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REVIEW ARTICLE**Leadership Succession in Zimbabwe's Pentecostal Churches**Loshick Nhumburudzi^{1*} | Jeffrey Kurebwa¹,**Abstract**

This study sought to understand the leadership succession issues in Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe, focusing on ZAOGA and AFM churches. The research compared how the two largest Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe apply leadership principles in assuring peaceful continuity of their churches through leadership succession. Pentecostalism is a very strong Christian fundamental movement and an extreme of Protestantism. Qualitative methodology was used in the study. Key informant and semistructured interviews were used to collect data. This study found out that Pentecostal founders and leaders did not want to release power and control of their churches and wanted to die in office. In most cases their deaths leaves a power vacuum which is difficult to fill due to incapacity. This has in most cases led to splits and fights among family members and other church leaders.

Key words: leadership succession, Pentecostalism, founder, leader

1 | INTRODUCTION

This study was prompted by the recent increase in the number of Pentecostal movements in Southern Africa and Zimbabwe in particular. (1) alluded that the popularity of Pentecostal churches has attracted scholarly attention. According to the International Religious Freedom Report (2007), the majority of the Zimbabwean population which previously belonged to mainstream Western Christian churches such as the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Methodist have converted to a variety of indigenous charismatic evangelistic church groups breaking away from these mainstream denominations. Pentecostal churches have experienced splits. In Zimbabwe, Pentecostal churches and apostolic sects have been the fastest growing indigenous religious movements. In light of widespread Africa's post-independence poverty, socio-economic and political ills, the formation of

indigenous Pentecostal churches that attract a huge following in Zimbabwe has not been a very difficult task (2)

Unlike mainstream churches which are administered by boards overseas, Pentecostal leadership in Zimbabwe has been characterised by single charismatic leaders who are called by different names such as 'Prophet', 'Apostle', 'High Priest', 'Judge', 'Baptiser', 'Bishop', 'Archbishop', 'President' or some other religious titles of power (3). The unity of the church revolves around the founder of the church. The hierarchical structures that are developed as the movement grows are usually along family lines and the founder's close friends or relatives who are catapulted into the echelons of power by the church leader. Daneel (1988) observed that most Pentecostal churches became family churches due to the nature of the first converts who were normally close friends or family members and therefore were quali-

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fied to be appointed to the powerful leadership positions of the church.

ZAOGA FIF founded by Ezekiel Guti and AFM by John Lake are well established Pentecostal churches. Their worship services are characterised by speaking in tongues and emotionally vibrant evangelistic preaching that attracts people of different ages (2). Both denominations have a similar Pentecostal ministry, well acclaimed theological colleges, over a thousand assemblies and full-time pastors all over the world. These churches were chosen because they are the oldest and have the largest following. Their leadership has been set as a model and reference point for other Pentecostal churches.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by the Social Constructionist theory by (4). According to the theory, the world can be socially created by social practices but at the same time can be experienced as if its nature is pre-given and fixed. The Social Constructionist theory attempts to integrate various strengths of models used in earlier leadership succession studies through its emphasis on interactive relationships and social constructions of practices and actions of actors. Human and external influences such as institutional and environmental impacts are of most concern during succession. Issues that need to be managed in Pentecostal leadership succession are relationships, individual attitudes and experiences, beliefs and denominational cultures. Social Constructionists postulate that various institutions reproduce constructions of leadership that coincide with concurrent episodes and processes at actor level (5). There is a lot of uncertainty and speculation as the church's middle leaders such as Pastors and Overseers do not make any decisions that influence change the mindset of the church founder or leader. Most of these Pastors and Overseers view their positions as a favour from the church leader.

2 | THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR LEADERSHIP AND SUCCESSION

The Bible contains many examples of God's call to leadership in both the Old and New Testament.

Throughout the Bible, there are various allusions to leadership and succession. The Bible includes many examples of how God reached the next generation through leadership succession. Leadership succession is dependent upon obedience as indicated in the calling of Abraham (Genesis.12:1-5), Moses (Exodus. 3:6) and Jesus Christ (John 17:4). The relationship between Moses and Joshua in the Old Testament clearly demonstrates that leadership and succession were needed for the nation to reach the Promised Land of Canaan.

