God is the *raison d’être* of the Church. Consequently, to fulfil God’s missionary purpose is the Church’s aim. The relationship is even more intimate, because the same Spirit of Christ who empowers the Church in mission is also the life of the Church. At the same time as he sent the Church into the world, Jesus Christ breathed the Holy Spirit into the Church (John 20:19–23). In this sense, ‘[t]he church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning’. Unless the Church is participating in God’s mission, the Church in history will cease to exist. From a mission perspective, therefore, it is impossible to separate the nature and the mission of the Church. The Church is ‘missionary by her very nature’”.

Accordingly, given the *missio Dei* concept, the work of mission is defining for all ecclesiological endeavors. According to this perceptivity, the mission of God is directly determinative to ecclesiology, resolutely for the redemption and transformation of mankind. The Church is the instrument of God that is branded by unconditional and sacrificial love.

Concurringly, Kok (2011:3), the totality of the missionary dimension originates from God (Galatians 1:4). “It is, in other words, not the story of people doing missionary work, but of people being taken up in the missionary dimension or story of God and his Son (*missio Dei*)”. That way, mission is not taken as something that someone does somewhere, or is sent to do, but something essential to being a Christian. For Kok (2011:9), being *missional* is subsequently part and parcel of being a Christian, and is existentially part of the ‘DNA’ of the Church, who should be missionary by its very nature. “We should rather not speak of doing mission or sending people on missionary projects, but rather of being *missional*, right there where we are in everything we do (Kok 2011:9)

Adam Dodds' paper, titled '*The Centrality of the Church's Missionary Nature: Theological Reflections and Practical Implications*' is very handy for this study. He explicates that the Church is missionary by nature because she originates in the *missio Trinitatis Dei*. Adam Dodds studied the interrelation between missionary faithfulness and ecclesial Christian existence, drawing on the Johannine and Pauline corpora. He clarified that the Church is vivified in *missional* obedience and, conversely, can lose its ecclesial identity if she abandons her missionary vocation (Dodds 2012:394).

In an expansively edifying way, Dodds (2012:394–395) avers that the theological case for the missionary identity of the Church is compelling. He outlined the following six considerations; firstly that the mission of the Church is essentially based on her conviction that salvation is meant for all people, secondly that she owes her being to God's gracious reconciliation and restoration, thirdly that the being of God can be showcased in holistic *koinonia*. *Fourthly, the* centrality of mission exists in, for God and can only be realized in the world when she advances the gospel. *Fifthly, mission Ecclesiae* encompasses historical and geographical factors to accomplish apostolic work across nations. Lastly, Dodds (2012:394–395) asserts that the Church is identifiable by responding to the gift of Jesus Christ by demonstrating passionate love to God and humanity

Proposals of Adam Dodds concur with Pinnock (2016:54), who says that mission is inherent in ecclesiology. For them, the Church is *missional*, not because she has undertaken a world mission (often in fact she refuses it), but because of the universality of the gospel itself. Additionally, Pinnock (2016:54) avows that the first act of the risen Lord had to do with mission and its priority; "As the Father has sent me, so send I you" (John 20.21).

Their views emblemize the defining missionary communion that the Church is identifiable with. Althouse (2016:102–103) brings in an involving thinking, saying that the *kerygma*, *koinonia* and *diakonia* ministries of the Church reflect the *Trinitarian* being and mission of God. That way, the fellowship of believers inside and outside their walls makes up the ecclesiological identity.

Through her worship (*leitourgia*) service, which includes the stewardship of creation (*diakonia*); and proclamation (*kerygma*), this study identifies the Church as and when she partakes in the

provisions of the mission of God. Given her identity, the Church testifies to the divine missionary work. The missionary identity of the Church is accordingly well covered by various scholars as shown throughout the above review. What remains missing and in dire need of serious attention from the conceptualizations of the Church is how she can sustain her missionary identity in economically capricious contexts – hence the value of this study as it explores ecclesiological sustainability in the economic crisis–ridden Zimbabwe.

3.1.9 Table Summary of Church portrayals

Portrayals	Summary of their Meanings
a) <i>As the Creature of God</i>	The Church is fully a product of God, created by and belonging to Him for His mission.
b) <i>As the People of God</i>	The Church is the new Israel, confessing the Trinitarian God through Jesus Christ under the leading of the Holy Spirit.
c) <i>As the Body of Christ</i>	The Church fully belongs to, and functions under the leadership of Jesus Christ
d) <i>As the Bride of Christ</i>	The Church is the special community belonging to, and led by and submitted to Jesus Christ for the glory of God.
e) <i>As the Temple of the Holy Spirit</i>	The Church is holy and expected to live righteously in accordance with the word of God in and for the transformation of the world.



f) <i>As Communion</i>	The Church is a community of believers who fellowship with God, with each other congregationally and ecumenically under the Trinitarian inspiration and guidance of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.
g) <i>As the Witness of God</i>	The Church proclaims person, nature and works of the living God evangelically and prophetically – in word and deed.
h) <i>As essentially missionary</i>	The Church exists for <i>missio Dei</i> .

3.2 The identity of the AOG BTG church

The AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe identifies herself inclusively in direct correlation with the above-mentioned ecclesiological portrayals, as a creation of God, people of God, part of the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, temple of God, communion of believers, witness of God and as wholly missionary.

Understanding mission as the lifelong essence of the Church – that which she is distinctly identified as, the AOG BTG church NE and DCC leadership concurringly aired that the denomination is a missionary, *missional* and communal denomination, which prioritizes missionary work and community involvement. “We are a missionary church that adheres to the Great Commission as well stipulated in Mathew 28:19–20”, said one of the senior NE members in Harare. A DCC member from Mashonaland agreeably said that “the AOG BTG is a community-based missionary movement that values soul-winning and discipleship”. An associate of the church’s national evangelism team commented that “the *Back to God (BTG)* addition to ‘Assemblies of God (AOG)’, which makes it AOG BTG reflects our missionary identity as this church was born out of a God-given vision to call Africa and the world back to God, that is, to win souls for Christ”

In agreement with Verster (2022:2), the majority of those who identify the church as *missional* identify it as a grouping of believers who respond to the salvific love of God and live to serve as His agents or ambassadors with an integral ministry that causes diverse transformational

development in their communities under the leadership of the Trinitarian God. Further together with Maclvaine III (2010:91), “a *missional* church is a unified body of believers, intent on being God’s missionary presence to the indigenous community that surrounds them, recognizing that God is already at work”.

This is also elaborated by Van Gelder (2004:455), who says that “in the biblical framework, the *missional* church is identified as living between the times. It lives between the now and the not yet. The redemptive reign of God in Christ is already present, meaning that the power of God is fully manifest in the world through the Gospel under the leading of the Spirit. This also relates to Nikolajsen’s (2013:259) reiteration that the conceptualization of mission streams from the triune creator and sustainer who sends the Church to collaborate with Him in redeeming the world from the jaws of sin and contextual social, economic, political and related evils.

The AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe’s *missional* identity and value of being missionary also relates to Snyder’s (n.d:6) viewpoint that the chief ecclesiological drive is taking life in the context of mission. In such lenses, a missionary church like the AOG BTG is discernible by unselfishly losing her self-centeredness and adopting other-centeredness to sacrifice her commitment, time and resources towards ministering the gospel for the physical and spiritual benefit of other human beings with an understanding that God served them with the same mindset as a model for her to do the same in the world.

According to Snyder (n.d), the distinctiveness of the Church is aggregate, because it involves every aspect of her life. For him, understanding *missio Dei* embraces submitting to and giving out its purpose on planet earth. With reference to him, the driving standpoint of the AOG BTG church subscribes to a far-reaching stewardship of that mission. Theologically, the perception of the AOG BTG church shapes her ecclesiology as she attempts to live in missionary terms. Consequently, the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe is most fundamentally a *missional* community. Her leadership says that she does not exist for herself, but for the creator whom she believes that He creates, prepares and commissions her into the world to exercise and accomplish His work for the inclusive salvation of all that He created.

The entire AOG BTG church leadership fully takes herself as genetically missionary. They say that the church is, and must live as a collectively supernatural agent of the heavenly mandate.

They further categorize themselves as part of the universal establishment of God that partakes and demonstrates the *DNA* of Jesus Christ. Their conceptualization presents the AOG BTG church as a formation that was called out into being by the plan and blessing of the creator. According to their view, all ecclesiology should be observed from *missio Dei*.

In addition to that, the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe distinguishes herself with reference to a church which is deliberately involved in raising, nurturing, sending and supporting missionaries to the ends of the earth. The AOG BTG church's ideology of what a *missional* church means is well displayed in her missionary activities and engagements.

As said by the quoted interviewees' views before, the AOG BTG's missionary identity is demonstrated by her historical missionary thrust that is reflected through her name AOG BTG (Assemblies of God, Back to God). The BTG part of her name was taken from her missionary tent–crusade movement that was established by her founder, Nicholas Bhengu for the evangelization of blacks with a vision to cover Cape to Cairo (which is mostly covered in the following section of his missionary work).

The missionary crusade method was traditionally viewed as the massive and numerically highly effective approach through which the church usually harvested multiple souls in each event from one area to another across the nation. Complementarily, the AOG BTG church also sometimes made visible attempts to make her missionary work comprehensive through attending to other dimensions (such as *diaconal* and *koinonia* services) which will be later detailed in this chapter.

3.3 AOG BTG foundational missionary work

From the initial foundation and development of the AOG BTG church, the founder, Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu envisioned and worked hard to build a movement that would grow and serve as a gigantic vehicle that is purposed, equipped and dedicated towards reaching out to the whole African region through his establishments (Chibango 2021:74). It is broadly publicized within the AOG BTG branches that the founder unwaveringly dedicated and set himself apart to advance the gospel from Cape to Cairo, while principally grounding his mandate from the book of Matthew 28:19–20, which says;

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have

commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Online NIV Bible Gateway: n.p).

Daniel Simon Billy Lephoko records that Nicholas Hepworth Bhekinkosi Bhengu theorized and prioritized the missionary responsibility of spreading and demonstrating the salvific gospelizing across the entire cosmos unto all humanity (Lephoko 2010:115–119). In a handbill for Bhengu’s Mission to Salisbury (now Harare, Zimbabwe), his life–changing missionary occupation was aptly underscored as follows,

“Nicholas Bhengu has preached to thousands of people throughout Scandanavia, the U.S.A, Britain, Canada and South Africa. In the late 1940’s he baptized 1300 converts after his Back to God Crusade in East London, South Africa. One of the biggest churches in South Africa, seating 5 000 people was built in East London as a result of that Crusade. At Christmas time each year some 10 000 people gather there for a huge convention. When Nicholas Bhengu visited Salisbury in 1959, the Time magazine (Monday, 23 November 1959) gave a full page report of his work. Outstanding miracles of healing and remarkable conversions took place under his ministry and thousands of lives were changed by God” (Lephoko 2010:115).

The *Time* magazine (1959:n.p.) published a romantic story about Nicholas Bhengu as a great missionary. Below is an extract of its report, with regards to his work in Zimbabwe,

“Inevitably, the Rev. Nicholas Bhengu is known throughout Africa as the black Billy Graham. In fact, Bhengu’s manner and technique are unlike Graham’s; he uses no publicity or promotion to advertise his campaigns, and his only assistance is a ten-member choir of amateurs supplied by the churches of his mission. His platform presence is almost subdued. But whether he is talking to black audiences or white, Bhengu weaves a spell no less effective than Billy’s. Last week Bhengu was busy in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia. Whites jam-packed Salisbury’s Methodist Hall to hear him tell them, in precise English, what was wrong with white Christianity. Part of what he said was, “the greatest dangers in Africa today are Communism and Islam. Both offer the African equality. The churches are divided. There are too many, and their different dogmas and doctrines are too confusing for Africans. Christianity has failed in India and China because Christians have failed to live up to Christ’s teaching, and in Africa it’s proving an empty shell for

the same reason. If Christians practiced what they preached, there would be no frustration and no fear”.

As a long serving senior lieutenant of the founding apostle, and scholar who dedicated his Master’s and doctoral studies to the history of AOG BTG, Daniel Simon Billy Lephoko recounts that Nicholas Bhengu developed a comprehensive conceptualization of the *missio Dei*.

According to him, Nicholas Bhengu based his ministry on John 20:21, which says;

“Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you”

(Online NIV Bible Gateway: n.p)

Lephoko (2018:134–135) chronicles that the missionary work of Nicholas Bhengu is well depicted through his Back to God crusade movement. According to him, Nicholas Bhekinkosi Bhengu had been calling out humanity to repent and dedicate their lives to God far before setting up the Back to God crusade. His history says that he dreamt about establishing the BTG movement in 1949, believed that that was the speaking of God and eventually responded to the voice, inspiration and determined himself to build a transformational church that was going to advance the mission by equipping churches to evangelize and disciple believers massively and efficiently.

According to such written and other orally shared views by old members of the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe, Nicholas Bhengu used the Back to God Crusade to plant and multiply *missional* churches. The Back to God campaigns grew big and eventually drew countless numbers of people from various places. Through it, different kinds of people were converted, *discipled*, equipped, commissioned to evangelize, disciple others and that, like a process, developed a magnanimous multiplication impact. In order to maintain the attained results from His strategy of ministry, Lephoko (2018:135) says that Nicholas Bhekinkosi Bhengu raised, appointed, deployed and trained them in areas such as leadership and administration (Lephoko 2018:135).

In view of the history written by Daniel Lephoko, Nicholas Bhengu’s crusades grew big and impactful. Nicholas Bhengu travelled to many places doing exploits under the Back to God banner with the support of a music and preaching team. A number of people were attracted by his crusades and invited others to attend. This study observes that the public preaching strategies yielded massive results in form of conversions. So he planted and established churches in and

outside South Africa. According to Lephoko (2018:135), the numerous congregations that he established eventually became a supportive source of human, financial and material resources for his missionary engagements. Accordingly, Nicholas Hepworth Bhekinkosi Bhengu established churches in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Lesotho and Mozambique.

It is firmly believed in the AOG BTG church that Nicholas Hepworth Bhekinkosi Bhengu was divinely inspired and empowered to drive the gospel, establish churches and transform lives across the entire African continent. As such, he was conscious and self-motivated to serve God by accomplishing His mandate and growing the church. The passion, commitment to ministry, massive crusades and revivals that Nicholas Bhengu held in Zimbabwe signpost that he subscribed to the conception of missionary work from its Trinitarian perspective. The core reflection from his submission is that the AOG BTG church was rooted in missionary work, as Kirk (2000:24) proposes.

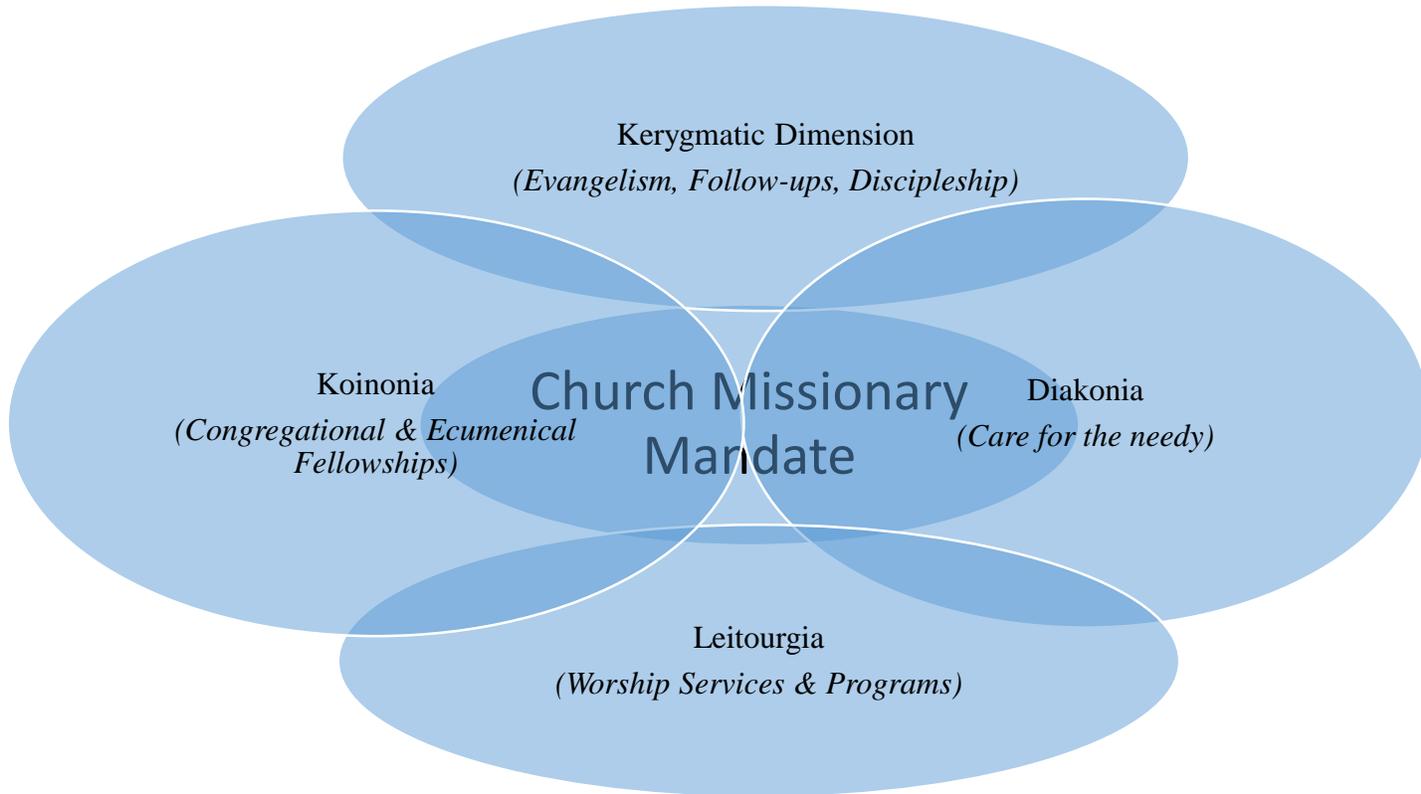
Historical submissions of Lephoko (2010:118) show that Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu appreciated and adorned the concept of ‘otherness’ and inclusivity beyond geographical parameters by reaching out to all tribes and races regardless of challenges that he and his team incurred in different contexts. Thus, “from the commencement of his ministry, Nicholas Bhengu sought to reach out to people of all cultures from Cape to Cairo: the Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, Pedi, Swazi, Venda, Whites, Indian, Colored and Shonas in Zimbabwe and the rest of Africa” (Lephoko 2010:118).

Having looked at the missionary work of the AOG BTG leader, the following brief subsections outline and discuss her missionary work in its broad *kerygmatic*, *diaconal*, *koinonia* and *liturgical* dimensions; what and how the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe has done in each dimension.

3.4 AOG BTG holistic missionary work in Zimbabwe

As signposted before, the AOG BTG church identifies herself conservatively as wholly missionary. In order to effectually historicize and come to terms with her missionary work, this section begins with a graphic illustration of her asserted missionary conceptualization and focus. After that, the following subsections will outline her attention to the *kerygmatic*, *diaconal*; *liturgical* and *koninoia* dimensions of mission.

Figure 5: Illustration of *missio Ecclesiae*



3.4.1 AOG BTG *Kerygmatic* Work in Zimbabwe

Wilson (2001:1) and Brown (n.d:387) conceptualize the term *kerygmatic* from its Greek noun ‘*kerygma*’ which refers to a spoken message or proclamation of the salvific message. They explain that the word is usually used mostly with regards to heralding or publicizing a message or an issue. *Kerygmatic* work therefore accommodates acts of evangelizing, converting, following up and winning souls for God.

Writing about the history of the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe from 1951–2019, Nqobizitha Mpoko heralds that since the inception of AOG BTG work early in 1950s, tent revivals/ crusades were the focal part of AOG BTG’s strategies for soul winning. It is publicized among AOG BTG congregations that the church regularly experienced massive revivals and conversion of souls for God. The church religiously attended to winning of souls as her major business. Apart from transforming deliveries of the gospel, miraculous healings and deliverance of the sick and those who were possessed by evil spirits accompanied the crusades (Mpoko 2019:18).

The church held her first tent crusade in Gweru at Mambo location in August 1951. This historic crusade stretched for thirty days. Nqobizitha Mpoko recounts that it was organized by Reverend Fred Burke who was an AOG BTG white missionary from South Africa. The crusade was fully backed by an evangelistic team from South Africa which included Pastor Gumede (Black), Pastor Richard (White) and an inclusive choir that comprised blacks, coloureds and white musicians. Nqobizitha Mpoko reports that more than three hundred people were baptized in the Gweru River, and uncounted miracles involving healing of the sick and deliverance of the demon–possessed happened (Mpoko 2019:18).

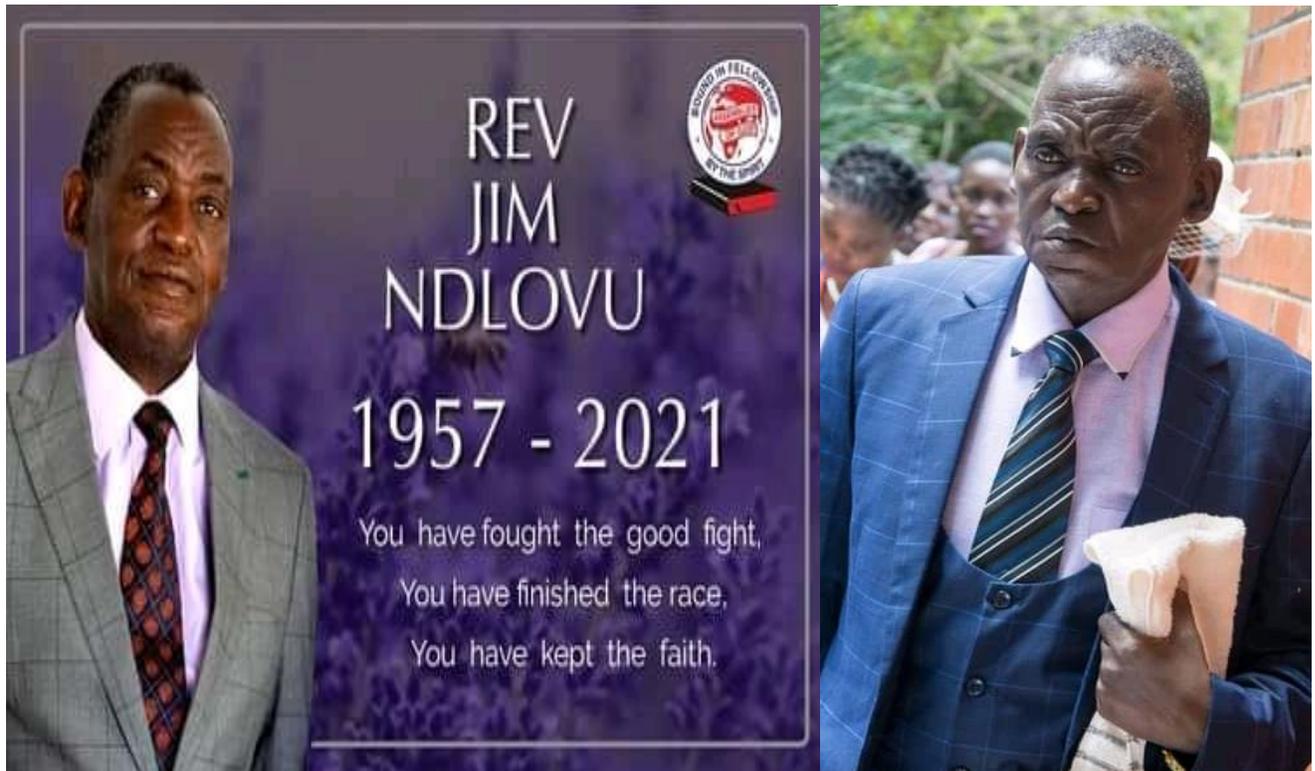
The church conducted a number of outreach programs thereafter. One of the outreaches include a one night crusade in central Gweru town at Bata shoe compound in 1955. AOG BTG evangelism leadership chronicles that the crusade was organized by local leaders and pastors who were raised from previous outreaches, such as pastor Lawrence Juru and some elders who were based in Gweru. Nqobizitha Mpoko narrates that pastor Lawrence Juru was one of the converts of the 1951 Tent Crusade. A record of eighteen people were converted and baptized, which involves Wilfred Mutasa who eventually became a great pastor in the Assemblies of God church (Mpoko 2019:19).

Among the several crusades that formed the biggest part of AOG BTG missionary work, it is historicized that the church held her monumental crusade in Highfields, Harare in 1959. That crusade marked the official establishment of the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe. Apostle Nicholas Bhengu then facilitated proper structuration of the work, deployment of pastors and development of the work. Since then, the AOG BTG church grew and developed numerically and spiritually through national, regional and local revivals, crusades and discipleship programs hitherto today.

Up to just before the introduction of lockdowns which the ruling government imposed as part of its attempts to withstand the spreading of the feared tragic coronavirus in 2020, tent crusades and revivals characterized AOG BTG missionary work which is coordinated by the national evangelism team. The AOG BTG evangelism team was led by a great evangelist and Apostle, Jimmy Ndlovu who ministered powerfully at major revivals, crusades and conventions in Zimbabwe, South Africa and other neighboring nations in the colossal and transformational manner of Nicholas Bhengu. The extraordinary gospel minister Jimmy Ndlovu was pastoring

Highfields assembly, which was planted after the 1959 crusade by Nicholas Bhengu in Harare. He was born on 15 June 1957, and succumbed to *Covid-19* on 8 August, 2021 at Parktown Private Hospital in Harare.

Figure 6: Pictures of Reverend Jimmy Ndlovu (Source – AOG BTG media)



3.4.2 AOG BTG Diaconal Work

According to Nordstokke (2011:1–2), ‘*diakonia*’ was developed from the early Church in which deacons assisted bishops as ecclesial eyes and ears in getting and addressing concerns of the needy. The deacons would respond to distressful eventualities, advocacy for justice and alerted their leaders to be and keep sensitive to human realities, experiences, especially to what threatens human life and dignity.

Biblically as Jesus responded to the hungry (Mathew 14:16), as the good Samaritan demonstrated love and empathy to a man who was robbed (Luke 10:30–35), the Church is called to do such works of love for the needy, randomly and in organized ways such as establishing hospitals, orphanages, homes for the homeless, aid for refugees, the poor, widows, the sick, and

related programs. It is thus argued that the diaconal ministry attends to challenges arising from suffering, need and injustice.

Klaasen (2020:132) concurringly explains that *diakonia* speaks to whole-making, which bridges the gap between service and liturgy through ‘catholicity’ beyond universality, to wholeness, and contextualized liturgy that is life-giving to communities. According to him, a diaconal church facilitates God’s salvation for the whole creation, affirming continuum between liturgy and communal service. With regards to that conception, the AOG BTG procedures’ manual shows that the AOG BTG church attends to widows and the needy as reflected through 1 Timothy 5:1–6, which says;

“Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity. Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God. The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. 6 But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.” (Online NIV Bible Gateway:n.p)

The AOG BTG church attends to widows who are believers and members of the church as her burden. As 1 Timothy 5:11–16 says that widows who are young enough to be married should not be supported by the church, the AOG BTG church supports widows who are desolate, from the age of sixty years and above.

“As for younger widows, do not put them on such a list. For when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ, they want to marry. Thus they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge. Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also busybodies who talk nonsense, saying things they ought not to. So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander. Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan.

If any woman who is a believer has widows in her care, she should continue to help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need.”. (1 Timothy 5:11–16, Online NIV Bible Gateway: n.p)

The AOG BTG procedures’ manual instructs that the church should give consideration to widows who have been married to one husband as 1 Timothy 5:9 states. Additionally, she selects widows who are well reported of as above reproach in accordance with the gospel. More–so, the AOG BTG church also supports orphans who are helpless.

