



## Covid-19: Impact on religion and spirituality in Zimbabwe

Joseph Muwanzi<sup>a</sup>, Peter Masvotore<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Midlands State University, Zimbabwe

<sup>b</sup>United Theological College, Zimbabwe

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Published online, 2023

### ABSTRACT

In an attempt to come up with an informed interpretation of Christian spirituality within the Corona Virus pandemic (Covid-19), this article addresses the following objectives; reflection on theodicy, why God allowed Covid-19 to happen, exposing how Christian community reacted to the phenomenon and assessing Christianity as a complementary medicine during the prevalence of the pandemic virus. Mixed method design of the qualitative and quantitative approach was adopted with a sample size constituting 14 participants. The primary and secondary data were sourced from the bible, newspapers, articles, internet material as well as telephone interviews. The study found that the experiences of Covid-19 implied affirmations that God punishes the humanity against sin, fulfils biblical prophecies, posed trial and spiritual growth and insinuated that it was God pulling the church and state to the round table. Other issues are that the church got to appropriate and maximise the technological era, partake in the paradigm shift of religious worship in traditions and practices and God's intervention. The study concludes that humanity is religious and Christian religion provided the necessary remedy, such as healing, to cope with Covid-19.

**KEYWORDS:** Christianity, Covid-19, Medicine, Religion, Spirituality, Zimbabwe



## **Introduction**

The prevalence of Corona Virus (Covid-19) pandemic took the world by surprise and changed the global societies' operations with regards to social, political, economic as well as the religious and spiritual dimensions. As the first infections were recorded in China at the end of 2019, the Covid-19 virus continued to spread across the globe. Resultantly, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a public health emergency of international concern on 30 January, and a pandemic, on 11 March 2020 (Balkhair, 2020). The study examines the impact of the pandemic on Christian religion and spirituality, focusing mainly on the Zimbabwean context from March 2020 to March 2022. On assessing the Christian community, considerations were on how Covid-19 is viewed from theodicy perspective, effects on religious traditional operations and Christianity as a healing therapy complementary to medicine.

### **A brief background to the Covid-19**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2020) define corona viruses as a large family of viruses causing illness in animals and humans. In humans, the virus causes respiratory infections; common cold to severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory (MERS). As of 29 March 2020, a total of 634,835 confirmed cases, 29,891 confirmed deaths were reported in 202 affected countries. Zimbabwe has not been spared by the COVID-19 pandemic (ZCTU, 2020). According to Sulkowski and Ignatowski (2020), one of the fundamental methods of limiting the spread of Covid-19 is social distancing, quarantine and a radical change in contacts between people should be employed. Since Christian denominations are based on religious communities, health pandemics such as the Ebola and Covid-19 are a challenge for the identities and life of these communities. Following the declaration by WHO of Covid-19 as a global pandemic, the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) declared a state of disaster on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, banning all social gatherings inclusive of the churches (ZCTU, 2020).

### **Conceptual Underpinnings**

The study has to be understood within the conceptual underpinning of theodicy and Christian spirituality. Theodicy "is a defense of the integrity of the justice and righteousness of God in light of the evil, injustice, and undeserved suffering in the world" (Waters, 1997 p. 1). God does 'inflict' suffering directly and indirectly for many different reasons: judgment, discipline, refining, and

more, but Satan is behind much of human misery (Watres, 1997). However, the world in this religious cosmology, is created in such a way that tragic events will happen. The world would be better if such catastrophes could be averted because suffering creates a crisis, a rupture, which cannot be managed easily, but only witnessed by others (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016). However, suffering is not a problem of the deity, it is an ethical problem and of response because God 'suffers' along with the people, travelling in exile like the Jews (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016).