“So the LORD said to Moses, take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him. Have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him. At his command he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out and at his command they will come in” (Numbers 27:15-21).

The context of this Biblical passage is the transition of leadership from Moses to Joshua. The bible clearly shows that leadership succession was orderly and gradual. There was cooperation between the predecessor and his successor. Moses as the outgoing leader was concerned about the community's future and so appealed to the Lord for the appointment of his successor (Gaebelien, 1990). A formal ceremony for the transfer of authority took place before the community (Numbers 27:18-23). The Scriptures show that Moses as Joshua's predecessor set the context of the mission. Even though Moses was not reaching Canaan, he still provided the vision for his successor. In Deuteronomy (31:1-7), Moses stood in front of the community, acknowledged his own mortality, and formally indicated that Joshua was going to lead the Israelites into the promised land of Canaan (Craigie, 1992).

“Then Moses went out and spoke these words to all Israel; I am now a hundred and twenty years old and I am no longer able to lead you” (Deuteronomy 31:1-2).

Of significance in the scriptures was the anticipation of Moses' departure and the subsequent preparation for the eventual transfer of leadership and its succession (Num. 27:12-21, Deut.31:1-8). Leadership succession is for continuity between successive

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generations. In Deuteronomy, the Scriptures provide another account of an orderly transfer of leadership and succession which involved Aaron transferring priestly responsibilities to his son Eleazar (Num. 20:22-29). Again, the transference and succession of leadership was held in front of the entire nation. The Bible also reveals that a successful succession depends upon how well the successor responds to his predecessor's guidance (1 Kings 11:11-13). Similarly, leadership succession was prevalent among prophets such as found in 1 Kings 19:16 where Elijah anointed Elisha as his successor. The relationship between Elijah and Elisha signifies the close relationship between the mentor and the mentee which must continue until the founder or current leader's departure. In the New Testament leadership succession was figured when Jesus Christ transferred his vision to all His successive followers (Matt. 28:18-20). Apostle Paul acknowledged his departure to his mentee Timothy and observed that:

“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim. 2:2; 2 Tim. 4:1-7).

3 | THE ORIGINS OF AFM CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE

The AFM church was formed in the USA in 1906 (6). Two American missionaries namely John Graham Lake and Thomas Hezmalhalch then launched the church in Johannesburg, South Africa in May 1908. This marked the coming of Pentecostalism to Southern Africa (6). AFM is the oldest classical Pentecostal church in Zimbabwe. It is a member of the Apostolic Faith Mission International, which is a fellowship of 52 national churches located in Southern, Central and East Africa, India, Pakistan, Australia, Brazil, Belgium, UK and USA (7-9) indicated that Lake and Hezmalhalch's apostolic mission in South Africa was full of signs, wonders and miracles. According to Burger and Nel (2008), the two missionaries called their new found ministry the Apostolic Faith Mission. It was formerly registered in November 1913 as an unlimited company rather than as a new denomination due to the strict requirements by the South African authorities.

The church was formerly registered on 27 May 1909. Thomas Hezmalhalch was elected the first President while John G. Lake was the Vice President of AFM. The election of Hezmalhalch was probably because he was older than Lake (7, 10). Towards the end of 1910, Thomas Hezmalhalch returned to the USA after serving a one year term and John G. Lake became the President until 1913 when he also left for the USA (7). Reverend Le Roux was elected to be the third president of the AFM church on 11 November 1913. He held the post for 30 years until 1943 when his health condition deteriorated (10). The church elected F.P. Moller as the fourth President in 1966. Moller served for 22 years until 1988 (11).