3.4.3 AOG BTG *Koinonia* Work

Koinonia is derived from its Greek root ‘*koinon*’, which means in common or communal.

Nalwamba and Sakupapa (2016:75–79) unriddles that in English, *koinonia* is translated to mean “fellowship, commonality, mutuality, partaking, participating, reciprocity, relief, sharing, society, solidarity, togetherness, union, and unity”.

Koinonia is also defined by Marumo (2019:2–3) as an association or a joint participation. It is broadly agreed that God intended to live in fellowship with creation as He does with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Church is thus expected to live by continuously fellowshiping with God and simultaneously with fellow congregational and ecumenical members. That means becoming a believer inspires and directs each one to commune with others as companions under the love, care and guidance of the creator as the following verse indicates;

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” (Online NIV Bible Gateway: n.p).

This study observes that communities which are reconciled with God are transformed to live in the likeness of God; hence *koinonia* is embedded in *imago Dei*. In the AOG BTG church, *koinonia* is understood as *sisterhood* and *brotherhood* among brethren, departmental meetings such as for pastors, couples, mothers, men and youths as well as ecumenical cooperation. As Lephoko (2010:230–231) observes, fellowship is critical beyond denominational boundaries, uniting Christians from different backgrounds, affiliations, denominational, ecumenical, doctrinal, liturgical and cultural diversities.

All AOG BTG assemblies are traditionally encouraged to facilitate the communing of brethren through organizing programs and services such as men's fellowships, mothers' fellowships, youth get-together and Sunday ministry parties. All those programs are meant to propel love, care, unity, enlightenment and transformation through togetherness and teachings that are shared at each of the meeting.

Clerically, AOG BTG national leadership organizes pastors' winter school, summer school and pastors' retreat programs every year, to enable fellowship, trainings and related programs. Regional and local leaders of the church also complementarily organize their programs for the same cause. The purpose of the schools and retreats is to edify and refresh the clergy towards ministerial effectiveness and personal development. It is in the schools and retreats that AOG BTG pastors share their experiences, challenges, testimonies; and encourage each other in order to manage their pastoral work and welfare progressively. The church has however been experiencing very low attendance at all such national, regional and local meetings mostly due to financial constraints. A number of apologies submitted by pastors who failed to attend national fellowship meetings suggest that they were struggling to attend their local ministerial, family needs and could not afford national *koinonia*.

The same applies to regional and local communions. Since the Zimbabwean economy deteriorated from year 2008 up to today, programs such as pastoral meetings, leadership meetings (which involve elders, deacons and delegates from assemblies) and local couples, men's, mothers', youth and children's fellowships have been lowly attended to. Some regions of the church have neglected fellowship programs as they actually struggle to meet basic bills such as water, electricity and pastoral support. The majority of local assemblies accrued debts by failing to pay water, electricity bills while smaller and poorest assemblies have been unable to give their pastors any financial support.

In such contexts, it has been difficult, and sometimes impossible to afford any fellowships. Ecumenically, the AOG BTG church subscribes and attends to the national Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (hereinafter referred to as EFZ). Pastors are allowed to join and attend their local clerical fellowships such as Pastors Fraternal and others. This has been efficient and enabling pastors to fellowship learn and develop with fellow gospel ministers from other denominations in their resident areas.

3.4.4 AOG BTG *Leitourgia*

Liturgy is a term that stems from the Greek word *leitourgia*, meaning service. Generally, it has been conventionally used by most churches with reference to worship service, in which congregants dedicate themselves to ‘service for God and fellow believers’ by worshipping God and taking part in service, for example in singing, sharing testimonies, attending to sermons and related items together throughout the programs. Recurring and mutually connected terms for liturgy are ‘order’, ‘system’, and ‘rites’ (Barnard 2000: 5).

Liturgy is thus taken as ‘an order of Christian rites and symbols’ (Klomp 2006:13). Fagerberg (2010:44) elucidates that liturgy is the service or work that is done by leaders or directors of a particular denomination or program, on behalf of, and with scriptural reference to God, for the benefit of the gathered masses. Accordingly, the salvific work of God is proclaimed and demonstrated in ecclesial liturgy. Eventually, liturgical activities become ritualistic as believers attempt to follow the leading of the scriptures and the Holy Spirit in accordance with one or few leaders’ interpretation, capabilities and contexts. Hence, liturgy identifies and distinguishes a church from others as they conduct themselves differently. Complementarily, Peter John McGregor simplifies *leitourgia* as activities of worship and the glorification of God in church gatherings (McGregor 2019:75).

With that in mind, the liturgy of the AOG BTG church is presented through her attention to Sunday Services characterized by an open morning worship in which congregants enjoy mass or concert payers; routine special prayer for national political, Church and other leaders (derived from 1 Timothy 2:1–5) that one of the congregation is usually called upfront to do on behalf of the rest; praise singing, sharing of items (i.e. songs, testimonies, scripture recitations); announcements and conclusively, a pastoral sermon which the pastor, or in the absence, or guidance of the pastor, any of the leaders or congregants is given an opportunity to preach the word of God before the congregation.

During mid-weeks, (some assemblies have different programs due to varying factors in their contexts) most AOG BTG assemblies hold a prayer service on Mondays that every member is mobilized to attend, mothers’ prayers on Tuesdays, with which all mothers are called to attend to pray for their issues of motherhood, girls service on Wednesdays, whereby girls attend to share or get teachings that concern their gender, youth service on Thursdays (in which both males and

females attend to get teachings that regard youth-hood), Friday service (for everyone) and Saturday praise and worship practice (music team) running concurrently with mothers meeting normally called ‘*China chaana Mai*’ (Shona meaning mothers’ meeting).

3.5 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter reviewed the identity of the Church through her portrayal as the creation of God, as the people of God, body of Jesus Christ, bride of Christ, witness of God, temple of the Holy Spirit, Communion and as essentially missionary. In view of the various depictions of the Church, the chapter surveyed the identity of the AOG BTG denomination. Upon that scrutiny, AOG BTG church foundational missionary work and holistic missionary focus in Zimbabwe were studied. It is observed that the AOG BTG church is a fundamentally missionary church that seeks to serve as an agent of *missio Dei*. The retrospection of her all-encompassing missionary attention revealed that while she attempts to attend to missionary work comprehensively, she struggles to accomplish that because of economic constraints. Having this in mind, the following chapter explores her history; national, regional and local leadership structures.

Chapter Four: The History of the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe

4.1 Introduction

Having puzzled over the ecclesiological being in general, AOG BTG identity, foundational missionary work and embracive missionary focus in Zimbabwe in particular through the previous chapter three, this section gives mega attention to the selected case study. It pays heed to the history of the AOG BTG denomination in Zimbabwe. As reflected under research design and methodology segment in chapter one, a case study gives mindfulness to a contemporary issue in a particular context. As a research strategy, it is attentive to a distinct establishment or phenomenon (Hendriks 2004:233). A Case Study was chosen because it seeks and begets deep comprehension of a present occurrence, state and denotation from involved people in their real life context (Woodside 2010:1–3; Hancock & Algozzine 2006:9–11).

The AOG BTG church is used as the subject of our case study to discuss the problem that necessitated this study. The research problem is that dependency on tithes, freewill offerings and other congregational collections and donations is unsustainable. The dependency of the Church on traditional sources of finances renders her incapacitated, invisible and ineffective, hence the need for an informed consideration and embracement of running some profit making business to meet operating expenses and complement traditional revenue for the furtherance of the gospel in and beyond the market place. It is observed that doing business as a church attracts a number of problems, such as diversion of attention from her core business of mission. In order to examine the identified tension between the character of the Church and expedition for her economic tenability, this unit commences by tracing the history of the AOG BTG church. Although the main focus of this part is her formation in Zimbabwe, the beginning and development of AOG BTG church cannot be divorced from her roots from the United States of America and South Africa.

Therefore, this chapter will begin by briefly historicizing the Assemblies of God church from Azusa Street in the United States of America where the genesis of Pentecostalism dawned after the monumental outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Thereafter, this unit will proceed through the foundation and development of AOG BTG in South Africa. Having done that, the next section will track the footing of AOG BTG in Zimbabwe. After that, the ensuing sub–sections will delineate the establishment and outlook of the leadership structures of the church from her national, regional down to local assemblies.

Given that, this chapter is thus a historical and contextual analysis. Scholars such as Wyche, Sengers, Grinter (2006:36) and Ukpong (1999:118) insightfully explain that an exploration of history, historical analysis, interpretation and discussion can yield so much information and an understanding of the past in order for the concerned to make informed decisions about the future. Grace Fleming further concurringly clarifies that historical context is a very significant part of life and literature, arguing that without it, there is no clue about where one or involved parties are coming from and going (Fleming 2019:n.p). According to her, historical issues, people and places provide essential enlightenment about whatever needs reflections in relationship with the particular past. Furthermore, Fleming (2019:n.p) says that historical awareness enables us to understand social, political and economic backgrounds of matters under interrogation.

Additionally, Fleming (2019:n.p) says that historical studies can harvest revealing details which may include locations and timelines of certain occurrences that enhance today's elucidation and investigation of the past, present and possible predictions of the future. As such, a dedicated survey of history behind current affairs can yield some better comprehension of the ecclesiological quest for tenability that is under inquiry. As Grace Fleming observed, historical *situatedness* gives desired meaning and clarity to any research. As the end of this study attempts to analyze historical developments on ecclesiastic economic sustainability, historical context will help us understand what contributes to sustainability or instability, and inform considerations towards strategies to grow the ecclesiological economic sustainability.

The goal of this section of the research is to revisit how the AOG BTG church was born, bred and how she is managing her missionary work, sources of finances and income generating business in order to realize her economic sustainability. At the conclusion of this chapter, the study notes that the AOG BTG is a historically missionary church which has been struggling to finance her operations; failing to develop and sustain human, material and financial resources. Therefore she is in grave need to reconcile missionary work and commerce in order for her to accomplish her missionary mandate in Zimbabwe.

4.2 The Background of AOG from USA

One of the pioneering leaders and senior pastors of the AOG church in South Africa, Lephoko (2005), Lephoko (2010) and Lephoko (2018) provides a highly informative account of the AOG church as a participant observer in his Masters and doctoral studies that the AOG church was

birthed from the spiritual revival that was done in Azusa Street, California, Los Angeles, USA in 1904.

According to Kgatla (2016:323–325), the Azusa Street Revival is a Pentecostal revival that was spearheaded by an African American, William Seymour, characterized by spiritual baptism, accompanied by *glossolalia*, miraculous encounters and other supernatural experiences. It is observed that the revival attracted millions of people in the United States of America and the world.

The Azusa Street Revival transpired for a long time that is estimated to be over eight years from 1906 until 1915. It influenced numerous people, and consequently led to the emergence of several denominations across the world. It was taken as a defining encounter and foundational bridge that believers crossed through into the end–time revival. It was also branded by long prayers, falling down, loud weeping unto God, and diverse expressions of joyfulness. Some of the remarkable features involved the bodily manipulation of believers’ faces and involuntary movements of the body. The Azusa Street grew globally, and emphasized duplication of the first Pentecost, reenactment of apostles’ experiences which are chronicled in Acts 2 as well as non-racialism.

In his PhD Thesis titled, *‘Culture and Conflict in Pentecostalism: The Assemblies of God in South Africa, Nicholas Bhengu and the American Missionaries, and the International Assemblies of God (1917-1964)’*, Albert Stephen Motshetshane concurs and details that the AOG church was born in the USA in 1914, and discloses that one of its founding principles revolved around a robust missionary program to ‘heathens’ (Motshetshane 2015:166). In order to accomplish missionary work, the American Assemblies valued ideas of independence, economic tenability and indigenous development. Eventually, ideals of an indigenous establishment determined most of her ecclesiological engagements.

Since then, the AOG grew and expanded beyond borders with great influence from the Azusa Street revival. Timothy Senapatiratne records that while several historical works on the AOG church exist, the majority of them are not scholarly and lack primary source documentation or references to scholarly secondary sources (Senapatiratne 2011:92). However, later from the 1980s hitherto today, some informative dissertations such as *‘For Such a Time as This’* by Nelson (1981), aforementioned researches by Daniel Simon Billy Lephoko and several others

were written. For the AOG BTG Zimbabwe, Mpoko (2019:10) observes through his book titled *“A history of Assemblies of God church in Zimbabwe: 1951–2019”* that there were no recordings in the early stages of the movement to glean from.

Like many local Pentecostal churches, the AOG BTG church has not been writing her history. Neglecting writing has been retrogressive as many of her members and leaders who were involved in the founding and development of the denomination passed on without leaving any records. A few remnants provided some notes which were eventually recorded (Mpoko 2019:10). Conversely, there have been some remarkable attempts to revisit and record the historical and structural formation of Pentecostalism, and the AOG BTG church.

Drawing from the South African and few Zimbabwean literature, it is widely agreed that the AOG BTG church was birthed in South Africa with the coming of missionaries who rose as a result of the great inspiration, empowerment and influence from the African–American Azusa Street revival. Having this background, the next transitory section therefore traces AOG Zimbabwe’s roots from South Africa.

4.3 The Roots of AOG BTG from South Africa

It is established that the AOG church is rooted from the missionary work that was done in South Africa by missionaries who were stirred by the extraordinary American revival. According to Lephoko (2010:165–167), the first missionaries came to South Africa in the early months of 1908, and established the Apostolic Faith Mission in Johannesburg, which was led by Mr. Lake who worked with certain unnamed Whites. Later in the same year 1908, a Canadian, Charles Chawner, Henry Turney, his wife Anna from America, and Hannah James from England (Resane 2018:37–38) arrived. They came in 1908 and formed a team that was strategically instituted to minister to the black people in and around Pretoria. Lephoko (2010:50) explains that they established a missionary station in Doornkop near Middleburg in the then Eastern Transvaal (now Mpumalanga Province) in 1911.

In 1914 the AOG was founded in Hot Springs, Arkansas and Turney registered the church with the South African government in 1917 (Watt 1992:21). A South African District Council to represent different groups of American, British and South African missionaries was eventually formed. According to Kelebogile Thomas Resane, Turney passed on in 1921 and several other missionaries flocked in from the United States, United Kingdom, and some Scandinavian

countries. Later in 1925, the American Assemblies of God recognized the South African District of the AOG as an autonomous church. Then, J. H. Law (American) was the chairman and C. J. H Bennet (British) was the secretary. The South African Assemblies of God received further autonomy in 1932 when American Assemblies of God re-organized South African Assemblies of God as a national church (Resane 2018:37).

Missionaries then decided to make the South African AOG a fully independent church. That was finalized at a conference of missionaries from the USA, Ireland, Britain, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, and other parts of the world held in Shingwedzi in 1932. According to AOG website (<https://agfsa.co.za/aoginsa.aspx>), in the year 1940, one of the strong AOG missionaries, James Mullan organized crusades for a South African Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu, who then founded indigenous AOG movement for Blacks, which was code-named Back to God (herein referred to as BTG) as it sought to call and reconcile Africans back to God. Daniel Lephoko and Stephen Motshetshane correspond that Nicholas Bhengu was born of Christian parents on 5 September 1909 at Entumeni, a Norwegian Lutheran Mission Station near Eshowe, former Capital of Zululand (now KwaZulu-Natal). His father, Josiah Khanda, was an evangelist of the Lutheran Church. His mother, Yele complemented his father in ministry. Nicholas Bhengu was always proud of, and highly influenced by his missionary upbringing and work by the Lutheran missionaries. He married Mylet, who died in 1971, and remarried Nokwethemba Mthethwa three years later, in 1974 (Lephoko 2010:50–51 and Motshetshane 2015:150).

According to Lephoko, Bhengu ministered massively in East London between years 1940 to 1945. His crusades generated transformational impact and influence across South Africa. The ministry of Bhengu was characterized by powerful preaching, multiple miracles of healing the sick, casting demons and getting massive conversions. The work developed and matured as numbers of converts multiplied. By year 1959, more than fifty branches were established. Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu then opened a 5000-seater church in Duncan Village, East London and developed various assemblies across the entire country from there. Lephoko (2010:47) describes him as one of the greatest ecclesiological apostles, prophets, teachers and leaders in Africa.

Eventually Nicholas Bhengu envisioned establishing AOG BTG movement beyond South Africa. He led numerous crusades in neighboring nations. It is remarked that revivals have been

still gaining momentum in the AOG church many decades after the demise of her founding fathers. The movement has been striving to evangelize, win souls for Jesus Christ and lead discipleship throughout and beyond South Africa, and that led to her entrance into Zimbabwe with an inspiration from Mathew 28:18–20.

Thus, the historical missionary development of the AOG in South Africa mothered the BTG movement, and eventually gave birth to AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe. Having had this background reflection, the subsequent section attempts to revisit the foundation and development of the AOG BTG in Zimbabwe through the BTG crusades movement.

4.4 The Foundation of AOG BTG in Zimbabwe

The institution of the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe is dated back to early 1950s. A great South African crusader named Nicholas Hepworth Bhekinkosi Bhengu, born on 05 September 1909 at a Lutheran Mission station in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, founded a massive crusade movement called BTG movement in the 1950s, got it institutionalized and operational in evangelizing and planting churches within and outside the AOG church in South Africa (Chibango 2021:73).

Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu officially opened the church in Highfields, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in 1959 and is thus recognized as the founder of AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe (Chibango 2021:74). The AOG BTG church was however already there, planted and headed by some missionaries (Mpoko 2019:15–17). Togarasei (2018:38) confirms that the AOG BTG church was initiated by some missionaries including John Bond in 1958 in Zimbabwe.

In his book titled, *Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu's Lasting Legacy: World's Best Black Soul Crusader*, which he developed from his PhD thesis, Daniel S. B Lephoko wrote that the AOG BTG work in Zimbabwe started in 1958 after one of the missionary leaders, Jim Mullan transferred John Bond to pastor a new branch in the then Salisbury (now Harare). After a year, in 1959, John Bond invited Nicholas Hepworth Bhekinkosi Bhengu to officially launch the Black missionary work in Harare. Nicholas Hepworth Bhekinkosi Bhengu came with a group of musicians, evangelists, few logistical supporters and held a crusade in Highfield, Harare. Lephoko (2018:165) says that the crusade took six weeks and ended in November 1959. Subsequently, Nicholas Hepworth Bhekinkosi Bhengu structured, institutionalized and operationalized the church with some of his lieutenants.

Figure 7: Pictures of Apostle Nicholas Bhengu (Source – Google pictures)



A broad spectrum of views of old serving pastors in the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe concur with the writing of Mpoko (2019:15) that there were various initiatives by AOG missionaries and converts in different parts of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Most of those people were affiliated to AOG South Africa, Canada and America. Mpoko (2019:15) says that the missionaries initiated some work in various areas around Zimbabwe, such as Rusape, Marondera, Harare, Kadoma, Chegutu, Gweru, Shurugwi and Bulawayo.

The missionaries included Fred Burke from AOG South Africa, and G. W. Bates who had an oversight of the AOG BTG works in Mashonaland. It is said that Bates founded AOG BTG Bible School in Harare, which was later sold to the AOG General Council. It is said that G.W. Bates later left AOG BTG and joined full gospel church.

There was also E. D. Rillan who came from South Africa and contributed to the establishment of AOG BTG in Gweru, and areas around Midlands, Schiner served in Matabeleland, Bulawayo and Bush who served in Manicaland. According to Mpoko (2019:15), another missionary called Bush contributed to the establishment of a Bible school in Dangamvura, Mutare. A number of local Black and White gospel ministers also served with the missionaries in establishing the

church without concrete attachments. It is agreed that later, a missionary and AOG affiliate, Reverend John Bond came to Rhodesia from South Africa, coordinated ministers who appreciated the BTG crusade movement and development of the AOG BTG church and organized congregations into proper assemblies.

Mpoko (2019:16) identified some of those who served with the missionaries as Reverend F. Murwisi who is now based in Gokwe, and Reverend Kenneth Mawire who came from Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) and used to be an interpreter for missionaries. There was also Reverend Daniel Gara who served in Gweru, Reverend Wilfred Mutasa who worked in Gweru, Kwekwe, Shurugwi and later left AOG BTG to form his own church, but retained the name AOG. Other ministers included Rev. Musasa, Rev. Wariro, Rev. Juru and Rev. M. Sengwayo. The list also included Rev. Shadreck Likuku, Rev. Mkolo who served in Shurugwi; Rev. Joel Moyo and Raphael Kupara in Zvishavane and Rev. Mthombeni in Bulawayo there was Rev. Mthombeni. As indicated earlier, while the missionaries and local ministers initiated Assemblies of God work in various places, Apostle Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu then came from South Africa in 1959, officiated Black missionary work, led enormous crusades (under his BTG crusade banner) with the logistical, financial and material assistance mobilized by Reverend John Bond in Highfields and founded AOG BTG black ministry.

The colossal crusades harvested hundreds of souls and raised a number of congregations around the country. Some pastors from Apostolic Faith Mission such as Ezekiel Guti, who later left to form ZAOGA, and others served under AOG BTG movement. AOG BTG eventually raised gospel ministers and deployed them to shepherd different assemblies around Rhodesia. Nicholas Bhengu provided oversight of the work from South Africa and regularly visited for leadership meetings and BTG crusades.

The church consequently grew in leaps and bounds with complementary local evangelism and Bhengu's regular huge tent revivals. The Bhengu-led Black work attracted a number of White converts as they appreciated his cooperation with John Bond. While assisting Nicholas Bhengu at national level, Reverend John Bond also pastored an assembly in Salisbury (now Harare) at McLary Avenue. John Bond converted several White farmers in Marondera, Chipinge, Mutare and presided over their congregations. The AOG BTG Black work therefore raised big Black and White congregations across the nation of Zimbabwe.

Nicholas Bhengu later passed on 07 October 1985 at Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa (Chibango 2021:74). He had established structures in the same way that he had organized the AOG BTG work in South Africa – i.e. having regular, decisive and electoral national conferences, elected national executive, administrative district or regional councils in Midlands, Manicaland, Matabeleland, Harare and Masvingo (Lephoko 2018:166). Since then, the regions have grown and some of them have established sub–regions in all the Northern, Eastern, Western and Southern geographical localities. The naming of the regions of the church has been after political regions, well depicted in the Zimbabwean political map which is featured below.

Figure 8: The Political Map of Zimbabwe (Source – <https://www.nationsonline.org>zim>)



Eventually, Apostle Nicholas Bhengu left the church in Zimbabwe under the leadership of a nine member team which forms the National Executive (hereinafter referred to as NE), and seven member regional District Council Committees (hereinafter referred to as DCCs). Since then, the church continued to evangelize and disciple congregants back to and in God, winning souls for Jesus Christ, building up the converts and deploying disciples everywhere, which is commanded by Jesus Christ as recorded through Mathew 28:18–20. In year 2019, the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe celebrated her 60th anniversary as AOG BTG movement or Black work.

4.5 The AOG BTG Leadership Structure

When the AOG BTG movement founder and Apostle Nicholas Bhengu was available, he was the national overseer of the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe. As the Apostolic Father, he influenced the direction of the Zimbabwean leadership the same way that he did in South Africa. In order to have a background of the South African leadership, Resane (2018:43) gives an informative narration of the leadership of the AOG church from South Africa that it had a mixture of a strong Episcopalian, apostolic and congregational system. While Nicholas Hepworth Bhekinkosi led with an apostolic authority, structured his subordinate leadership in an episcopal manner and established local branches with congregational autonomy.

The Zimbabwean AOG BTG followed the same route. After Nicholas Bhengu's death in 1985, the NE took supreme custody of the national oversight of the church, applying a mixture of Presbyterian and Episcopal governance. A number of attempts have been made to consider an exclusively episcopal governance in vain because delegates of the decisive national conference kept disagreeing and the matter has been repeatedly deferred indefinitely. As presented through a graphic illustration in the following section below, the AOG BTG NE operates with nine members who are elected as stipulated by the constitution of the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe. The NE is elected after every three years by the National Conference. The national conference is made up of member assemblies and ministers, elders and organizers in accordance with the specifications of her constitution.

In order to realize and maintain effective administration, the national executive organizes every AOG BTG district to elect her regional leadership. The regional leadership is called DCC. The DCC is elected at a district general council after every two years. According to the constitution of the AOG BTG, all DCCs are composed of seven elected ministers. As a strategy to complement their leadership development, AOG BTG pastors traditionally meet on monthly basis at what they term ministers' fellowship where they have some communion in word, prayer and sharing reports about what and how God is working in their assemblies. The ministers' fellowship is made up of pastors in a locality, town, or region. The pastors' meeting is also meant for prayers about their individual and collective visions, programs, needs, challenges and related issues with regards to their pastoral work and families.

The pastors' fellowship is also used as a platform for doctrinal training, refreshing reflections and discussions. It is also held for pastors to equip and help each other up on various matters including pastoral and personal conduct. Additionally, the pastoral fellowships also connect pastors to organize combined programs towards the accomplishment of their ecclesial and clerical work. The following sections will discuss the national executive, regional and local assembly leadership of the church in detail.

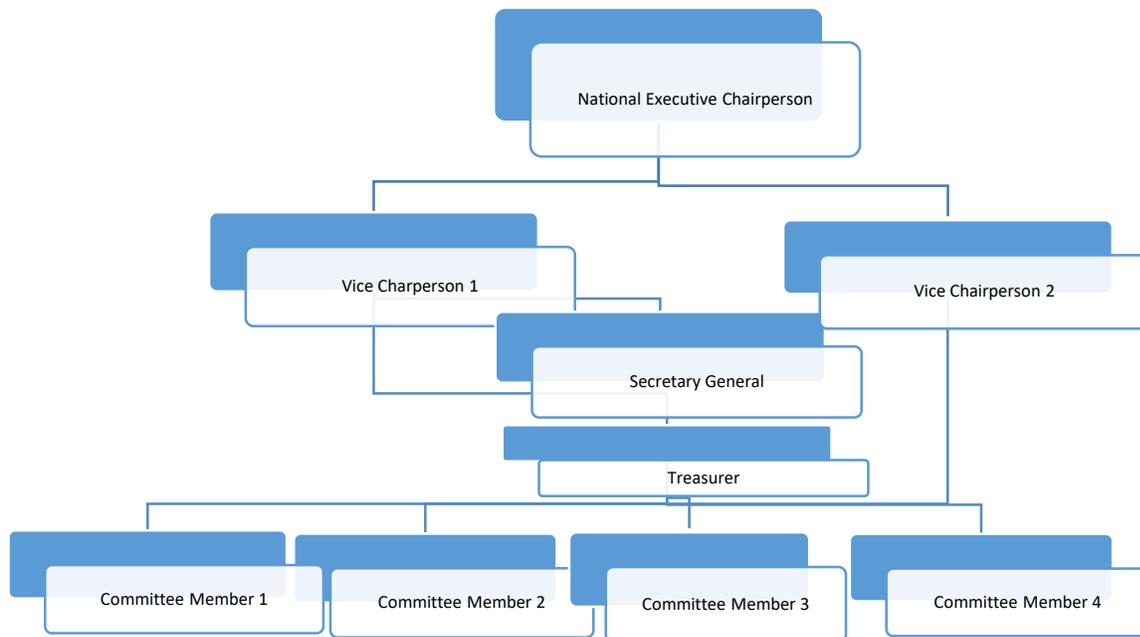
4.5.1 The AOG BTG National Executive

The AOG BTG NE is the national leadership which oversees the policing and operations of all regions of the church in Zimbabwe. It is made up of nine members who are elected by the National Conference at the national assembly after every three years. After each election, the elected members gather under the guidance of an invited *scrutineer* to choose the Chairman, secretary, and treasurer for the next three year tenure.

The NE of the AOG BTG church has authority to give recognition to assemblies upon receipt of a prescribed application. The NE also gives recognition to ministers, elders, and organizers upon receipt of applications done by the applicant with the recommendation from a local assembly and DCC.