**I**n general, suffering often includes feelings of alienation, of abandonment, of loss resulting to feel as if God has moved away for the rescue. Scientifically, coronavirus (Covid-19) is a respiratory infection, an illness caused by a virus that can spread from person to person with the symptoms that can range from mild to severe illness (WHO, 2020). However, from theological understanding, the coronavirus is a pandemic/pestilence, a widespread plague or epidemic that brings death. Biblically, a pestilence is presented as divine judgment as in the case of one of the ten plagues of Egypt (Exod. 9:1-7). In the Scriptures, plagues are God's usable natural phenomena to bring chastisement to his erring people as has been reflected in Revelations. 21:9 and 22:18), they foreshadow the eschatological devastations. Generally, pestilence, plagues and pandemic can be used inter-changeably (Longman III, Enns & Straus, 2013).

**W**ith regards to Christian religion, Longman III et al. (2013) define it as the system of worship particularly by Christians shaping the foundational theological principles undergirding this system of worship such as doctrinal standards and rituals performed during worship. It is also expressed as "a system of beliefs in a divine or superhuman power, and practice of worship or other rituals directed towards such a power" none other than God (Beit-Hallahmi, 1975 p. 1). Spirituality, refers to "the way one lives out one's faith in daily life, the way a person relates to the ultimate conditions of existence" (Vaughan, 1991 p. 105). According to Spilka and McIntosh (1996) spirituality is that particular belief within a religious framework which can be personal or group that searches for the sacred. The terms Christian religion and Christian spirituality have been used interchangeably.

**C**hristian religion and Christian spirituality provide potent sources of comfort, direction, and meaning for many people, but they can also be sources of strain and struggle. Some believers see themselves as victims of supernatural attack (Juola & Rose, 2005).

Generally, as the conceptual definitions were articulated by different scholars, it is clear that besides being religious or spiritual, human beings face the problem of suffering. Loved ones can die, floods and tornadoes destroy homes, accidents, crime, and serious illness shatter the illusion of invulnerability. These concepts therefore help one in understanding the impact of Covid-19 on Christian religion and spirituality within the Zimbabwean context.

## Methodology

Due to the Covid-19 induced-lockdowns, the researchers were not able to do field work. Rather the research process resorted to desktop research, discourse analysis, observations and telephone interviews with small selected number of fellow clergymen and congregants. Telephone interviews were conducted from the between April and May of 2020 with 14 representatives of Christian Churches operating in Zimbabwe. The table below represents the interviewees who participated in the study. Gender sensitivity was also observed in this purposive sample interview.

Table 1: Interviewees who participated in the study

<b>Respondent's Code</b>	<b>Church Representative</b>	<b>Location</b>
MCZ1	Methodist Church in Zimbabwe- Minister	Harare-Epworth
MCZ2	Methodist Church in Zimbabwe-Minister	Chitungwiza-Zengeza
MCZ3	Methodist Church in Zimbabwe-Lay Person	Kadoma
MCZ4	Methodist Church in Zimbabwe-Lay Person	Gweru-Mtapa
UMC5	United Methodist Church-Lay Person	Mutare-Dangamvura
UMC6	United Methodist Church-Minister	Harare-Mt. Pleasant
UCCSA7	United Congregational Church of Southern Africa-Minister	Bulawayo
AC8	Anglican Church-Minister	Gutu-Bhasera
RCC9	Roman Catholic Church- lay Person	SA-UKZN
RCC10	Roman Catholic Church-Priest	Harare-Mt. Pleasant
SAC11	Seventh-day Adventist- Lay Person	Sanyati-Copper Queen
RCZ12	Reformed Church in Zimbabwe	Gutu
UCCZ13	United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe-Lay Person	Gweru-Senga
ZAOGA14	Zimbabwe Assemblies of God-Evangelist	Gweru-Mkoba