4 | AFM IN ZIMBABWE

The AFM Church was a self-propagating movement which spread into Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) through evangelists and migrant miners who had converted into Pentecostalism in South African mines (12). According to Maxwell (1999), towns and mining compounds in South Africa were the prime areas for missionary activity. However, the church later spread to rural areas and neighbouring countries through returning labour migrants or native preachers. This led to the first preachers who brought the church into Zimbabwe to become the leaders of the various assemblies which they established in Zimbabwe. These assemblies had little links with the main AFM church in South Africa (12). Many researchers do not agree on the actual dates of the establishment of AFM in Zimbabwe. This is mainly due to the unrecorded sporadic movement of immigrants from South Africa to Zimbabwe (6, 12, 13). However, research carried out by (14) indicates that AFM church was established in Matabeleland South in 1908 by migrant workers who were coming back for the 1908 Christmas holiday.

Other researchers have also indicated that organised groups of white Missionaries were sent to Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) by Le Roux, the AFM President to establish and coordinate AFM activities (6, 11-14). Given the apartheid system in South Africa at the time, President Le Roux devoted himself to white churches and appointed one Reverend W.F. Dugmore to be in charge of the African

outreach work that included expansion into Zimbabwe. During Rhodesia, the Pentecostalism movement was in constant conflict with the government possibly due to uncoordinated church activities and lack of supervision by its leaders (10). However, Rev Louis L. Kruger after a long struggle with the Rhodesian government finally got the AFM church registered by the Rhodesian government on the 4th of November 1947. This led the church to be known as 'Kruger's Church' in various circles of the country (10–12). After that Kruger became the first registered Overseer of the AFM church in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). (15) noted that Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe was generally characterised by uneducated charismatically gifted leaders who made a lot of leadership errors due to illiteracy. The Inspector Native Development Department of Rhodesia on 22 June 1932 rejected AFM's application for registration and noted, 'Withholding of approval is because of educational qualification' (NAZ File S 1542 M 8 B 1). From 1948 to 1983, Rev Willard Wilson was responsible for coordinating all AFM activities in Zimbabwe (12, 13)

5 | THE ORIGIN OF ZAOGA FIF CHURCH

ZAOGA is one of the oldest single led Pentecostal movements in Zimbabwe. The church was founded by Ezekiel Handinawangu Guti on 12th May 1960 (16). The church is internationally known as 'Forward in Faith Ministries International' (FIFMI). It is found in more than 125 nations and States. The church has over 2000 assemblies in Southern Africa alone (16). For the past 57 years, the church has been led by its charismatic leader Ezekiel Handinawangu Guti (16). ZAOGA has eight Bible Colleges in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia, Ghana and United Kingdom. (17) classifies ZAOGA as an indigenous African Independent Church by virtue of being Zimbabwean-founded and based international movement which is totally independent of Western missionaries' control.

The Church's operations are guided by the ZAOGA Guidance, Rules and Policy (2014) which is the Constitution approved by the Executive and accepted by the National Council of the church. The ZAOGA Guidance, Rules and Policy is for use by lower

church leadership, Overseers, Pastors, Elders and Deacons. Articles 5 and 6 of the Guidance, Rules and Policy constitutes the Executive Board, General Secretary and the Day to Day Advisory Board which form the Episcopal body of the church. Article 14 states that the Founder (Ezekiel Guti) of the church (also referred to as President) has the full powers to appoint Overseers after consultation with the Executive. There is however, a knowledge gap on who constitutes the Executive and where the Founder fits in the Executive as well as the powers of the Day to Day Advisory Board of Bishops. One would assume the Episcopal body was subordinate to the Founder. The Founder exercises absolute powers and decides which powers or matters to delegate to the Executive (Article 14.1).

In his book entitled 'History of ZAOGA Forward in Faith', Ezekiel Guti traces the roots of ZAOGA church to his birth place Mutema Ngaone-Chichichi village in Chipinge rural of Zimbabwe. It is at Ngaone village where Ezekiel Guti as a young boy had his first vision and encounter with God as he was praying alone in the bush (16). In the book, Ezekiel Guti indicates that "I began preaching on 12 May 1960 which is the day this ministry was born, under a gum tree, in Bindura" (16). Bindura town located in Mashonaland Central Province, Zimbabwe, then becomes the mythical birthplace of ZAOGA but the roots are traced back to the founder's rural home in Chichichi Village, Chipinge, Manicaland province (Maxwell 2006:4).