According to section 15 of the AOG BTG constitution, the NE admits the church's qualified and ordained pastors who have credentials, probationary ministers who are yet to be accepted and accredited, provisional and ordained elders, organizers and delegates from recognized assemblies and preaching points as ministers of the national conference. Traditionally, it is those admitted ministers that attend general and elective national conferences where national decisions, reviews and elections are done.

Figure 9: Graphic Illustration of the AOG BTG National Executive

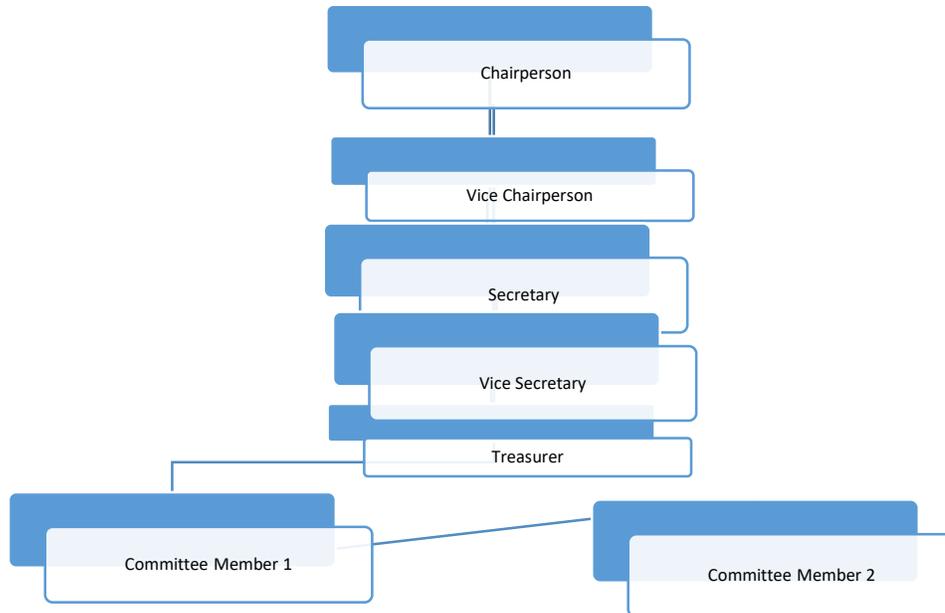


The NE is also authorized to uphold the autonomy of recognized assemblies within the framework of the constitution and by-laws. The NE also acts as the court of discipline in any matters which affect accredited ministers, probationary and temporary ministers, elders, organizers and recognized assemblies. It is well stipulated in the church that the NE is the final authority that interprets by-laws and procedures of the church. More-so, the NE sets up district councils to supervise regions on behalf of the national conference and be accountable to the national executive.

During the course of this research (2021 to 2022), the AOG BTG NE in Zimbabwe was led by Reverend Nathan Sethlako as the Chairperson, Reverend Silas Mhazo (General Secretary), Reverend Peter Rwambiwa (treasurer), and committee members – Dr. Cuthbert Chidoori, Reverend Kirion Mhazo, Reverend McKenzie, Reverend Ngwenya and Reverend Complexion Mataya. The church was expected to hold an elective national conference end of year 2022 to choose a new NE that will lead the church for the next two years respectively.

4.5.2 The AOG BTG Regional Leadership Structure

Figure 10: Graphic Presentation of AOG BTG Regional Structure



The regions of the AOG BTG follow the political regions of Zimbabwe – which are Mashonaland Central, North, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West and South; Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South, Manicaland, Midlands and Masvingo. All the regions are well displayed in the map (featured under the foundation of AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe section). AOG BTG DCCs are the top administration bodies in every region. According to her procedures’ manual (n.d), the AOG BTG NE members are not elected into regional leadership. When in regions, they are subject to their respective DCCs.

Each DCC is composed of seven members who are elected from among the pastors in that particular region. The DCC is elected by ministers (fully accredited and probationary pastors, organizers, elders and assembly delegations).

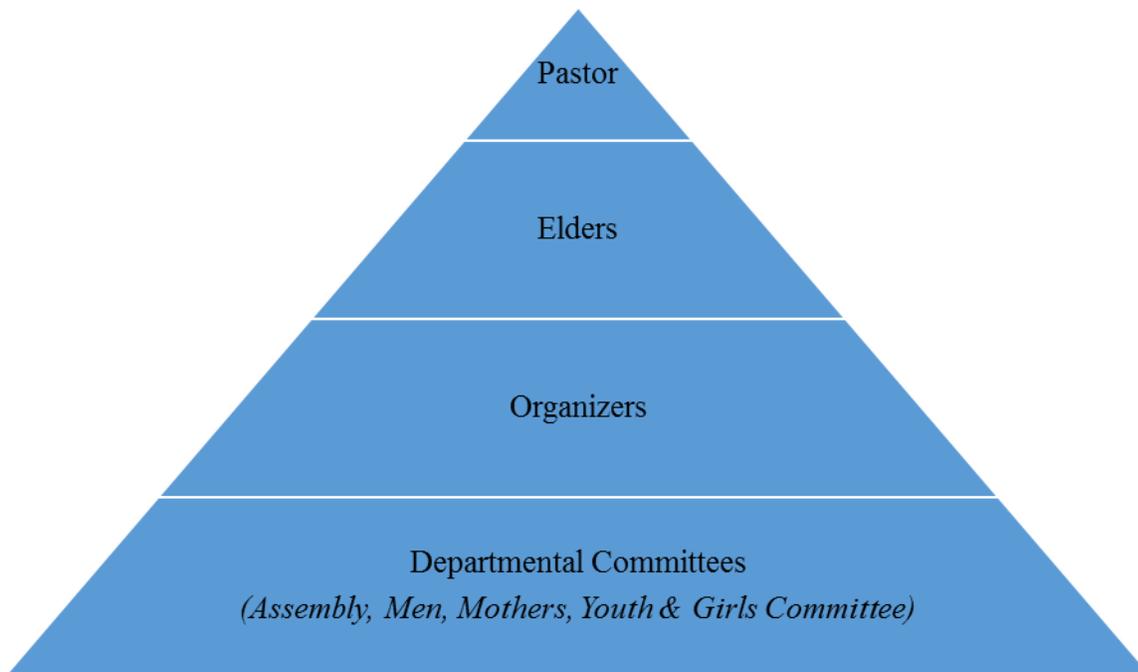
Traditionally, the DCC regularly meets to plan and administer work in their region and to disseminate communication to and from the NE. The DCC assesses and recommends ministry applicants to the NE for approval and accreditation. The DCC is also mandated to propose and manage rotation and transfer of ministers for consideration and implementation by the NE. The DCC runs the regional office, appoints and supervises the secretary and the office orderly. The DCC also mobilizes and manages financial, material and human resources for missionary work

in their respective regions. The DCC also audits all financial, material and human resources of all assemblies in their constituency.

It is also constituted that the DCC regularly calls for regional general meetings. Such meetings are regarded as the regional conferences, which are also called councils in the church. The conferences are usually called to discuss the work, plans and related business of the region. The DCCs also use the conferences to deliberate and consider ministerial applications to recommend to the NE for appointment as marriage officers, especially those who would have undergone examinations by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Regional leaders also take the meetings as platforms to review and discuss the welfare of pastors, economic sustainability of their assemblies and submit suggestions to the national executive leaders towards relative developments accordingly.

4.6 The AOG BTG Local Assemblies Leadership Structure

Figure 11: Pyramid Illustration of local Assemblies Structure



The AOG BTG church local assemblies are historically administrated by elders, organizers and departmental leaders under the oversight and guidance of the pastor. Elders are normally appointed through a process whereby pastors recommend their names to the DCC; the DCC subsequently assesses qualifications of submitted names, and submit them to the NE for approval and accreditation. Appointed elders and deacons are then authorized to oversee the

administration of local assemblies under the overall leadership of their local pastors.

Complementarily, the administration of local assemblies is also backed by their self-governing committee, departmental committees such as men, mothers, youths and girls committees.

The Assembly Committee is mainly composed of mature men, although sometimes women can also be elected in young assemblies where there are not enough men. The election of the local assembly committee is supervised by the DCC. The Assembly Committee consists of seven members – comprising the Chairman, deputy Chairman, secretary, deputy secretary, two trustees and one additional member. The assembly committee is responsible for preparing program of services (except preaching which is exclusively programmed by the pastor), mobilizing and managing financial, material and human resources of the assembly.

While the pastor remains in charge of the assembly, the assembly committee is set to support him/ her towards effectuation and development of the church vision and mission. The pastor is usually invited to be present at every committee meeting to take part in all decisions as reflected through Acts 6:1-4 and Exodus 18:14-22. The departmental committees, such as men, mothers, youths and girls committees are mandated to manage and oversee their particular groups under the general supervision of elders and the pastor.

The departmental committees are normally meant to facilitate free organization of each group in a delegated leadership. The model also liberates the pastor from being overburdened and overwhelmed by each group's needs. All the AOG BTG local assemblies are, that way as articulated above, managed through the leadership of assembly and departmental committees under the control of pastors and elders.

4.6.1 The Recruitment and Deployment of Pastors in the AOG BTG church

Having revisited the nationwide, regional and local structuration and headship of AOG BTG denomination, this subdivision gives attention to how pastors are recruited and deployed in the AOG BTG church.

The AOG BTG church recruits pastors from her congregations across Zimbabwe. According to the AOG BTG procedure manual (n.d), anybody above the age of twenty-five, who has been part of the denomination for a minimum of five years and testified to have received a call of God for pastoral ministry writes an application letter to his or her local assembly, through elders, for recruitment as a pastor.

Upon reception of the letter, elders submit it to their pastor and they, together, evaluate if the applicant qualifies in accordance with their considerations such as age, membership, character, conviction, commitment and competence. When the pastor and elders get satisfied with the applicant's suitability, they present the application to the congregation for their collective assembly assessment. When the assembly accepts and approves the application, the pastor takes it to the DCC. The DCC examines the application using the same approach – additionally considers recommendation from the applicant's home assembly. When satisfied, the DCC writes a commendation for the application and submits it to the NE for final approval and accreditation. When that is done, the NE writes a letter of acceptance to the DCC. The DCC will then deploy applicants in consultation with the NE.

4.6.2 The Recruitment and Appointment of Elders in the AOG BTG church

Elders are traditionally administrative and focal leaders of every Christian church. Several scholars (such as Cummins 1997:23; McDill 2009:177–190; Fernandez 2001:11–14; Chifamba 2014:51 and Strother 2014:6) concur that elders are entrusted with fundamental responsibilities such as guarding the scriptural doctrine (as reflected through Titus 1:9–16; 1 Timothy 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9; Hebrews 13:7–17), identity and direction of the congregation, establishing and maintaining policies, giving oversight, guidance, equipping and preparing congregants towards efficiency and effectiveness for the realization of denominational and any other given targets. Some of their roles involve overall ecclesial administration, recruiting and appointing deacons in consultation with pastors and congregants (Acts 6:1-6). In view of this conception of the fundamentality of elders, this segment thus recounts their recruitment and appointment in the AOG BTG church.

According to the procedure manual (n.d) of the church, elders are recruited through the nomination and recommendation of their pastors, committees and congregations. Pastors identify prospective candidates for eldership in their congregations and engage their assemblies for a prayerful consideration. When the assembly committee and congregation accept given nominations, the pastor submits them to the DCC. The DCC assesses given names, and when done, submits them to the NE for further assessment and approval.

Usually each AOG BTG assembly which has a minimum of twenty–five baptized members is allowed to have a maximum of two elders. The elders are recruited in accordance with Biblical

qualifications specified in 1 Timothy 3:1–10, such as being born again, mature in the Lord, filled by the Holy Spirit, blameless, husband to one wife/ wife to one husband, sober, vigilant, capable of delivering the gospel through preaching, teaching and other characteristics.

The AOG BTG church applies duties of elders in line with Acts 21:23, such as assisting pastors in overseeing the administration and spiritual affairs of the Assemblies. The elders are also authorized to stand in for the Pastor by overseeing their assembly and ministering the word of God when he/she is not available. The constitution of the AOG BTG church stipulates that elders should be taken as ex-officio members of the Assembly/deacons committee.

Additionally, elders are constituent members of the national conference and are periodically given credentials every year. Considering that they are required to assist pastors, they are expected to be proficient in overall congregational leadership and delivery of the gospel. Conclusively, the AOG BTG church elders are sanctioned to make administrative and spiritual decisions in consultation with their pastors. They also handle disciplinary matters with the Pastor, supervise the work of the local Assembly committee (and when deacons are eventually appointed they will be supervised by the elders).

4.6.3 The recruitment and responsibilities of organizers in the AOG BTG

The AOG BTG church operates with a nationally recognized arm of organizers for women, youth, girls and men's work. Traditionally, the longest serving body of organizers identifies considerable candidates from their particular groups in local assemblies. Eventually the organizers coordinate with local assembly leaders to examine prospective nominees and recommend them to DCC.

Information from the researcher's participant observations is that the recruitment of organizers is mainly done in consideration with the same qualities that are deliberated for pastors and elders, mainly looking at character, competence and conviction in God and ministry for particular groups. As an example, for girls, regional leadership scrutinizes given recommendations and their own analysis towards making recommendations and submissions to the NE for final approvals. After considerations and the subsequent approval of the NE, leading organizers facilitate the orientation and training of newly recruited organizers so that they get equipped and empowered to serve from their local assemblies.

The organizers are then recognized as constituent members of the National Conference and their terms of office are usually reviewed annually. It is established in the AOG BTG church that organizers are mandated to expedite regional group programs such as conferences, in consistent consultation with local committees and regional leadership. Organizers also supervise their constituent ministries and services, and the election of committee for his/her group at local, monthly and quarterly level. They also orient and train the elected local assemblies' committees for local service, under the guidance of local pastors.

Furthermore, the organizers receive reports from assemblies or monthly committees respectively, comment and oversee accountability of local committees and services. They supervise financial, human and material resource mobilization and management of local committees regularly. Additionally, organizers are tasked to prepare programs for national conventions and submit to the NE for approval. They suggest speakers for their conventions for consideration and/or approval by the NE. The organizers also prepare field and financial reports for presentation at their national conference.

4.7 The AOG BTG Local Committees.

The AOG BTG local assemblies are self-governing under the leadership of their pastors, elders and committees. Every assembly committee is primarily composed of spiritually mature men although sometimes women can also be elected in small assemblies where men are in limited numbers. The election of local assembly committees are supervised by the DCC. It is constituted that AOG BTG assemblies are run by the Assembly Committees until elders and deacons are ordained.

AOG BTG procedure manual (n.d) says that an Assembly Committee consists of seven members – which include the chairman, the deputy chairman, the secretary, the assistant secretary, two trustees and one additional member. The Committee is responsible for the administration of the assembly. It is delegated to prepare programs for services, except preachers who are exclusively assigned by the pastor. The committee is also responsible for mobilizing and managing human, financial and material resources for the assembly. The assembly committee attends to all expenditures of the Assembly, prays and supports the pastor in accomplishing *missio Dei* and *missio Ecclesiae*.

As well outlined in the church's procedure manual (n.d), local pastors are ex-officio members of the Assembly Committee. The Pastor is generally in charge of the Assembly and the committee is obligated to assist him. The committee therefore works with the pastor in everything as reflected through Acts 6:1–4 and Exodus 18:14–22.

4.8 The AOG BTG Departmental committees

As noted in the foregoing subdivision, the AOG BTG church employs the leadership of committees to organize services and programs of her departments. The departments comprise men, mothers, youths, girls; as well as missionary teams such as evangelism, intercession, praise and worship.

Organizers of the church facilitate elections for departmental committees in consultation with elders and pastors.

In principle, the elections are procedurally supposed to be held after every two years. However, the researcher observed that, that has been varying from assembly to assembly due to contextual factors, for example, some assemblies have few members in certain departments and are thus forced to defer elections and keep using the same leaders until their numbers increase. Every departmental committee consists of seven members in form of chairperson, vice chairperson, two trustees, secretary, deputy secretary and an additional member without portfolio. While the rest of the committee members have clearly stipulated duties, an additional member is reserved to assist whenever and wherever need arises in the committee, for example, if any of the committee members is absent, sick or incapacitated, an additional member fills the gap until it gets reoccupied.

4.9 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter provided a detailed account of the history of the AOG BTG church from the United States of America where some believers who got transformed, empowered and influenced by series of revivals that rose from the popularized massive Azusa Street revival reached out as missionaries to different countries. The researcher discerned that it is from those who became missionaries that others journeyed to South Africa, evangelized and eventually planted the AOG church. The chapter then explored the development of AOG BTG Black African movement by Nicholas Bhengu, who then took it to Zimbabwe where some missionaries had already planted some congregations. The chapter presented the foundation of AOG BTG in Zimbabwe,



establishment of her national, regional and local assembly leadership structures. In an attempt to examine how the church developed, the chapter looked at the recruitment of pastors, elders, organizers, local committees and departmental leadership structures. The following chapter five will unpack and analyze findings of this study. It will discuss, analyze and interpret gathered data, through which strategies for the economic sustainability of AOG BTG in Zimbabwe will be subsequently drawn.



Chapter 5: Presentation and Analysis of Research Findings from Interviews

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter recounted the history of the AOG BTG church from the United States of America through South Africa up to her establishment and development in Zimbabwe. Having had such a historical discourse and appreciation of the church, at this juncture of the study, the focus turns to the primary results that have been gathered from in-depth interviews. As well highlighted under the sampling sub-section of methodology towards the end of chapter one, a population of thirty participants, in form of three national executive leaders, twelve leaders from representative regions and fifteen congregants from different assemblies were purposively sampled and engaged in in-depth interviews for a thorough examination of the study.

This segment will begin with the conceptualization of the identity of the Church by AOG BTG leaders and congregants. Thereafter, their views on, and expressions of ecclesiological sustainability will be presented. After doing that, the next unit will outline AOG BTG fountains of finances. Succeeding that, the ensuing sub-sections will map out the sustainability of AOG BTG sources of finances, inclusive challenges and conceptualizations of giving.

Once that is done, the successive component will unravel the AOG BTG business engagements; inclusive challenges of AOG BTG business sustainability; effects of national economic crisis and *Covid-19* on church-owned business as well as positive impact of business on missionary work. Afterwards, an assessment of the complications and remedies of doing business as a church will be done. When all the outlined discussion and analysis is completed, this chapter will end with an analytic summary.

5.2 Conceptualization of the Identity of the Church in AOG BTG

Identity is generally conceptualized from nature. As Ginn and Demeritt (2008:300) introduce, nature is a widely contested terminology that refers to various things and diverse people from different contexts. Discussing it is usually centralized on the essence or distinctiveness of something.

Accordingly, ecclesiological and scientific discussions on the matter indicate that it is highly complicated and it demands continuous close assessment and evaluation of factors about internal and external characterization.

Well corresponding with that, (as highlighted through chapter 3 subsection 2 regarding the identity of the AOG BTG denomination), the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe understands ecclesiological identification from her various depictions as the creation of God, people of God, the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, temple of God, communion of believers, witness of God and as wholly missionary. One of the national executive (NE) members said that “the Church is just those who believe and live by the will of God. That is the people of God”. Two other NE members concurred and quoted some scriptures such as 2 Corinthians 11:2, Revelations 19:7–9 and John 3:29 which present the Church as the bride of Christ. Additionally, “the Church is also identified as the temple and witness of God as He dwells in and with the Church while she witnesses about Him in the world”, said one of the NE members.

As such, the AOG BTG church leadership submitted that the AOG BTG church regards the Church as wholly missionary. They expounded that the nature of the Church reflects her identity, her essence – that which she is distinctly identified as. “I also must hasten to point out that the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe is a missionary and communal denomination”, said a member of the regional leadership committee in Mashonaland. Another regional leader from Matebeleland spoke out that “the AOG BTG church is a *missional* church that gives priority to missionary work”.

For the AOG BTG church, the identity of the Church is inclusive, because it involves every aspect of her being. The understanding of leaders corresponds with congregants that the Church is created and called to live in, under and live out *missio Dei*. “We are always taught and reminded in local, regional and national conferences that we carry the Great Commission. Our leaders emphasize that we must advance the mission of God, which, to me, is the salvation of humanity”, said a congregant from Manicaland at a regional convention which was held in Mutare in 2021. All the fifteen interviewed congregants agreed in different expressions that the church is missionary. Thus, the AOG BTG church subscribes to a far-reaching stewardship of the mission of God. Theologically, the perception of the AOG BTG shapes her ecclesiology as she attempts to live in missionary terms. Consequently, the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe is most fundamentally a *missional* community.

In most of his addresses, the NE chairman reminds the church that “the AOG BTG does not exist for herself, but for God who established and commissioned her to be part of His missionary work for the salvation of all creation”.

A close assessment of the AOG BTG leadership and congregational views shows that the Church is inherently missionary. “The church is, and should live as ambassadors of Jesus Christ. We are agents of the mission of God”, added one of the NE members. The whole leadership believes that the denomination partakes the DNA of Jesus Christ. Their conceptualization portray *ecclesia* as people who are called into new life of the *missio Dei*.

In addition to that, the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe perceive the Church with reference to an institution that is purposely involved in the conversion, discipleship, sending and supporting of missionaries to the ends of the earth. “If you check with all our regions, you can confirm that we evangelize, disciple, send and support our members and servants of God for the furtherance of the gospel” said one of the regional leaders in Masvingo in an interview. The AOG BTG church’s ideology of the identity of the Church is also well displayed in her missionary activities and engagements. As indicated earlier in chapter three, the AOG BTG’s missionary uniqueness is demonstrated through her national BTG missionary movement that has been conventionally doing massive crusades to harvest souls across the nation every year. Additionally, AOG BTG’s conceptualization of the identity of the Church as fully missionary is well portrayed through her advancement of overarching missionary work.

5.3 AOG BTG Conceptualization of *missio Dei*

The AOG BTG church takes *missio Dei* as the universal mission of God on and for humankind. The conception relates to multiple submissions that have been advanced by various scholars like Flett (n.d:75–77) who avers that *missio Dei* is firstly a call for believers to worship God as He is, and it belongs to God for the reconciliation and redemption of humanity. Likewise, Wright (2006:71) asserts that as redemption is done and sustained by sovereign God (with reference to Revelations 7:10), and the Bible is predominantly about the life-bearing story of how God has brought about His salvation for the whole cosmos, mission belongs to God, and it is the prior reality out of which flows any mission that we get involved in (Wright 2006:71).

Upon the same appreciation, Thomas Schirrmacher, through his book, ‘*Missio Dei, God’s Missional Nature*’, engages Georg F. Vicedom’s 1998 observations which describes *missio Dei*

as the heavenly commissioning of the Church for the salvation of mankind (Schirmmacher 2017:12). The remarks are based on John 17:18, which says, “*As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world*”, and Mark 16:15, “*...Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation*” (Online NIV Bible Gateway: n.p).

Unlike a number of Pentecostal and evangelical churches that customarily recognize *missio Dei* in a narrow salvific form, the AOG BTG church takes Harold’s (2019:87) stance that *missio Dei* is praxis–orientated, taking into consideration specific contexts of the lived realities of people. “We take the mission of God as the salvific work of God for people in all our different areas of residence and occupations. We seek to pursue what God wants for everyone in their contexts. So, we aim to bring, and apply the gospel to everyone and every corner of our societies”, said a district member of Gokwe in Chireya. For that reason, the AOG BTG church engages with the mission of God beyond seeking and nurturing individual disciples to demonstrating the gospel in every possible context.

The *missional* conceptualization of the AOG BTG church’s representative leadership and congregations is that the mission of God, for the sake of mankind to be served, also concurs with Khauoe (2008:9–10) who asserts that *missio Dei* is the purpose and work of God which the Church is assigned to pursue, which correspondingly yields to the concept of *missio Ecclesiae* (mission of the Church). In that order, informants from the AOG BTG fellowship thus comprehend *missio Dei* in *missio Ecclesiae* as the former leading to the latter.

Ten of the fifteen (NE and regional leaders) interviewed AOG BTG church leaders and thirteen (of fifteen interviewed congregants) members separately and concurringly expressed that the mission of God is the main reason behind the existence of the denomination. Concurringly, it is widely professed in the AOG BTG church that the universal Church and mission cannot be separated. It is perceived that one cannot exist without the other. The comprehension and appreciation of the AOG BTG grouping is that they value and uphold the work of the creator at the centre of all their endeavours and activities. Essentially, therefore, such a mind–set inspires and builds up the denomination to strive to be distinctively missionary. It is contended that since the ecclesiological representations are the creation, people, temple, witnesses of God, and body of Jesus Christ, if she ceases to be missionary, she would have not just missed one of her assignments, but would have stopped to be the Church. The AOG BTG denomination in

Zimbabwe consequently observe that she is absolutely dedicated to missionary work. She declares that she is intrinsically missionary. They take themselves as part of God's salvific plan for the human race.

5.4 AOG BTG Conceptualization of *missio Ecclesiae*

The AOG BTG church comprehends *missio Ecclesiae* as the ecclesial mission to carry out the salvific commission of God. "We understand that the mission of the church is to advance the salvific mission of God for mankind", said an NE member. Concurringly, all interviewed AOG BTG leaders and congregants perceive the mission as a cardinal charge towards growing herself as an indigenous church-planting movement, which is also presented by Winter and Koch (n.d:538) as that which carries the potential to renew lives and transform societies.

"One of the goals of our vision 2030 is to grow our membership to populate the kingdom of God through evangelizing, planting new branches, increasing and nurturing believers for God", explained one of the NE members. Like Peters' (1972:159-163) proposition, the AOG BTG church views herself as a missionary agency of salvation born out of eternal will and purpose of God for the redemption of humanity from sin into life in Him. A number of different scholars (such as Padilla 1982:18, Yahya 2020:70, DeYoung n.d:1, Dreyer 2016:6, Kim 2010:2, Lephoko 2010:113 and Vit Hlasek 2017:26-27) concur that the ecclesiological commission can only be appropriately comprehended from *missio Dei*. They believe that the assignment of the Church is an extension of the Godhead through an all-inclusive declaration and living of the gospel in correspondence with contextual circumstances.

Primarily therefore, *missio Ecclesiae* is conceptualized in the AOG BTG church as delivering exhaustive good news to humanity, which Goheen (2000:327) further express as restoring the reign of God over the universe in conjunction with the indispensable work of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit that was transcendentally delegated to all denominations and congregants for its execution in all nations. "The AOG BTG church considers that the mission of the Church is to advance the mission of God in all spheres (referring to the *kerygmatic, diaconal, liturgical* and *koinonia* dimensions of missionary work). Unfortunately, our church has not managed to attend to all areas of mission due to economic incapability, but we just understand and believe that we should be ministering and applying the gospel to all aspects of lie" lamented one congregant who withheld information about her location.

5.5 The AOG BTG Views on Ecclesiological Sustainability

With the background of Butzke (n.d:1) which portrays that, like every other organization in the contemporary society, churches also need to reflect on their own economic tenability and implement strategic ways towards keeping it up. This study engaged the AOG BTG leaders and congregants to find out their conception of ecclesiological sustainability, probing their positions towards reconciling the business of mission and economics.

“Ecclesiastical sustainability refers to how the church will meet its welfare in order to effectively fulfil its God given mandate here on earth. The institution is not an exception to resource needs such as property, financial and manpower needs so and to fulfil a spiritual cause as the main goal therefore, the ability to core exist with such demands and remain faithful and loyal to the mandate is what I call sustainability of a church”, said one of the NE members. “For me, it is the capacity of the church to sustain its operations”, answered one of AOG BTG senior pastors and former NE member. A regional leader from Harare said “I am not sure what it really means”, while one congregant from Gokwe said that “the economic sustainability of a church is rooted in its members. So, it is the congregational economic wellbeing of a church”.