## Results

### *Etiological Perspectives on Covid-19*

#### *Theodicy*

The Covid-19 plague was understood, and interpreted, differently by interviewees from different Christian denominations. It was reported that background influences people to project, judge or interpret the phenomena. With regards to the Covid-19, the political, social, economic, health and religious communities conceptualise it differently though sometimes coming to terms with a global plague. For some politicians, and senior government officials in Zimbabwe, notably Oppah Muchinguri-Kashiri, the Minister of Defense, “the pandemic was a punishment from God on the West for imposing economic sanctions on Zimbabwe” (*The NewsDay*, 2020 p. 1). This inference made the nation struggle to deal with the misconception resulting from understanding Covid-19 as a punishment from God. Although there were efforts to retract the statement it was too late, because the social media had already transported the news abroad. Since this article focuses on the impact of Covid-19 on Christian religion and spirituality, responses derived inferences through religious lenses over the matter of theodicy. From the assertion above one can conclude that the experience of Covid-19 implied affirmations that God punishes the nation against sin. However, the preceding utterance by Oppah Muchinguri-Kashiri has a theological foundation. Biblically, when God ‘sends a plague among the people, and when they humble themselves by praying, seeking his face and turned away from their wicked ways, God can forgive the sins and heals the land’ (2 Chronicles 7: 13-14). This reflects that some of the Christians had a strong belief that God allowed it to happen as a reprimand to sinfulness

The study also established that, the Christian instruction is informed by the Bible composed of the Old and New Testament. In the Old Testament, God is portrayed as punishing his people when they transgress and redeems them when they turn back from their wicked ways. This understanding is portrayed during the destruction of humanity by floods because of sin in Genesis 7. The New Testament portrays God as the suffering Messiah, who is prepared to go on to the cross to save lost humanity.

People of all times face calamities and are bound to always ask why things happen the way they happen. Interviewees emphasised that ‘*Some Christians perceive Covid-19 as a theodicy issue. They at times argue that it is a form of a calamity caused by human sin*’ (Telephone Interview, UMC5). Although, one may attribute

and code-name some statements made by politicians and government officials as 'political statements', to attribute Covid-19 as a punishment from God as insinuated the Zimbabwean Defense Minister, is a misdemeanour that relegate God to an unjust, confused and cruel God (The *NewsDay*, 2020).

### *Millennialism Fulfilment*

**R**espondents also proffered that some Christians have also incorporated elements of millennialism that the pandemic is a sign that the world is about to end. This can be referenced from the text with regards to the signs of the end of the age. The response states "the end will not come right away before experiences of great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places" (Luke 21:11) (SAC11).

**I**n view of the above, the majority of the Christian believing community are of the opinion that Covid-19 is the work of the devil and not God. The fact that the pandemic has disrupted the majority of the religious activities has reinforced the belief that the pandemic is the work of the Antichrist. Some African Independent Churches (AICs) defied the national lockdowns as tantamount to giving in to the devil, and they continued to meet at their places of worship.

**F**urther analysis of the results is affirmed by the text which reflects the devil's diversified and indirect skirmishes to prevent worship of God. The devil who is antichrist opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Actually, religious activities are being carried out not in the churches or temples, but not at the level they have been done before the lockdown.

**I**t was further argued by respondents that whether Covid-19 was created in a laboratory or that it is a natural pandemic that befell humanity, God permitted it. From a scriptural understanding, Christ promises protection to his followers as they would experience some threats as presented in the famous Jesus' prayer in John 17:15, "*My prayer is not that you will take them out of the world, but that you will keep them from the Evil One.*"

**W**hat this could mean is that God may have allowed the plague to be experienced so that the world could witness the power of God. Theologically, it is the "permissive will of God" drawn from the book of Job. The Book of Job, explicates Job's despite that he was a God-fearing person as such God would like

his people to acknowledge him, in every situation. From the results, however, it was questioned that if God is an all powerful and in control, why does he allow innocent souls to perish? The preoccupation was that even the faithful continue to grapple with what God wants humanity to learn because He has allowed it, despite how the other side of the equation remains unaccounted for. In view of such theological debates, it attributes that God is still in control and will respond appropriately at the opportune time.