The origins of ZAOGA are contested as some critics of the movement have arguably documented that ZAOGA was founded by a prayer band that broke away from the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) church in Highfields, Harare (Maxwell 1995). Traces of Ezekiel Guti's links with AFM Church were deliberately erased from the ZAOGA history book. Ezekiel Guti stated that the 'Angel of the Lord' directed him to be baptised by Enock Gwanzura, an AFM Elder

(16) In the 'History and Tenets of the AFM', Ezekiel Guti and other AFM Elders like Gabriel Chipoyera, Zacharia Mugodhi, Amon Nyika, Simon Vambe, Chaza and others are listed as some of the good Elders who supported the AFM Pastors /Evangelists Enock and Samson Gwanzura and prophetess Mbuya Rhoda Ruwuya of Domboshava (11). A recorded

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host of co-founders of ZAOGA include Abel Sande, George Chikowa, Joseph Choto, Clement Kaseke, Lazarus Mamvura, Aaron Muchengeti, Priscilla Ngoma, and Caleb Ngorima (Maxwell, 1995:351). One can therefore conclude that the theological history of ZAOGA was not a chronological true reflection of the origins of the movement as other important figures and facts were not recorded. ZAOGA's historical narratives do not mention the core founders or the significant role that this group played in the formation of the church.

The ZAOGA church history emphasises more on Ezekiel Guti's rural youth experiences and not much is recorded about the urban dynamics in Highfields, Harare. (17) observes that Guti's sole founding position is spelt out in songs such as "*Zvakatanga nababa Guti*" (It all started with Baba Guti), "*Pa Ngaone, takange tisipo!*" (At Ngaone we were not there). This study was persuaded to accept observations by (17) that emphasis on Guti's Ngaone village divine encounters in the church expressed through music, regalia, slogans, conference themes and sermons was a 'calculated political move to shape the theology of the movement, to authenticate and bolster the controversial origins of the movement in order for Ezekiel Guti's family to have a firm grip over the ever expanding movement' (17) This means that the role of co-founders was purged, silenced or deliberately left so that they do not benefit from the church. (17) argues that the Ngaone rural narrative serves to mystify the figure of Ezekiel Guti which demonstrates that ZAOGA is truly an African Independent Church that has no links or influence with Western controlled churches.

Ezekiel Guti's spiritual experiences and encounters were mainly at Ngaone Village, Bindura Mountain and Cottage 593, Highfields, Harare. These places have been declared ZAOGA sacred sites and form the basis for justification of the church naming system (17) These include Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University (ZEGU), Ezekiel Guti Primary School and Ezekiel Guti Farm among others. According to Takavarasha, (1997:4), Guti's mother Dorcas, well known as Mbuya Dorcas, was credited for giving birth to an 'African apostle', and hence ZAOGA hospital in Waterfalls, Harare, was named after her as Mbuya Dorcas Hospital. This authenticates the Guti family name over the church and the impression that

ZAOGA church is a family property. It appears the decision to locate the ZEGU in Bindura was also a calculated political move to link the university with the sacred site where the church was started (17)

6 | RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This research used a case study research design. The research selected AFM and ZAOGA churches from Zimbabwe. Qualitative research methodology was used in this study. In this study, the sample consisted of 60 general members and 20 top senior leaders from both the ZAOGA and AFM churches, and 5 key informants from civic, academic, religious bodies, political and traditional groups in Harare and Bindura. The sample size had 85 members. The respondents were former presidents and deputies, former and serving general secretaries, Executive members, bishops, overseers, pastors, elders, deacons, lay leaders and ordinary church members from both ZAOGA and AFM churches. These Pentecostal respondents provided their views of ZAOGA and AFM leadership succession. Data collection methods were key informant interviews and a survey.