Some of the AOG BTG church leadership relatively expressed sustainability as meeting their current needs without negatively affecting their future. Their opinions concurred with the conception of Lutheran Sustainability Institute which is presented in its founding document for Latin America and the Caribbean (2013:4–6). The foundational document explains that the notion ‘sustainability’ bears numerous implications and demands to be applied in distinctive areas. The Lutheran institute avows that the issue of tenability branches from individual and institutional realizations for the need to set up ways that can keep up and guarantee efficacy, fruitfulness and longevity in specified terrains.

The document articulates that for social organizations, sustainability is comprehended as the capabilities of an institution, or body to sustain the targets, principles and impact of their purposes of existence in an indestructible manner. According to the Lutheran institute, tenability is not just an issue that regards fiscal resilience. Accordingly, the tenability of an institution requires clarification of purposes, commitments, principles, strategies and regular evaluations. Thus, the achievability of tenability is determined by the regularity of professional and accountable checks and balances.

Some leaders of the AOG BTG church reiterated viewpoints of the Lutheran Sustainability Institute's founding document that the ideology of tenability relates to the concerted direction and redoubling of efforts to build up the economic development and resilience of an organization. With such progressive thinking, the AOG BTG denomination voiced that sustainability calls for their administrative and managerial work to be regularly improved, audited and evaluated towards rebuilding their human, financial and material resources in a sustainable and resilient way. They further said that tenability should be informed by biblical *theonomic* reflections on provisions of God and human responsibility towards lifelong ecclesial and individual resourcefulness.

As the Lutheran Sustainability Institute's founding document alludes to, perspectives of the AOG BTG's ecclesiological tenability lies in her national, regional and local administrative and managerial conduct. Nevertheless, keeping in mind that indigenous environments have been continually fluctuating, engagements with the AOG BTG leaders and congregants uncovered that they find it necessary for their denomination to continuously review the way they manage and administrate their financial, human and material resources. "It's all about how we steward our God-given resources. Our economic sustainability is our capacity to manage what we have, generate what we can in order to sustain ourselves", said a regional committee member from Bulawayo. All interviewees who were engaged in this study independently corresponded that ecclesiological tenability is upwardly enabled and downwardly disabled by their leadership approaches and handling of available resources.

Emphasizing the interconnection of tenability, management and administration, AOG BTG senior leaders enunciated that their ecclesiastical formation is structured and managed with her extensively spiritual and economic sustainability in mind. Their submissions are confirmed by specific designation of different boards and voluntary staff which are responsible for specific developments (such as her projects board, which has been recently named Assemblies of God Development and Relief Agency, hereinafter referred to as AOGDRA) and an education board. Such a set up was made deliberately for the denomination's spiritual and economic development.

The AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe comprehends that she is both a spiritual and a social organization that needs contextually relevant strategies for her own economic sustainability. She finds herself in dire need to attend to administrative processes towards accomplishing her

economic sustainability. Although the church has been economically unstable for decades, her leaders say that they are always mindful of the need for economic sustainability, hence the establishment of AOGDRA.

While human, material and financial resources are very important, the AOG BTG church leadership espies that the economic sustainability of their denomination does not wholly depend on human action. She believes that, overall, supernatural enhancement makes tenability attainable. Thus, the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe values human responsibility as complementary in realizing total sustainability. Her conception, coupled with perceptions submitted by the likes of the Lutheran Institute of Sustainability, challenge the church to work on developing contextually feasible administrative and operating strategies towards comprehensive ecclesiastic sustainability.

“We value and consistently make deliberate efforts to build a balanced team of pastoral and technical staff for efficient and effective distribution of responsibilities our sustainable development”, explained an NE member in Harare. While her leaders presented such progressive conceptual submissions, most of the AOG BTG church congregants and junior voluntary staff members bemoaned that their church management is obstructively doomed by voluntarism, disintegration of faith and economics as well as poor stewardship. “We rely much on voluntary workers and our leaders do not have an agreed position on the link between faith and economics. So, you find others talking of believing in God for provision while doing nothing, while others arguing for business projects to increase our sources of revenue. As long as we do not have one leadership voice to follow, we will take long to realize economic sustainability”, said one congregant from Mashonaland east in Marondera. One of the former NE members from Matebeleland agreeably voiced that the NE, regional leadership and leading pastors and elders have never agreed on a theology of business, and any viable strategies for the economic development of the church besides depending on tithes, freewill offerings, fundraising collections and donations.

Whereas some (both leaders and congregants) AOG BTG participants communicated commendable understanding of ecclesiastic sustainability, others stammered about it. They appeared unsure of what the concept really means. Some of them however pointed out that their comprehension of ecclesiastic sustainability is limited to the capacity of the church to just meet

her operational costs and remain with some surplus for future use. Nevertheless, five of AOG BTG congregants were relaxed on their dependency on tithes, freewill offerings, donations and ten were concerned with the economic sustainability of the church.

While they all proclaimed that they fully trust that God provides needs of the church through congregants and donors' giving, most AOG BTG members reasoned that the church should do some business engagements to complement her traditional sources of income. As Holloway (2010:18–19) finds dependency on traditional sources of ecclesial revenue such as donations unsustainable and problematic, the majority of AOG BTG church participants resonate with the *theonomic reciprocity* theory (which this study is premised on), that they should correspond with God's provision by utilizing, multiplying and developing available resources (by doing any contextually feasible commerce) for the economic sustainability of the church. Their reasoning also relate with Butzke (n.d)'s historical submissions that the concept of sustainability should deeply and broadly speak more on deliberate investments, recoveries and developments in production and profit making engagements in order for them to support themselves and pursue the work of God successfully.

Views of AOG BTG members and leaders on ecclesiological sustainability ruminates the observations of Butzke (n.d:5) that the church should understand the world as a multifaceted system that is supernaturally resourceful for inclusionary tenability if members utilize and manage available resources responsibly and selflessly. They explained that some of their past and incumbent leaders selfishly disconnected supportive networks to personalize and exploit some resources for their enrichment. As a result, selfishness, personalization and self-serving leadership incapacitated and ruined prospects for their denominational tenability. Interviewed leaders and congregants independently agreed that ecclesiological sustainability speaks to reconnecting their disconnected networks, filling up some policy gaps and reuniting efforts towards institutional development.

The AOG BTG church's appreciation and conceptualization of ecclesiological sustainability is therefore a mixture of divine and human contributions. Hence, that is fertile for the developmental mobilization, diversification, strategic management and development.



5.5.1 AOG BTG Views for her Economic Sustainability

a. Spiritual Growth

Some leaders of the AOG BTG church think that spiritual growth determines the economic sustainability of the church. One of the NE members said that “economics is determined by God who creates and provides all human, material and financial resources” while another added that “the church can only give financially, materially and contribute to her economic sustainability when spiritually mature”.

A pastor from Chitungwiza said that “my understanding of spiritual growth is understanding and living the Bible, so, if one does not understand, and adhere to teachings of the Bible, how can they do something serious like giving? They cannot. So, as giving is the pillar of the economy of the Church, spiritual maturity matters”. Other interviewed leaders and congregants also concurringly pointed out that stewardship and *theonomics* cannot be easily grasped by the immature. They reasoned that they can only be best understood by those who have sought and attained spiritual maturity. “Without spiritual maturity, both congregants and leaders may only desire but cannot rise to be good stewards and constructive Christians, so spiritual maturity is integral in the economics of a church”. Out of thirty interviewees, twenty clearly specified that the church should maximize efforts towards spiritual development through thorough doing studies of the Bible, preaching and teaching of the gospel.

When spiritual maturity reigns in the church, interviewees argued that congregants and leaders can then understand economics, *theonomics*, stewardship, biblical theology of business and consequently redouble their contributions for the economic sustainability of the church in one accord as mature stewards of God.

b. Numerical Growth

Part of those who contributed their views in this study also observed that numbers are a fundamental factor in the mammoth yet unavoidable concern for economic tenability.

“Whenever congregants are few, their contributions will be correspondingly less than those who are more populated” said one pastor in Mutare. An elder from Chipinge voiced that “if she will gain economic sustainability, the AOG BTG denomination should evangelize and increase her numbers more than before, as costs of operation are rising”.

While appreciating that soul winning is not and should not be purposed to effect a maintainable treasury; some congregants articulated that numerical growth directly and indirectly attracts



matching contributions and economic tenability for the sustenance of ecclesial mission. The membership of the majority of AOG BTG local assemblies ranges between thirty to hundred congregants. Nationally, the AOG BTG has averagely seventeen thousand members. It has been noticed that only a quarter of each assembly congregation is economically able to give more than five United States dollars per month. More than nine thousand AOG BTG congregants are poverty-stricken and financially constrained.

As well outlined in the introduction and background of this study (in chapter one) that Zimbabwe has been in an unsettling economic catastrophe that impoverished the majority of citizens due to various factors such as incommensurate taxes, institutional corruption, and lately, worsened by *Covid-19*, small numbers of congregations can only give limited contributions in the already depressed economic environment.

That is why most interviewees urged that the AOG BTG should reinforce her efforts in winning more souls and increasing her numbers. For them, when congregants increase in number, their giving may measure up with their numbers and resultantly contribute to the economic sustainability of the church.

c. Stewardship

Engaged leaders and followers also pointed out that stewardship determines the economic sustainability of the church. A member of the regional committee in Mashonaland North said that “I think we, as leaders and pastors, should teach our congregants about stewardship so that they grow as stewards, recognize themselves as custodians of God’s resources and utilize them towards the development of the church”.

A deacon from Harare commented that “our church is very rich with human, material and financial resources, but some of us seem to be stingy, and that has been depriving AOG BTG of much development”. In analyzing this, and other similar views, this study observes that when congregants become virtuous stewards, they can channel their resources for their ecclesiological economic sustainability. In view of the church as the people of God, AOG BTG interviewees argue that when congregants become responsible stewards, their resources become church capitals – meaning that they will always support the church with their God-given resources and meet operating and missionary costs sustainably. Their views relate to Warren J. McFate who avers that ecclesiological development should entail theologizing stewardship that awaken and

change believers to rise from stinginess up to generosity to sustain ecclesial mandate (McFate 2010:6–7).

d. Business

Some of the interviewed congregants and leaders aired that the church should also establish some businesses to generate income and complement tithes, freewill offerings, donations and other collections. “Look at denominations such as Church of Christ, United Methodist, United Family International, Celebration and ZAOGA; they built up educational, agricultural, clinical and pharmaceutical investments to grow their revenues” said one congregant from Kadoma. While the tenability of such investments might have been somewhat negatively impacted by countrywide economic quagmire and various denominational challenges, they have been contributing some noteworthy percentages towards their regular revenue, overall economy and congregational wellbeing.

“Honestly, going on with no plan and deliberate efforts to diversify our revenue will keep us struggling and losing more members who find better leadership elsewhere”, one of the church’s youth organizers complained in Bulawayo. According to those who proposed business engagements, their denomination seems to have been failing to integrate faith, work and resultantly submitting their human responsibility to God in prayer while neglecting their collaborative role that is clarified in the theory of *theonomic reciprocity* (whereby humanity submits to God for His blessings and guidance while reciprocally working with given resources and opportunities to realize tenability).

Keeping in mind that conventional sources of their ecclesial treasury have been unsustainable, twelve interviewees advanced that the church should include some commerce in her developmental plans so as to generate extra income. They reasoned that the church should utilize and commercialize available resource towards establishing any other feasible businesses to generate more income.

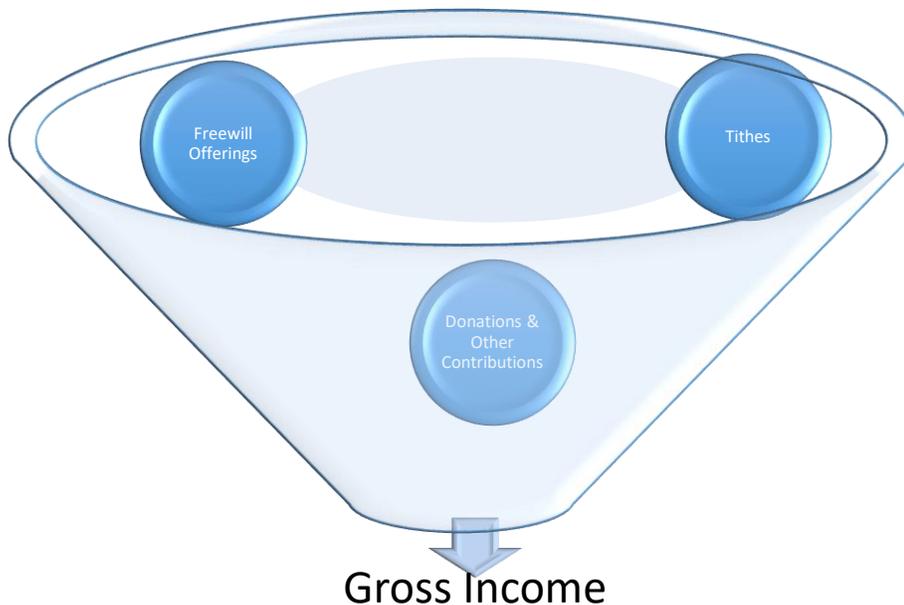
5.5.2 AOG BTG Traditional Sources of Finances

Since the establishment of the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe, she has been customarily getting her finances from freewill offerings, tithes, donations and other contributions. An NE member from Harare stated that “our main finances are from freewill offerings, tithes and targeted collections such as building fund and love offerings”. Generally, local assemblies collect freewill

offerings on Mondays, which they call campaign funds – which they direct to evangelism outreaches and related soul winning expenses. On Tuesdays mothers meet for prayers and collect freewill offerings. They customarily dedicate them to their reserves which will be combined for what they give at regional collections as regional groups. On Wednesdays girls meet and collect their offerings. They then keep their funds for girls’ conferences and related local, regional and national programs. On Thursdays youths meet and give offerings which are committed to youth work, conferences and related services. On Fridays the whole church meets for a service and give offerings which are directed to complement Sunday offerings for local expenditures.

Besides those midweek and weekend collections, the AOG BTG church traditionally developed a denominational culture of communal giving through which congregants can always contribute extra funds whenever there is a program that needs collective mobilization, such as building, evangelistic revivals and others. In order to demonstrate the sources of finances that are conservatively used across all the AOG BTG assemblies in Zimbabwe, below is a funnel presentation.

Figure 12: Funnel Presentation of AOG BTG Assemblies’ Finances



A close analysis of the AOG BTG finance model is that her members voluntarily give any amounts of offerings in correspondence with their abilities and willingness in midweek and main Sunday gatherings. Every local assembly strives to work with what congregants give. Few of her

assemblies sometimes run small poultry projects, and trade items such as t-shirts, hats and other ecclesial regalia to generate extra income to complement the aforementioned main sources of finances.

Moreover, to augment freewill offerings, congregants are encouraged to contribute or donate any other monies towards sustaining operating costs. On top of that, congregants are taught and expected to pay tithes, which is ten percent of their incomes every month. Normally, tithes are reserved for pastoral welfare (except when freewill offerings are short, some assemblies then take part of given tithes to cover what they may deem critical, such as venue and or pastor's house rent, for those without their own), while other offerings and contributions cater for expenses of the church such as water, electricity, maintenance and other needs of the church. Whenever the church is doing a project such as building, or appreciating a pastor, elders and deacons organize that the church gives freely in cash and kind. This means that all the sources of AOG BTG finances are therefore determined by quantity, capacities, availability and willingness of congregants at particular assemblies. As Mark DeYmaz observes the following;

“The power of the church to do good in the world is controlled and measured, in substantial part, by its size. A tiny church might be a pinch of salt in society, but a larger church has a greater chance of salting it thoroughly. In most instances, it is true: the larger a church, the larger its income (that is, its tithes and offerings). Therefore, seeking to increase attendance is often the first line of attack in dealing with budget deficits and the need for more money in a church.

Nevertheless, we take exception with the consultant's last point. As I've written before, “I've seen what a determined [multiethnic and economically diverse] church can do regardless of its size and demographics, without a quality facility to call its own, and without what many others consider the income necessary to make a significant impact on its city” (DeYmaz 2019:208).

DeyMaz (2019:208) explains that the economy of a church is determined by generosity of congregants, accountability and oversight of leaders, instilling confidence in congregants, making giving easy by providing electronic options, monetizing existing services and engaging in entrepreneurship as a church to avoid giving financial pressure and overburdening congregants and generating own income. In such circumstances (which is the exact case of the AOG BTG

church), the decrease of numbers of congregants, capacities, willingness and absence of others usually affect quantities and qualities of assembly incomes.

According to her procedures manual, AOG BTG deacons (who are made up of appointed trustees and an additional member) are responsible for collecting funds. Procedurally three of them collect the funds, do banking and manage records and transactions together with the secretary, under the supervision of the local body chairperson and the pastor. At regional and national level, historically women have been the backbone of the AOG BTG movement. Under the leadership of organizers, DCC treasurer and NE treasurer, the mothers' wing of the church conduct campaigns and raise money for functional costs of the national executive, and national missionary work.

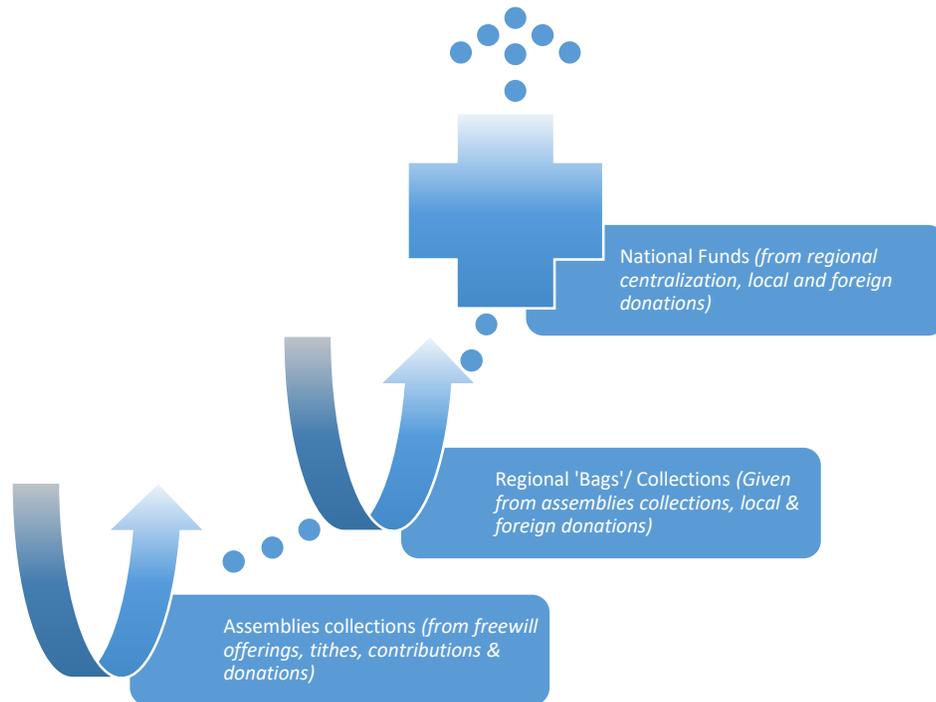
According to Lephoko (2010:134), from 1950 Nicholas Hepworth Bhekinkosi Bhengu considered that accomplishing the broad-based work of his ministry required him to re-plan and come up with a strong financial muscle. Historically, he used to go to the USA to look for fiscal aid towards funding the planning and execution of his crusades. Somehow, Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu did not get much – sometimes he would come with far less than what he needed, or without any donations. He then assigned the mothers wing of the church to raise funds for missionary work and that has been cascaded down to all AOG churches, including AOG BTG congregations in Zimbabwe.

Lephoko (2010:135) explicates that God eventually told Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu to stop begging for foreign aid and start raising funding indigenously. He explains that God told him to utilize women in mobilizing funding. In response to that divine direction, he appointed leaders of the mothers' wing from all regions, whom he called organizers for the premeditated resolutions of facilitating regular fundraising efforts to fund national and regional missionary work. The mothers' leaders devised a strategy that they term 'bags', with which they mobilize local branches to raise money and present in a competitive form at regional forums. Afterwards, regional leadership submit the funds at a national convention in a competition where winners get prizes. The strategy inspires branches and regions to work hard in raising more than previous collections. Conclusively, part of the money is usually directed to national missionary programs while the rest is redistributed back to respective regions for the same purpose.

The AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe borrowed the same model from South Africa and has been employing it up to today. National and regional mothers’ organizers religiously facilitate the ‘bags’ strategy. They collect contributions from every assembly and present them at their regional and national conferences. They conduct their presentations of the ‘bags’ in a competitive scheme and give prizes to assemblies and regions that would have given biggest amounts. Like in the South African case, Zimbabwean mothers’ organizers do their best to instil a spirit of working hard in raising money and supportive material gifts.

After gathering branch collections, the mothers’ organizers combine regional contributions from their assemblies and present them as regions at massively mobilized and populated national conferences. A region that gives more than other regions gets a national prize. The national executive will take a portion of the money given at national convention for national programs and operating needs, and return the rest to regional district offices for regional operations and programs.

Figure 13: Graphic Illustration of AOG BTG regional and national finances



5.5.3 AOG BTG Business Engagements

The missionary identity of the Church, her existence, operation and purpose as costly (DeyMaz 2019:208). Looking at the insufficiency of freewill offerings, diminishing tithes, other collections, fluctuation and unreliability of donations, unstable fundraising revenues, increased

competition for limited resources and decrease of other contributions, the church has been exposed to the need to integrate economics with her faith and engage in profit making business to generate complementary income, and further her missionary work.

Understanding economics as the attention to resource scarcities, mobilization, administration and development (as reflected by Metu 2016:n.p.; Backhouse & Medema 2009:221–222; Khumalo 2012:599–600), learning from other churches as advised by Iannaccone (2010:1–3) and DeyMaz (2019:212), views of the AOG BTG church interviewees suggest that she must embrace businesses not simply to generate income, as if mercenary or self-serving, but to bless the community by encouraging small business and entrepreneurship, creating jobs, revitalizing abandoned or underutilized space, helping to reduce crime, generating tax revenue for local communities and more, as ambassadors of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20), like good and faithful servants (Mathew 25:23).

“Just like many fellow classical Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe, ours has been struggling to be and keep effective in operating, and executing our missionary work using our freewill offerings and tithes”, said one congregant from Harare. This has been getting worse due to multiplying challenges in the Zimbabwean worsening and ongoing state of weakening and distressing politics, economy and society (as alluded to by a number of scholars such as Chimhowu, Manjengwa & Feresu 2010:9–10; Chamunogwa 2018:2 and Pasara & Garidzirai 2020:3).

In attempts to build her economic capacity, realize her missionary mandate and embody the love and care of God to humanity, the AOG BTG church built a high school in Norton, a small town about forty kilometers out of Harare along Bulawayo road, and named it Nicholas Bhengu High School (NBHS), after her founder, Nicholas Hepworth Bhekinkosi Bhengu. As hinted earlier, besides prospects of raising some funds which will help the church in meeting her operating expenses, the school is expected to be missionary through evangelistic engagements by teaching and complementary staff, incorporation of pastors and Christian students towards spreading the gospel to their fellow learners and residents of their surrounding community.



Figure 14: Some Pictures of Nicholas Bhengu High School in Norton (Source – AOG Projects)



Banner of the school by its main gate



Source – AOG BTG projects



Source - AOG BTG Projects pictures

Figure 15: Students in class at Nicholas Bhengu High School (Source – AOG Projects)



The construction work of Nicholas Bhengu High School project was begun in 2012 and classes were opened in 2018 when one block was finished, while other blocks were being worked on. Since then, the church has been continuously mobilizing funds to erect additional buildings in order to accommodate more students, as well as establishing and resourcing a library and other school essentials.

The development of the school has been slow due to lack of funds. The church has been running a one-dollar (US) campaign whereby every AOG BTG church member is asked to donate a dollar every month-end towards the school building project. Exact figures were not given for this study, but organizers of the campaign have been regularly reporting that the campaign has historically received very low congregational buy-in. Few brethren have been donating in cash and kind, while the majority of congregants have been failing to give much due to various reasons ranging from general economic constraints confirmed by their incessant struggles to sustain their local assemblies.

Besides the school, the church has not been doing any other entrepreneurial venture. However, the church owns a farm which she bought in Mashava in 1992, and left it idle for decades up to today. The farm is in region four in the Tokwe area under Shurugwi district. It is twenty-eight kilometers from Mashava mine along Tokwe growth point, and hundred and thirty kilometers from Gweru. It is four kilometers away from electricity power lines. The farm was bought with a farm house, borehole, orchard and fence – and all that is now dilapidated. The farm had a water harvester, and a windmill. The harvester is now cracked and dysfunctional while the windmill was stolen since nobody stays at the farm. There used to be a stream that runs through the farm to provide water for livestock, but has since been blocked and silted. The farm has much arable land which could be used for crop farming, and livestock production.

According to the youth organizers' report (2012:n.p), the region four of Zimbabwe is usually characterized by 450 to 650 millimeters of rainfall and frequent seasonal droughts. It is thus not suitable for dry-land cropping and the majority of farmers around the area grow resilient varieties such as farming sorghum, pearl millet, finger millet as well as cattle, goat and wildlife production. Youth organizers recommended national leadership to consider livestock production (especially piggery, cattle ranching, and poultry).

Figure 16: AOG BTG Youth Organizers surveying the farm in 2012 – (Source: AOG BTG Projects)



A borehole that was drilled at the farm



One of the former first AOG BTG NE members and senior pastors, who was involved with the farm project before and after its procurement disclosed that “the church has not utilized the farm due to divergent theological perceptions about engaging much into business as a church”. He explained that after the church procured the farm in 1992, leaders eventually disagreed on doing any business with it. Some of the leaders then perceived engaging in business as disruptive to missionary work, while others thought that doing business was ideal to complement revenues of the church. While the debates raged on for years in separate meetings, Zimbabwe fell into series of economic crisis and the church got further incapacitated to engage in any serious investment. Since then up to now, there has been no progressive plans and actions towards commercializing and monetizing the land. Some senior youth organizers visited the farm in 2012 to assess what could be invested and wrote a report to the NE.

According to the organizers, the national leadership did not respond to their report and recommendations. Meanwhile, the church also owns another farm in Bulawayo, which was bought by Matabeleland region during the period of the AOG BTG national split after 1987. The Ndebele and Shona regions reconciled later after twelve years (Mpoko 2019:69), and the Bulawayo farm was submitted to the national executive. Like the case of Mashava farm, the Bulawayo farm has never been utilized since it was acquired. Here and there, passive talks about the farms are engaged in leadership and congregational physical and online meetings. A broad continuum of views from interviewees suggest that the church has been stuck with volunteerism and that has failed her to run any investments.

Since her conception, except employing an office secretary and book keeper, the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe operates with different part time human resources on voluntary basis. Few of the voluntary manpower are consistent while the majority are inconsistent because they are preoccupied with their own personal commitments. The church has seldom employed full time workers who could commit themselves to establishing and running her business engagements. According to interviewed participants, brethren who avail themselves to serve the church voluntarily usually talk and unfortunately eventually fail to commit themselves to progressive actions because they are occupied where they get paid.

Besides the disturbing various challenges of volunteerism, the AOG BTG church has had an unending dilemma of whether, and how best, to integrate faith and economics, hence she has remained stagnant in theologizing economics and business towards sustainability, effectiveness and longevity. At regional level, some DCCs have been initiating small income generating projects such as poultry, at very low scales irregularly. Similar to the national situation of the church, the regional and local assembly business engagements have been inconsistent and failing to grow while others broke down due to the same aforementioned factors such as conceptual differences on ecclesial finances (as others held on to traditional sources while some felt the need to embrace extra income generation through business), lack of economic theology, and continued absence of committed full time human resources. Considering that congregants demands to sweat for personal and family financial needs have been worsened by hemorrhaging economic meltdown and tragic *Covid-19* pandemic in Zimbabwe, they would give more attention to engagements that pay them to sustain themselves.