**R**esults further show general submission that the “Covid 19 cannot be seen as punishment from God or asking why God in not intervening. When looking from the source of infection, it is from the returnees which means if it was not the case, we could not have experienced it.” It was noted that:

*‘Zimbabweans we have not yet reached high levels as compared to Western Europe or South America, despite similar climate conditions on the equator. Probably because we are blessed climatically, or it could be that our governments took preventive measures. There is always a reason for anything good or evil (Telephone Interview, UCCSA 7).*

**W**ong and Weiner (1981) assert that when faced with suffering, a natural response is to conduct an attribution search in an attempt to pinpoint the source of suffering and the reasons behind it. Sometimes people attribute responsibility to God, in which they believe that God either caused or allowed the suffering to happen. They may hold God partly responsible for suffering even when a human perpetrator exists. In that respect, respondents believed that the Covid-19 brought a new perspective on what life really means in regarding where the power of life lies. From an African perspective, most Africans ‘trusted’ the Western countries as having power over humanity and scientific advancement. Africans, and others elsewhere, thought of God not in the way they now do particularly when it came to times of hopelessness.

**O**verall, whether Covid-19 is the question of theodicy, millennialism or time for God to show His power to protect His people, does not leave out the question of its impact to the Christian community. In that regard, the study explored how Christianity was affected, responded and how worship was considered a complimentary healing process.

### *Impact of Covid-19 to the religious communities*

In view of the impact of Covid-19 towards the Christians activities, it was noted that “initially, churches received directive on closure of church gatherings with mixed feelings probably because it was their first experience” (Telephone Interview, RCC10). This portrays that it is difficult to be abruptly divorced from worship traditions which yield to after effects such as lapsing from faith. According to Quadri (2020), the events related to the Covid-19 affected all religious activities. Ideally, the suspension of gatherings was to circumvent the spread of the pandemic during such times. It is also imperative that all possible preventive measures be exercised during ordinary times to reduce the chances of cross infections during religious ceremonies.

With regards to the church’s compliance to the closure of church gatherings, it was reported that:

*The majority of Christian communities have adhered to the call to abide by the regulations as a way to protect them against infection. However, the church has been caught off guard as the pandemic impacted on social, psychological, economic and spiritual dimensions. Churches have resorted to using the social media as a way to minister to their followers but this can apply to the urban settings. On the other hand, some AIC defied the call for restrictive measures on religious gatherings (Telephone Interview, MCZ1).*

In assessing the above submission, it was observed that the significance of conventional religious gatherings could not be under estimated. Merits for gatherings promote reengaging with the deity and fellowship with others. This means, lack of fellowshiping interrupts religious oneness. Respondents reported that most of Christian communities responded negatively to the closure of church gatherings because the lockdown deprived them of financial resources, numerical growth as well as spiritual growth. Casidy and Tsarenko (2014) agree that the church is designed to inform prospective attendees of the benefits that the church offers in terms of social, psychological, and spiritual support. In the same view Allport and Ross (1967) proffered that conventional participation brings about intrinsic religiosity as the motivation to experience religion for the sake of the faith itself. Gorsuch (1994) agrees that intrinsically religiosity individuals who participate in church-related activities leading them to search for personal relationship with God. Indeed, what has been proffered by Allport and Ross, Gorsuch, and Casidy and Tsarenko cannot be neglected because meeting for religiosity connects a person with the Ultimate Being for their own good.

Casidy and Tsarenko (2014) reiterated that physical meeting has a greater meaning in life as it ushers a secure relationship with God, and a sense of spiritual connectedness with others. Socially, Christian faith is developed through involvement with a community of faith and nurtured within a network of relationships with other believers. Of course, the lack of conventional worship affected those in rural areas, and a few in urban areas who are not technologically networked. According to Wildman et al. (2020), collective worship is an effective mechanism for accelerating its spreading. This is so because religious communities all over the world are having online services through stream live videos of suitably modified rituals, sermons, and prayers. In addition, religious communities are also disseminating practical health information, and offering urgent financial help in the wake of rapidly degrading economic conditions.