7 | DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Most key informant responses commended ZAOGA church for having achieved gender balance in all its leadership structures from Deacons to Archbishop. They cited that the ordination of Eunor Guti to the post of Archbishop meant that she was the only qualified candidate to succeed her husband. In interviews with the Secretary General and Bishops in the ZAOGA church, it was established that several women held top posts alongside men as directors of departments in the church. On the other hand, the AFM church was found to be patristic in nature. The term uses such terms like 'Vana Baba' (Fathers) to refer to church boards from assembly to national level. No woman sits in the Apostolic Council, and as such women are not eligible to be elected to the post of President of AFM. According to constructionists believe that as a result of constructive pro-

cesses that are socially and personally constructed, people take it as pre-given, such as the AFM scenario about women. Response from one human rights key informant urged the liberal Pentecostal churches to respect calls by women's organisations for gender equality. The church should be a model of social equality as the Bible commands;

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28 NKJV).

An observation of the AFM Constitution revealed that the Ladies Department was regulated through *Instructions of the Ladies Department of the AFM in Zimbabwe* and not a Constitution like the Young People's Organisation and the Children's Ministry Departments. The President was *ex-officio* chairman of the Young People's Organisation, the Children Ministry and all other AFM Departments at national level. It is only the Ladies Department which was chaired by the President's wife. This totally alienates activities of the Ladies Department from the main church administrative line. Women are also excluded from participating in the control, administration, leadership and succession of church leadership (15) This study submits that by sexual segregation the AFM's

Constitution was in violation of Section 17 on Gender balance and Section 56 on equality and non-discrimination

8 | KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE CURRENT LEADER OF THE CHURCH

All the respondents knew their current church leaders. ZAOGA respondents indicated that their leader was Archbishop Ezekiel Guti while AFM respondents indicated that their leader was Reverend Madziyire. ZAOGA respondents were well aware that Archbishop Ezekiel Guti was the founder of the church. The church members have a tradition of praying in the name of 'Mwari WaBaba Guti' (The God of Father Guti) as well as composing songs which popularises the leader and founder of the church (17). On the contrary, AFM Church presidents have not been popular figures with the Zimbabwean society but the current leader, Reverend

Madziyire had surpassed his predecessors in popularity within the church and outside circles of Zimbabwe. Reverend Madziyire has been the longest serving President in the life of the AFM church in Zimbabwe (12). Outside the AFM, he has defended his integrity and post several times in the courts and the church has witnessed the highest number of splits under his leadership (11).

9 | KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE SUCCESSOR TO THE CURRENT LEADER

Most AFM general respondents viewed the deputy AFM president as the one likely to succeed in the event that the current AFM President was removed from office through incapacitation, elections or death. The respondents indicated that when the AFM National Workers Council holds elections for President, the second favourite candidate becomes the Deputy President. This situation strategically placed the Deputy President to be the possible successor to the president. The history of the AFM presidential succession has mostly seen the Deputy President succeeding the President. Reverend J. Mvenge was Deputy to the first black AFM in Zimbabwe leader, Reverend Langton Kupara and succeeded him after his death. Reverend Mvenge was also succeeded by his deputy Reverend Stephen Mutemererwa. There were mixed reactions from the ZAOGA respondents. The majority of the respondents indicated that they were not part of the selection or election process to choose the next leader. The however, indicated that Archbishop Eunor Guti was likely to succeed her husband while others indicated that the Secretary General was the second favourite after Archbishop Eunor Guti. This view by general church members was persuaded by the concentration of ZAOGA FIF functional administrative powers to the office of the Executive Secretary General under Article 5 of ZAOGA Guidance, Rules and Policy (2014). Some respondents indicated that one of the Bishops would be elected to succeed the leadership of ZAOGA Church. This view was in line with Article 14.2 of the ZAOGA Guidance, Rules and Policy (2014) which states that; “The term of office of any future President shall be three years. However, he remains eligible for re-election”. The assump-

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tion was that the future president would likely to be male and would come from among the Executive Board members. However, Section 5 of the ZAOGA Guidance, Rules and Policy does not mention who constitutes the Executive but it could be inferred to include the Founder, his immediate family, Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General. Below the Executive was the appointed Day-to-Day Advisory Board of Bishops in terms of Article 6.3 as read with Article 29 of the said Guidance, Rules and Policy whose constitutional duty shall be to “Use the approved guiding principles in determining or reviewing sexual offences”. It is also not clear which board will elect the successor president; the Executive, Appointed Bishops, Executive plus Council of All Bishops or Executive plus Appointed Bishops. These vacuums of knowledge in the succession process are likely to be potential areas of conflict that were going to spark succession conflicts Ezekiel Guti becomes incapacitated or dies.