Without paid and committed human resources, most church owned projects have been incurring failures and losses while others never started. As a result, national, local assemblies and regional bodies have remained dependent on erratic tithes, freewill offerings, donations and other contributions from local congregants and foreign donors to meet their operating and related costs.

5.5.4 The Sustainability of AOG BTG sources of finances

This subsection analyses the sustainability of tithes, freewill offerings, donations, other collections and business as sources of finances. It will also capture the inclusive challenges of giving, effects of the Zimbabwean national economic crisis, and *Covid-19* on the finances of AOG BTG church.

i. The Sustainability of Tithes as a source of church finances

Although tithes are extensively accepted, given and valued in different denominations, the concept of tithing has been contested for a long time now. Ademiluka (2020:297–300) observes that there are endless debates whether Christians should pay tithes or not. Of course, some scholarly submissions advance that giving tithes is biblically backed, but it is undebatable that the concept of tithing appears absent in the New Testament literature.

This study observes that the predominant principle about ecclesial giving is summed up in 2 Corinthians 8:2–3 in which personal freedom, voluntarism, capacity and cheerfulness are factored. Various arguments that relegate tithing to the Old Testament's Malachi 3:8–12 provision dismiss it from the New Testament and makes it problematic to depend on.

Taking that into account, and continuing conflicting submissions about tithing (as also noted by Moretsi 2009:409), countless numbers of believers have been resultantly neglecting tithing, while others do it. That has been negatively affecting the tenability of tithing in churches. Reid (2019:31–34) propels an Adventist perspective that tithes are exclusively for pastors. Chibango (2019:122) disagrees with such opinions, and argues that tithes are biblically used beyond pastoral welfare, to also cater for widows and orphans. Both Reid (2019:n.p.) and Chibango (2020:122) expose that tithing is perceived contrarily by different Christians, hence cannot be fully depended on. As some congregants embrace it while others reject it, tithes may not always be adequate and sustainable.

Agreeably, Prot, Ntibalema and Mugaya (2012:7–8) aver that tithing and all congregational contributions are undependable. Although their views are developed from their studies on the Catholic denomination, they resonate with observations of this study in Zimbabwean classical Pentecostalism. I agree with their clarification that unstable incomes leave churches failing to budget and manage their financial needs. So, Prot, Ntibalema and Mugaya (2012:8) argue that the Church usually faces problems if her planners estimate the amount to be collected, and at times, the Christians do not respond positively to the estimations made. When the capability to contribute declines, annual budgets get disturbed and that leaves initiated projects and programmes unaccomplished, leaving the management frustrated.

It is thus observable that although tithing has been repeatedly taught and encouraged in most churches across the world, churches cannot fully depend on them, hence the need for the AOG BTG church to diversify her sources of income for sustainability.

ii. *The Sustainability of Freewill Offerings as a source of church finances*

The study of the AOG BTG church disclosed the precariousness of freewill collections in her local, regional and national treasury. One regional committee member from Mashonaland opened up that “most congregants usually give as and when they can. That is, and after exhausting their personal and family commitments. So, left overs cannot sustain the church”. Another regional leader from Matebeleland said that “freewill giving does has not been sustainable. We need to diversify and grow our revenues to talk of sustainability”. A senior elder from Mashonaland east voiced that “freewill offerings are not sustainable. They cannot be depended on, hence, it’s very difficult to work with them”

Like in the findings of Moretsi (2009:398–399) from his research on the black Reformed churches in South Africa, the AOG BTG church has been bearing the brunt of monetary problems of solely depending on her traditionally problematical sources in Zimbabwe. As a result, the churches fell into, and gave up to a somewhat enslaving dependency syndrome.

In a similar way to what Moretsi (2009:399) observed, the issue of giving is largely determined by local and national economic, social and political factors that may be beyond the control of congregational memberships. Teachings of the church initially considered to address poverty and did not encourage their giving in attempts to reserve their members to grow into maturity and concentrate on developing their own lives. Successively, they then came to church with an

expectation of getting help instead of giving anything for ecclesiological tenability. As such, the principle of a steward was not attended and that eventually adopted a wrong conceptualization of ecclesial membership. Traditionally needy congregants received clothes, food, money and other help, and that ultimately accustomed many congregants across different assemblies.

Correspondingly, multiple congregants eventually thought that other people from somewhere are responsible for meeting costs of sustaining their church. From such a background, the AOG BTG assemblies inherited a problem to transform such wrong mind-set. As historically most economically challenged congregants received more than what they gave, they fell into some dependency syndrome. While challenges that they faced may not be the same as those that today's believers face, the church remains challenged to establish some income generating businesses to complement congregants' giving towards meeting their operating costs. While the giving of congregants has been generally low, expenditures incurred in running the denomination kept rising and the fiscal difficulties continued worsening.

iii. Inclusive Challenges of Giving

- *Different Conceptualizations of Giving*

Various springs of ecclesial revenue such as dedicated collections (i.e. Pastors' appreciation, love offerings, widows, orphans and poor collections) have been inconsistent. This study observed that the inconsistency and unsustainability of all congregational collections are principally because the majority of congregants have varying understandings of giving. "Some of us understand and value giving, while others do not. As such, depending on congregational giving is problematic and unsustainable", one mother from Masvingo said. A deacon from Bikita expressed that "while most congregants easily give freewill offerings, some of them find problems in tithing. This is because the issue of tithing is silent in the New Testament and debates about it have not brought us any clarifications. So, as long as something is debatable, it cannot bear desired fruits"

In agreement with Letamora (2019:83), the AOG BTG denomination has had some progressive congregants who just give out of their generosity for the advancement of the gospel.

Accordingly, such congregants are of the view that while the gospel should be delivered freely, it costs some money to resource and sustain it. The same congregants conceive that the congregational contributions are also very instrumental in paying multiple ecclesiological expenses in executing all commitments which include *diakonia*.

Contrary to that, as observed in views of some AOG BTG interviewees, there are also congregants who disregard giving in church, such as those that Mwenje (2016:76) observed from ZAOGA. So, giving has been different amongst some church members, leaving a minority giving and some do not give regularly. Mwenje (2016:76) found out that most members would agree with the concept of tithing, freewill offerings, pastors' appreciation and other modes of giving in the public domain where they are in the limelight of authorities and totally disagree when they are in a group of their own.

With such findings from the AOG BTG church and observations from other churches, it is noted that the church has a mixed bag of members who take giving differently – and that means some will give while others do not, and that makes dependence on congregants' giving unreliable.

- *Lack of Trust*

Some congregants developed suspicions on the way that their ecclesial finances were handled while some of them got discouraged by misplaced priorities such as purchasing luxurious movable and immovable assets for some leaders instead of addressing other ecclesial issues that they deem important. One of the AOG BTG leaders beheld that “congregants find it difficult to give when they feel that their leaders are irresponsible and abusive to church money”.

Corresponding with Mwenje (2016:77), some AOG BTG congregants no longer trust some of their leaders with their gifts. Consequently, such believers do not give. As a result, their withdrawal reduces amounts of collections.

It is undebatable that trust is one of the most critical and determining factors in the giving of congregants. It always appears in most denominations that if someone does not trust how church leaders use monies that they give, or how those who handle money manage the finances, they eventually give less, or stop giving.

As McFate (2010:17) opines, believers tend to give generously when they trust their leaders and administrators. Congregants usually watch how their pastors, staff and the lay leadership manage their financial affairs. That way, congregational confidence, inspiration and leadership vision and trustworthiness determine ecclesiological giving. McFate (2010:17) adds that ecclesial leadership matters in the rise and fall of resources. The presence and standing of visionary and trustworthy pastors and subordinate leaders attracts congregational giving in various forms. The AOG BTG

denomination has different kinds of pastors and leaders – hence their differences draw varying levels (both low and high) giving.

Generally, increasing numbers of leaders have been appearing to be selfish and self-serving. Taru & Settler (2015:133) argue that in postcolonial Zimbabwe, Pentecostal Charismatic churches embraced global consumerism and view wealth accumulation as a divine imperative. Given that AOG BTG congregants are also exposed to past and current affairs in other churches through various sources of information such as social media, publications of consumerism tend to discourage their giving. A number of AOG BTG congregants revealed that they mistrust some of their leaders, and suspect that their finances and material gifts could be abused and directed to personal enrichment instead of being channelled to operating expenses and developments of the church.

According to Colvin (2017:n.p.), while trust is intangible, it is one of the most critical resources that the Church needs to cherish and adhere to, in order to inspire congregants' giving. He contends that successful raising of support and maintaining giving requires trust. For him, it is the responsibility of pastors and their subordinate leaders to build trust and prove to congregants that they will use given funds in responsible ways.

This study concurs with Colvin (2017:n.p.) who adds that there are several tales about brethren who have been reserving their gifts from their church because of lacking confidence. He observed that instead of giving to the church, some of them choose to donate to secular organizations whenever they feel that their ecclesial heads do not manage their gifts in responsible and professional ways. He argues that when clerics and their subordinate leaders are trustable, congregants usually notice and get comfortable to give in their churches. It is noteworthy that in many Zimbabwean contexts, some church leaders failed to be faithful with little things and that has cost them loss of trust.

As the Bible says through Luke 16:10–11, “whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?” (Online NIV Bible Gateway: n.p). While Jesus Christ gave a spiritual lesson, it connected with physical resources and still resonates much with the Zimbabwean context in which little failures cost much loss of trust and congregants consequently tend to give less, while

others stop giving at all as they feel that their gifts will be personalized and abused. Some of the leaders fail to be transparent. Yet, transparency is a very vital aspect that builds trust in any relationship. It speaks to being open. It refers to being upfront with given resources for the accomplishment of set missions.

- *Lack of accountability*

While issues of mistrust have been emphasized (Chibango 2019:121), Biri (2020:120) submits that the majority of Pentecostal establishments lack accountable structures. Some of the pastors claim and instill that they are the executive ecclesial authorities and end up becoming dictatorial on the mobilization and usage of resources. Beaming with claims of being sublimely anointed and appointed, other ecclesial leaders justify their selfish misuse of church resources by saying that God directs them. As Biri (2020:120) observes, claiming that one is directed by the Holy Spirit dismisses any professional accountability from ecclesiology. Thus, misuse of funds continues unabated whenever heads are above all authority. In a similar scenario, some AOG BTG pastors and elders have not been upholding accountable checks and balances in managing and administering resources.

Consequently, when others hide behind taking the Holy Spirit as their guide, administration of resources become problematic. While the AOG BTG church has a constitution and procedure manual, some leaders do not adhere to them. Armed with their self-acclaimed powers, self-centred leaders scare away any critics. Somehow, concerned congregants get discouraged from giving.

Ukah (2013:n.p.), concurs with Biri (2020:120) that lack of accountability and transparency problematize giving in churches. This is has been the same within the AOG BTG context. Although a team of deacons administrate finances under the supervision of elders, there are some assemblies where certain pastors and or elders have direct influence and control over how their finances are managed. Such areas have been lacking accountability and creating loopholes for ecclesial resources to be personalized and abused. Such instances have cost them trust, scared several congregants away from giving and weakened sustainability of tithes, offerings and donations as sources of church income.

Besides the abuse of financial and material resources, reports about some Pentecostal leaders who have been molesting girls and women problematized giving. The media has been ablaze with several cases of sexual that implicated the clergy. Allegedly due to the unlimited

powerfulness of clerical leaders, Biri (2020:122) acquiesces that sexual temptations have been overwhelming them, and exposing them to be abused too. While observations of Biri (2020:122) were not made from the AOG BTG church, such general idolization of church leaders tarnished the image of all across denominations and some congregants have generally lost trust in their leaders and withheld giving.

Correspondingly, as Mbukanma (2004:n.p.) observes, increasing numbers of African church leaders salivate for earthly riches, temporal well-being and that continues to cost them trust. Most African church leaders have created systems that are devoid of accountability as they name and give impressions that they own their denominations and everything associated with the church. Such a predicament tarnished the image of leaders, and triggered negative conceptualizations on giving as it appears to be enriching leaders at the expense of the church.

iv. [The Sustainability of Donations as a source of church finances](#)

Observations from the AOG BTG church indicate that donations are highly appreciated because they help local churches to cover various expenses in their operations and development. The AOG BTG church appreciates that she managed to build some church halls, school and run some missionary programs with support from donors.

Up to today, the church caters for part of her running expenditures using support from friends and donors from in and beyond the country. Meanwhile, leaders and some engaged congregants of the AOG BTG church note that aid is never guaranteed because is variegated by the availability, capacities, willingness and conditions of donors. One of the NE members remarked that “some of the aid is given with particular conditions that can compromise their principles and priorities”. A regional committee member from Bulawayo added that “aid is temporary. The church needs some permanent sources of revenue, such as property investment”. A youth quarterly finance leader from Kwekwe said that “aid is not guaranteed and sustainable. It can cease anytime when expected donors fail, or decide to stop giving”. Considering all that, aid is ordinarily welcome, but always not guaranteed, consistent, undependable and untenable.

Experiences and submissions of the AOG BTG church are echoed in different contexts by De Los Mozos, Duarte and Ruiz (2016:4–5) who assert that donations are fraught by growing uncertainty, competition and they ensnare takers-in to dependence and loss of autonomy. Concurringly, Moosa (2016:93–94) laments that aid is complex, self-centered; lacks continuity,

permanency, reliability and effectiveness. Although he was talking of general foreign aid, the same applies to the Church. Donations are often complicated and undependable. Similarly, Black (2018:6) studies donations for churches as historically enslaving, "...the men, women, and children attracted by foreign aid often view themselves as beneficiaries entitled to the opportunities provided by the mission and the church, rather than contributing members". As a result, some of the AOG BTG interviewees suggest that the church should diversify her sources of funding to end dependency on aid and raise self-tenability.

v. *The Sustainability of AOG BTG Business as a source of church finances*
Mindful of the identified challenges of dependency on tithes, freewill offerings and donations, (as reflected before) the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe commendably established the Nicholas Bhengu High school in Norton, and purchased two farms – one in Mashava and one in Bulawayo, in attempts to diversify her sources of income, and advance the gospel. This unit examines the sustainability of her business establishments to draw progressive lessons. It is observed that the AOG BTG case demonstrates that she appreciates the importance of the mission of business to the business of mission. However, a number of problems have negatively impacted the sustainability of business as a source of her finances as well depicted below.

Problems of illegal settlers

The AOG BTG bought Mashava and Bulawayo farms, but never used them for about more than twenty-five years now. The neglecting of AOG BTG farms exposed them to an influx of illegal settlers. According to Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum's April (2010:9–10) report on land reform and property rights in Zimbabwe, there has been continuous violations on individual and institutional entitlement due to lawlessness and selfishness of political leaders. The Commercial Farmers Union of Zimbabwe (CFU) documented almost hundred politicized strategies that violate property rights in Zimbabwe, which include invasions and occupations by politicians.

With some inspiration from such a politicized violation of property, idle land has been highly vulnerable to invasions and illegal settlements. It has been observed that some village heads close to idle farms have been selling off parts of the land to subsistent farmers with political backing. AOG BTG interviewees disclosed that since the church farms have been idle for more than twenty years, they are highly vulnerable and some politically motivated neighbouring villagers have been planning to invade them. While they have been idle and exposed to illegal

settlers, the church has been paying taxes to the government and thus they have been unsustainable economically.

- *Ineffectiveness of Boards*

Eleven of the fifteen interviewed congregants revealed that some members of their church boards are unqualified and incompetent to facilitate effective business. Some of them mentioned that some of their education board members are pastors who have no experience about the administration and development of schools. “Should pastors not be assigned to the work of ministry? Without much experience on how schools run, can they facilitate tangible developments?” One congregant from Masvingo questioned and suggested that the selection of board members need to be reviewed and reshuffled.

As Akinwunmi, Dada, Olotu & Jayeoba (2020:327) postulate, boards assume an important task in modern corporations. According to them, business boards are purposed to monitor the management and administration of a given area or discipline on behalf of stakeholders. One of their responsibilities is to ensure that shareholders’ investments are not wasted. Considering that, board members should be relevantly qualified and experienced to assure their efficacious custodianship of institutional investments. Akinwunmi, Dada, Olotu & Jayeoba (2020:327) believe that corporate organizations that are run by educationally and experientially qualified directors can be better than those managed by less-qualified executives. Ideally, education constitutes main considerations for such appointments.

Studies on the AOG BTG church suggest that qualifications, experience and competences of board members should correspond with particular business that the board is set to oversee. In view of Akinwunmi, Dada, Olotu & Jayeoba (2020:327)’s observation, having qualified board members can broaden the efficaciousness of the board. It is agreeably discernible that neglecting education and working experience is retrogressive when selecting board members for church businesses. However, Akinwunmi, Dada, Olotu & Jayeoba (2020:334) note that taking educational qualifications without considerations of leverage and board size may not be effective. One of the NE leaders argued that “the issue of boards is a problem everywhere, and having some members who are not academically qualified cannot ruin businesses when they have entrepreneurial experience”.

Another NE member argued that “the AOG BTG boards mostly hold three (or less) board meetings per year. Such limited meetings cannot affect sustainability of our projects as those who run them do so freely”. However, some AOG BTG interviewees disputed his views, and reasoned that the board meetings have affected business because they approve managers’ proposals and make final decisions late. According to them, some of the AOG BTG board members are inconsiderate and slow in making decisions and that affects the growth and progression of church based business.

Other senior AOG BTG leaders denied that the board members are involved in the daily operations of the businesses. They contended that failures and losses of their business are due to various factors branching from national economic instability, *Covid-19* lockdowns and global recession. They said that the businesses have some very competent staff such as their school head and teachers who are formally trained and qualified. A congregant from Harare suggested that pastors should be excluded from boards and give space for technocrats. “One of the main reasons why we are not utilizing our (Mashava and Bulawayo) farms, and not growing our school (Nicholas Bhengu High School in Norton) is incompetent boards that do not facilitate serious progress”. A senior NE member vied that “pastors cannot be excluded from the business boards because they are custodians of what the church holds so dearly, and that that they cannot run away from organisational culture”. He added that a qualification in Theology does not disqualify one from contributing to commercial business of the church. Two of the three interviewed NE members argued that pastors have been serving well with managers, chartered accountants, bankers, economists and vet doctors in separate boards respectively.

All in all, conflicting views about boards caused problems for the AOG BTG business development and correspondingly affected their economic sustainability. Some congregants added that a number of other variables such as micro-management and organisational politics affect their business operations and effectiveness.

Micro-management of Businesses

It is contended that the challenges of AOG BTG business root from her committees. Part of the AOG BTG leaders bewailed that their church has been bureaucratic and micromanaging them. Resultantly, that has been delaying and frustrating business development, and caused avoidable losses to extremes that reduced expected revenues.

One of Mashonaland congregants reiterated an example of Mashava farm. “The farm was purchased by youth fund and youth organisers are tasked to run it. While that is so, the youth organisers submit all their plans to the national leadership for approval and support.

Unfortunately, the national leadership has been taking too long to assess their plans and mostly they get zero feedback”. Considering that they cannot do anything without the leadership approval, they say that they have been micromanaged and frustrated – as such, the Mashava farm, and the Bulawayo farm which was bought by the church, have been idle since 1992 hitherto today.

According to Serrat (2010:n.p.), micromanaging refers to taking direct control of individuals or groups, or exercising excessive overseeing. She explains that, in its mildest form, micro–management gives assignments, frequently checks and implies lack of trust between the overseer and the employee. In such a way, those who adopt the concept of micromanagement deny employees responsibilities of making decisions and working independently. Somehow, the concept encompasses dictatorship and extremism in which series of meetings and checks are involved.

While some propose that micromanagement has some positive effects, such as gaining direct control over how employees conduct their assignments it can be time–consuming as it demands continuous oversight and wasting time that could be utilized for other productive commitments. Unlike what Olivier Serrat (2010:n.p.) suggested that effective management values and utilizes time for diverse production, some AOG BTG leaders (unconsciously, and sometimes consciously) micromanaged other ecclesial engagements and failed them. Micromanagement stressed, frustrated and weighed some of the leaders and involved congregants down. Voices from young congregants imply that such micro–management has affected ecclesial entrepreneurship by delaying decisions and obstructing progress.

- *High Government Taxes*

Additionally, heavy government taxation was mentioned as part of the problems that affected the tenability of business as a source of church finances. Although tax gives needful revenue for the government and national development (Mushuzhe & Mashasha 2018:1; Aderemi 2021:31), the African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD) (2011:11) reported that the Zimbabwean tax is historically too high that a number of companies have been struggling to pay

it, which led most of them to evade it. All Church owned businesses have been similarly affected by high direct and indirect taxes. As a result, the sustainability of business as a source of finance for the church is affected in Zimbabwe. As such, more than twenty (out of a total of thirty) interviewees engaged in this study concurred that the church needs to diversify her sources of revenue to be sustainable.

- *Lack of Ownership*

All three NE members, twelve regional leaders and fifteen congregants agreed that material and financial possessions of the AOG BTG church belong to all members of the church. Thus, everything of the church belongs to all members and, somehow, to nobody. This same observation was made by Kantanka (2012:67) who says that “any business of that is owned by the church belong to everyone and is therefore taken as nobody’s business”.

Consequently, much of the devotion and responsibility, obligation that is required in running a business investment is usually absent from most of the AOG BTG entrepreneurial attempts. Due to that, any decisions and actions that may need to be done always demand collective engagements and agreements which cost time and sometimes miss opportunities. Unlike private enterprises that an owner can easily decide and make certain moves, ecclesial ventures are *bureaucratic* and problematic.

Most of the church businesses indicated having problems with dedication, as most involved people are voluntary leaders and members of the church. Consequently, that affects adherence to discipline. An elder from Bulawayo said that “the church leaders and members at times do not patronise essential services offered by their own businesses, such as the Nicholas Bhengu High school, and that has been limiting its clientele base”. One regional mothers’ committee member from Harare commented that “it is so easy to disengage from any church engagement because one does not own any shares. Although we are all part of the church and submit to stewardship, lack of personal ownership sometimes affect the commitment of some of our members”

As such, the AOG BTG farms have lied idle for years mostly because of the problem of ownership. More—so, some of the AOG BTG properties, like church buildings are not documented and not followed up. “Some of our elders took title deeds of some of our buildings and never submitted them to our regional and national offices. As pastors get transferred from one assembly to another, some of them do not ask about any of such documents where they are

serving either with an assumption that they were submitted to our regional or national offices, or out of fear that those who are keeping the documents may victimize them. Besides, pastors, and all of us, do not own the church properties, and as such, none of us really give such issues the serious attention that they deserve”. Therefore, this study observes that lack of ownership affects investments as a source of the economic sustainability of the church.

Effects of National Economic Crisis to Church Finances

Besides the foregrounded array of problems that militate against tithing, freewill offerings, other congregational collections, donations and business, the national economic crisis in Zimbabwe deserves attention. As well reflected in the introduction and background of this study (in chapter one), the Zimbabwean economy has been in a deteriorating quandary for more than thirty–seven years hitherto today reportedly due to various factors that branch from political, social and economic volatility (Bhoroma 2021:n.p.). The local currency declined precipitously and the economy succumbed to a turmoil (Sguazzin, Ndlovu, and Marawanyika 2022). The situation has been allegedly caused, exacerbated by failures, selfishness of the nation’s political leadership and ruining lives and livelihoods across the nation (Noko 2022:n.p). The economic bleeding has been aggravated by *Covid–19* lockdowns and the majority of Zimbabweans correspondingly got imperilled into tragic poverty. Correspondingly, quantities of tithes, freewill offerings and donations dwindled, and the economics of the church became unstable.

Effects of Covid–19 to Church finances

While the national economic instability has been worsening; the calamitous outbreak and rapid spread of *Covid–19* late 2019 from Wuhan, China (Zhu, et al 2020:1), triggered unprecedented challenges for congregations (Afolaranmi 2020:12), dramatically led to obstructive national lockdowns, closure of physical gatherings, deeply unsettled churches and correspondingly impacted their finances.

It has been detected that during lockdowns, the rates of tithing, freewill offerings, other special collections and donations sharply deteriorated. As Szmigiera (2021:n.p.) noted, there is a widespread agreement among economists that the coronavirus pandemic caused severe negative impact on the global economy. The coronavirus also heavily affected all local businesses. Most companies retrenched their workforce to reduce their wage bills and cover up for their lost revenue, and that raised diverse effects as the retrenched workers lost their lifelines and delved

into desperate pursuits for survival (such as robberies, prostitution and other criminalities). Generally, the majority of citizens succumbed to poverty and desperation (Nyabunze and Siavhundu 2020:6). Prices of basic commodities were hiked while incomes fell. The Zimbabwean situation got worse because the economy has been bleeding for decades as noted before. Such a predicament left the flow and levels of all collections harmoniously low, hence the value of diversification so that all sources may complement each other.

- **Inclusive challenges of AOG BTG Business as a source of church finances**

It is conclusive that the business engagements of the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe have been challenged by unintended impressions that the Church is greedy and materialistic in seeking profits and influx of illegal settlers in her farms. Other challenges have also been associated with ineffectiveness of her business boards, bureaucracy and micro-management. Issues of high government taxes, lack of ownership of the church businesses as nobody takes personal responsibility and total commitment for any engagements affected the sustainability of ecclesial entrepreneurship as a source of finances. Nevertheless, although the church business ventures were correspondingly yielding limited financial and material resources due to the identified factors, renewed efforts towards entrepreneurship are still considerably progressive for the sake of cushioning AOG BTG's unstable and unsustainable traditional sources of income.

5.6 Problems and Panaceas of doing business as a church

Besides the above-mentioned instability of AOG BTG business as a source of church finances, running business as a church has a number of problems. While being heedful of circumstantial necessities for the church to do business (Weerawardena, McDonald & Mort 2010:351–352; Kantanka 2012:29), this subset unravels some of the innumerable problems of interfacing business with mission (which is also advanced by Johnson and Rundle n.d:34–35). The problems include commercialization of the gospel, negative impressions; division of attention, corruption and cultural conflicts. Having proposed business as a strategy for the AOG BTG church to be economically sustainable in Zimbabwe, this unit delineates the complications, and how the church may deal with them.

- i. **Commercialization of the gospel**

This study observes that, in other churches, pursuing business tempted a large number of charismatic gospel ministers to go to extremes of selling anointing oil, bangles, handkerchiefs and similar objects (Wafawarova 2015:n.p.) for divine healing, protection and blessings, which is

similar to the findings of the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL Rights Commission) (2017:31) report in South Africa. Some Southern African scholars talk of this as the gospel of health and wealth (Kgatle 2020:5) while others call it ‘*gospreneurship*’ (Chitando 2013:96; Marongwe and Maposa 2015:15).

All in all, falling into an overdrive for economic tenability saw the gospel getting commercialized. Andrew (2021:10) sums the challenge up by saying that “one is a more positive appreciation of the ‘prosperity gospel’ or the gospel of health and wealth, and the other a more negative perspective that regards it as a practise that only benefits a few and leads to the abuse of followers”.

Nonetheless, that some self-centred pastors commoditized the gospel and tarnished the image of ecclesial entrepreneurship, but cannot stop progressive and other-centred churches from properly establishing ventures to sustain missionary work for the salvation of humanity, especially in the context of economic crisis where traditional sources of finances are unsustainable.

Understanding that the temptations of commercializing the gospel still exist, responsible churches can strategically set up separate business development units and boards to professionally execute checks and balances for transparency and accountability towards avoiding personalization and abuse (by ecclesial leaders) as well as promoting accountable standardization of church businesses and directing proceeds to the work of ministry.

ii. Negative Impressions

In the same way that Munyikwa (2011:109) observed in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, the AOG BTG church considered to invest in agriculture and purchased farming land, which could aid them in supporting missionary endeavours and develop human, material and financial resources. Debatably, entrepreneurship however turned to be a problem that obstructed the advancement of the gospel by involuntarily reflecting a wrong impression of a greedy and materialistic denomination.