Although, this is a positive move taken by the church to conduct online church services, the majority of Christian members could not access it as they could not afford data bundles for downloading sermons or viewing sermons. As a result, the spirituality of church members was minimised if not cut off completely. This is in congruent with responses by respondents that serious Christians felt that they were far away from God while the noncommitted in faith continued in apostasy. It is argued, therefore, that since the body, mind and soul cannot be separated; if religious patterns of life are disturbed psychologically, one may feel exposed and condemned to die.

With regards to religious home fellowships, the researchers draw inspiration from Acts 2:46b and 5:42 that during persecution Christian believers met in temple courts and homes for having 'holy communion', teachings and proclaiming good news of Jesus Christ. This portrays that diversity, in terms of place of worship, is permissible. Christians can encounter with the Almighty even through modern channels of communication though they may have some limitations. Indeed, for such a time such as the prevailing Covid-19 era, the Christian community changed a number of practices as a result of the pandemic. Christians were robbed of the interpersonal contact such as 'touching' one another when praying, hugging or greeting each other using hands or body contact; sharing Holy Communion from the same elements and utensils, use of water, oil, wrist bands and other shared objects. Also, the bereaved family rarely feels adequately comforted due to limited number of attendances at funeral service of their beloved one.

### *Christianity as complementary to medicine*

The research also established that the Christian religion continues to be a substitute for medicine especially in cases where orthodox medicine fails to provide solutions. As such, healing has been observed as a driving force in modern day Christianity within the Zimbabwean religious landscape. Richards and Bergin (2005) identified some of the examples of religious and spiritual interventions that could be applied when the community is faced with pandemic. These interventions include therapist prayer, teaching scriptural concepts, spiritual confrontation, spiritual meditation, religious biblio-therapy and scripture memorisation. On the same note, it was acknowledged during the study that:

*in times of crisis religion is always one of the solutions. Some prophets like Emmanuel Makandiwa and TB Joshua claimed that the pandemic will be stopped by God (Telephone interview, ZAOGA 140).*

Most Christians are resorting to prayer either for cure or protection against the pandemic. According to Targ (1997) intercessory prayers offered by religious persons can also be understood to effect distant healing. Biblical reflection of what Targ presented upholds that, "if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal the land" 2 Chronicles 7:14. In this regard, the researchers attribute that if people of God are faced with problems just like Covid-19, their belief in God brings a miraculous cure. Cure in the sense of stress relief, mind wellbeing and having hope for tomorrow.

Further submissions during the study were that the Church needs to provide care and protection to the victims of Covid-19 and pray for the world. The respondents further indicated that during Covid-19 period, some churches have been giving the needy food, those with health institutions, provided medical care through testing and curing the sick while some used their buildings as quarantine centres. Furthermore, The Zimbabwe Heads of Christians Denominations (ZHOCD) engaged the government and encouraged it to give financial and food assistance without discrimination. Given to what had been done by the church, that was a multiple approach towards healing process of the mind, soul and body.

From the above, the study posits that suffering is a practical problem which can be alleviated from diverse interventions. This is consistent with Hauerwas (1991) assertion that the value of religious accounts for medicine, is to help patients and medical practitioners recover the context of meaning for medical interventions, and to develop communal responses for dealing with the ill and suffering. It was also explained that religious leaders, faith-based organisations, and faith communities have been playing a major role in saving lives and reducing illness related to Covid-19. Primarily, faith-based organisations sourced the support, comfort, guidance, and direct health care and social services, for the communities they serve. The Christian community shared health information to protect their own members and wider communities, which has been believed to be accepted than from other sources. They provided pastoral and spiritual support during public health emergencies and other health challenges and advocated for the needs of vulnerable populations. The religious institutions' helpful information reduced fear and stigma; provided reassurance to people in their communities, and promoted health-saving practices. Religious communities became a critical link in the safety net for vulnerable people within their faith community and wider communities. Thus,