Many Pentecostal leaders in Africa assume the deified-living saint figure that naturally enhances unquestionable abuse of authority (17) observes that the status in ZAOGA was such that all properties were unquestionably named after Ezekiel Guti and his family. The Founder's authority was further propagated through divine claims during the church's anniversaries to invoke memories of Ezekiel Guti's past in order to deal with the challenges of leadership in a 'multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multilingual, religiously pluralistic, administratively divided political systems such as in Zimbabwe. Guti's monopoly leadership over his church overshadows every facet of life in ZAOGA such that followers make reference to the God of Ezekiel (*Mwari wababa Guti*), 'God of Father Guti' during their prayers (17). This makes him the key to God in ZAOGA and no one can suggest about replacing him during his lifetime. Ezekiel Guti's leadership titles show the respect, authority and command he enjoys from the church. His titles include Archbishop, Apostle, Professor, Servant and Prophet. According to (17), as 'Archbishop and Apostle', Ezekiel Guti stamps his absolute authority over all ZAOGA FIF churches. As a 'Prophet', he is the voice of all the decrees which must be taken seriously without protest or questioning. According to (17) the greatest challenge to ZAOGA was whether members and

senior leaders would accept Eunor Guti's leadership of the church after the incapacitation or death of her husband. The ZAOGA leadership and loyalists to Ezekiel Guti have demonstrated immense insight and innovation in handling the 'leadership politics' in the church by formulating a capturing theology around the founder of the church (17)

10 | CONCLUSIONS

The study revealed that AFM was predominantly Presbyterian in governance from assembly to national level and leaders succeeded positions by election. However, the President, Deputy President, Secretary General and the National Administrator of the AFM have formed an Executive Committee above the Apostolic Council, which is against the Presbyterian system that is spelt out in the Constitution. The research found out that the word 'Executive' is not found in the AFM Constitution and the AFM President was assuming 'Executive Powers' thus AFM governance blended Presbyterian with Episcopalian polity (9). In ZAOGA, church governance was found to be absolutely Episcopalian, with a constituted Executive that gave directives to the church. The Founder's wife and the Secretary General as members of the Executive were in line for the succession as they were favoured by majority respondents interviewed in this research. Succession was therefore found to be by inheritance in ZAOGA as suggested by (17)

It was clear from all the responses in this study that both AFM and ZAOGA churches did not involve their general church members in the selection of succession leaders. In the AFM, only a 10 member Electoral College per province was allowed to cast votes to elect the top 'Executive' members of the church (Article 13.1.1 and 13.4.1). In ZAOGA, succession was a hidden issue from the general membership who were living in speculation. This confirms the assumption of that there was no clear succession in Zimbabwe's Pentecostalism. Leadership politics, hero worshipping, formulation of a theology around a leader and personal claims by leaders had socially constructed a reality in the Pentecostal churches that the founders and leaders were God-given.

The study concludes that a democratic election pro-

cess of leadership in Pentecostal churches will guarantee accepted, smooth and peaceful transfer of power from one generation to the next. Currently AFM is in its fifth generation of successive leadership through elections and has survived under different leaders. ZAOGA was adopting elections in choosing the Founder's successor and future Presidents in terms of Article 14.2 of the ZAOGA Guidance, Rules and Policy (2014). In the AFM church, 65 years is set as the age limit for the President while no age limit is set for ZAOGA. This is possibly to accommodate Archbishop Eunor Guti who is now advanced in age. Most Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe have collapsed after the death of the founder. This confirms the observation by (18) that many Pentecostal Churches are just one generation away from extinction because of lack of a succession plan. Pentecostal leaders in Zimbabwe should start considering stepping down and leaving leadership to a new generation so that they will die peacefully having seen the perpetual continuity of their visions through the next generation.

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