As expressed by Kantanka (2012:66), the prevalent ecclesiological appearance is that *other-centred* organization that is not concerned with and involved in making profits. Impressions of becoming commercial after financial gains clouded the AOG BTG church for decades and caused conflicts among leaders as confirmed by the purchase and neglecting of the farms. As

alluded to by one interviewee (highlighted under the AOG BTG business engagements section before), as different leaders have been elected, getting in office and leaving office respectively, some have been pursuing while others neglecting business mainly due to varying views on the theology of business.

Some of the interviewed AOG BTG participants pointed out that their church continues to face conflicting considerations and uncertainty on whether to run business as investments or to avoid focussing on profit. While the Nicholas Bhengu High school is expected to give returns later as it grows, an analysis of AOG BTG farms and views about entrepreneurial projects show that business has not been a sustainable source of finances for the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, the ever unavoidable necessity of human, material and fiscal capital to cope up with operational expenditure; against the overwhelming rise of operating costs and unsustainability of conventional springs of church revenue in Zimbabwe necessitate resilient business engagements.

This study therefore remarks that the church cannot operate efficiently and effectively without reconciling her mission with commerce. She has to, and can become resilient in advancing her mandate also by doing business in ways that do not only create supplementary income, but in strategies that also create and build up space for evangelism and discipleship in the marketplace for the accomplishment of an integral mission (proclamation and demonstration of the gospel). It is discernible that integrating mission with entrepreneurship can clear negative impressions of greediness and materialism if it is done effectively. Engaging in business is thus, actually, contextually progressive in volatile settings like Zimbabwe where the prevailing social, economic and political situation is not conducive, hence deliberate efforts to create such advances *missio Dei*.

iii. Division of attention

This study observes that venturing into business as a church may sway one's focus from missionary work to economics. As Tsukahira (2003:122) avows, there is a predominant contradiction between business and ministry. Resultantly, delving into any kind of business may lead pastors and elders to give partial attention to both ministry and commerce concurrently. Thus, their devotion may get divided and that will eventually cause negative effects to the work of the gospel.

However, the problem of attention is normally much a result of failing to manage time and resources. As previously highlighted, a progressive church that seeks to do business for the sake of supporting ministry can come up with delegated structures to attend to all needful areas of mission and business. That way, manpower that is set for business can focus on it while pastors, elders and their subordinate personnel deal with the work of ministry unwaveringly. When delegation is properly done, responsibilities and every other related matter is clarified, the church can realize success in both ministry and commerce without either of the two taking more of each other's attention.

iv. Corruption

Another issue that has been problematizing doing business as a church regards fears that business is commonly tempting those who engage in it to succumb to the love for money, and eventually lead to corruption and connected evils. Such sentiments relate to observations that were made by Bonga (2014:10–11) that there is an escalation of graft in Zimbabwe. Additionally, Seet (2000:n.d) also contended that there is some differently overwhelming forms of pressure that can eat up the times and morals of those who venture in any business today across the world. Moreover, Seet (2000:n.d) stresses that anybody who engages in commerce eventually finds out that it is not a bargaining place, but a fighting contest where the fittest and corrupt usually survive.

For him, believers who get into business generally find themselves down in fierce competitions for tenders and market which sometimes sink them into vulnerabilities of unethical means for survival. Charles Seet examined the corruption challenge from Singapore, but his submissions equally relate to the Zimbabwean case. Transparency International (2012:n.p.) reported that corruption has become rife in Zimbabwe across all sectors. True to that, Zimbabwe was been ranked at number 163 out of 176 countries in the 2012 TI Corruption Perceptions Index. Since then, it has been perennially increasing across all sectors until today (Cain 2015:3–4; Zinyama 2021:135–140; Tshuma 2022:n.p).

Agreeably, the problem of graft has been degenerating because of selective application of the law, unstable currency exchange rates, changing pricing system, institutionalization of graft, and untrustworthy banking system that keep entrepreneurs making daily modifications to endure.

One regional leader from Manicaland said that “anybody who is involved in serious business in Zimbabwe is forced to adjust their operating strategies in ways that sometimes contradict with

biblical principles”. Agreeably, due to the devaluation and unreliability of local currency; most citizens can no longer transact their forex using the conventional banking system. This is also because the government imposes and restrict bank rates; sometimes make disturbing policy amendments overnight and declare banked forex as Zimbabwe dollar without following due process. How churches can withstand temptations of using illegal black market options for viability is agreeably an elephant in their room. The concern of how a church can stay Godly in an ungodly business environment where many have writhed with probity and integrity in face of volatility scares away countless classical denominations from commerce in Zimbabwe.

However, it is arguable that the matter of corruption has been historically determined by individual considerations. Churches and involved parties can keep principled and decisive in withstanding and keeping free from profiteering. This study remarks some examples of victorious Christian businessmen who overcame the temptation of unscrupulousness, such as Strive Masiyiwa. Strive Masiyiwa is an intercontinentally established Zimbabwean telecoms magnate who is currently based in London. He fought and defeated corruption as part of his personal attempts to be free. Shumba (2019:n.p.) reported that Strive Masiyiwa asserted at the annual Desmond Tutu International Peace lecture at the archbishop’s 88th birthday that corruption is stoppable is individuals and institutions decide to fight it. He accentuated that if corruption is taken as pandemic, it can be tackled collectively and individually. Strive Masiyiwa argued that when collective and individual efforts are maximized against venality, business can be done ethically, transparently, accountably and effectively. Regardless of the prevalence of corruption, the church can rise as the salt and light of the world (Mathew 5:13–16), by establishing and ministering through their enterprises in exemplary ways that the secular world can learn from.

v. Cultural challenges

Venturing into commerce as a church is also disturbed by cultural challenges. Sometimes the principles, norms and values in secular business market conflict biblical stipulations. While business appreciates and pursues some profits, using some persuasive language of advertising may include untruthful information in attempts to draw clients, make sales and profits. Relatively, continual adjustments of prices and operating tactics to stay viable in the unstable Zimbabwean setting contradict biblical values of love, empathy, sharing, honesty and integrity.

However, churches can still Christianize and missionize their business activities by sincerely applying biblical principles, remaining authentic, unswerving and faithful. This study advances that business can actually capacitate the church to utilize her profits to support her comprehensive missionary work beyond *kerygma* to *diaconal* and ecumenical dimensions.

5.7 The Positive Impact of Business on missionary work

Regardless of many challenges against doing business as a church, that does not mean that entrepreneurship is wholly a bad idea for her in Zimbabwe. Thus, respondents of this study were asked to indicate positive effects of doing some profit-making business as a church. One of the NE members in Harare said that “we have managed to do some missionary work in remote and urban areas of Zimbabwe, such as in Gokwe, Mbire and in Masvingo with support from enterprising people in the church”. A regional committee member from Matebeleland added that “business will always help us directly and indirectly. It funds our ministry, creates employment for our brethren and give us room to minister the gospel in the marketplace”

While noting encountered challenges, three quarters of interviewed participants argued that business units could yield dividends and support missionary work and pastoral welfare in newly planted branches before they become self-sustaining. A congregant from Norton where the church’s school is located said that “I am hopeful that the church will eventually benefit from Nicholas Bhengu High School through levies, and we, the members of this church may also get employed”.

In some churches such as the Church of Christ, levies from their schools back their other investments. The Anglican denomination has been building her university in Marondera and furthering their missionary work within, around and outside the institution with support from levies from other church schools. The Reformed church has also been meeting medical insurance and pensions of pastors through levies from her schools and other businesses such as butcheries and Morgenster hospital.

Likewise the AOG BTG church believes that establishing different businesses will enable her to support her missionary work and develop various investments. Regardless of challenges that the businesses have been facing in Zimbabwe, that other churches have been getting some levies from their investments gives inspiration to the AOG BTG to establish her own businesses. The majority of AOG BTG leaders and congregants concur that business will increase ministry

opportunities for the church (as business will open doors for them to minister in the marketplace, and get financed to advance the gospel in new places).

In the beginning of this study, I made assumptions that the outcomes of Kitawi & Irungu's (2015) study on church-owned businesses as supportive to mission fully apply to the Church in Zimbabwe, that the church needs business to diversify her sources of finances because congregational collections, local and foreign donations are unsustainable. The assumption resonated with the findings from the AOG BTG church. The AOG BTG dependency on her traditional sources of income have been unsustainable, most congregants and leaders agree that they need to apply the *theonomic reciprocity* theory, embrace business, diversify and develop her sources of finances towards their economic sustainability, meeting their missionary work and operating costs in Zimbabwe.

5.8 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter delineated, interpreted and analysed the results of this study. It outlined the conceptualization of ecclesiological identity and tenability in the AOG BTG church. The chapter delineated the sustainability of tithes, freewill offerings, other collections, donations and business as sources of AOG BTG church finances. Towards the end of the segment, a discussion and analysis of AOG BTG business engagements, effects of the national economic situation and *Covid-19* lockdowns, other challenges and sustainability has been done. In view of congregational and leadership appreciation of *theonomic reciprocity* and embracement of business as essential towards AOG BTG economic sustainability and accomplishment of her missionary mandate, an assessment of the difficulties and remedies of venturing in profit-making business as a church has also been done. Drawing from research findings and observations from the *theonomic reciprocity* theory by Butzke (n.d) as well as complementary sustainability propositions by Kitawi and Irungu (2015), the following chapter six offers strategies that the AOG BTG can consider to apply for her economic sustainability in Zimbabwe.

Chapter 6: Strategies for the AOG BTG's Economic Sustainability: *Interacting with Theonomic Reciprocity*

6.1 Introduction

The foregoing chapter outlined and scrutinized the results of this study. It delineated the conceptualization of the identity of the Church and sustainability in the AOG BTG denomination. It reviewed the tenability of tithes, freewill offerings, other collections, donations and business as sources of AOG BTG church finances. Thereafter, it discussed and examined the church's business engagements against effects of national economic meltdown, *Covid-19* lockdowns and other contextual challenges.

Bearing in mind AOG BTG's congregational and leadership appreciation of *theonomic reciprocity* and embracement of commerce as essential towards AOG BTG economic sustainability and accomplishment of her missionary mandate, the chapter also evaluated the complications and remedies of venturing into profit making entrepreneurship as a church. Drawing from the results of the study, and observing the *theonomic reciprocity* theory by Butzke (n.d) as well as supportive propositions for tenability by Kitawi and Irungu (2015), this chapter suggests strategies that the AOG BTG church can apply for her economic sustainability in Zimbabwe. The first unit discusses the need and theology of strategies in church, in view of scriptural provisions that the church should live by faith. The second part intertwines faith with economics, followed by a proposal for the incorporation of faith and research. The section addresses questions such as; what is research? What is the general use of research? What is the specific use of research in church? How can research – and research-based findings support the establishment of ecclesiological tenability? What have other churches done with regards to research?

Subsequently, I will propose the reconciliation of *missio Ecclesiae* and business as a strategy towards sustaining the AOG BTG church. After that, the ensuing segment reviews the inadequacy of church finances. Having done that, the next subdivisions recommend the rebuilding of stewardship, diversification of sources of income, setting up of a business development unit, reviewing of volunteerism, employment of fulltime workers and utilization of available human, material and financial resources towards multiplication of streams of income. Throughout all sections, the chapter discusses, analyses and interprets data that was gathered through in-depth interviews, intermingled with various scholarly engagements.

6.1.1 Does the Church need to have Strategies?

How should the Church rethink its conception of, and pursue her quest for economic development and sustainability? An expansive variety of views from interviewees concurringly propose that the AOG BTG church should develop contextually applicable strategies to rebuild her economic sustainability in Zimbabwe.

For Kraemer (1951:392–393), ‘strategy’ is not a good word to use in the context of ecclesiology. He argues that God was, is still and will remain the only strategist, and therefore the Church has no, and should not worry about having strategies. Agreeably, the Church is conventionally expected to abide by faith, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In view of that, expressions like ‘strategies’, or ‘tactics’ somewhat sound secular to the Church.

Kraemer recalls that the early Church lived not by tactics but by faith and the Holy Spirit. He also felt that in making use of sociology, and other secular ideologies, the gospel was liable to be made subservient to the so-called sociological ‘laws’. Meanwhile, the Church is taught to understand and believe that Jesus Christ conquered all powers, including ‘sociological laws’. According to Kraemer (1951), in making use of the methods and discoveries of sociology and economics as applied sciences, the Church would be tempted to become an instrument of some human propaganda. His evaluation points out that ‘strategy’ means that the churches, drawing from the wisdom of the people of the world, should intelligently discharge their duty in a way that expresses their obedience to God.

However, being strategic is very biblical as depicted through the Biblical account of God’s work, economics and human’s correspondence as co-workers and economists for inclusive sustainability from the book of Genesis throughout the whole Old Testament (Cho 2020:39–45). Furthermore, the early Church’s generous and communal economics by which believers strategically shared what they had in order to meet their needs (Wessels 2017:489; Arnold 2015:n.p; Adalakun 2010:2–3; Cho 2020:47).

In today’s precarious Zimbabwean context, the Church should know and keep in mind that the modern economics that is unavoidably involved in the missionary tasks that she is entrusted with, and her day-to-day sustenance cannot be accomplished haphazardly. Therefore, the Church should come to terms with the fact that accomplishing *missio Ecclesiae* and meeting rising costs of living in Zimbabwe’s explosive setting demands certain strategies. Hence, this

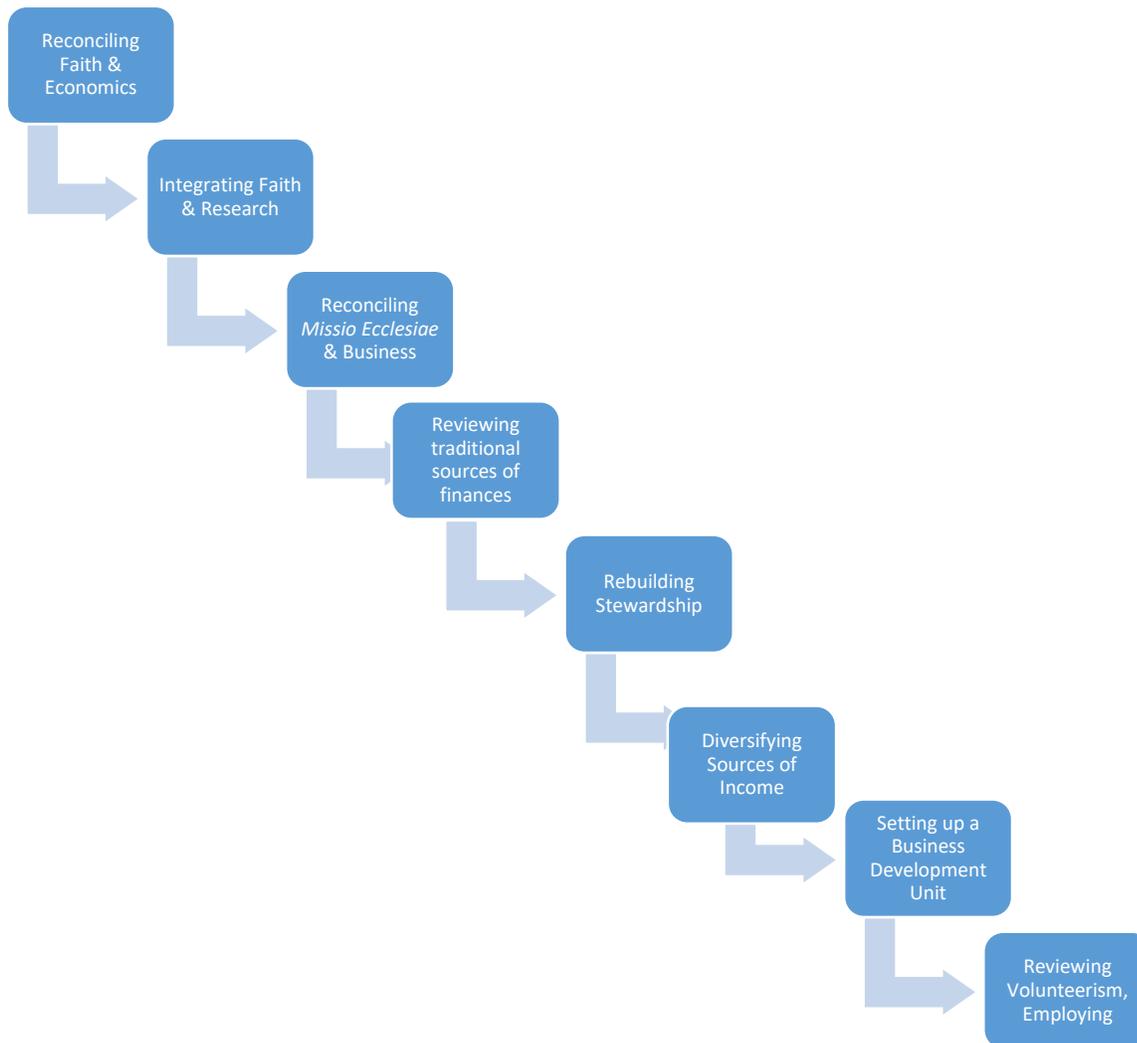
study argues that the Church should realize that strategies are very biblical and contextually important for her to cope with the cost of growing demands of her missionary work and operating costs in Zimbabwe. It is thus commendable for the AOG BTG to appreciate new patterns of economics, development and related secular affairs in order to establish her economic sustainability.

This need for the Church to have strategies is well exhibited by the *theonomic reciprocity* theory upon which this study is premised. As initially reflected through chapter two in the development of this study, the *theonomic reciprocity* concept is borrowed from Borhen's (1986:66–76) examination of the ministry of preaching in which he observed the secondary and complementary involvement of human methods to the primary leadership of the Holy Spirit in the preparation and delivery of sermons.

Interpreting Rudolf Borhen's submissions, Paulo Afonso Butzke explained that Rudolf Borhen commendably interfaced divine guidance and human participation as *Siamese* twins that can bear tangible fruits when working together, hence the *theonomic reciprocity* theory (Butzke n.d:9). As supported by Meeks (2014:5), Oslington (2014:n.p) and Ruffner (2004:88–89), while human beings should depend on God, they should embrace economics to manage, develop and utilize His provisions for sustainability.

Appreciating such *theonomic reciprocity*, the AOG BTG church should correspondingly develop circumstantially viable strategies to revolutionize her economics, build her economic sustainability; sustain her existence and missionary work in Zimbabwe. Having reflexed on the contextual need of strategies, traditional secularization of the term and neglecting of strategies by the Church, biblical basis of strategies from the work and economics of God as well as correspondence of humanity as God's collaborative workers and economists, this study observes the interface of human involvement in the work of God for ecclesiological sustenance. To that end, the next subsection considers strategies that the AOG BTG church can consider to embrace in the Zimbabwean context.

Figure 17: Graphic Summary of Strategies for AOG BTG’s economic sustainability



6.1.2 Reconciling Faith and Economics

From the previous scholarly, biblical engagements and data from interviews, this study observes that economics is interconnected with faith. The linkage cannot and must not be disengaged, neglected or devalued in ecclesiastic development. Considering that the sources of AOG BTG church finances are fluctuating, unsustainable and unreliable, she is in a serious need of a strategic revolution of her economics.

As a classical Pentecostal church that has relied on traditional sources of income since her inception, it is contented that the AOG BTG church can revolutionize her economics by redoubling her efforts in mobilizing biblically based usual sources (such as freewill offerings,

tithes donations), complementarily adopting a professional financial management system, diversifying and multiplying her sources of revenue through engaging in profit-making business.

Theologizing the parabolic story of talents in Mathew 25:14–30 which advances a theology of stewardship and investment in utilizing God-given talents, this study proposes harnessing, variation and development of human, material and financial gifts to sustain ecclesiological mission. This is against the backdrop of my submission in preceding chapters that the church is vulnerable to incapacitation, ineffectiveness and stagnation if they continue running without diversified revenue generating investments. The emphasis of my proposition is the fundamentality of economizing ecclesiology.

It is noted that some mainline and few Pentecostal churches which have conceptualized and utilized principles of economics are managing their resources well and affording to attend *missio Dei* and *missio Ecclesiae* in the same volatile Zimbabwean context. Observed Church owned businesses such as schools, medical facilities and farms have created employment, set up strategic platforms for broad evangelism within and around communities surrounding their businesses.

I propose that entrepreneurial ventures of churches are thus not only supportive to pastoral work, welfare and ecclesial missionary work, but they are missionary on their own, especially when tactically purposed and directed that way. While churches are endowed with dual citizenship as they belong to heaven and their earthly nationalities, they need to prayerfully identify their varied God-given human, material, financial and natural talents. They need to work, invest, multiply and manage them towards advancing the gospel, meeting ecclesiological expenses, creating employment for the benefit of congregants and non-believers as well as sustaining missionary work in its holistic terms towards winning and discipleship of souls.

I remark the commendation of God for two servants who invested what their master had given them;

“Well done, good and faithful servant, thou has been faithful over few things, I will make thee ruler of many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Mathew 25:21 & 23).

Thus, it is considerable for the classical AOG BTG church to fuse her faith with economics; take up resources at her disposal, revolutionize her economics and develop through a theology of investment in order to be economically sustainable in Zimbabwe.



6.1.3 Integrating faith with Research

Since the church started bearing the brunt of the national economic crisis which deteriorated from year 2008, a number of earnest congregants attempted to ask questions about her financial sustainability after researching and observing that she had been struggling to meet her operating costs, sustain pastoral work, welfare and ecclesial mission for decades.

Up to today, there has been no concerted efforts to engage in any research, and address the old and new economic questions that are troubling the church. According to Francis Gannon, most part of leaders who are involved in making decisions at any level have been somewhat traditionally less accommodative to the work of researchers. Consequently, very little has been gained from the findings and recommendations of researchers. “For too long the researcher and churchmen have been at loggerheads, living seemingly on splendid isolation from each other, unable to appreciate fellowship among themselves” (Gannon 1967:3).

Consequently, the AOG BTG church has been struggling with rising costs of missionary work, pastoral work and welfare. Therefore, it is pertinent for the church to have some objective self-introspection, if she is to deal with her weakening economic challenges; revitalize her missionary work and attention to pastoral work and welfare. As Harmon Alden Johnson declares, investing in studies that engages some institutional or individual analysis is developmental and worth any price (Johnson 1968:n.p.).

While the denomination could learn a lot from research, she has not been making any efforts to engage in studies, internally, or externally, and make use of new findings. To my concurrence, Jackson Carroll avers that ecclesiological organizations currently seem to be facing some conflict between traditionalism and modernism. Thus, unlearning the past and learning new *ecclesiologies* appear to be challenging for many. This is why research should be adopted to seek progressive ways towards gradual liberation from the past and adoption of contemporaneously relevant trends (Carroll 2000:545–546). It is arguable that most religious institutions in, and outside Zimbabwe are inherently conservative. The majority of them develop their doctrines from Old Testament texts out of context and make reference to them as their primary springs of authority. They fail to interface the ancient with current ecclesiology. This study observes that the AOG BTG church has not changed some of her procedures which appealed to old times to suit today’s changing circumstances. In that way, it is observable that change has been difficult to embrace in the church.

Notably, research will not only help as an instrument for the understanding of the old and new ecclesiology and economic sustainability, but as a mechanism to enhance the much necessary and contextually relevant change and recovery. The church is therefore recommended to review her philosophy of research and interface it with her faith.

Aptly, Kabir (2016:2) conceptualizes the word ‘research’ from the old French word ‘*recerchier*’, which means to search and continue searching. It literally implies acts of repeating an exploration for something while indirectly making assumptions that previous studies did not exhaust some areas or angles of the issue that one regards to be important and researchable. Researching generally refers to an expedition for knowledge, or further, or new knowledge about a certain phenomenon. It may also be redefined as a systematic expedition or experiment in attempts to gain information or ideas with regards to a specific case. The online Advanced Learner’s dictionary of current English configures research as a meticulous interrogation or inquiry for new facts about any branch of knowledge (Online Advanced Learner’s dictionary: n.d). Thus, researching involves an organized and methodological hunt for new comprehension. It is also configurable as a journey from the familiar to the unfamiliar areas, or a pursuit for new discoveries.

With this understanding, the church can appreciate and pursue research to seek answers to identified problems, generate new knowledge on something, using circumstantially considerable strategies. In agreement with Kabir (2016:2), methodological researching involves collecting, compiling, categorising, interpreting, evaluating and presenting data to target audience.

A number of scholars concur that research is essentially transformative, can lead to progressive changes in church practices as well as theological development through exposure, attainment and increase of knowledge (i.e. Dunaetz 2020:2; Kapur 2018; Buch–Hansen, Felter & Lorensen 2015:242). As such, the church should value and carry out researches towards new and additional discoveries (Bordens & Abbott 2011:2).

It is also contended that research shapes takers–in’s conceptualization of their area. Through results of accomplished studies, the church can then be informed and empowered to deal with certain issues that are affecting her identity. When findings are engaged and utilized in the church, it becomes possible to work on identified problems, apply given suggestions and

recommendations for desired results and developments. In that view, as the identity of the church is integrally missionary, research can help the church to develop her mission.

According to Kabir (2016:11), researching gives fundamental knowhow through which organizational policies, planning, operating and delivering systems can be developed. As observed in this study, some challenges that are disturbing the AOG BTG church from realizing her missionary identification root from policy gaps. Research can address governance problems and fill identified gaps. I agree with Kabir (2016:11) that research builds informed considerations and determines developmental strategies that addresses identified problems and brings desired solutions.

Additionally, Carroll (2000:547:551) suggests that using research is one of the progressive strategies that ecclesiological institutions can monitor their affairs and come up with effective ways towards realizing their objectives. While he was talking about applied research, it can equally work for the same purposes in the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe. However, as Carroll (2000:547:551) explains, some church leaders are not ready for reflexivity because they deem research to be somewhat secularization of the Church and lack of trust in the Holy Spirit. I argue that such resistance to research is retrogressive to ecclesial trends and policy development because it stops the church from learning anything new and closes doors for attention to problems that need to be addressed.

While the tension between faith and research remains ongoing, an integration of the two could be liberating and developing the church from traditionalism and incapacitation to contextualization and progressiveness. Writing about multiple challenges and opportunities in ecclesiological studies, Dunaetz (2020:2) observed that believers have been traditionally often confused with the old tension between research, *Sola Scriptura* (submission to the Bible alone) and the Holy Spirit especially with regards to 2 Peter 1:3, which says that;

“We already have all things pertaining to life and godliness”

If the church takes scripture literally, she may think that research is not necessary. That is why, similarly, Biblical verses such as the following have been misinterpreted and misused by some AOG BTG leaders who relegated responsibilities of the welfare of the church to God without applying *theonomic reciprocity*. Thus, the next Bible verses need to be contextualized in order

for the church to avoid misleading herself and reciprocate by working for their sustenance under the blessing and guidance of God;

- “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20);
- “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7);
- “And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19);
- “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with
- Thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6–7).

The foregoing references have been misunderstood and misused in ways that suggested total submission to God without taking personal responsibility to work. More—so, there are also some congregants and leaders who argue that the church belongs to God and they should thus submit everything to Him without doing anything for their economics. Such viewpoints are often based on the following verses;

- Colossians 1:18, “He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything”;
- Ephesians 1:22, “And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,”
- Ephesians 5:23, “For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Saviour of the body”

Regardless of the ownership of the Church by God, and His provision, this study agrees with Baham (2020:2) who asserts that while faith should be the cornerstone of the Christian worldview, it should drive Christians to interact with the world, fellow human beings, and hopes for the future with a practical understanding of the past and the present contexts. Baham (2020:2) defines faith as a step of commitment or trust in God who blesses and provides as one works. The belief system that Christians share and seek to uphold should therefore be a comprehensive guide for a working life under the leadership and empowerment of God. Understanding that the

church belongs to God, and faith in His provision should not stop believers from researching and working. It must inspire them to work hard in view of the fact that God will bless and enable them to realize corresponding results.