*...worshipping by praying is a remedy for the sick be it in spiritual, social or physical dimensions (Telephone Interview, MCZ3).*

Healing comes by when one engages in practices promoted by religion and spirituality such as worship, prayer, meditation, and forgiveness (Oman and Thoresen, 2003). The discourse on healing (MCZ3; Oman & Thoresen, 2003) is depicted in the life of the Biblical figure, Job, who became a victim of Satan and experienced many troubles. However, the religiosity and spirituality of Job lead to contain and heal his situation because God was also at work in Job's suffering and restoration. Job's response of worship, confession, and prayer healed his situation (Job 1-2 and 28:23). The story of Job strengthened faith for Christian communities in Zimbabwe during this Covid-19 era by acknowledging that this does not mean that God is unconcerned about what happens to His people.

In the same vein, Koenig (2000) understands that the religious institution's motivating the patient through increased ability to believe that medical and spiritual goals are aligned, can justify that religion complements the medicine in the healing process. In view of Rowatt and Kirkpatrick (2002), God as an attachment figure, appears to function analogously to childhood attachment figures, as a safe haven in crisis and a secure base for exploration. More

secure attachment to God has been associated with greater life satisfaction, agreeableness, religious symbolic immortality, positive effect, as well as with less negative effects such as neuroticism, loneliness, anxiety, depression, and physical illness. Reflectively, the authors observed that Covid-19 affected the community psychologically. The psychological therapy can be experienced as people invested their trust in God.

**T**he critical question is, has the outbreak of the Covid-19 marked the end of religious healing practices in the world, particularly in Africa and Zimbabwe to be specific? This question has become necessary among scholars because a few days, weeks, months and years ago traditional and Christian faith healing claims have been rampant. And they include claims of healing persons who are suffering from all sorts of illness, the blind, lame or those with HIV and AIDS. The questions to ask are why? What went wrong? Is it because religious healing is no longer effective? Or that faith healing cannot apply to the coronavirus? These, and other questions, can be answered by viewing the silence of faith healers not as a surprise but as issues embedded in politics of knowledge (Foucault, 1980).

**T**he same developments, where religious organisations were silenced giving priority to scientific medicine that took place during the nineteenth century, are being repeated. This is substantiated by Foucault (1980) when he indicated that the progressive emplacement of what was to become the great medical edifice of the nineteenth century, cannot be divorced from the concurrent organisation of a politics of health, the consideration of disease as a political and economic problem for social collectivises which they must seek to resolve as a matter of overall policy.

**T**he advent of Covid-19 was a moment of trial and spiritual growth at the same time. It also demonstrated that the church is a useful arm of the nation as the church was later regarded as front-line workers by the government. This then enabled the church and the state to come to a round table to proffer for a way forward during the vaccination program.

## **Conclusion**

The spread of the pandemic of Covid-19 world over, and Africa in particular, has seen the translational nature of contemporary Church being proactive and innovative through appropriations of modern media technologies. In the process, African sacramental worldviews have found a place to feel at home in the hearts and lives of people going through challenges of the pandemic as they attempt to find their way within the maze of Covid-19 and its numerous challenges. Belief occurs through the medium, which is the locus of religious sensations.

The new Church in African we have encountered in this period of Covid-19 has taken the uses of the media to another level as both for healing and deliverance and pastoral initiatives during lockdown.

Notwithstanding the challenges brought by this Covid-19 there are also opportunities created by this pandemic in the whole world. The Coronavirus has managed to bring together people to be each other's keeper despite economic strength, political affiliations and religious affiliations. Unity of purpose has been created where all stakeholders are coming together in spite of all these differences to seek for solutions together.