The proverbial wisdom that is provided in the Bible, such as; “in all toil there is profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty,” (Proverbs 14:23) pertinently reflects a sense of *theonomic reciprocity*. Being lazy, extravagant, uneconomical and undisciplined naturally lead to avoidable scarceness. Applying the *theonomic* wisdom of proverbs in this proposition, I think that integrating faith and research, working hard and managing available resources begets the needful economic sustainability. It is discernible that much of today’s economic instability in the AOG BTG church is also a result of negligence to research. Although other factors such as poor government policies and endemic corruption count, inattention to research and neglect to professional suggestions and recommendations keep the church stuck in retrogressive and costly traditionalism.

According to Kraemer & Abrecht (1951:391–394), the essential concern of the matter is that all conversations between theology and science is the probity of evangelical philosophy. When Christians participate in scientific inquiries from their theological grounds, they reconcile research and faith, thus Christianizing intellectualism. This can then aid the church in economic analysis for her development.

Interestingly, Schroeder (1971:5) submits that members of the ecclesiastical bureaucracies in several denominations and religious professionals serving local religious institutions in the United States of America have been interested in religious research primarily for the assistance it may give in policy formulation, program evaluation, cultivation of parish life, and understanding the contemporary situation. Most of the people doing research under ecclesiastical auspices have drawn on other studies which interpret the contemporary situation. These studies are generally done by research and planning staff members for some group within a denomination and are rarely published for the benefit of the larger scholarly and ecclesiastical community. For example, during the four years from 1965 to 1969, only three papers were submitted to the *Review of Religious Research* by staff members of ecclesiastical bureaucracies who had conducted research under such support (Schroeder 1971:5).

This study notes that research is integral for the church's tenable effectiveness (Carroll 1985:324). When a church values and engages in research, much developments and changes can be realized. It is thus unfortunate that there has been resistance and underutilization of research in the church. As Carroll (1985:325) further remarks, a combination of factors that include conventionalism and ignorance are the usual reasons that lead to conventional policies and procedures that are in dire need of being changed.

Similarly in the AOG BTG context, some of her fundraising practices, such as mothers' handwork (mobilization of individual, collective submission of products that mothers produce on their own, and auctioning them at national conferences) are considered as traditional and in need of refining. The idea behind mothers' handwork was to inspire innovativeness, industriousness and building the church's economy. It is so noble, but much of the products have been of poor quality, correspondingly bought at very low prices and thus, not profitable. Hence, researching on how the quality of such products could be improved, how sales and profits could be maximized towards contributing to the betterment of the church's economy is highly advisable. This is why Carroll (1985:326) commendably asserts that there is serious need for continual recommendations for research to be adopted in churches for constructive reformation.

Notably, some AOG BTG congregants feel that the difference between faith and research is not simply a question of intellectual honesty, but is also born of fundamentally different conceptions of the place of research and faith in the theological interpretation of Biblical revelation. "I have never heard of any research engagement in our church since I joined the Assemblies of God. I think we are just a people of faith. Or, maybe, our pastors research for us, but still, I haven't heard of any much research-based presentation in our church besides teachings and sermons", said a young man from Harare. A member of mothers committee from an assembly in Gweru added that "we do not have a clear place of research in our walk of faith in the church. So, talking of research appears to be something new". One senior member of the regional leadership in Manicaland commented that "there is need for research on many issues that we often struggle with as a church, such as tithing and leadership. Does the New Testament teach about tithing or not? Who should be appointed to be an elder, pastor and who should be elected into our local, regional and national offices? We have not, and I do not know if we, as leaders, and our NE will ever appreciate the value of research for clarifications" This study observes that the role of

research in the AOG BTG ecclesiology is not progressively appreciated. Put differently, there has been an underlying difference in the conception of the interface between the sacred and the secular. Those who embrace the idea of research take it as an instrument and technique for development while those against it assume and fear that it may secularize the church. Countless AOG BTG congregants and leaders view that research is secular, and argue that the church should be kept spiritual and unadulterated by strategies.

Much of the challenge roots from the point of interpretation. It is believable that the church can exercise the effectiveness of her faith more than before, if she complements it with researching, acquiring and utilizing new knowledge. Thus, it must be paramount to engage in research and Christianize it by faith and understanding, under the guidance of God. That way, the church may grow, develop and become economically sustainable in Zimbabwe regardless of current political and economic crisis.

When research is conceptualized as a sound attempt to gain new ideas, it can be valued and pursued as suggested by the book of Proverbs 18:15. Primarily, human knowledge and studies can never replace divine knowledge that is grounded, detailed in the Bible and inspired by the Holy Spirit. When taken as complementary and responsibly reciprocal to spiritual provisions, researched outcomes can be so much helpful in contemporary ecclesiology.

In this sense, church-based research can be approached as a sub-goal of building up collective social, economic and political information that can be utilized in strategic planning under the blessing of God, for the *theonomic* betterment of the church. Similarly, research can provide explanations that are deeply engrained in researched evidence about practical problems that congregations are facing, through which spiritual engagement can be informed. As Swanson (2005:n.p.) avows, seeking and increasing enables believers to pursue the Great Commission successfully.

Admirably, denominations such as the Catholic Church realized that they needed to provide sound guidance to their heads of congregations and lay members by engaging in research. Eventually, that gave birth to the establishment of their Centre for Applied Research (hereinafter referred to as CARA). The purpose of CARA is to give their ecclesial leaders with well gathered, categorized, interpreted and analysed information for strategic planning and implementation in their different parishes. Additionally, CARA does various surveys, communications and

feedbacks about the entire denominational work. It interrogates clerical, congregational, ecumenical, communal, social, economic and political studies to keep the church updated in order for her to serve all *kerygmatic, diaconal, liturgical* and *koinonia* missions from an informed position. Complementarily, CARA identifies new ecclesiological trends, opportunities and challenges and informs leaders to keep proactive and relevant with contextual developments. (Gannon 1967:6–7).

Though religious research has been undertaken by such religious bodies, the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe has not devoted any plan, and budget towards research and evaluation. The church has not attended to research. Some of her regional and national executive heads revealed that lack of will, consideration and funding keeps research unattended to.

In light of the various aforementioned contextual and scholarly observations, it is recommendable for the AOG BTG church to integrate her faith with research as a reformist strategy to review, analyse and revolutionize her economic situation towards her economic development and sustainability in Zimbabwe.

6.2 Reconciling the *Missio Ecclesiae* and Economics

Observations from my literature review and views of AOG BTG concurring interviewees suggest that business should not be detached from the church, but can and must be used as an instrumental means of fulfilling *missio Ecclesiae* and *missio Dei*.

Having conceptualized the Church integrally as the collection of converted believers, some notable scholars restate that the ecclesiological mandate is so inclusive and demanding tactic economic engagements, hence the need to interface *missio Ecclesiae* with *missio Dei* (Ayuch 2018:5–6; Nkansah–Obrempon 2017:283–283).

Together with the opinions of Brian Woolnough and Wonsuk Ma’s ideas, this study agrees that *missiological* provisions are all–encompassing (Woolnough & Ma 2010:27). Their contributions advance the value and urgency of intersecting missiology and economics towards contextual engagements with social and economic lives. As Lee (2019:181) voices, economics serves as a springboard for the development of humanity through establishing businesses, creating employment, demonstrating the transformative nature of entrepreneurship, enlightening and

eventually empowering communities by equipping them to be economical and capable of sustaining themselves.

Similarly, learning from Moltmann, Wolterstorff & Charry (1999), economics enhances an ecclesiology of framed public life (Moltmann, Wolterstorff & Charry 1999). According to them, Christian living should be demonstrated publicly, even in contexts of economic crisis. It is discernible from their submissions that ecclesiology should be reconciled with contextually developmental strategies for the furtherance of Christian faith in communities.

Various AOG BTG participants and scholars who are engaged throughout this study propose the embodiment of the gospel in public spheres in the marketplace, workplace and communities. Quoted scholars such as Graafland (2013:110); Metu (2016); Backhouse & Medema (2009:221–222) and Khumalo (2012:599–600) advance the interplay of ecclesiology, missiology and economics. They concur that it is strategically vital to mobilize, manage, develop and multiply resources for ecclesiological sustainability and realization of holistic missionary work.

In the same view, Lee (2019:192) talks of embracing entrepreneurship as a model of inclusive enlightenment and transformation of lives by the gospel through reconciling the identity of the Church (which is stressed in this thesis as essentially missionary) with business, integrating mission with economics for the total transformation of lives in the marketplace, workplace and communities.

Additionally, Crosby (1988:266) stresses the interaction of the divine and earthly, saying that “with a growing realization of the basic unity of the world, we are beginning to return to a realization of the need to see things not just from the perspective of the *oikia* or the *oikoumene*, but from the viewpoint of the ecological whole”. According to him, Jesus Christ epitomized and facilitated the development of the previously emphasized holistic missionary ministry (covering *kerygmatic*, *diaconal*, *koinonia* and *leitourgia*).

Crosby (1988:266) adds that the ministry of Jesus Christ also advanced ecology – the study of the household, or how the household of nature is kept in order. For him, ecology has an economic concern that addresses the whole of the earth and all creation – persons and resources in their interrelationships, as a single, unified organism. Taking such an economic ecology with complementary submissions of Laurence R. Iannaccone, it is vital to merge *missio Ecclesiae*

with economics in order to seek answers to questions about why some churches have been declining and how to develop them (Iannaccone 2010:1–3).

From the interplay of ecclesiology and economics in chapter one under literature overview, this study noted the indigenous necessity for ecclesiological responsiveness to such interrogation. After observing that the many local denominations which have been relying on conventional streams of revenue have been finding it herculean to eke out tenability in the same context where enterprising others have been thriving, it is expedient for the AOG BTG church to integrate her mission with economics. It has been emphasized that without sufficient income, congregations face ceaseless economic struggles, and some of their congregants eventually flock away in an anxious quest for alternative options where mission is reconciled with economics and the gospel is effectively contextualized.

Drawing from the review of the work of Self (2012:n.p.) who also backs the studying and connection of faith with circumstantial economies for the creation of sustainable churches and communities, it must be appreciated that when the mission of the Church is reconciled with economics, ecclesiological sustainability will be realized and comprehensive missionary work will be sustained even in volatile contexts like Zimbabwe.

Taking views of Judith Mwenje on the case of ZAOGA about the instability of local ecclesial finances, and the inevitability of constructive reviews and development of their sources of revenue (Mwenje 2016:80) into account, the conception of Clifton (2014:274–277) affirms reconciling ecclesial mission with economics as he professes contextualized, innovative and entrepreneurial thinking that ends stagnation, rebuilds the economic capacities of the Church to conceive life as a fight and competition for the redemption, holistic transformation and empowerment of humanity.

It is underscored herein that economics has been conceived by most classical Pentecostal churches as inherently secular. Mixing ecclesiology with economics has been resultantly conceived to be despondently impractical, since there is no easy way to Christianize economics (as previously reflected by Richardson 2014:293), while Christians are spiritual (Philippians 3:20; John 17:16). However, there is crucial necessity for the AOG BTG church to economize her missionary focus, taking into account the scarcity of required resources in the Zimbabwean context.

Considering the wisdom of developing and growing her financial and material resources, with a religious submission to *theonomic reciprocity* (which is the central base of this study), prayerfully and faithfully working with the provisions, blessings and guidance of God (as propounded by Butzke n.d:9), reconciling *missio Ecclesiae* with economics matters so much as an influential strategy for ecclesiological sustainability and advancement of the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe.

6.2.1 Reviewing the Inadequacy of ecclesial finances

Reiterations that the dependability of copious classical Pentecostals on conventional sources of revenue is untenable indicate the significance of reviews (Mwenje 2016:79). This study suggests that the AOG BTG church should regularly review her finances with a progressive understanding that tithing, freewill offerings and all other traditional modes of ecclesial giving have been problematic (Uroko 2021:6; Moretsi 2009:400).

This study also observed a magnitude of confusion and endless ecclesiological debates about the continuation, interpretation and applicability of tithing from the Old to the New Testament as debates about the theology of New Testament tithing rage on unabatedly (Van Rensburg 2002:76; Croteau 2005:37–38).

The prevalence of debates and confusion have problematized traditional giving in the churches (Odom 2016:n.p.; Merrit, 2020:n.p.). Different schools of thought discredit reserving tithes for the clergy and argue that they must be shared with the needy (Chibango 2020:118). Uroko (2021:10) reviews Deuteronomy 14:22–29 which is understood habitually in Pentecostalism to be calling congregations to pay their tithes towards pastoral welfare. Although basing his views from his Nigerian context, implications of his submission are relevant to the Zimbabwean trajectory. Uroko (2021:11) argues that while Deuteronomy 14:22–29 recommends tithes for Levites and includes care and support for widows, orphans, and strangers. Thus, depending on tithes is contextually limited, overwhelmed and untenable in Zimbabwe.

Tithes are commonly set aside for pastors and their families in the majority of Pentecostal churches in the AOG BTG church. The church also directs part of them to widows, orphans and the needy as and when they feel that their pastors are well catered for. Considering that the amounts of tithes that are given on monthly basis are usually meagre, deacons are usually

advised by elders to submit all tithes to pastors. Congregants are usually taught that God will bless and take care of them whenever they honour the principle of giving with consistency.

Problematically, due to economic constraints and desperation, besides getting overwhelmed and inadequate, the concept of tithing has been wrongly theologized and taught by coerciveness instead of conviction to biblical integrity. As a result, limited numbers of congregants still subscribe to tithing, while increasing numbers have been withdrawing and that has been respectively further reducing the quantity and quality of traditional ecclesial income.

Local ecclesiological leaders should also review the decline of foreign and local donations (Munyoro & Ncube 2020:13). While it has been generally tempting to generalize and just blame *Covid-19*, it must be born in mind that the downward shift of donations in secular and Christian establishments has been in motion far before year 2020. As the deterioration of donations has been disconcerting, especially to churches which believed and relied on them, it must be a wake-up call to all that dependence on traditional sources of revenue is both risky and irresponsible. The challenge must teach the church that donations are unreliable arguably because they are conditioned by unreliable availability, will and capabilities of donors.

The *Economist* (2016:n.p.) reported a thought provoking story titled '*Tithing Troubles*', which delineated problems of tithes, donations and finances of Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe, extracted below;

“...the prosperity (referring to emerging Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe) churches have suffered setbacks recently. As the economy melts down, donations have dwindled. One church has been accused of seizing property and equipment from members who have failed to pay their tithes. The government, ever ravenous for cash, has started to tax some church proceeds. Bishop Rodger Jeffrey, who founded a church in a poor Harare suburb eight years ago, says he used to get about \$2,000 a month from his congregation. Nowadays donations have halved. “We must encourage them to be entrepreneurs,” he says. To help things along, an upcoming church conference will include lessons on starting a business. “No one wants to be poor,” says Bishop Jeffrey. “Poverty is the devil.”

The above story reveals that ecclesiological finances in Zimbabwe have been destabilized by the national economic predicament. It is extensively publicized that the economical quagmire

ravaged lives (Muronzi 2019:n.p.; Chikohomero 2021:n.p.), negatively affected payment timelines, quantities and value of congregational incomes (Muronzi 2020:n.p.) and correspondingly shrunk their levels of giving. The predicament has been further degenerated by governmental decision to tax churches (Nyashadzashe & Mhizha 2019:n.p.) regardless of the fact that they were already financially distressed. The economic situation of churches in Zimbabwe therefore necessitate continuous reviews of her finances and matching strategic commitment to growing their limited revenues.

Arguably, reviewing one's finances and engagement in entrepreneurship does not only capacitate churches to pay their operational expenditures, but can rejuvenate and empower them to attend to local community and national causes. As an example, in the wake of *Covid-19* and cyclones, churches could do a lot towards rescuing and helping victims of tragedies if they had enough financial, material and human resource capacity.

This study notes that the AOG BTG church has not fully fused economics, faith and established business investments. She is unlike other denominations such as Zimbabwe Assemblies of God in Africa which developed an entrepreneurial 'talents concept' through which congregants are inspired, taught and facilitated to trade anything and give part of their earnings to their denominational treasury (Mwenje 2016:79). Charismatic churches, like United Family International (Bulawayo24 2015:n.p.) and Heartfelt International Ministries have been reviewing their finances and trading, for example, their denominational regalia to generate income for their churches.

Learning from such enterprising and progressive churches, it is arguable that the AOG BTG church must realize the limitedness of her traditional sources of income, conceptualize economics and engage in massive investments to attract more profits in correspondence with her growing missionary costs.

This study minds that the majority of emerging enterprising charismatic churches like the Good News church (formerly Spirit Embassy), Heartfelt and Kingdom Embassy founded by prophet Passion Java are owned, personalized and consequently, proceeds from any of their businesses are controlled and used by their founders. While such examples are discouraging, the AOG BTG church needs to revolutionize her economics; avoiding personalization, self-enrichment and

related errors showcased by the aforementioned bad examples, for the advancement of integral missionary development.

Therefore, the AOG BTG church is recommended to review the inadequacy of her traditional sources of income, professionalize her management of finances by strategically appointing congregants who are trained in finance as deacons and training those who were appointed on other scriptural grounds without financial training.

6.3 Rebuilding Stewardship

Stewardship is one of the pivotal strategies that can help the AOG BTG church to regain her life-bearing economic sustainability in Zimbabwe. It speaks to the trusteeship or guardianship of all resources such as time, money, talents or other resources, and has in recent times been applied to the human responsibility for the care and management of the natural world.

According to Attfield (2015:n.p.), those who are stewards understand that they do not have ownership of what they have, but they are entrusted and expected to avail them for missionary purposes. He explains that the concept of stewardship revolves around taking responsibilities of mobilizing, managing and using given resources in tenable ways that serve the requisite interests of addressing individual, institutional and communal needs today and in the future.

Conventionally, however, stewardship has been understood *theocentrically*, as in the following statement from the General Synod Board for Social Responsibility of the Church of England;

“Christians believe that this world belongs to God by creation, redemption and sustenance, and that he has entrusted it to humankind, made in his image and responsible to him; we are in the position of stewards, tenants, curators, trustees or guardians, whether or not we acknowledge this responsibility. Stewardship implies caring, management, not selfish exploitation; it involves a concern both for present and future as well as self, and a recognition that the world we manage has an interest in its own survival and wellbeing independent of its value to us. Good stewardship requires justice, truthfulness, sensitivity, and compassion” (Attfield 2015:n.p.)

Additionally to my concurrence, Churchil (2017:1) clarifies that countless believers have been holding on to a narrow and finite conceptualization of just giving in their churches as if that is the closed end of stewardship. For him, stewardship broadly entails maturity and responsibility

in management and distribution of available resources for the accomplishment of divine purposes.

As such, the AOG BTG church is recommended to review, renew and rebuild her conceptualization of stewardship. Agreeing with Churchil (2017:2), stewardship yields production, fruitfulness and multiplication of God-given resources. Biblical examples include Adam who was assigned to work and look after the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1:28-30). The story of Joseph is also informative as it demonstrates total submission to being entrusted, responsible, efficient and effective. Joseph could not waste the household resources of Potiphar's family, the same way that he did when he was appointed to be the governor of Egypt. The church's stewardship should be as such. If she teaches congregants to take their time, talents and treasures as entrusted to them by God, they can support her mission adequately. Winston Churchill goes on to add that stewardship also involves exercising God-given dominion over His creation, reflecting the image of our creator God in His care, responsibility, maintenance, protection, and beautification of His creation" (Churchil 2017:2).

In consideration of Winston Churchill's thoughts, the church should realize that she has perennially increasing missionary responsibilities that demand her to consistently revise and reconstruct the theology of stewardship in her congregations. Meanwhile, to-date she also owes Caesar what is due to him (Matthew 22:21) as the Zimbabwean government has been contemplating about taxing churches.

Furthermore, as previously reflected through Jesus Christ's parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 19:12-27), which is engaged in the theology of investment under the integration of faith and economics subsection of this chapter, the creator respectively rewards those who serve in good and accountable steward manners, and God withdraws what he gives from those who do not utilize his talents.

Following that, I agree with Ahiamadu (2007:43) who avers that human beings are stewards who should exercise responsible care over possessions that are entrusted to them. In that sense, it is implied that the church should teach her congregants that they belong to God, and their resources are God-given, hence should be utilized towards sustenance of *missio Dei* and *missio Ecclesiae*. Some interviewed AOG BTG leaders proffered that teaching about stewardship can inspire their congregants to give more than what they have been doing. Ordinarily, giving is broadly

concomitant with biblical principles. Brooks (2005:n.p.) concurringly supported the indoctrination of stewardship in churches for their monetary and tenable developments.

According to Sergeyev (2020:56), congregants are biblically supposed to be taught to give towards the tenability of their churches. Every ministry requires human, financial and material resources. Thus, each denomination faces varying expenses as they execute their operations on daily basis. The operating costs, and latitudinous ecclesiological mandate can only be accomplished with more than the tithes, offerings and related contributions of congregations.

Remembering that God freely gave humanity all that is available, giving should be reviewed and taught to be free-willed (Mathew 23:23), according to individual and collective capacities (1 Corinthians 16:2) and with cheerfulness and love (2 Corinthians 8:8–9 and 9:6–8), ultimately for the ennoblement of the work of God in the world.

Upholding the abundant provisions of God for mankind from creation to redemption and sustenance, ecclesiological reviews can be biblically reflective of the following scriptures that showcase the generosity of God;

- The wedding at Cana in Galilee when Jesus turned more water into wine than the wedding guests could possibly consume (John 2:1–11)
- The significant provision made for an injured stranger of a different nationality in the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37)
- The decision of Zacchaeus, inspired by his encounter with Jesus, to make four-fold reparation to any he has cheated. This brings the response from Jesus: ‘Today, salvation has come to this house!’ (Luke 19:1–10).

Moreover, the sacrificial incarnation of God through the coming of Jesus Christ to the world, his undertaking of human birth, his life, death, resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit demonstrates His extraordinary kindness towards humankind, which ecclesial teachings on stewardship can borrow lessons from. The church can challenge her memberships to align themselves with such divine sacrificial generosity, contextually towards sustaining ecclesiological mission.

With such reflections, AOG BTG congregations could be taught to give their offerings as stewards of the generous and sacrificing God. Lombart (2018:n.p.) reiterates sacrificial giving

and avers that when congregants are led to observe it, they can become joyful and sacrificial givers in correspondence with their God-given talents, time, spiritual and material gifts.

Lovelace (2004:n.p.) emphasizes the need for some more ecclesiological teachings until congregations are matured enough to live the talks of stewardship. In concurrence with McFate (2010:6–7), it is crucial for the church to lay a solid foundation by developing a theology of Christian stewardship that is biblically oriented and that saturates their thinking and acting. Integrating concurring interviewees' and scholarly views, it is creditable for the AOG BTG church to instil a theology of stewardship in her congregations so as to enlighten, transform and enable them to give towards her economic sustainability for the sustenance of *missio Dei* and *missio Ecclesiae*.

6.4 Diversifying sources of income through business

After reviewing sources of income and renewing stewardship, this study also recommends the church to diversify her streams of revenue towards attaining indigenous tenability. Bearing in mind that the church has two idle farms (Mashava and Bulawayo farms) and a school in Norton, it is prudent for her to utilize her farms and school to diversify her revenue. The church can grow drought resistant crops, or consider establishing irrigation farming or animal husbandry to generate income. Additionally, she can also redouble efforts towards growing her Nicholas Bhengu High School in Norton to a point where she can eventually gain some levies.

The necessity of diversifying springs of ecclesial revenues is irrefutably long overdue. Examples of some churches that have conceptualized business as mission by engaging in investments to advance and support missionary work appear as model case studies that the large numbers of those which have not yet embraced economics (such as the AOG BTG) can learn from, and get inspired and enlightened to pursue entrepreneurship.

A number of scholars engaged in this study concur that embracing business as mission upholds the redemptive potential of business beyond multiplying streams of income. It is also espoused that business can enable the church to promote inclusive approaches to missionary work through which the gospel can be estimably advanced in the marketplace, and practical needs are met. When the church establishes business, she can also create some forms of employment for congregants and citizens. She can then cover her operating expenses, sustain pastoral work and

welfare through proceeds (Johnson & Rundle n.d:36–37; Mitchell 2016:15; Tunehag 2006:10–17; Albright 2014:209–210).

Some of the denominations (which have been mentioned in the overview of the interplay of Church and Economics section under chapter one of this study) such as the Church of Christ, , Lutheran church, Celebration church, and the Roman Catholic church churches established and are currently developmentally utilizing their schools, hospitals, hotels, farms and mining claims. Besides creating employment for their congregants and neighbours, they are building additional platforms to evangelize their clients and surrounding communities and, eventually, propelling the gospel. Such churches are making commendable strides in winning souls while concurrently gaining greatly needed profits from their businesses and continuously enlarging their revenues towards meeting their working expenditures.

Denominations that have handled business successfully have also withstood fears of diverting their attention from their core business of mission by hiring professional teams to manage their enterprises and reserve pastors to focus on missionary work. While using specialized management models to build concrete economic sustainability, they simultaneously fully submit to God for blessings, divine direction, enablement and development.

In light of such laudable headways from the few identified churches, especially mainline denominations, it is recommendable that the AOG BTG church conceptualizes and incorporates herself with economics, diversifies her sources of income for desired economic sustainability, so as to sustain pastoral work, welfare and effectuation of missionary work in Zimbabwe.

Without diversifying her sources of revenue, the missionary work of the church may remain herculean, minimally attended and, resultantly, fruitless. While God always provides, congregational collections help to a certain extend; negligence to multiply income will be irresponsible and detrimental to ecclesial development. Reciprocal attention to divine supply through developing other income sources can proliferate what God gives for the church to survive and thrive in economically crisis–ripped Zimbabwe.

This strategy is given in view of Christian life as a life of dual citizenship, of primarily belonging to heaven and temporarily to earthly nations (Landrum 2018:n.p.; McShane 2020:1–2; Stokes 2021:n.p.) as mirrored through Philipians 3:20. As the church is on earth, she needs to work,

invest and multiply what she has, in order to thrive. Corroborating this, the parable of talents in Mathew 25:14–30 remains inspiring as it reflects a theology of stewardship and investment. It tells a transforming story about a rich man who delegated the management of his wealth to his servants, just as investors in today’s markets do. After entrusting five talents to the first servant, two talents to the second, and one talent to the third, two of them raised hundred percent returns by trading, while the third one kept the money and profited nothing. When the rich man comes back, he rewards the two who made profits, and punishes the servant who did not invest by taking back what he had given him. I take the meaning of the parable beyond financial investments.

Bearing in mind that God gives all people and churches a variety of gifts, it is discernible that He expects us to utilize those gifts as stewards, for His service. It is thus reckless for the church to neglect her God–given gifts. Like the three servants, she has gifts of different values. It is remarkable that the expectation of God on her is commensurate with the gifts that He gave her. It must be noted that the servant who received one talent was not condemned for failing to reach the five–talent goal. He was actually condemned for doing nothing with what he was given. The gifts that the church got from God include skills, abilities, positions, education, experiences, land etcetera. The church can sustain *missio Dei* and *missio Ecclesiae* by utilizing all her God–given gifts in different capacities and locations. If the church disregards the gifts and resources that God endowed her with, she may find herself perennially unsustainable, unproductive, retrogressive and ineffective. It is consequently wise and progressive to integrate ecclesiology with economics, to invest, diversify her sources of income and not waste her God–given resources.

Harnessing available resources is therefore strategic for the tenability and advancement of ecclesial mission. It is outstanding that the master praised the two servants who had invested and worked hard with their talents. In view of that, a church that invests and works hard in utilizing her human, material and financial resources for multiplication and usage in missionary work will, arguably, respectively please God. If the church neglects the need to utilize, grow and manage resources at her disposal, she may fail to accomplish missionary work and eventually displease God. Bradley (2020:40) agreeably submits that the abovementioned parable is a helpful

metaphor for what God asks of us as it relates to fulfilling his desires. It teaches utilization of God-given resources and making of profits for His mission.

Accordingly, the church should carefully, thoughtfully invest God's resources to make the most out of them. It is arguable that the church can realize peace, success, sustenance and longevity when she participates in investments by using available God-given resources. If the church invests and earns profits, she can realize surplus to give towards her *kerygmatic, diaconal, koinonia* and *liturgical* services. The costs of not investing are tragic. Zero investment means no diversification and multiplication of incomes, and zero profit. Usually without diversified incomes, the church may suffer and fail to accomplish the mission of God. Graafland and Van de Ven (2011:n.p.) supportively says that the church should now economize herself to accomplish her mandate comprehensively.

In light of the above expansive discussion rooting from the insufficiency of traditional sources of church income, circumstantial economic predicament and biblical principles and instructions about investments and giving, it is recommended that the AOG BTG church should intensify her efforts towards expanding her sources of income through forming business ventures to sustain herself in Zimbabwe.

6.5 Setting up a Business Development Unit

One of the former NE members suggested that “the church is afraid of doing business because business can divert her attention from her primary work of mission. So, I think the church should set up a business development unit and authorize it to develop and run business for the church”. Concurring emphatic views from incumbent NE, regional and local assembly leaders propositioned that the church needs, and should form a business development unit which focusses on research, innovation, brainstorming, generation, development and operation of business for the denomination to realize her economic sustainability.

It is perceptible that such a business unit can come up and run business that generates income to enable the ongoing funding of the church's mission. Voices of the interviewed informants corresponded that the church should authorize, resource and empower the unit to coordinate all aspects of new business development.

Business development encompasses growing a wide scope of activities, and initiatives that a business owner and the management implement towards making and growing any of their engaged business to become better and greater than before. This study proposes that a business development unit of the church can pursue more objectives, such increasing sales, expanding business ventures, forming strategic partnerships, and increasing profitability of church enterprises.

More—so, I observe that successful business development is a generative strategy that can positively impact every ecclesiological section, such as feasibility studies, production, administration and accounting.

Thus, it can also drive the expansion of business ventures, form strategic partnerships and increasing profitability of church enterprises. For instance, since the AOG BTG church has natural capitals such as agricultural land in her Mashava and Bulawayo farms; the business development constituent can work on assessing further potentials and strategies of expanding them for further productivity and profitability. After all due diligence, research, and studies, the business development unit can present findings to the national leadership, and if approved, operationalize them.

This study notes that the AOG BTG church initiated deliberations towards instituting a business development unit called Assemblies of God Development and Relief Agency (hereinafter referred to as AOGDRA) in 2021. The church approached some people from other denominations to be part of the pioneering leaders and members of the agency. As the development of the agency was still being worked on and yet to be finalized and inaugurated while this study was being carried out, nothing much tangible had been done. However, some senior members of the church confirmed that the national leadership was considering to incorporate extra members for the agency from other denominations.

While the move is commendable as the AOG BTG church could benefit from experiences and skills from other denominations, it will be much better for the church to establish her own team that can wholeheartedly develop her economic base. Such a line—up will be able to brainstorm ground—breaking ideas with genuine interests for the development of the AOG BTG church.

While the unit may consult from external incubator firms, business development companies, and small business development centres, an internalized unit can be more trusted to keep dedicated for, and attentive to its denominational development without ulterior interests.

Suggestions from interviews recommend that the church should internally hire any of her members who have the needed skills and experience to steer the business development unit. Such roles may not be fulltime. They can be part time and somewhat cost effective. They can be employed, or taken on voluntary but fairly appreciated on part time basis, while one or few may be engaged full-time in accordance with their specific roles (as suggested by Ahmed 2018:n.p.).

Scholars such as Ahmed (2018:n.p.), Awuku–Gyampoh & Asare (2019:101–102) support the idea of establishing a competent business development unit for institutional development and tenability. Ahmed (2018:n.p.) further advises that business development departments should be envisioned and empowered to run and develop institutional engagements to build strategic partnerships and attain profitability. This is why this study commends that the AOG BTG church should seriously make up and establish her business development unit to initiate and oversee her entrepreneurial projects.

This thesis advances that the establishment of a business development division for the church will aid the delegation of duties, and reserve pastors for the work of ministry. Unlike succumbing into a current scenario where some pastors and elders take part in the running and administration of businesses of the church, when a business development block is properly established, it will take over all the business work. This will liberate pastors and elders to focus on the work of ministry. In addition to that, when the business development unit works, it will boost productivity, accountability, economic development and sustainability for the church. As a result, this will eventually rebuild the economic capacity of the church for her to accomplish her missionary work in its comprehensive dimensions.

[6.6 Reviewing Volunteerism, Employing Fulltime Workers](#)

This study found out that the AOG BTG church, like many other local classical Pentecostal denominations in Zimbabwe, has been working with volunteers. NE, DCCs, education and projects board members generally do not have any agreed form of payment. The church has been mostly enjoying the benefit of skilled and semi-skilled labour without bearing a burden of

paying or giving them any other kind of appreciation (as volunteerism is advantageous as reflected in different contexts by Kodia 2014:10 and Chaudhry 2010:6–7).

All her pastoral, and almost hundred percent of her technical workforce are on voluntary engagements. In most national, regional offices and local assemblies, it is only pastors who are given certain support on a monthly basis. The rest of the labour force never get any financial or kind payment or support for their work. The generality of congregants believe that volunteerism gives them an open space for them to serve the Lord through availing themselves to ecclesiological assignments without expecting any material or financial benefits.

Understandably, the prevailing economic quagmire has been a leading factor behind the adoption of volunteerism in the church. Overall, the AOG BTG church does not have the financial capacity to engage human resources on employment contract. Economic incapability has been a disturbing challenge that promoted volunteerism without developments towards employment of human resources.

However, given the widespread human insecurity in Africa (Graham, et al 2013:33–35), and high rate of unemployment in the crisis-ridden Zimbabwe, volunteering is usually a means to eventual employability, survival and livelihood. It would therefore be considerate if the church builds her capacity towards giving them some monetary or materialistic appreciation, and eventually employ them. Considerately, while volunteers help the church to run without obligations to pay, there are a number of challenges that the church should look at on volunteerism. Considering that they have no contract of employment, volunteers can attend to what can pay them whenever opportunities arise regardless of whether that would divert their attention from their voluntary services for the church or not. Depending on them is thus risky and retrogressive. Summarily, volunteerism is mired with various problems such as unreliability, absenteeism, poor working habits, inconsistency, vulnerability, corruptibility, and instability (Hager & Brudney 2004:3–5; Harris 2010:4–5).

In agreement with Kodia (2014:13), volunteers are vulnerable to be misunderstood by employers, communities and families which sometimes assume that they can cater for themselves when they actually cannot. Volunteers also have their own personal needs. Somehow, sometimes personal needs may demand attention coincidentally when the church calls

for their services. When personal and institutional interests conflict like in such instances, volunteerism can be highly stressful to volunteers and the church. It is also apparent that volunteers can burn out when they keep serving without being incentivized as they sometimes incur certain costs in attending the work of the church, such as transport, food, communication and related expenses. When volunteers use their resources to attend to church work, and the church fails or ignores appreciating them in cash or kind, they sometimes get frustrated, fatigued and some of them eventually disappear from the church without notice.

Harris (2010:6) elaborates that it is always very difficult for the church to expect or ask volunteers to accomplish certain things or maximise their skills, experiences and efforts to reach particular standards when she does not pay them anything. As Kabonga (2020:18) says, volunteers are also problematical because they serve without any form of motivation for some time and some of them eventually succumb to corruption in desperate attempts to sustain themselves. Although ecclesiological volunteers are expected to be inspired and energized by the Holy Spirit, economical desperation may get them corrupted and at times lead them to defraud the church. While some congregants may keep faithfully serving in any ecclesial work voluntarily, it is advisable for the church to respectfully appreciate them even in kind. Additionally, sometimes by words of the mouth, so as to save them from feeling unappreciated, frustrated and falling into the abovementioned temptations.

If the church develops enough to employ, it means that she can then set standards, give precise assignments and timeframes towards execution of whichever commitment with assurance that contracted and paid personnel will always attend to the given tasks dutifully and professionally. In view of that, a church that seeks to grow economically needs to have paid staff. The essentiality of paid staff substantiates the suggestion that the AOG BTG church should appreciate volunteerism and work towards employing either part or full timers.

Emphatically, like any other organization, mirroring the above views against the poverty-stricken Zimbabwean context, it looks highly considerate to review volunteerism as a valuable strategy in the church that should be attended through a people-centred, participatory, empowering and a collaborative approach to social, economic, political and sustainable development.

While doing so, the church should make deliberate plans and efforts towards retaining, recruiting and employing some of them on full time basis in order to realize mutual and integral tenability (Kabonga 2020:18; Graham, et al 2013:33–35). Continued engagement of traditional volunteerism is consequently a limited strategy.

Meanwhile, if it is integrated in a contextually progressive frame in which mutual expectations are attended to, volunteerism has the potential to yield great impact in and beyond the church for her much needed economic development and realization of her missionary identity. So, if the AOG BTG church revises volunteerism, develop policies and address policy gaps towards supporting volunteers through any appreciation, support, incentivizing, retention, recruitment and employment, large numbers of volunteers can be attracted, a lot of ecclesiological work can be accomplished. More–so, productivity, effectiveness and sustainability can be eventually realized.

6.7 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter explored contextually viable approaches that the AOG BTG church can consider and embrace to become economically sustainable in Zimbabwe. Theologizing how the church could rethink its conception of, and quest for economic development, this chapter confronted the conundrum of strategies. Bearing in mind old yet ongoing debates on whether a church needs to have strategies since she is married to the Almighty God who can always provide all her needs, the section reflected on the term ‘strategy’ which is traditionally viewed as secular and denigrated in classical Pentecostal ecclesiology. Multiple arguments that root from a notion that God is the only strategist and provider of the Church suggest that she must exclusively live by faith in total submission to the ubiquitous spiritual guidance. Having done this inclusive reflection, this chapter observed biblical economics through Old Testament depiction of God as a worker and an economist; humanity as His co–workers and co–economists; New Testament economics of the early Church as well as the need for the AOG BTG church to adopt strategies in light of the *theonomic reciprocity* conception upon which this study is grounded. The chapter emphasized reflexivity on the framework of *theonomic reciprocity* which reconciles the relationship between the Spirit and method, integration of dependence and submission of humanity to God while correspondingly and responsibly working with God–given human, material and financial resources towards sustaining missionary work and operating liabilities. It also advanced a theology of stewardship and investment reflected through the parable of talents

in Mathew 25:14–30. Drawing from submissions of interviewed informants and engaged scholars, I proposed a review of the theological place of faith, research and interconnecting them with economics while learning from other churches and related organizations towards ecclesial economic sustainability. The chapter uncovered that the AOG BTG church has been hard-pressed by conventionalism, isolation from, and lack of research which kept her stuck in old practices that are loop-holed by policy gaps and traditional patterns practices that she lived with over the years while delaying her from adapting to current rapid changes that confront her with new challenges and opportunities. I thus defined and advanced embracement, pursuit of research, implementation of resultant recommendations for the understanding and management of contemporary situations. This study further recommended rethinking and reconciling of mission and business, setting up of a business development unit, utilization of available human, material and financial resources for the multiplication of her streams of income as well as reviewing volunteerism, incentivising volunteers and making plans towards employing them on fulltime basis. In view of all the foregoing submissions, the AOG BTG church is advised to review her policies, evaluate and overhaul her operating system and programs towards the development and sustenance of her operational and missionary costs as well her longevity in Zimbabwe. The next chapter seven presents an inclusive summary, overall conclusion and recommendations of the study. Deriving from an analysis of my findings, it also offers suggestions about areas for further studies.

Chapter 7: Inclusive Summary, Conclusions & Recommendations

7.1 Summary of Chapters

This study interfaced classical Pentecostal ecclesiology with economics. The aim of the study was to review the identity of the Church and quest for her economic sustainability. Objectives of the study were to examine the identity of the Church, discuss the *theonomic reciprocity* theory and sustainability; study AOG BTG's conception of ecclesiological tenability, revisit the history and economic of AOG BTG church and discern contextually feasible strategies for her economic sustentation in Zimbabwe.

Chapter one presented preliminaries, such as the introduction, statement of the problem and unpacked the Zimbabwean economic crisis-ridden background. It outlined the justification of the research, literature review and research gap. The section also captured the research design, methodology, sampling, research instruments, data presentation and analysis; delimitation, limitations, ethical considerations and an overview of chapters of the entire study.

Chapter two explored the *theonomic reciprocity* theoretical framework and complementary sustainability model upon which this study is premised. It conceptualized *theonomic reciprocity* and sustainability. The segment provided the background and tenets of *theonomic reciprocity* and Sustainability. Observing that the provisions of *theonomic reciprocity* and sustainability advance the reconciliation of the identity of the Church and economics, the chapter also outlined the significance and biblical reflection of sustainment for the Church.

Chapter three reviewed the identification of the Church in detail, through her various portrayals which supportively showcased that she is predominantly missionary. After that the chapter surveyed the AOG BTG identity, foundational and holistic missionary work, covering the work of her founder Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu, and the AOG BTG *kerygmatic*, *diaconal*; *liturgical* and *koinonia* works in Zimbabwe.

Chapter four gave an account of the history of the AOG BTG church. It drew her roots from the United States of America, through South Africa up to her foundation and development in Zimbabwe. It historicized her national, regional and local assembly leadership structures. It also encapsulated the recruitment and deployment of pastors, elders, organizers and local committees in the AOG BTG church. Throughout the study, I found out that the church has been traditionally conventionally missionary, but disturbingly struggling to sustain her missionary work and meet

her operating expenses through freewill offerings, tithes, other congregational collections and donations.

Chapter five discussed and analyzed the primary findings of this study. It laid out the conceptualization of the identity of the Church, *missio Dei* and *missio Ecclesiae* in the AOG BTG church. It delineated leadership and congregational perceptions about the conception of sustainability, and the tenability of AOG BTG finances, inclusive challenges of business as a source of finances, effects of national economic crisis and *Covid-19* to church finances. The chapter also covered the positive impact of business on missionary work, complications as well as ways of effectively managing business without obstructing the primary mandate of the church.

Chapter six provided contextually viable strategies that can help the AOG BTG church to become economically sustainable in Zimbabwe. It unraveled the necessity and theology of strategies in church, considering that scriptures teach that the church should live by faith. It discoursed strategies such as interlinking faith and economics, integrating faith and research, reconciling *missio Ecclesiae* and business. Other strategies included reviewing traditional sources of income, rebuilding congregational stewardship, diversifying sources of income, setting up a business development unit for the church, evaluating volunteerism, as well as harnessing available human, material and financial resources towards multiplying streams of income.

This chapter seven gives the overall summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

7.2 Conclusions of the Study

7.2.1 Contextualization of Ecclesiology and Missiology is critical

The discussions, reviews, analysis and interpretations of this study unearthed that the church should contextualize ecclesiology and missiology in order for her to realize economic sustainability, accomplish her integral missionary work and regain her identity. Context is always preeminent for the comprehension of local circumstances and progressive strategizing towards what can effectively work for the actualization of the Church and accomplishment of her fundamental missionary work.

Having observed that Zimbabwe has been languishing in an economical tragedy for decades, and her predicament has been worsened by *Covid-19*, the operating costs of the church correspond with worsening economic situation and the sustainability of her traditional sources of finances

change respectively. Ecclesiology and missiology in Zimbabwe, like in every other nation, should therefore be always contextualized, evaluated, strategized and sustained from time to time.

7.2.2 The economics of the Church should be revolutionized

This study established that the traditional sources of church income, namely tithes, offerings, other congregational collections and donations are fluctuating and untenable because they are determined by erratic availability, unpredictable will and sometimes selective and conflicting conditions of givers.

Considering her precariousness, the church is enlightened to realize the unsustainability of her conventional streams of revenue, appreciate, conceptualize economics and delve into constructive engagements in contextually feasible investments to generate supplementary revenue in correspondence with her growing missionary liabilities for the capacitation, promotion and advancement of extensive work of the gospel.

7.2.3 Conceptual problems should be resolved

It was observed that the AOG BTG church has been bedeviled by conceptual misunderstandings and conflicting perceptions on the theologies of business, employment and volunteerism. Thus, the church repeatedly steps forward and backward as leaders agree and disagree on whether to embrace, shelve or shun business.

This was confirmed by the purchase and dumping of AOG BTG farms which some interviewees disclosed that certain heads had perceived their value as essential investments to diversify ecclesial incomes and later other leaders conceived that running business would sway the church from her core missionary business.

The same applies to employing or engaging volunteers in offices and fields of the church. The AOG BTG denomination is divided on whether to hire or invite congregants to volunteer. The church has consequently been stuck without properly working investments and engaging volunteers whose availability and reliability remains wavering. The church should brainstorm and conceptualize business as supportive to mission, and as missionary on its own by its potential to create platforms of ministry in the marketplace. More-so, she should consider incentivizing, and eventually employing volunteers. Without such reformist considerations, the

church may keep struggling and failing to realize economic sustainability and missionary efficiency in Zimbabwe.

7.2.4 Church should embrace Strategies for economic development

This study also rummaged that the AOG BTG church has been lacking contextually relevant strategies for her economic development as she fully submitted to faith while doing nothing innovatively tactful to grow her incomes. The church should therefore theologize strategies that this study proposed, such as interlinking faith and economics, integrating faith and research, reconciling *missio Ecclesiae* and business, as well as reviewing traditional sources of income, rebuilding congregational stewardship, diversification of sources of income, setting up a business development unit for the church, reviewing volunteerism, and harnessing available human, material, natural and financial resources as locally considerable strategies for the development of the church's economic sustainability.

7.3 Recommendations of the Study

1. It is recommendable for the AOG BTG church to evaluate and overhaul her operating system and liberate herself from traditionalism through adopting contextually relevant and feasible strategies for her economic sustainability, missionary efficiency and longevity in Zimbabwe.
2. I strongly recommend the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe to consider strategies that can help her to become economically sustainable in Zimbabwe, which are presented and discussed in chapter six of this thesis – such as reconciling faith with economics, integrating faith with research, interlinking *missio Ecclesiae* with business, rebuilding stewardship, setting up a business development unit and others that she can develop.
3. I recommend the AOG BTG National Executive to train pastors, regional and assembly leaders on how they can apply and utilize the aforementioned strategies towards developing and sustaining the church at all levels.
4. The church should also review her policies, identify policy gaps and fill them up to correspond with current religious, social, economic and political contexts.

7.4 Areas for further Research

A number of problems that are affecting the AOG BTG church, and other classical Pentecostal denominations in Zimbabwe were unearthed but could not be exhaustively addressed in this study. Understanding that problems necessitate researches, the following issues may need further attention;



- 1) Reviewing the integral ecclesiological mission in Zimbabwe;
- 2) Interrogating contemporary theologies of business and their contextual applicability;
- 3) Integrating Faith with Economics;
- 4) Interfacing Ecclesiology with Pandemics and Economics;
- 5) Theologizing the interplay of Ecclesiology and Politics.

I hope that this study will inform, enlighten and challenge other researchers to make broadminded considerations to pay attention to these, and, or other related matters that have emerged from this study. Such studies will contribute a lot towards additional reflections and reviews of the identity of the Church as well as new links between different *ecclesiologies* and economics towards globally, regionally and locally desired missionary contextualization, sustainability, effectiveness and development.



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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics Clearance



Faculty of Theology and Religion

Research Office
Mrs Daleen Kotzé

NAME: Mr K Tagwirei
STUDENT NUMBER: 21790532
COURSE: Doctoral
DATE: 11 May 2021
APPLICATION NUMBER: T016/21

This letter serves as confirmation that the research proposal of this student was evaluated by:

- 1) **The Research committee:** This applies to all research proposals
- 2) **The Research Ethics committee:** This applies only to research that includes people as sources of information

You are hereby notified that your research proposal (including ethical clearance where it is applicable) is approved.

Prof E van Eck
Chairperson: Research committee: Faculty of Theology and Religion

Dr T van Wyk
Chairperson: Research Ethics committee: Faculty of Theology and Religion



Appendix 2: Letter of Permission from Church

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD NATIONAL EXECUTIVE



P.O. Box 4254,
Harare, Zimbabwe
167 FIFE AVE BTWN 6TH & 7TH STREET,
Harare, Zimbabwe
Telephone: +263 4 290 7532
Fax: +263 4 290 7533
Email: aoghq@zol.co.zw
0773 872 721

22 April 2021

The Academic Dean
University of Pretoria

Dear Sir/Madam

Subject: Kimion Tagwirei

Greetings in the most wonderful name of Jesus Christ.

This letter serves to notify you that the **Assemblies of God** Leadership has unconditionally authorized Kimion Tagwirei to do his **PhD** research taking Assemblies of God as his case study.

The leadership of the church will cooperate with him in his research work.

Yours faithfully

Reverend Silas Mhazo

General Secretary



Appendix 3: Letter of Introduction & Consent for participants



Practical Theology and Mission studies

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION AND INFORMED CONSENT
FOR PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Title of the Study:

**The identity of the church and quest for her economic sustainability: A
case study of the AOG BTG church in Zimbabwe**

Researcher:

Kimion Tagwirei, University of Pretoria

Email address kimion22tc@gmail.com Mobile +263777430283

You are cordially invited to participate in an academic research study due to your experience and knowledge in the research area of your church denomination's economic sustainability. Each participant must receive, read, understand and sign this document *before* the start of the study. If a child is 7-17 years and is requested to partake in a research study, the parent/legal guardian must give consent. Children from 7-17 years are also required to sign an assent form.

Purpose of the study: The purpose of the study is to study Identity of the Church and Quest for her economic Sustainability in Zimbabwe. The results of the study may be published in an academic journal. You will be provided with a summary of our findings on request. No participants' names will be used in the final publication.

Duration of the study: The study will be conducted over a period of two years and its projected date of completion is 31 December 2022.

Research procedures: The study is based on Butzke (n.d) and Kitawi & Irungu (2015) who spoke volumes about ecclesiastic sustainability, quantitative and qualitative growth. The researcher will conduct face to face and online interviews on information gathering.

What is expected of you: You are kindly requested to answer prospective interview questions honestly.



Your rights: Your participation in this study is very important. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without stating any reasons and without any negative consequences. You, as participant, may contact the researcher at any time in order to clarify any issues pertaining to this research. The respondent as well as the researcher must each keep a copy of this signed document.

Confidentiality: All information will be treated as academic. Gathered data will only be used for academic purposes. Gathered data will be kept confidential. Engaged interviewees who prefer anonymity will be guaranteed that. Only those involved in this academic research will have access to findings. If, by any need, you choose to withdraw from participating in this research, any information you would have given will be deleted.

WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT

I hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature of this research. I understand that I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the research. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions.

Respondent: _____

Researcher: _____

Date: _____

Contact number of the Researcher:

VERBAL INFORMED CONSENT *(Only applicable if respondent cannot write)*

I, the researcher, have read and have explained fully to the respondent, named _____ and his/her relatives, the letter of introduction. The respondent indicated that he/she understands that he/she will be free to withdraw at any time.



Respondent: _____

Researcher: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____



Appendix 4: Interview Questions for AOG BTG leaders

1. What is your understanding of the identity of the Church?
2. What is the identity of the AOG BTG church?
3. What is the history of AOG BTG church:
 - a. *founder(s)*
 - b. *When was she founded?*
 - c. *What is her leadership structure?*
4. What do you understand by sustainability?
5. What are the sources of AOG BTG finances?
6. Has AOG BTG engaged in any entrepreneurial projects as a church?
7. Which missionary activities does AOG BTG church affords and attends to?
8. How sustainable have AOG BTG financial sources been in meeting her operational needs?
9. What are the positive effects of AOG BTG church business projects to her missionary work?
10. What are the negative effects of church projects to missionary work?
11. What strategies can help the church to be economically sustainable in Zimbabwe?

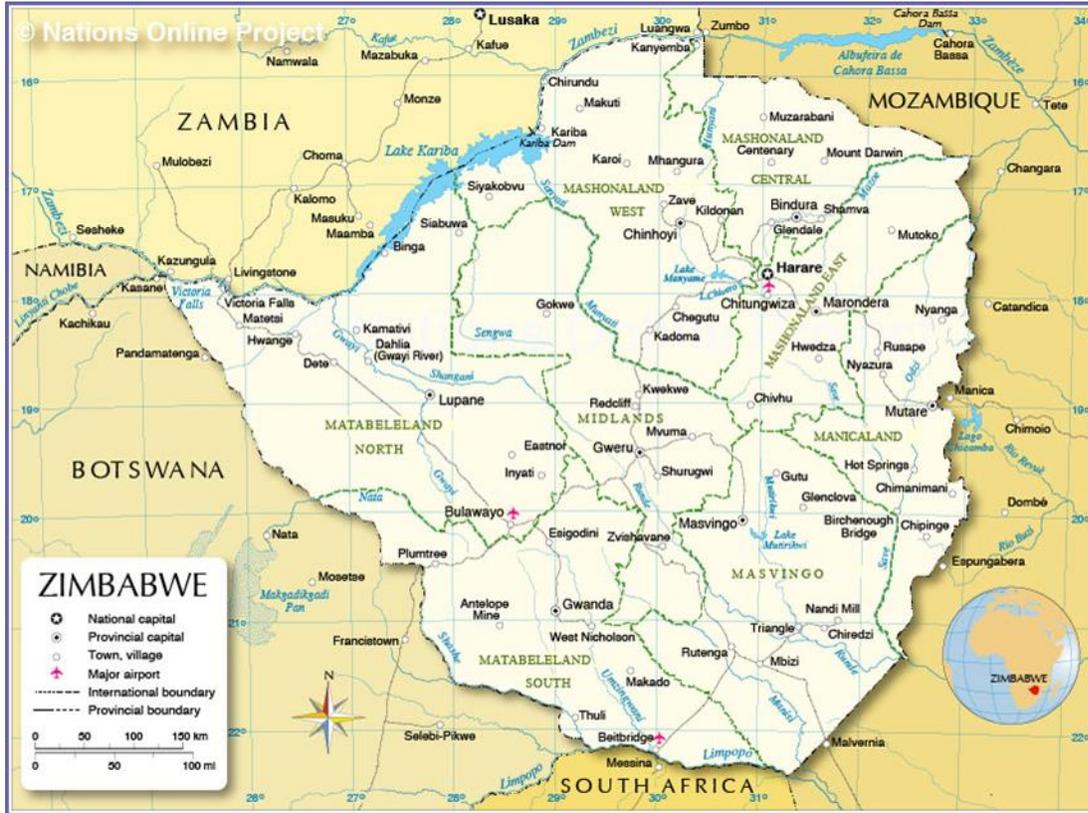


Appendix 5: Interview Questions for AOG BTG Congregants

1. What is your understanding of the identity of the Church?
2. What is the identity of AOG BTG church?
3. What is the history of the AOG BTG church?
 - a) founder(s)
 - b) When was she founded?
 - c) What is her leadership structure?
4. What do you understand by sustainability?
5. What are the sources of AOG BTG finances?
6. Has AOG BTG engaged in any entrepreneurial projects as a church?
7. Which missionary activities does AOG BTG church affords and attends to?
8. How sustainable have AOG BTG financial sources been in meeting her operational needs?
9. What are the positive effects of AOG BTG church business projects to her missionary work?
10. What are the negative effects of church projects to missionary work?
11. What strategies can help the church to be economically sustainable in Zimbabwe?



Appendix 6: Map of Zimbabwe



Source: <https://www.nationsonline.org>zim>