## References

- Allport, G. W. and Ross, J. M. 1967. Personal religious orientation and prejudice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 5(4) pp. 432-443.
- Balkhair, A. A. 2020. Covid-19 pandemic: A new chapter in history of infectious disease: *Oman Medical Journal* 35(2): e123.
- Casidy, R. and Tsarenko, Y. 2014. Perceived benefits and church participation: A comparative study among regular and irregular church goers. *Article in Asia Pacific journal of marketing of logistics*. November 2014. pp. 1-19.
- Fitzpatrick, S. J. et al. 2016. Religious perspectives on human suffering: Implications for medicine and bioethics. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 55:159–173.
- Foucault, M. 1977. *Power/Knowledge Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. New York: Panthen Books.
- Gorsuch, R. L. 1994. Toward motivational theories of intrinsic religious commitment. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 33(4), pp. 315-325.
- Hauerwas, S. 1991. *Naming the silences: God, medicine, and the problem of suffering*. Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans.
- Koenig, H. G. 2000. Religion, spirituality, and medicine: Application to clinical practice. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 284, 1708.
- Juola, J. & Rose, E. E. 2005. Religious and spiritual struggles: In Paloutian, R. F. and Park, C. L.(eds.). *Handbook of Psychology of religion and spirituality*. New York: The Guilford Press. pp. 315-330.
- Longman II, T. et al. 2013. *The Baker illustrated Bible dictionary*. Baker Publishing Group. Washington.
- Maponga, J. 2020. Life happens: How the virus has affected. *SAfm*. Retrieved from <https://iono.fm>
- The NewsDay, 2020. *'Muchinguri touches raw nerve'* The NewsDay 16 March 2020.
- The NewsDay, 2020. *Churches declare end of Covid-19* The NewsDay 16 June 2020.
- Oman, D. and Thoresen, C. E. 2003a. The many frontiers of spiritual modelling. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 13, 197–213.

- Quadri, S. A. 2020. Covid-19 and religious congregations: Implications for spread of novel pathogens. *International Journal of Infectious Diseases* 96 219–221.
- Rowatt, W. C. and Kirkpatrick, L. A. 2000. Two dimensions of attachment to God and their relation to affect, religiosity, and personality constructs. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41, 637–651.
- Spilka, B. and McIntosh, D. N. 1996. *Religion and spirituality: The known and the unknown*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Psychological Association, Toronto, Canada.
- Sulkowski, L. and Ignatowski, G. 2020. Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on organization of religious behaviour in different Christian; *Religions* 2020, 11, 254; doi:10.3390/rel11050254. pp. 1-15
- Targ, E. 1997. Evaluating distant healing: A research review. *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine*, 3, 74–78.
- Vaughan, F. 1991. Spiritual issues in psychotherapy. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 23,i 105–119.
- WHO. 2020. [www.http://wa.me/41798931892?text=hi](http://wa.me/41798931892?text=hi)
- WHO. 2020. Practical considerations and recommendations for religious leaders and faith-based communities in the context of Covid-19: *Article on interim guidance*, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO: 1-6
- Wong, P. T. and Weiner, B. 1981. When people ask “why” questions, and the heuristics of attributional search. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 40, 650–663.
- Waters, L. J. 1997. Reflections on suffering from the book of Job: *Bibliotheca sacra* 154(October–December 1997): 436–51
- Wildman, W. J., Bulbulia, J., Sosis, R. and Schjoedt, U. 2020. Religion and the Covid-19 pandemic, *Religion, Brain & Behavior*, 10:2, 115-117, DOI: 10.1080/2153599X.2020.1749339
- ZBC, 2020. Covid-19 team visits Madzibaba with 30 wives, 23 children. [zbcnews.co.zw/covid-19](http://zbcnews.co.zw/covid-19).
- ZCTU, 2020. Response to the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic on workers and the Zimbabwean economy, March 31, 2020 <https://www.ituc-csi.org/zimbabwe-response-to-the-impact-of>